

THE SUTRA OF COMPLETE ENLIGHTENMENT

Translated from the Chinese of Buddhadrata by Ven. Guo-go Bhikshu

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Thus have I heard. At one time the Bhagavan entered the Samadhi of the Great Illuminating Storehouse of Spiritual Penetration.¹ This is the samadhi in which all Tathagatas brightly and majestically abide. It is the ground of the pure enlightenment of all sentient beings.

[The Bhagavan's] body and mind were in the state of quiescent-extinction,² where past, present, and future are intrinsically equal and identical,³ and his completeness filled all ten directions, and was in accord with everything without duality. From within this condition of nonduality, he caused various Pure Lands to appear.

[The Bhagavan] was accompanied by one hundred thousand great bodhisattvas and *mahasattvas*. Chief among them were Bodhisattva Manjusri, Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, Bodhisattva of Universal Vision, Bodhisattva Vajragarbha, Bodhisattva Maitreya, Bodhisattva of Pure Wisdom, Bodhisattva at Ease in Majestic Virtue, Bodhisattva of Sound Discernment, Bodhisattva Cleansed of All Karmic Obstructions, Bodhisattva of Universal Enlightenment, Bodhisattva of Complete Enlightenment, and Bodhisattva Foremost in Virtue and Goodness. Together with their retinues they all entered samadhi, abiding in the Tathagata's Dharma assembly of impartial equality.

Bodhisattva Manjusri

Thereupon Bodhisattva Manjusri rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms,⁴ and said: "O World Honored One of great compassion! Please expound to the multitude who have come to this assembly the Tathagata's Dharma practice of the original-arising purity of the causal ground.⁵ Please also expound to us how bodhisattvas may initiate this state of pure mind within the Mahayana and leave all illness. [Pray teach us] so that sentient beings in the future Dharma Ending Age who aspire to the Mahayana will not fall into erroneous views." Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to Bodhisattva Manjusri: "Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas you have asked about the Tathagata's Dharma practice of the causal ground. For the benefit of all sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who aspire to Mahayana, you asked how they can attain correct abiding and not fall into erroneous views. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you."

Hearing this, Bodhisattva Manjusti was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

"Virtuous man, the Supreme Dharma King possesses the method of the great dharani⁶ called Complete Enlightenment,⁷ out of which emanates pure true suchness, bodhi, and nirvana, as well as the paramitas to teach bodhisattvas. The original-arising [purity] of the causal ground of the Tathagatas relies on the complete illumination of [intrinsic] enlightenment, which is pure [in essence] and permanently free from ignorance.⁸ Only then do the [Tathagatas] accomplish the Buddha Path.

"What is ignorance? Virtuous man, since beginningless time, all sentient beings have had all sorts of delusions, like a disoriented person who has lost his sense of direction. They mistake the four great elements⁹ as the attributes of their bodies, and the conditioned impressions¹⁰ of the six sense objects as the attributes of their minds. They are like a man with an illness of the eyes who sees an [illusory] flower in the sky, or a second moon.

"Virtuous man, there is in reality no flower in the sky, yet the sick man mistakenly clings to it. Because of his mistaken clinging, he is not only deluded about the intrinsic

nature of the empty space, but also confused about the arising of the flower. Because of this false existence [to which he clings], he remains in the turning wheel of birth and death. Hence this is called ignorance.

“Virtuous man, this ignorance has no real substance. It is like a person in a dream. Though the person exists in the dream, when [the dreamer] awakens, there is nothing that can be grasped. Like an [illusory] flower in the sky that vanishes into empty space, one cannot say that there is a fixed place from which it vanishes. Why? Because there is no place from which it arises! Amidst the unarisen, all sentient beings deludedly perceive birth and extinction. Hence this is called the turning wheel of birth and death.

“Virtuous man, one who practices Complete Enlightenment of the causal ground of the Tathagata realizes that [birth and extinction] are like an illusory flower in the sky. Thus there is no continuance of birth and death and no body or mind that is subject to birth and death. This nonexistence of [birth and death and body and mind] is so not as a consequence of contrived effort. It is so by its intrinsic nature.

“The awareness [of their nonexistence] is like empty space. That which is aware of the empty space is like the appearance of the illusory flower. However, one cannot say that the nature of this awareness is nonexistent. Eliminating both existence and nonexistence is in accordance with pure enlightenment.

“Why is it so? Because the nature of empty space is ever unmoving. Likewise, there is neither arising nor perishing within the Tathagatagarbha.¹¹ It is free from conceptual knowledge and views. Like the nature of *dharmadhatu*, which is ultimate, wholly complete, and pervades all ten directions, such is the Dharma practice [of the Tathagata] of the causal ground.

“Because of this [intrinsic completeness], bodhisattvas within the Mahayana may give rise to pure bodhi-mind. If sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age practice accordingly, they will not fall into erroneous views.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Manjusri, you should know
that all Tathagatas,
from their original-arising causal ground,
use wisdom to enlighten
and penetrate ignorance.
Realizing that ignorance is like
a flower in the sky,
they are thus liberated from the continuance
[of birth and death].
Like a person [seen] in a dream who
cannot be found when [the dreamer] awakens,
awareness is like empty space.
It is impartial and equal, and ever unmoving.
When enlightenment pervades all ten directions,
the Buddha Path is accomplished.
There is no place where illusions vanish,
and there is no attainment
in accomplishing the Buddha Path,
for the intrinsic nature is already wholly complete.
By this, bodhisattvas
can give rise to the bodhi-mind.
Sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age
through this practice will avoid erroneous views.

Bodhisattva Samantabhadra

Then Bodhisattva Samantabhadra rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: "O World Honored One of great compassion! For the multitude of bodhisattvas in the assembly, as well as for all sentient beings who cultivate Mahayana in the Dharma Ending Age, please explain how they should practice, having heard about this pure realm of Complete Enlightenment.

"World Honored One, if these sentient beings come to understand illusion, then body and mind are also illusory. How can they then use illusion to remedy illusion? If all illusory characteristics were exhausted and extinguished, then there would be no mind. Who is it that practices? Why, then, do you say that practice is illusory?

"If sentient beings originally had no need to practice, then they would remain confined to illusory projections amidst birth and death and never discern the state [in which all is seen to be] like an illusion. How could they be liberated from illusory conceptualization? For the sake of all sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, please explain the expedient method of gradual cultivation of practice in order that sentient beings may permanently leave the state of illusion." Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to Bodhisattva Samantabhadra: "Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked about the expedient, gradual stages of the bodhisattva's practice of the samadhi in which all is seen to be like an illusion, and which frees sentient beings from illusion. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you."

Hearing this, Bodhisattva Samantabhadra was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

"Virtuous man, all illusory projections of sentient beings arise from the wondrous mind of the Tathagata's Complete Enlightenment, just like flowers in the sky which come into existence from out of the sky. When the illusory flower vanishes, the nature of the sky is not marred. Likewise, the illusory mind of sentient beings relies on illusory [cultivation] for its extinction. When all illusions are extinguished, the enlightened mind remains unmoved. Speaking of enlightenment in contrast to illusion is itself an illusion. To say that enlightenment exists is to not have left illusion yet. [However], to say that enlightenment does not exist is also no different. Therefore, the extinction of illusion is called the unmoving [mind of enlightenment].

"Virtuous man, all bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the , "Dharma Ending Age should separate [themselves] from all illusory projections and deluded realms. [However], when one clings firmly to the mind that separates [from all illusory projections and deluded realms], this mind [should also be taken as] an illusion, and one should separate oneself from it. Because this separation is an illusion, it should also be separated. One should then be free from even this 'separating from the illusion of separation!' When there remains nothing to be separated from, all illusions are eliminated. It is like rubbing two pieces of wood together to obtain fire. When the fire ignites and the wood completely burns, the ashes fly away and the smoke vanishes. Using illusion to remedy illusion is just like this. Yet even though illusions are exhausted, one does not enter annihilation.

"Virtuous man, to know illusion is to depart from it; there is no [need to] contrive expedient means! To depart from illusion is to be enlightened; there are no gradual

steps! All bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who practice accordingly will permanently leave illusions behind.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Samantabhadra, you should know
that the beginningless illusory ignorance
of all sentient beings
is grounded on the Tathagata's
mind of Complete Enlightenment.
Like a flower in empty space,
its appearance relies on the sky.
When the illusory flower vanishes,
the empty space remains in its original unmoving state.
Illusion depends on enlightenment for its arising.
With the extinction of illusion,
enlightenment is wholly perfect,
for the enlightened mind is ever unmoving.
All bodhisattvas and sentient beings
in the Dharma Ending Age
should forever leave illusions far behind
until all illusions are extinguished.
It is like producing fire with wood,
when the wood is burned out,
the fire is also extinguished.
Enlightenment has no gradual steps;
the same applies to expedient means.

Bodhisattva of Universal Vision

Then the Bodhisattva of Universal Vision rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: “O World Honored One of great compassion! For the sake of the multitude of bodhisattvas in this assembly and all sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, please expound on the gradual stages of the bodhisattva's practice. How should one contemplate? What should one abide in and uphold? What expedient methods should one devise to guide unenlightened sentient beings, to universally enable them to reach enlightenment?”

“World Honored One, if these sentient beings do not have the correct expedient methods and contemplation, they will be confused when they hear you expound this samadhi [in which all is seen to be an illusion] and will be unable to awaken to Complete Enlightenment. Would you be compassionate enough to expound the provisional expedient methods for our benefit and for sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age?” Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to the Bodhisattva of Universal Vision: “Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata about the gradual stages of cultivation, what contemplation one should abide in and uphold, as well as the various expedient methods one should use. Listen attentively now. I shall explain them to you.”

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva of Universal Vision was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

“Virtuous man, newly initiated bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age seeking the Tathagata’s pure mind of Complete Enlightenment should hold the right thought of separating from myriad illusions. First, they should rely on the *samatha* practice of the Tathagatas and strictly observe the precepts. They should reside peacefully among an assembly of practitioners and sit in meditation in a quiet room.

“They should always be mindful that the body is a union of the four elements. Things such as hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, marrow, and brain all belong to the element of earth. Spittle, mucus, pus, blood, saliva, sweat, phlegm, tears, semen, urine, and excrement all belong to the element of water. Warmth belongs to the element of fire. Motion belongs to the element of wind. When the four elements are separated from one another, where is this illusory body? Thus one knows that the physical body ultimately has no substance and owes its appearance to the union [of the four elements]. In reality it is not different from an illusory projection.

“Due to the provisional union of the four conditions [of vision, hearing, perception, and awareness], the illusory six sense faculties come to exist. The inward and outward combination of the six sense faculties and the four elements [of earth, water, fire, and wind] gives rise to the illusory existence of conditioned energy. [In this process], there ‘seems to be’ something which is cognizant. This is provisionally called ‘mind.’¹²

“Virtuous man, this illusory mind cannot exist without the six sense objects [of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, thought]. When the four elements disperse, the six sense objects cannot be found. Once the elements and the sense objects disperse and are extinguished, ultimately there is no cognizant mind to be seen.

“Virtuous man, when the illusory bodies of sentient beings become extinguished, the illusory minds also become extinguished. When the illusory minds become extinguished, the illusory sense objects also become extinguished. When the illusory sense objects become extinguished, the illusory extinguishing also becomes extinguished. When the illusory extinguishing becomes extinguished, that which is not illusory is not extinguished. It is like polishing a mirror. When the defilements are wiped off, brightness appears.

“Virtuous man, you should know that both body and mind are illusory defilements. When these appearances of defilement are permanently extinguished, purity will pervade all ten directions.

“Virtuous man, for instance, the pure mani jewel reflects the five colors as they appear before it, yet the ignorant see the mani as actually possessing the five colors. Virtuous man, although the pure nature of Complete Enlightenment likewise manifests as body and mind, [people] respond in accordance with their capacities, yet the ignorant speak of the pure Complete Enlightenment as having intrinsic characteristics of body and mind. For this reason, they are unable to depart from illusion. Therefore, I say that body and mind are illusory defilements. It is in terms of separating from illusory defilements that bodhisattvas are defined. When defilements are thoroughly removed, their corresponding [cognition] is [completely] eliminated. Since there is nothing corresponding to defilement, there is also no ‘one’ there to designate.

“Virtuous man, if bodhisattvas as well as sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age realize the awakening of the extinction of illusory appearances, at that time unlimited purity and infinite emptiness will be revealed and manifested in their enlightenment. Because the enlightenment is complete and illuminating, it reveals the mind in its purity. Because the mind is pure, objects of vision are pure. Because vision is pure, the eye faculty is pure. Because that faculty is pure, the visual consciousness is pure. Because the consciousness is pure, hearing is pure. Because hearing is pure, the

faculty of hearing is pure. Because that faculty is pure, the consciousness is pure. Because the consciousness is pure, perception is pure. The same holds true for the nose, tongue, body, and mind.

“Virtuous man, because the sense faculties are pure, the objects of sight are pure. Because the objects of sight are pure, the objects of sound are pure. The same holds in the cases of smell, taste, touch, and thought.

“Virtuous man, because the six sense objects are pure, the earth element is pure. Because the earth element is pure, the water element is pure. The same holds for the elements of fire and wind.

“Virtuous man, because the four elements are pure, the twelve entrances, the eighteen realms, and the twenty-five existences are pure. Because these are pure, the ten powers, the four kinds of fearlessness, the four unhindered wisdoms, the eighteen exclusive attributes of the Buddha, and the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment are all pure.¹³ The same holds for the purity of everything all the way up to the eighty-four thousand dharani doors.

“Virtuous man, because the nature of Absolute Reality is pure, one’s body is pure. Because one’s body is pure, a multitude of bodies are pure. Because a multitude of bodies are pure, likewise sentient beings in all ten directions are completely enlightened and pure.

“Virtuous man, because one world is pure, a multitude of worlds are pure. Because a multitude of worlds are pure, all things completely exhausting empty space in the past, present, and future are impartially equal, pure, and unmoving.

“Virtuous man, since empty space is equal, identical, and unmoving as such, you should know that the nature of enlightenment is also equal, identical, and unmoving. Since the four elements are unmoving, you should know that the nature of enlightenment is also equal, identical, and unmoving. Since [everything] up to the eightyfour thousand dharani doors are equal, identical, and unmoving, you should know that the nature of enlightenment is also equal, identical, and unmoving.

“Virtuous man, as the nature of enlightenment is pervasive and full, pure, and unmoving, being perfect and boundless, you should know that the six sense faculties also fully pervade the *dharmadhatu*. Because the sense faculties are pervasive and full, you should know that the six sense objects also fully pervade the *dharmadhatu*. Because the sense objects are pervasive and full, you should know that the four elements also fully pervade the *dharmadhatu*. So it is with everything up to all the dharani doors, which also fully pervade the *dharmadhatu*.

“Virtuous man, because the nature of wondrous enlightenment pervades everything fully, the nature of the sense faculties and the sense objects is indestructible and clear. Because the sense faculties and the sense objects are indestructible, [everything] up to all the dharani doors is indestructible and clear. It is like hundreds of thousands of lamps illuminating a room: their illumination pervades fully and is indestructible and clear.

“Virtuous man, since his enlightenment is fully accomplished, you should know that a bodhisattva neither is bound by dharmas nor seeks to be free from dharmas. He neither detests birth and death nor clings to nirvana; neither reveres those who uphold the precepts nor condemns those who violate them; neither esteems experienced practitioners nor slights beginners. Why? Because all [sentient beings] are enlightened. It is like clear vision that is completely aware of what is in front: when this clarity is perfect, it has no likes or dislikes. Why? Because the essence of this clarity is nondual and itself has no likes or dislikes.

“Virtuous man, these bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who have gained accomplishments through cultivating the mind have neither cultivated nor accomplished anything. Complete Enlightenment is universally illuminating in

quiescent-extinction without duality. Hundreds of thousands of millions of *asamkya*s of Buddha worlds, as innumerable as the grains of sand of the Ganges, are like flowers in the sky, randomly arising and perishing. They are neither identical to nor separate [from the nature of Complete Enlightenment]. Since there is no bondage or liberation, one begins to realize that sentient beings have intrinsically accomplished Buddhahood, and that birth and death and nirvana are like yesterday's dream.

"Virtuous man, because birth and death and nirvana are like yesterday's dream, you should know that they neither arise nor perish, neither come nor go. That which is actualized is neither gained nor lost, neither grasped nor discarded. One who truly actualizes [enlightenment] does not contrive, stop, allow things to be as they are, nor annihilate [vexations]. In the midst of the actualization, there is neither a subject nor an object. Ultimately there is neither actualization nor one who actualizes! The nature of all dharmas is equal and indestructible.

"Virtuous man, bodhisattvas should thus practice, thus [progress through] these gradual stages, thus contemplate, thus abide in and uphold, thus use expedient methods, and thus become enlightened. In seeking this Dharma, they will not be confused and perplexed."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Universal Vision, you should know
that the minds and bodies of
all sentient beings are illusory.
The body is the union of the four elements.
The nature¹⁴ of mind is reducible
to the [six] sensory objects.
When the four elements are separated
from one another, who is the unifier?
If one practices gradual
cultivation like this, all will be pure.
[The nature of Complete Enlightenment]
is unmovable and pervades the *dharmadhatu*.
There is no contrivance, stopping,
allowing things to be as they are,
annihilation, nor is there one
who actualizes [enlightenment].
All Buddha worlds are like
flowers in the sky.
Past, present and future are
all impartially equal.
Ultimately there is no coming or going.
The newly initiated bodhisattvas
and sentient beings in
the Dharma Ending Age,
in their quest to enter the Buddha Path,
should thus cultivate themselves.

Bodhisattva Vajragarbha

Then Bodhisattva Vajragarbha rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right,

knelt down, joined his palms, and said: “O World Honored One of great compassion! You have wonderfully expounded to bodhisattvas the great dharani of the Tathagata’s pure Complete Enlightenment, the Dharma practice of the causal ground, and the expedient methods of gradual cultivation, so that sentient beings may unveil their obstructions. Because of your compassionate teaching, all in the assembly have cleared away illusory illnesses [of the eye] and their wisdom-eyes have become pure.

“World Honored One, if sentient beings have intrinsically accomplished Buddhahood, how can there be so much ignorance? If all sentient beings originally have ignorance, why does the Tathagata say that they have intrinsically accomplished Buddhahood? If sentient beings in all ten directions intrinsically accomplished the Buddha Path and afterward gave rise to ignorance, then when will the Tathagata give rise to vexations again? Please do not forsake your unrestricted great compassion, but disclose the secret treasury for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas, so that when all the sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who hear of this Dharma door to the ultimate meaning of this sutra will permanently sever doubts and regrets.” Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to Bodhisattva Vajragarbha: “Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata about the very secret and profound ultimate expedient methods, which are the highest teaching for bodhisattvas and the ultimate truth in the Mahayana. These methods are capable of causing practicing and beginning bodhisattvas in all ten directions and all sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age to obtain [the stage of] resolute faith¹⁵ and permanently sever doubts and regrets. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you.”

Hearing this, Bodhisattva Vajragarbha was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

“Virtuous man, all worlds begin and end, are born and perish, have a before and after, exist and do not exist, coalesce and disperse, arise and cease. Thoughts follow one another in succession, going and coming in a ceaseless circle. With all sorts of grasping and rejecting, these [changing processes] are all cyclic existences. If one were to discern Complete Enlightenment while still in cyclic existence, then this nature of Complete Enlightenment would have the same [nature] as the turning flow [of cyclic existence]! If one wished to be free from cyclic existence, then there would be no place where [Complete Enlightenment] could exist. For instance, when one moves one’s eyes, still water appears to have waves; when one fixes one’s gaze, a circling flame appears to be a wheel of fire. The fact that moving clouds make it seem as if the moon were moving and a sailing boat makes one feel as if the shore were moving also exhibits the same principle.

“Virtuous man, while the motion is going on, it is impossible for those things to be still. How much more would this be so if one were to discern the Complete Enlightenment of the Buddha with the defiled mind of birth and death, which has never been pure; how could it not [appear to] be in motion?¹⁶ For this reason, you gave rise to these three doubts.

“Virtuous man, for example, because of an illusory illness [of the eye], a flower is falsely seen in an empty sky. When the illusory illness [of the eye] is eliminated, one does not say: ‘Now that this illness is eliminated, when will other illnesses arise?’ Why? Because the illness¹⁷ and the flower¹⁸ are not in opposition. Likewise, when the flower vanishes into the empty sky, one does not say: ‘When will flowers appear in the sky again?’ Why? Because the sky originally has no flowers! There is no such thing as appearing and vanishing. Birth and death and nirvana are like the appearing and vanishing [flowers in the sky], while the perfect illumination of wondrous enlightenment

is free from flowers or illnesses.

“Virtuous man, you should know that the empty sky does not temporarily exist and then temporarily not exist. How much more so in the case of the Tathagata who is in accordance with Complete Enlightenment, which is comparable to the equal intrinsic nature of empty space.

“Virtuous man, it is like smelting gold ore. The gold does not exist because of the smelting. As it has become [perfect] gold, it will not become ore again. Even after an inexhaustible period of time, the nature of the gold will not deteriorate. Therefore, one should not say that gold is not intrinsically perfect in itself. Likewise, the same holds true with Tathagata’s Complete Enlightenment.

“Virtuous Man, the wondrous and completely enlightened mind of all Tathagatas is originally without bodhi or nirvana; it has nothing to do with accomplishing Buddhahood or not accomplishing Buddhahood, illusory cyclic existence or noncyclic existence.

“Virtuous man, even the sravakas, who have perfected the state where [the karmic activities of] body, mind, and speech are entirely severed, are still unable to enter the nirvana that is personally experienced and manifested [by the Tathagata]. How can one possibly use one’s conceptual mind to measure the realm of the Tathagata’s Complete Enlightenment? It is comparable to using the light of a firefly to scorch Mount Sumeru; one would never be able to burn it! He who attempts to enter the Tathagata’s ocean of great quiescent-extinction by using the cyclic mind and giving rise to cyclic views will never succeed. Therefore, I say that all bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age should first sever the root of beginningless cyclic existence.

“Virtuous man, contrived conceptualizations come from the existence of a mind, which is a conditioned [conglomeration of] the six sense objects. The conditioned impressions of deluded thoughts are not the true essence of mind; rather, they are like flowers in the sky. The discernment of the realm of Buddhahood with such conceptualization is comparable to the production of empty fruit by the empty flower. One merely revolves in this entanglement of deluded thoughts and gains no result.

“Virtuous man, deluded groundless thinking and cunning views cannot accomplish the expedient methods of Complete Enlightenment. Discriminations such as these are not correct.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Vajragarbha, you should know
that the quiescent and extinct
nature of the Tathagata
never had a beginning or end.
To conceptualize this with the cyclic mind
results in rotations in cyclic [existence].
One will then remain in cyclic existence
unable to enter the ocean of the Buddha.
Like smelting gold ore,
the gold does not exist
as the result of smelting.
Though it regains the original golden [quality],
it is perfected only after
[the process of] smelting.
Once it becomes true gold,
it cannot become ore again.
Birth and death and nirvana,
ordinary beings and all Buddhas,

are but appearances of flowers in the sky.
Conceptualizations are illusory projections.
How much more so are such questions asked
with an illusory mind?
If one can put an end to this [illusory] mind,
Complete Enlightenment can be sought.

Bodhisattva Maitreya

Then Bodhisattva Maitreya rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: “O World Honored One of great compassion! You have opened wide the secret treasure for bodhisattvas and have caused the great assembly to deeply awaken from cyclic existence and distinguish between the erroneous and the correct. Your teaching is capable of bestowing the Fearless Eye of the Path to sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, causing them to give rise to resolute faith in the great nirvana, and never again to flow within the realm of the turning wheel [of samsara] or hold cyclic views.

“World Honored One, if bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age desire to sail on the Tathagata’s ocean of great quiescent-extinction, how should they sever the roots of cyclic existence? In the various cyclic existences, how many types of capacities are there? What are the different kinds of cultivation of Buddha’s bodhi? When [bodhisattvas] enter the world of passions, how many expedient methods should they devise to deliver sentient beings? Pray do not forsake your great compassion in saving the world, but cause all practicing bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age to cleanse their wisdom-eyes and illumine their mirrorlike minds. May they be completely awakened to the Tathagata’s unsurpassed knowledge and vision.” Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: “Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata about the most profound, secret, subtle, and wondrous truth so that bodhisattvas’ wisdom-eyes may become pure, so that all sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age may permanently sever themselves from cyclic existence, so that their minds may awaken to Absolute Reality, and so that they may possess the patient endurance of the unborn [wisdom]. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you.”

Hearing this, Bodhisattva Maitreya was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

“Virtuous man, all sentient beings [experience illusory] cyclic existence due to all kinds of affection, love, craving, and desire¹⁹ since beginningless time. The different types of births in the world - be they from egg, womb, humidity, or by transformation - are created by sexual desire.²⁰ You should know that attached love is the root of cyclic existence. Because there are all sorts of desirable [objects] that enhance and augment the activity²¹ of attached love, birth and death proceed in unending succession.

“Desire arises because of attached love. The existence of life comes from desire. Sentient beings’ love of their lives [in turn] relies on desire as a base. Therefore, love and desire are the cause, love of life is the consequence. Because the objects of desire [vary], like and dislike arise. If the object goes against one’s grasping mind, one gives rise to hatred and jealousy and commits evil karmic deeds. As a result, one is reborn in hell or as a hungry ghost.

“Realizing that desire is detestable, if one desires to leave behind karmic paths and abandons evil and delights in doing good, one is reborn in the realms of gods or humans. If, further, one knows that attachment is detestable, and thus abandons attachment and delights in renunciation, one still stirs up the root of attachment. This results in increased worldly meritorious fruit, which, being samsaric, does not lead to accomplishing the holy path. Therefore, if sentient beings wish to be liberated from birth and death and to avoid cyclic existence, they should first sever craving and desire, and eliminate their attached love.

“Virtuous man, the transformation and manifestation of bodhisattvas [in various forms] in the world are not based on attachment. Out of their compassion, they cause sentient beings to abandon attachment by provisionally taking on all kinds of craving and desire so they can enter birth and death. If sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age can abandon desire, eliminate love and hatred, permanently sever cyclic existence, and diligently pursue the Tathagata’s state of Complete Enlightenment with a pure mind, they will attain awakening.

“Virtuous man, due to the inherent desire in all sentient beings, ignorance flourishes and increases. Thus [sentient beings] manifest five distinct natures. According to the two obstructions, their hindrances may appear to be deep or shallow. What are the two obstructions? The first is the obstruction of principle,²² which hinders right views. The second is the obstruction of phenomena,²³ which perpetuates birth and death.

“What are the five distinct natures?²⁴ Virtuous man, sentient beings who have not eliminated and extinguished these two obstructions are called ‘those who have not attained Buddhahood.’ Sentient beings who have permanently abandoned craving and desire and have eliminated the obstruction of phenomena, but not the obstruction of principle, can only be enlightened as sravakas or pratyekabuddhas. They are unable to manifest and abide in the realm of bodhisattvas.

“Virtuous man, if sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age desire to sail on the Tathagata’s great ocean of Complete Enlightenment, they should first vow to practice with diligence and sever the two obstructions. When these two obstructions have been subdued, they will be able to awaken to the realm of bodhisattvas. If the obstructions of principle and phenomena are permanently severed, they will enter into the subtle and wondrous Complete Enlightenment of Tathagatas and consummate bodhi and great nirvana.

“Virtuous man, all sentient beings [intrinsically] actualize Complete Enlightenment. If they meet a good teacher and can rely on his Dharma practice of the causal ground, [their karmic roots for attainments] will be either gradual or sudden. However, if they come across the Tathagata’s unsurpassable bodhi and engage in the correct path of practice, they will attain Buddhahood whether they are of great or small [karmic] roots. If sentient beings, though they seek a good teacher, meet one with erroneous views, they will not gain correct awakening. These people are called ones of outer path nature. This fault is due to the teacher and not to sentient beings.

“The above are the five distinct natures of sentient beings.

“Virtuous man, with great compassionate expedient methods, a bodhisattva enters the world to ex and and mature [the mind~ ofl the ~e6t~ene~dHe manifests in various forms, amidst favorable or adverse situations so that he may work together with sentient beings in order to guide them to Buddhahood. In so doing, he relies entirely on the power of his pure vows made since beginningless time.

“If sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age can arouse the supreme thought of [awakening to] great Complete Enlightenment, they should make the pure great vow of bodhisattvas, declaring: ‘May I, from now on, abide in Buddha’s Complete Enlightenment, and may I, in my search for a good teacher, not meet outer paths and

practitioners of the Two Vehicles.²⁵ With their practice based on this vow, they will gradually sever all hindrances. When all hindrances are exhausted, their vows will be fulfilled. They will then ascend the pure Dharma hall of liberation and actualize the wondrous, august citadel of great Complete Enlightenment.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Maitreya, you should know
that sentient beings
cannot attain great liberation
because of their craving and desire,
which cause them to fall into
the cycle of birth and death.
If they can sever like and dislike,
along with greed, anger, and delusion,
regardless of their difference in nature,
they will all accomplish the Buddha Path.
The two obstructions will also be permanently severed.
After correct awakening is attained
by meeting a good teacher,
one accords with the bodhisattva vow
and abides in the great nirvana.
All bodhisattvas in the ten directions,
relying on the great compassionate vow,
manifest the appearance of entering birth and death.
Practitioners now and
sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age,
should diligently sever all attached views.
Then they will return to great Complete Enlightenment.

Bodhisattva of Pure Wisdom

Then the Bodhisattva of Pure Wisdom rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: “O World Honored One of great compassion! You have broadly expounded to us inconceivable things which we have never seen or heard before. Because of your excellent guidance, our bodies and minds are now at ease and we have gained great benefit. For the sake of all practitioners of the Dharma who have come here, please expound again the nature of the Dharma King’s complete and fulfilling enlightenment. What are the differences in actualization and attainment between all sentient beings, bodhisattvas, and the World Honored Tathagata? [Pray teach us] so that sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, upon hearing this holy teaching, may follow and conform to it, be awakened, and gradually enter [the realm of Buddhahood].” Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to the Bodhisattva of Pure Wisdom: “Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata about the distinct progressive stages [of practice]. Listen attentively now. I shall explain them to you.”

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva of Pure Wisdom was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

“Virtuous man, the intrinsic nature of Complete Enlightenment is devoid of distinct natures [as described before], yet all different natures are endowed with this nature of Complete Enlightenment, which can accord and give rise to various natures.²⁶ [Since these two natures are nondual], there is neither attainment nor actualization. In Absolute Reality, there are indeed no bodhisattvas or sentient beings. Why? Because bodhisattvas and sentient beings are illusory projections. When illusory projections are extinguished, there exists no one who attains or actualizes. For example, eyes cannot see themselves. Likewise, this nature is intrinsically impartial and equal, yet there is no ‘one’ who is equal.

“Because sentient beings are confused, they are unable to eliminate and extinguish all illusory projections. Because of the illusory efforts and activities of those who extinguish and those who do not extinguish [vexations],²⁷ there manifest distinctions. If one can attain accordance with the Tathagata’s quiescent-extinction, there is in reality neither quiescent-extinction nor the one who experiences it.

“Virtuous man, all sentient beings since beginningless time have deludedly conceived ‘self’ and that which grasps on to the self; never have they known the succession of arising and perishing thoughts!²⁸ Therefore, they give rise to love and hatred and indulge in the five desires.²⁹

“If they meet a good teacher who guides them to awaken to the nature of pure Complete Enlightenment and to recognize these arising and perishing [thoughts], they will understand that it is the very nature of such rising [thoughts] that causes toils and anxieties in their lives.

“If, further, a man permanently severs all toil and anxiety, he will realize the *dharmadhatu* in its purity. However, his undermining of purity may become his obstruction and he will not attain freedom and ease regarding Complete Enlightenment. This is called ‘the ordinary man’s accordance with the nature of enlightenment.’³⁰

“Virtuous man, all bodhisattvas realize that this very understanding is a hindrance. Although they sever themselves from this hindrance of understanding, they still abide in this realization. The realization of hindrance is yet another hindrance. Therefore they do not have freedom and ease. This is called ‘the bodhisattva before the stage of the first *bhumī*’s accordance with the nature of enlightenment.’³¹

“Virtuous man, ‘attaining’ illumination and realization³² is a hindrance. Thus a great bodhisattva is constantly in realization without abidance, where the illumination and the illuminator simultaneously become quiescent and vanish. For instance, if a man beheads himself, there exists no executioner after the head has been severed. It is the same with eliminating various hindrances with a mind of hindrance: when the hindrances have been eliminated, there is no eliminator. The teachings of the sutras are like the finger that points to the moon. When one sees the moon, one realizes that the finger is not the moon. Likewise, the various teachings of all Tathagatas in instructing bodhisattvas are also like this. This is called ‘the bodhisattva above the stage of the first *bhumī*’s accordance with the nature of enlightenment.’³³

“Virtuous man, all hindrances are themselves [the nature of] ultimate enlightenment. Having a [correct] thought or losing it is not different from liberation. Conglomeration and dispersion of dharmas are both called nirvana. Wisdom and stupidity are equally prajna. The Dharma accomplished by bodhisattvas and that by outer path practitioners are both bodhi. Ignorance and true suchness are not different realms. [The threefold discipline of] sila, samadhi and prajna³⁴ and [the three poisons of] greed, anger and delusion are all pure activities. Sentient beings and the world they live in are of one Dharma-nature. Hells and heavens are all Pure Lands. Regardless of [their distinct] natures, all sentient beings have [intrinsically] accomplished the Buddha Path. All vexations are ultimate liberation. [The Tathagata’s] ocean of wisdom, which encompasses the whole *dharmadhatu*, clearly illuminates all phenomena as empty

space. This is called ‘the Tathagata’s accordance with the nature of enlightenment.’

“Virtuous man, all bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age should at no time give rise to deluded thoughts! [Yet], when their deluded minds arise, they should not extinguish them. In the midst of deluded concepts, they should not add discriminations. Amidst non-discrimination, they should not distinguish true reality. If sentient beings, upon hearing this Dharma method, believe in, understand, accept, and uphold it and do not generate alarm and fear, they are ‘in accordance with the nature of enlightenment.’

“Virtuous man, you should know that these sentient beings have made offerings to hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddhas and great bodhisattvas as innumerable as the grains of sand of the Ganges, and have planted the roots of all merits. I say that such people will accomplish the [Buddha’s] Wisdom of All Aspects.”³⁵

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Pure Wisdom, you should know
that the nature of perfect bodhi
is without attainment or actualization.
It is without bodhisattvas or sentient beings.
However, when there is enlightenment
and unenlightenment,
there are distinct progressive stages.
Sentient beings are obstructed by understanding.
Bodhisattvas [before the first *bhumī*]
have not left behind realization.
[Once] they enter the first *bhumī*
there is permanent quiescent-extinction
with no abidance in any form.
Great enlightenment, being complete,
is called ‘pervasive accordance.’
If sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age
do not give rise to deluded thoughts,
the Buddha says that they are
bodhisattvas in this very lifetime.
Having made offerings to countless Buddhas
as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges,
their merits are perfected.
Though expedients are many,
all are called in accordance with wisdom.

Bodhisattva at Ease in Majestic Virtue

Then the Bodhisattva at Ease in Majestic Virtue rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: “O World Honored One of great compassion! For our sake you have extensively clarified the different ways of according with the nature of enlightenment and caused the enlightened minds of the multitude of bodhisattvas to be illuminated. Hearing your perfect voice, we have gained great benefit without cultivation.

“World Honored One, a great city has four gates. People coming from different directions have more than one entrance. Likewise, all bodhisattvas who embellish the

Buddha Lands and attain bodhi do so by means of more than one single expedient method. Please, World Honored One, broadly expound to us all the expedient methods and stages as well as how many types of practitioners there are, so that the bodhisattvas in this assembly and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who aspire to the Mahayana may quickly attain enlightenment, and roam and play in the Tathagata's ocean of great quiescent-extinction." Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to the Bodhisattva at Ease in Majestic Virtue: "Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata about such expedient methods. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva at Ease in Majestic Virtue was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

"Virtuous man, unsurpassable wondrous enlightenment pervades all ten directions. From it arise the Tathagatas and all dharmas, which are equal and identical to one another and of the same substance. [Likewise], the various methods of cultivation are, in reality, not different [from one another]. Though there are countless expedient methods for becoming attuned to the nature of enlightenment, if one categorizes them according to their different natures, there are three kinds.

"Virtuous man, if, after awakening to pure Complete Enlightenment, bodhisattvas with pure enlightened minds engage in the cultivation of stillness, they will cleanse and settle all thoughts. Becoming aware of the agitation and restlessness of consciousness, they will cause their wisdom of stillness to manifest. Their bodies and minds, [which will be realized as adventitious] guests and dust³⁶ will be permanently extinguished.³⁷ Inwardly they will experience lightness and ease³⁸ in quiescence and stillness. Because of this quiescence and stillness, the minds of all Tathagatas in all ten directions will be revealed like reflections in a mirror. This expedient is called *samatha*.

"Virtuous man, if, after awakening to pure Complete Enlightenment, bodhisattvas with pure enlightened minds realize the nature of mind and realize that the six sense faculties and sense objects are illusory projections, they will then generate illusion as a means to eliminate illusion. Causing transformations and manifestations among illusions, they will enlighten illusory sentient beings. By generating illusions, they will experience lightness and ease in great compassion. All bodhisattvas who practice in such a manner will advance gradually. That which contemplates illusion is different from illusion itself. Nevertheless, contemplating illusion is itself an illusion. When all illusions are permanently left behind, the wondrous cultivation completed by such bodhisattvas may be compared to the sprouting of seeds from soil. This expedient is called *samapatti*.

"Virtuous man, if, after awakening to pure Complete Enlightenment, bodhisattvas with pure, enlightened minds grasp on to neither illusory projections nor states of stillness, they will understand thoroughly that both body and mind are hindrances. [Awakening from] ignorance, their [minds] will be illuminated. Without depending on all sorts of hindrances, they will permanently transcend the realms of hindrance and nonhindrance and make full use of the world as well as the body and mind. They will manifest in the phenomenal world [without any obstructions], just as the sound of a musical instrument can travel beyond [the body of the instrument]. Vexations and nirvana will not hinder each other. Inwardly, they will experience lightness and ease in quiescent-extinction. They will accord with the realm of quiescent-extinction in wondrous enlightenment, which is beyond the reach of body and mind and the reach of self and others. All sentient beings and all life are only drifting thoughts. This expedient method

is called *dhyana*.

“Virtuous man, these three Dharma methods are intimately in accordance with Complete Enlightenment. Tathagatas in all ten directions accomplish Buddhahood through these means. The myriad expedient methods used by bodhisattvas in all ten directions, whether similar or different, depend on these three activities. At the perfect actualization of these practices, one accomplishes Complete Enlightenment.

“Virtuous man, if in his practice on the holy path, a person teaches, delivers, and succeeds in guiding hundreds of thousands of millions of people into arhatship and pratyekabuddhahood, he cannot be compared with someone who, upon hearing these Dharma methods of the unhindered Complete Enlightenment, practices accordingly for even an instant.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Majestic Virtue, you should know
that the unsurpassable mind of
great enlightenment is intrinsically nondual.
Even though the various expedients
that accord with it
are limitless in number,
the teachings of the Tathagata are
altogether three in kind.
Quiescent and still in *samatha*,
[the mind] is like a mirror
reflecting myriad images.
Samapatti, wherein all is seen as an illusion,
is like a bud growing gradually.
Dhyana is quiescent-extinction,
[yet, its functions are] like the sound
of a musical instrument.
These three wondrous Dharma methods
are all in accordance with enlightenment.
The Tathagatas in all ten directions
and the great bodhisattvas
achieve Buddhahood through them.
Perfect actualization of these three
is called ultimate nirvana.

Bodhisattva Of Sound Discernment

Then the Bodhisattva of Sound Discernment rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: “O World Honored One of great compassion! Such Dharma methods are rare indeed. World Honored One, how many approaches are there in the bodhisattva’s cultivation of these [three] expedient methods toward the gate of Complete Enlightenment? For the sake of this assembly and the sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, please expediently teach us so that we may be awakened to Absolute Reality.” Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to the Bodhisattva of Sound

Discernment: “Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the assembly and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata about such practices. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you.”

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva of Sound Discernment was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

“Virtuous man, being pure, the Complete Enlightenment of all Tathagatas is originally without cultivation and cultivator. All bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, while unenlightened, rely on illusory effort in their cultivation. Thus there are twenty-five kinds of pure samadhis.

“If bodhisattvas engage only in utter stillness, through the power of stillness, they can permanently sever vexations and accomplish the ultimate. Without arising from their seats, they enter nirvana. These bodhisattvas solely practice *samatha*.

“If bodhisattvas engage only in contemplating [all things as being like an] illusion, through the power of the Buddhas they can transform and manifest things in the world into all sorts of functions and fulfill all their pure, wondrous practices as bodhisattvas. While maintaining dharani, they do not lose mindfulness in quiescence, nor do they lose wisdom derived from stillness. These bodhisattvas solely practice *samapatti*.³⁹

“If bodhisattvas engage only in extinguishing illusions without getting involved in functions, they will singly sever all vexations. When vexations are completely severed they will actualize Absolute Reality. These bodhisattvas solely practice *dhyana*.

“If bodhisattvas first engage in utter stillness and then, with the wisdom mind begotten by stillness, clearly illuminate all illusions and perform bodhisattva deeds, they practice *samatha* first, followed by *samapatti*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the wisdom begotten by stillness, fully actualize the nature of utter stillness and then sever vexations and transcend birth and death permanently, they practice *samatha* first, followed by *dhyana*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the wisdom begotten by quiescence and stillness, manifest the power of illusions and create all sorts of transformations and manifestations for the purpose of liberating sentient beings, after which they sever vexations and enter quiescent-extinction, they practice *samatha* first, followed by *samapatti*, ending in *dhyana*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of utter stillness, sever vexations and then perform the wondrous pure practices of a bodhisattva to liberate sentient beings, they practice *samatha* first, followed by *dhyana* and ending in *samapatti*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of utter stillness, sever the vexations in the mind, liberate sentient beings and establish the world, they practice *samatha* first, followed by both *samapatti* and *dhyana*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of utter stillness as a support, generate transformations and manifestations, and then sever vexations, they practice both *samatha* and *samapatti* first, followed by *dhyana*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of utter stillness as a support, attain quiescent-extinction, then give rise to functions in manifesting in and transforming the world, they practice both *samatha* and *dhyana* first, followed by *samapatti*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of transformations and manifestations to accord with all sorts of [sentient beings], then attain utter stillness, they practice *samapatti* first, followed by *samatha*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of transformations and manifestations, create various realms, then attain quiescent-extinction, they practice *samapatti* first, followed by *dhyana*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of transformations and manifestations, first perform Buddha works, then peacefully abide in quiescence and stillness, and then sever vexations, they practice *samapatti* first, followed by *samatha*, ending in *dhyana*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of transformations and manifestations, perform [bodhisattva] functions without hindrances, then sever vexations and peacefully abide in utter stillness, they practice *samapatti* first, followed by *dhyana*, ending in *samatha*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of transformations and manifestations, expediently perform [bodhisattva] functions, then accord with utter stillness as well as quiescent-extinction, they practice *samapatti* first, followed by both *samatha* and *dhyana*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of transformations and manifestations, give rise to [bodhisattva] functions to engage in utter stillness, then sever vexations, they practice both *samapatti* and *samatha* first, followed by *dhyana*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of transformations and manifestations as a support, cultivate quiescent-extinction, then abide in the pure, uncontrived stillness, they practice both *samapatti* and *dhyana* first, followed by *samatha*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of quiescent-extinction, give rise to utter stillness and abide in purity, they practice *dhyana* first, followed by *samatha*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of quiescent-extinction, give rise to [bodhisattva] functions, yet accord with both quiescence and functions in all circumstances, they practice *dhyana* first, followed by *samapatti*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of quiescent-extinction, abide in the contemplation of stillness amidst the distinct nature of all phenomena, then give rise to transformations and manifestations, they practice *dhyana* first, followed by *samatha*, ending in *samapatti*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of quiescent-extinction, from the uncontrived intrinsic nature [of all dharmas] give rise to the function of manifesting pure realms, then return to the contemplation of stillness, they practice *dhyana* first, followed by *samapatti*, ending in *samatha*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of quiescent-extinction, with various purities abide in stillness, yet give rise to transformations and manifestations, they practice *dhyana*, first, followed by both *samatha* and *samapatti*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of quiescent-extinction as a support, engaging in utter stillness, then give rise to transformations and manifestations, they practice both *dhyana* and *samatha* first, followed by *samapatti*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the power of quiescent-extinction as a support, engaging in performing transformations and manifestations, then give rise to utter stillness and pure luminous wisdom, they practice both *dhyana* and *samapatti*, followed by *samatha*.

“If bodhisattvas, with the wisdom of Complete Enlightenment, perfectly harmonize all [dualities] and never depart from the nature of enlightenment⁴⁰ in relating to the diverse [dharma] natures⁴¹ or phenomena,⁴² they are perfect in the threefold practice of according with the intrinsic nature of pure [samadhi].

“Virtuous man, these are called the twenty-five practices of bodhisattvas. All bodhisattvas practice in this way. If bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age wish to rely on these practices, they should uphold practices of purity,⁴³ quietly contemplate and wholeheartedly repent. At the end of twenty-one days, after placing a numbered tally for each of the twenty-five methods, they should wholeheartedly pray [and seek divination] by picking a tally at random. The number picked will indicate whether the method is gradual or sudden. However, a single thought of doubt or regret will cause them to fail in accomplishment.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Sound Discernment, you should know
that the unhindered, pure wisdom
of all bodhisattvas arises from samadhi:

the so-called *samatha*,
samapatti, and *dhyana*.
The gradual or sudden practice
of this threefold Dharma
has twenty-five variations.
All Tathagatas in the ten directions
and the practitioners in the past, present, and future
achieve bodhi through this Dharma,
with the only exceptions being
those of sudden enlightenment
and those who do not follow the Dharma.
All bodhisattvas and sentient beings
in the Dharma Ending Age
should ever practice diligently
in accordance with these methods.
Relying on the Buddha's power of great compassion,
they will before long attain nirvana.

Bodhisattva Cleansed of All Karmic Obstructions

Then the Bodhisattva Cleansed of All Karmic Obstructions rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: "O World Honored One of great compassion! You have broadly expounded to us such inconceivable things as the practices of all Tathagatas of the causal ground, and have caused the assembly to gain what they have never had before. Having seen the Buddha's arduous toil through kalpas as innumerable as the grains of sand of the Ganges, and his efforts in practice unfold as if they were in but an instant of a thought, we bodhisattvas feel deeply fortunate and joyous.

"World Honored One, if the intrinsic nature of this enlightened mind is pure, what caused it to be defiled, making sentient beings deluded, perplexed, and unable to enter it? Pray let the Tathagata thoroughly expound and reveal to us the nature of dharmas so that this assembly and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age may use [your teaching] as a guiding vision in the future." Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to the Bodhisattva Cleansed of All Karmic Obstructions: "Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of this assembly and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata, about such expedient methods. Listen attentively now, I shall explain it to you."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva Cleansed of All Karmic Obstructions was filled with joy, and listened silently along with the assembly.

"Virtuous man, since beginningless time all sentient beings have been deludedly conceiving and clinging to the existence of self, person, sentient being, and life. They take these four inverted views as the essence of a real self, thereby giving rise to dual states of like and dislike. [Thus], based on one delusion, they further cling to other delusions. These two delusions rely on each other, giving rise to the illusory paths of karma. Because of illusory karma, sentient beings deludedly perceive the turning flow [of cyclic existence]. Those who detest the turning flow [of cyclic existence] deludedly perceive nirvana, and hence are unable to enter [the realm of] pure enlightenment. It is

not enlightenment that thwarts their entering; rather, it is the idea that 'there is one who can enter.' Therefore, whether their thoughts are agitated or have ceased, they cannot be other than confused and perplexed.

"Why is this? Because the original-arising ignorance has been [falsely perceived as] one's own master since beginningless time, therefore all sentient beings are unable to give rise to the wisdom-eye. The nature of their bodies and minds is nothing but ignorance. [This ignorance which does not eliminate itself may be illustrated] by the example of the man who does not take his own life. Therefore, you should know that people get along with those who like them and resent those who contradict them. Because like and dislike nurture ignorance, sentient beings always fail in their pursuit of the Path.

"Virtuous man, what is the sign⁴⁴ of the self? It is that which is experienced in the minds of sentient beings. virtuous man, for instance, when a man's body is well coordinated and healthy, he forgets about its existence. However, when his four limbs are sluggish and his body unhealthy and unregulated, then with the slightest treatment of acupuncture and moxa he will become aware of the existence of the self again. Therefore, the self manifests when experience is felt. Virtuous man, even if this man's mind experienced the realm of the Tathagata and clearly perceived pure nirvana, it would be but the phenomenon of the self.

"Virtuous man, what is sign of the person? It is that which is experienced in the minds of sentient beings. Virtuous man, he who awakens to the self no longer identifies with the self. This awakening, which is beyond all experience, is the mark of the person. Virtuous man, both what is awakened to and the awakening are not the self. Thus, even if this man's mind were perfectly awakened to nirvana, it would be but the self [because] as long as there is even the slightest trace of awakening or striving in the mind to realize the principle,⁴⁵ it would be the sign of the person.

"Virtuous man, what is the sign of sentient beings? It is the experience which is beyond self-awakening and it is that which is awakened to in the minds of sentient beings. Virtuous man, if for example a man says, 'I am a sentient being,' we know that what he speaks of as 'sentient being' refers neither to himself nor another person. Why is he not referring to his self? Since this self is sentient being, it is not limited to his self. Since this self is sentient being, therefore it is not another person's self. Virtuous man, the experiences and awakenings of sentient beings are all [traces of] the self and the person. In the awakening beyond the traces of the self and person, if one retained the awareness of having realized⁴⁶ something, it would be called the sign of sentient beings.

"Virtuous man, what is the sign of life? It is the mind of sentient beings that illuminates purity, in which they are aware of what they have realized. Karmic [consciousness] and wisdom cannot perceive themselves. This is comparable to the root of life. Virtuous man, when the mind is able to illuminate and perceive enlightenment, it is but a defilement, because both perceiver and perceived are not apart from defilement. After ice melts in hot water, there is no ice to be aware of its melting. The perception of the existence of the self enlightening itself is also like this.

"Virtuous man, if sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age do not understand these four characteristics [of the self], even after cultivating the Path diligently for many kalpas, [it is still] called practicing with attachments⁴⁷ and they will not be able to accomplish the fruition of sainthood. Therefore, this is called [cultivating] the True Dharma in the Dharma Ending Age. Why? Because they mistake the various aspects of the self for nirvana, and regard their experiences and awakenings as accomplishments. This is comparable to a man who mistakes a thief for his own son. His wealth and treasure will never increase. Why? Because if one grasps onto the self, one will also grasp onto nirvana. For him, the root of grasping onto the self is [merely] suppressed

and [seemingly] there is the appearance of nirvana. If there is one who hates the self, one will also have hatred for birth and death. Not knowing that grasping is the real [source of] birth and death, hatred for birth and death is [also] not liberation.

“How does one recognize the Dharma of nonliberation? Virtuous man, if sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, while cultivating bodhi, have partial actualization [of Complete Enlightenment] and think they are already pure, then they have not exhausted the root of the trace of the self. If someone praises his Dharma, it gives rise to joy in his mind and he wants to liberate the praiser. If someone criticizes his achievement, that gives rise to hatred in his mind. Thus one can tell that his attachment to the phenomenon of the self is strong and firm. [This self] is hidden in the storehouse consciousness.⁴⁸ It wanders in the sense faculties and has never ceased to exist.

“Virtuous man, these practitioners, because they do not eliminate the phenomenon of the self, cannot enter [the realm of] pure enlightenment. Virtuous man, if one actualizes the emptiness of the self, there will be no one there who can slander the self. When there is a self who expounds the Dharma, the self has not been severed. The same holds true for sentient beings and life.

“Virtuous man, sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age speak of illness [in their practice] as the Dharma. They are pitiable people. Though diligent in their practice, they only increase their illness and are consequently unable to enter the [realm of] pure enlightenment.

“Virtuous man, because sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age are not clear about these four signs [of the self] when they take the Tathagata’s understanding and conduct to be their own practice, they will never reach accomplishment. Some claim that they have had actualizations though they have not; some claim that they have had realizations though they have not. When they see others more advanced than themselves, they become jealous. Because these people have not severed their grasping onto the self, they are unable to enter the [realm of] pure enlightenment.

“Virtuous man, sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who wish to accomplish the Path should not seek awakening through increasing their knowledge by listening [to the Dharma]. This will only further strengthen their view of the self. Instead, they should strive to diligently subdue their vexations! They should generate great courage to attain what they have not attained and sever what they have not severed. In all circumstances, they should not give rise to craving, hatred, attached love, arrogance, flattery, crookedness, envy, and jealousy. Then, the affection and grasping between the self and the others will be extinguished. [When they can do this], the Buddha says that they will gradually reach accomplishment. Furthermore, they should seek good teachers so that they will not fall into erroneous views. However, if they give rise to hatred and love in their minds while seeking [a good teacher], they will be unable to enter the ocean of pure enlightenment.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Cleansed of All Karmic Obstructions,
you should know that sentient beings,
because of their attachment to and love of self,
have been bound in the illusory turning flow
[of cyclic existence] since beginningless time.
Without severing the four signs [of the self],
bodhi will not be attained.
With the mind harboring love and hatred,
and thoughts carrying flattery and crookedness,
one is full of confusion and perplexity,

and cannot enter the citadel of enlightenment.
To return to the realm of enlightenment,
desire, anger, and delusion must first be eliminated.
When attachment to the dharma [of nirvana]⁴⁹
no longer exists in the mind,
one can gradually reach accomplishment.
This body is originally nonexistent
so how can love and hatred arise?
A practitioner should also seek a good teacher
so as not to fall into erroneous views.
If hatred and love arise in the quest,
he will not accomplish [enlightenment].

Bodhisattva of Universal Enlightenment

Then the Bodhisattva of Universal Enlightenment rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: “O World Honored One of great compassion! You have with no hesitation explained the faults in practice so that this great assembly [of bodhisattvas] has gained what it never had before. Their minds are thoroughly at peace and they have gained a great, secure, and steadfast [teaching as a guiding vision for their practice].⁵⁰

“World Honored One, sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age will gradually be further away from the days of the Buddha. The sages and saints will seldom appear, while the heretical teachings win increase and flourish. What kind of people, then, should sentient beings seek to follow? What kind of Dharma should they rely on? What line of conduct should they adopt? Of what faults [in practice] should they rid themselves? How should they arouse the [bodhi] mind so that the blind multitude can avoid falling into erroneous views?” Having said these words, he fully prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to the Bodhisattva of Universal Enlightenment: “Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, you have asked the Tathagata about such methods of practice which are able to impart to all sentient beings, in the Dharma Ending Age, the Fearless Eye of the Path so that they will be able to accomplish the holy path. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you.”

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva of Universal Enlightenment was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

“Virtuous man, sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who wish to arouse the great mind should search for a good teacher. Those who wish to practice should look for one who has correct views in all aspects. Such a teacher’s mind does not abide in characteristics. He has no attachment to the realms of sravakas and pratyekabuddhas. Though [expediently] manifesting worldly afflictions, his mind is always pure. Though displaying misdeeds, he praises the practice of purity and does not lead sentient beings into undisciplined conduct and demeanor. If sentient beings seek out such a teacher, they will accomplish unexcelled perfect enlightenment.⁵¹

“If sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age meet such a teacher, they should make offerings to him even at the expense of their lives, not to mention their food, wealth, spouse, children, and retinue. Such a teacher always reveals purity in the four modes of conduct.⁵² Even if he shows misdeeds and excesses, disciples should not give rise to pride and contempt in their minds. If these disciples do not entertain evil

thoughts of their teacher, they will ultimately be able to accomplish correct enlightenment. Their mind-flowers will blossom and illumine all Pure Lands in the ten directions.

“Virtuous man, the wondrous Dharma that is actualized by this good teacher should be free from four kinds of faults. What are these four faults?”

“The first is the fault of contrivance. If a man says: ‘I exert myself in all kinds of practices based on my intrinsic [pure] mind in order to seek Complete Enlightenment,’ this is a fault, because the nature of Complete Enlightenment is not ‘attained’ by contrivance.

“The second is the fault of allowing things to be as they are. If a man says: ‘I neither wish to sever birth and death nor seek nirvana. There are no conceptions of samsara and nirvana as truly arising or perishing. I allow everything to take its course with the various natures of dharmas in my quest for Complete Enlightenment,’ this is a fault, because the nature of Complete Enlightenment does not come about through accepting things as they are.

“The third is the fault of stopping. If a man says: ‘In my quest for Complete Enlightenment, if I permanently stop my mind from having any thoughts, then I will attain the quiescence and equality of the nature of all [dharmas],’ this is a fault, because the nature of Complete Enlightenment does not conform with the stopping of thoughts.

“The fourth is the fault of annihilation. If a man says: ‘In my quest for Complete Enlightenment, if I permanently annihilate all vexations, then my body and mind, not to mention the illusory realms of sense faculties and dust, will ultimately be emptiness and utter nothingness. Everything will be [in the state of] eternal quiescence,’ this is a fault, because the nature of Complete Enlightenment is not annihilation.

“One who is free from these four faults will know purity. To discern these faults is to have the right discernment. To have other discernments than these is called erroneous discernment.

“Virtuous man, sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who wish to cultivate themselves should, to the end of their lives, make offerings to virtuous friends and serve good teachers. When a good teacher approaches them, they should sever arrogance and pride. When the teacher leaves them, they should sever hatred and resentment. Be it favorable or adverse condition that [a teacher] brings to them, they should regard it as empty space. They should fully realize that their own bodies and minds are ultimately identical with all sentient beings’, and are the same in essence, without difference. If they practice in this way, they will enter the [realm of] Complete Enlightenment.

“Virtuous man, when sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age are unable to accomplish the Path, it is due to the seeds of love and hatred toward themselves and others since beginningless time. Thus they are not liberated. If a man regards his foes as he would his parents, without duality, then all faults will be eliminated. Within all dharmas, self, others, love, and hatred will also be eliminated.

“Virtuous man, sentient beings in their quest for Complete Enlightenment in the Dharma Ending Age should give rise to the bodhi-mind, saying: ‘I will lead all sentient beings throughout boundless space into ultimate Complete Enlightenment. In [the realm of] Complete Enlightenment, there is no realizer of enlightenment, and [the signs of] self, others, and all characteristics are left behind.’ Giving rise to such a mind, they will not fall into erroneous views.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Universal Enlightenment, you should know
that sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age
who wish to seek a good teacher

should find one with correct views
whose mind is far away from the Two Vehicles.
The Dharma [he actualizes] should be free
from the four faults of
contrivance, stopping, allowing things
to be as they are, and annihilation.
Approached by the teacher, they should
not be arrogant and proud.
Left by the teacher, they should not be resentful.
When witnessing different conditions
displayed by the teacher,
they should regard them as precious rare occurrences,
like a Buddha appearing in the world.
[They should] break not the rules of discipline and demeanor
and keep the precepts forever pure,
lead all sentient beings into
the ultimate Complete Enlightenment,
be free from the signs of the self,
person, sentient beings, and life.
When relying on correct wisdom,
they will transcend erroneous views,
actualize enlightenment, and enter *parinirvana*.

Bodhisattva Of Complete Enlightenment

Then the Bodhisattva of Complete Enlightenment rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: "O World Honored One of great compassion! You have broadly expounded expedient methods for attaining pure enlightenment so that sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age may receive great benefit. World Honored One, we have already awakened. Yet after the nirvana of the Buddha, how should sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who are not awakened dwell in retreats to cultivate this pure realm of Complete Enlightenment? Which of the three kinds of pure contemplation are foremost within the [cultivation of] Complete Enlightenment? May the great passionate One bestow great benefit upon this assembly and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age." Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to the Bodhisattva of Complete Enlightenment: "Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, you have asked the Tathagata about such expedient methods for the sake of bringing great benefit to sentient beings. Listen attentively now. I shall explain them to you."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva of Complete Enlightenment was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

"Virtuous man, whether during the time of the Buddha's stay in the world, after his nirvana, or in the declining period of the Dharma, sentient beings with Mahayana nature who have faith in the Buddha's mysterious mind of great Complete Enlightenment and who wish to cultivate themselves should, if they live in a monastic community with other practitioners and are occupied by various involvements, examine themselves and engage in contemplation as much as circumstances permit in accordance with what I have already taught.

“If they are not occupied by various involvements, they should set up a place for practice and fix a time limit: 120 days for a long period, 100 for a medium period, and 80 for a short period. Then they should dwell peacefully in this pure place. If the Buddha is present, they should hold correct contemplation of him. If the Buddha has entered nirvana, they should install his image, generate right mindfulness, and gaze at him as if he were still living in the world. They should adorn [the sanctuary] with banners and make offerings of flowers and within the first twenty-one days make obeisance to the Buddhas in all ten directions with utmost sincere repentance. Thus they will experience auspicious signs and obtain lightness and ease [of the mind]. After these twenty-one days, their minds should be well collected.

“If the retreat period overlaps with the three-month summer retreat [of sravakas], they should adhere to and abide with the retreat of a pure bodhisattva, instead. Their minds should stay away from the [ways of] sravakas, and they do not have to be involved with the community at large. On the first day of the retreat, they should say this in front of the Buddha: ‘I, bhikshu or bhikshuni, upasaka or upasika so and so, in the bodhisattva vehicle, will cultivate the practice of quiescent-extinction and together enter [with other bodhisattvas] into the pure abode of Absolute Reality. I will take the great Complete Enlightenment as my monatory. My body and mind, will peacefully abide in the Wisdom of Equality.⁵³ The intrinsic nature of nirvana is without bondage. Without depending on the sravakas, I now respectfully pray that I can abide for three months with the Tathagatas and great bodhisattvas in all ten directions. For the great cause of cultivating the unsurpassed wondrous enlightenment of a bodhisattva, I will not be with the community at large.’

“Virtuous man, this is called the retreat manifested by the bodhisattva. At the end of the three kinds of periods of retreat,⁵⁴ he is free to go unhindered. Virtuous man, if practitioners in the Dharma Ending Age go into retreats on the Bodhisattva Path, they should not accept [as authentic] any experience which they have not heard [from the Tathagata].

“Virtuous man, if sentient beings practice *samatha*, they should first engage in perfect stillness by not giving rise to conceptualization. Having reached the extreme of stillness, enlightenment will come about. Such stillness [acquired] in the beginning [of practice] pervades a universe from one’s body, as does enlightenment. Virtuous man, when enlightenment pervades a universe, a single thought produced by any living being in this universe can be perceived by these practitioners. When their enlightenment pervades hundreds of thousands of universes, the same condition prevails. They should not accept [as authentic] any experience that they have not heard [from the Tathagata].

“Virtuous man, if sentient beings practice *samapatti*, they should first be mindful of the Tathagatas in all ten directions and the bodhisattvas in all worlds. Relying on various methods, they will diligently cultivate samadhi in gradual steps, bearing hardship. They should make great vows [to save sentient beings] and thus ripen their seeds [of Complete Enlightenment]. They should not accept [as authentic] any experience that they have not heard [from the Tathagata].

“Virtuous man, if sentient beings practice *dhyana*, they should begin with methods of counting.⁵⁵ [Gradually] they will be clearly aware of the arising, abiding, and ceasing of each thought, as well as the state before the arising of a thought, the state after the arising of a thought, and the scope and number of these thoughts. Further on, they will be aware of every thought, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. By gradually advancing still further, they will be able to discern a drop of rain in hundreds of thousands of worlds as if seeing, with their own eyes, an object used by them. [Again], they should not accept [as authentic] any experience that they have not heard [from the Tathagata].

“These are the foremost expedient methods in practicing the three contemplation

techniques. If sentient beings thoroughly practice and master all three of them with diligence and perseverance, it will be called, 'Tathagata appearing in the world.' In the future Dharma Ending Age, if sentient beings with dull capacities who wish to cultivate the Path are unable to gain accomplishment due to their karmic obstructions, they should zealously repent and always remain hopeful. They should first sever their hatred, attachment, envy, jealousy, flattery, and crookedness, and pursue the unsurpassable mind.⁵⁶ As to the three kinds of pure contemplation, they should practice one of them. If they fail in one, they should try another. They should steadily strive to attain realization without giving up."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Complete Enlightenment, you should know
that all sentient beings
seeking to tread on the unsurpassed Path
should first enter a retreat.
They should repent their beginningless
karmic obstructions for twenty-one days
and then engage in right contemplation.
Experiences that they have not heard [from the Tathagata]
should not be accepted [as authentic].
In *samatha* one practices perfect stillness.
In *samapatti* one upholds right mindfulness.
In *dhyana* one begins with clear counting.
These are the three pure contemplations.
Those who practice them with diligence
are called "Buddhas appearing in the world."
Those with dull capacities who are not accomplished
should repent zealously of all the misdeeds
they have created since beginningless time.
When all obstructions are extinguished,
the realm of Buddhahood appears.

Bodhisattva Foremost in Virtue and Goodness

Then the Bodhisattva Foremost in Virtue and Goodness rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times clockwise, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: "O world Honored One of great compassion! You have broadly revealed to us and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age such inconceivable things. World Honored One, what should this Mahayana teaching be named? How should one receive and observe it? When sentient beings practice it, what merit will they gain? How should we protect those who keep and recite this sutra? What will the extent of the benefit be if one spreads this teaching?" Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to the Bodhisattva Foremost in Virtue and Goodness: "Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata the name and merit of this teaching. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva Foremost in Virtue and Goodness was filled with joy

and listened silently along with the assembly.

“Virtuous man, this sutra is expounded by hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddhas as innumerable as the grains of sand of the Ganges. It is esteemed by all Tathagatas in the past, present, and future. It is the refuge of all bodhisattvas in all ten directions. It is the pure eye of the twelve divisions of the Buddhist scriptures.

“This sutra is called the Dharani of Complete Enlightenment of the Mahavaipulya Teaching. It is also called the Sutra of the Ultimate Truth, the Mysterious King Samadhi, the Definitive Realm of the Tathagata, and the Distinctions within the Intrinsic Nature of the Tathagatagarbha. You should respectfully receive and observe it.

“Virtuous man, this sutra reveals only the realm of the Tathagatas and can only be fully expounded by the Buddha, the Tathagata. If bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age rely on it in their practice, they will gradually progress and reach Buddhahood.

“Virtuous man, this sutra belongs to the sudden teaching of the Mahayana. From it sentient beings of sudden [enlightenment] capacity will attain awakening. This sutra also embraces practitioners of all other capacities who engage in gradual cultivation; it is like a vast ocean which allows small streams to merge into it. All who drink this water, from gadflies and mosquitoes to *asuras*, will find fulfillment.

“Virtuous man, if there were a man who, with the purest intentions, gathered enough of the seven treasures⁵⁷ to fill a great chiliocosm and gave them all as alms, he could not be compared to another man who hears the name of this sutra and understands the meaning of a single passage. Virtuous man, if someone teaches hundreds of sentient beings as innumerable as the grains of sand of the Ganges such that they attain arhatship, his merit cannot be compared to that of an expounder of half a gatha of this sutra.

“Virtuous man, if a man hears the name of this sutra and has faith in it without any doubt, you should know that he has sown the seeds of merit and wisdom not with just one or two Buddhas; indeed he has cultivated roots of goodness and heard the teaching of this sutra from Buddhas as innumerable as the grains of sand of the Ganges. Virtuous man, you should protect all practitioners of this sutra in the Dharma Ending Age so that evil demons and heretical practitioners will not disturb their bodies and minds and cause them to regress.”

At that time in the assembly, the Fire Head Vajra, the Wrecking Vajra, the Nila⁵⁸ Vajra, and other vajra [guardians] numbering eighty thousand, together with their retinues, rose from their seats, prostrated themselves at the feet of the Buddha, circled him three times clockwise, and said in unison: “World Honored One! If in the Dharma Ending Age there are sentient beings who practice this definitive Mahayana teaching, we will guard and protect them as we would our own eyes. We will lead our retinues to their place of practice to guard and protect them day and night so that they will not regress. We will see to it that their families will forever be free from all calamities and hindrances, that they will never have any plagues and illnesses, that their wealth and treasures will be ample, and that they will not be in need.”

Then Mahabrahma-devaraia,⁵⁹ the king of the twenty-eight heavens,⁶⁰ the king of Mount Sumeru, and the [four] Lokapalas rose from their seats, prostrated themselves at the feet of the Buddha, circled him three times to the right and said in unison: “World Honored One! We too will guard and protect those who observe this sutra so that they can live in security and peace without regression.”

Then the powerful king of demons, Kumbhanda, and one hundred thousand other demon kings rose from their seats, prostrated themselves at the feet of the Buddha, circled him three times to the right and said: “World Honored One! We also will guard and protect those who observe this sutra from morning to night so that they will not fall back in their practice. If ghosts and spirits approach within one *yojana*⁶¹ of their

dwelling, we shall pulverize them.”

When the Buddha had preached this scripture, all who were in the assembly, including bodhisattvas, devas, nagas, and others of the eight groups⁶² with their retinues, as well as the deva kings and Brahma kings, having heard the teaching of the Buddha, were filled with great joy. With faith, they respectfully received and practiced this teaching.

GLOSSARY

- AMITABHA SUTRA (*A mi tuo jing*): The principal scripture on which the Pure Land practice is based. Reciting Buddha Amitabha's name is one, if not the most accessible and simplest, form of Buddhist practice. Through Amitabha Buddha's vow, any person who sincerely invokes his name and expresses the wish to be born in the Pure Land will be reborn there.
- ANUTTARA-SAMYAK-SAMBODHI (*a nou duo luo san miao sanpu ti*): Unexcelled perfect enlightenment of the Buddha.
- ARHAT (*a luo han*): "Worthy one." In Buddhist tradition, the arhat is thought of as having completed the course of Buddhist practice and attained liberation, or nirvana. As such, the arhat is no longer subject to rebirth and death. Arhat is also one of the epithets of the Buddha.
- ASAMKYA (*a seng qi*): Innumerable and infinite.
- ASURA (*a xiu luo*): One type of being in the sixth realm of existence. Asuras are beings who have the merit to travel to the heavenly realms but are inflicted with a mind of jealousy. They are always jealous of heavenly devas or gods and fight with them.
- AVALOKITESVARA (*Guan shi yin*): Perhaps the most important bodhisattva in the East Asian Buddhist tradition; he is the embodiment of compassion who hears and responds to the cries of all living beings. Avalokitesvara can be both male and female, but in China the bodhisattva is usually depicted in the female form.
- AVATAMSAKA SUTRA: See *Hua-yen Jing*.
- AVIDYA (*wu ming*): Lit. "unilluminated." Avidya means fundamental ignorance or darkness. It is usually considered a fundamental or primal condition of sentient beings, which mistakes illusion as reality. Fundamental ignorance brings about desire and thereby is the essential cause binding sentient beings in cyclic existence, where they experience all kinds of suffering. It veils the understanding of the true nature of existence and is the cause of the construct of illusions. The analogy of fundamental ignorance used throughout The Sutra of Complete Enlightenment is the flower in the sky.
- BHAGAVAN (*Shi zun*): Lit. "World Honored One." One of the ten titles of the Buddha.
- BHIKSHU, BHIKSHUNI (*bi qiu, bi qiu ni*): Fully ordained Buddhist monk and nun, respectively.
- BHUMI (*di*): The bhumis (ground, regions, or stages) are the last ten stages of a bodhisattva's career on his or her way to full Buddhahood. See Bodhisattva Positions.
- BODHI (*pu ti*): Bodhi can refer to: 1) the principal wisdom that severs all vexations and defilements and realizes nirvana 2) the phenomenal wisdom that realizes the truth of every conditioned phenomenon that can realize omniscience.
- BODHI-MIND (*pu ti xin*): The mind of wisdom. A central idea in Mahayana Buddhism, its meaning varies in different contexts: 1) the altruistic mind of a person who aspires to attain Buddhahood for the sake of helping sentient beings, 2) the genuine actualization of enlightenment, awakening to the true nature of reality and the loftiness of Buddhahood, and 3) selfless action. This last meaning is extremely important, yet often overlooked. In regards to the first definition, arousing the bodhi-mind is the first step in establishing oneself on the Bodhisattva Path.
- BODHISATTVA (*pu sa*): "Enlightened being." The role model in the Mahayana tradition. The bodhisattva is a being who vows to remain in the world of samsara, postponing his or her own full liberation until all other living beings are delivered.
- BODHISATTVA POSITIONS (*pu sa wei*): Anyone who can give rise to the altruistic mind of enlightenment, although still an ordinary person, becomes a bodhisattva and enters into the family of the Buddhas. In the Chinese Buddhist tradition,

specifically the Hua Yen tradition, bodhisattva realizations and attainments are divided into 52 positions: Ten Faiths (*shi xin*), Ten Abodes (*shi zhu*), Ten Practices (*shi xing*), Ten Transferences (*shi hui xiang*), Ten Grounds (*shi di*), Ultimate Wisdom (*deng jue*), and Wondrous Wisdom (*miao jue*). Practitioners at the level of Ten Faiths are still considered ordinary people (*fan fu wei*), although there is a division between ordinary people of the “inner circle” (*nei fan*) and “outer circle” (*wai fan*). Practitioners of the next thirty positions are considered to have reached sagehood (*xian wei*). Practitioners at the Ten Grounds and above have reached sainthood (*sheng wei*).

Another division of bodhisattva positions is the Path of Seeing (*darsanamarga, jien dao wei*), the Path of Practice (*bhavanamarga, xiu dao wei*), and the Path of Attainment (*labhamarga, jiu jing wei*). According to the Chinese doctrinal system, when a person perceives self-nature or nature of emptiness (*kung xin*), the person is said to have entered the Path of Seeing and has entered the domain of the ordinary people of the “inner circle” within the Ten Faiths position. Path of Practice begins at the level of the Ten Abodes and ends at the Ten Transferences. The Path of Attainment begins at the first position of the Ten Grounds. A bodhisattva progresses on this path toward complete, perfect Buddhahood through abandoning gross levels of self-grasping for subtler and subtler levels of self-grasping. At the same time, a bodhisattva cultivates merit and benefits living beings until all obstructions to full wisdom of emptiness are realized and omniscience is attained.

BUDDHA (*fo*): “The awakened one.” The historical Buddha is the religious teacher Gautama Sakyamuni, who founded the religion generally known in the West as “Buddhism.”

BUDDHADHARMA: See *Dharma*.

BUDDHA-NATURE (*fo xing*): The nature or potential for Buddhahood; synonym for the nature of emptiness. It is also equivalent to Tathagatagarbha.

CAUSAL GROUND (*yin di*): Another term for Buddha-nature. It is called ground because it can give rise to all merit and virtue; it is the potential for Complete Enlightenment. Causal ground can also refer to the initial generating of the bodhi-mind.

CH'AN: Better known in Japanese as “Zen.” Ch'an is one of the main schools of Chinese Buddhism to develop during the Tang dynasty (618-907). The designation derives from the Sanskrit word *dhyana*, transliterated as *chan-na* in Chinese. Ch'an can mean meditation but it can also mean the heart of Buddhism - enlightenment.

CYCLIC EXISTENCE: See *Samsara*.

DHARANI (*tuo luo ni, zhong chi*): Dharani derives from the root word “dhara,” which means maintaining, holding, control or preserving. The literal Chinese translation of this word is “universal control” or “complete control.” It refers to complete “maintenance” of wisdom and “control” over evil passions and influences. The words “complete” and “universal” also bear the meaning of inclusiveness, because it is the essence of all approaches to the Dharma. Therefore, practicing dharani means practicing all approaches to the Dharma. In this sutra, dharani refers to Complete Enlightenment or Buddha-nature.

DHARMA (*fa*): Dharma has two basic meanings. Dharma with an upper case “D” means the Buddhist “law” or “teaching.” Dharma with a lower case “d” simply refers to a thing or object, and physical or mental phenomenon.

DHARMAKAYA (*fa shen*): Dharma Body. One of the three bodies of the Buddha - the ultimate body of reality beyond all forms, attributes, and limits. In the Chinese Buddhist tradition the expression, “to see the Dharmakaya” means to realize the

nature of emptiness. It is sometimes used as a synonym for Buddha-nature. See entries for *Nirmanakaya* and *Sambhogakaya*.

DHARMA ENDING AGE (*mo fa shi dai*): A period of time when the teaching of the Buddha is weak, and although there may be practitioners, no one is able to gain realization.

DHARMADHATU (*fa jie*): Dharma realm, the infinite realms or worlds of reality; it can also be regarded as the ground or nature of all things - the Mind from which all proceeds.

DHYANA (*chan na*): A term designating certain states of meditative absorption cultivated by Buddhist practitioners as a technique for attaining enlightenment. However, in this sutra dhyana is referring to a practice after enlightenment, in which one solely cultivates the nondual quiescent and still nature of mind. See the chapter on Bodhisattva at Ease in Majestic Virtue for further inquiry.

EIGHT CONSCIOUSNESSES (*ba shi*): A central idea in the Indian Yogacara (*Yu qie xing pai*) or the Consciousness-only school (*vijnaptimatratā, wei shi zong*) of Chinese Buddhism, which divides consciousness into eight modes of operation. Together, these eight modes of operation are divided into three categories: 1) *vijnana* (*shi*), referring to the first five sense consciousnesses (or the “knowing” that arises from contacts between sense faculties and corresponding sense objects) and the sixth sense consciousness, the faculty of mental discrimination (*manovijnana; yi shi*), 2) *manas* (*yi*), referring to the seventh ego consciousness (*mo na shi*), and 3) *citta* (*xin*), referring to the eighth consciousness, *alayavijnana*. The first six consciousnesses are named after the sense faculties that serve as their support: 1) eye consciousness, 2) ear consciousness, 3) nose consciousness, 4) tongue consciousness, 5) body consciousness, and 6) mind consciousness. The sixth consciousness, our ordinary mind, is characterized by discrimination and has all dharmas as its object. It utilizes the previous five consciousnesses in order to identify, interpret, and define the world. The seventh consciousness is the source of the delusion of a separate self, belief in a self, self-conceit, and self-love; it takes the eighth consciousness as its support and its object of attachment. It can be said to be the center of these eight consciousnesses. The eighth consciousness (*alayavijnana, a lai ye shi*) operates as the underlying continuum of the workings of mind and functions as an underlying projective consciousness on which delusion is ultimately based. It is a kind of a “repository” or “storehouse” that contains all experiences as karmically-charged seeds, which, under the proper causes and conditions, ripen as actions of body, speech, and mind, which in turn create new seeds. Therefore, the eighth consciousness is unceasingly conditioned by the previous seven consciousnesses. When one is thoroughly enlightened, these consciousnesses become the function of wisdom.

EIGHTEEN EXCLUSIVE ATTRIBUTES OF THE BUDDHA (*shi ba bu gong fa*): Whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, the physical body of the Buddha is always dignified and composed; a Buddha can never make mistakes in speech or speak inappropriately; a Buddha's mind is always tranquil and luminous; a Buddha's true form is formless; a Buddha's mind is always in samadhi, like still water; a Buddha's mind is clear of all thoughts, like a mirror reflecting images without clinging. The Buddha has an inexhaustible desire to deliver sentient beings, unsurpassable diligence, inextinguishable mindfulness, inextinguishable Wisdom of Equality, unending observing Wisdom of Liberation, unending Mirrorlike Wisdom derived from full liberation, all actions of body, speech, and thought in accordance with wisdom, and the ability to perceive the past, present, and future in accordance with wisdom.

EIGHTEEN REALMS (*shi ba jie*): These realms refer to the domain of the six sense faculties, sense objects, and sense consciousnesses.

FEARLESS EYE OF THE PATH (*wu wei dao yen*): Perspicacity. Ability to discern true from false, wholesome from unwholesome, as a result of having realized enlightenment.

FOUR KINDS OF FEARLESSNESS (*si wu wei*): The Buddha's ability to bestow fearlessness in the heart/mind of sentient beings: correct wisdom of all Dharmas; exhaustion of all outflows of wisdom, merit, and virtue, as well as extinction of all habitual tendencies; ability to expound remedies to all obstructions and hindrances on the Path; ability to fully explain causes of suffering.

FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS (*si shen di*): The four basic principles of Buddhism preached by Buddha in his first sermon: 1) that in the ultimate analysis, life is suffering, 2) that the cause of suffering is desire, 3) that there is a state of peace called nirvana, beyond all suffering and poisons of the mind, and 4) that the way that leads to nirvana includes the practice of morality, concentration, and wisdom.

FOUR UNHINDERED WISDOMS (*si wu ai zhi*): Four eloquent skills in expounding the Dharma by Buddhas and great bodhisattvas: 1) without hindrance in Dharma, the ability to understand the texts and systems of the Dharma, 2) without hindrance in meaning, the ability to understand all subtle meanings of the Dharma, 3) without hindrance in eloquent speech, the ability to eloquently speak in any dialect; and 4) without hindrance in debate, the ability to fully present the Dharma eloquently and appropriately to sentient beings.

HEART SUTRA (*Xin Jing*): One of the most important sutras of Mahayana Buddhism. It is especially significant in Chinese Ch'an and Japanese Zen schools.

HINAYANA: A designation for the path of individual liberation within Buddhism. A hinayanist would be anyone in any tradition who practices for self-enlightenment or liberation, regardless of whether he or she practices the Northern or Southern traditions of Buddhism.

HUA-T'OU: Lit. the source of words (before they are uttered), a method used in the Ch'an school to arouse the "doubt sensation" (*yi qing*). The practitioner meditates on such baffling questions as: "What is Nothingness?" "Where am I?" or "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" One does not rely on experience, logic, or reasoning. Often, these phrases are taken from kung-ans; at other times they are spontaneously generated by the practitioner. The term "hua-t'ou" is often used interchangeably with the Japanese usage of "koan."

HUA-YEN (*Avatamsaka*): Lit. "Flower Adornment," one of the most important and influential scholastic schools of Chinese Buddhism to develop during the Tang dynasty (618-907). The fundamental teaching of this school is the equality of all things and the unobstructed interpenetration of, and interrelation between, absolute reality with all phenomena.

HUA-YEN JING (*Avatamsaka Sutra*): A massive Mahayana Buddhist sutra translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in the fifth century, seventh century, and late eighth century. The sutra became quite popular among Chinese Buddhists, who believed that this sutra was a revelation from the Buddha's enlightenment while still absorbed in the ocean-seal samadhi (*hai yin san mei*) under the bodhi tree. In China, this sutra eventually became the basis of the Hua-yen school. The Ch'an school has always held it in especially high regard.

KALPA (*jie*): An old Indian way of calculating an unimaginably long period of time - an eon. These are of various lengths. The basic kalpa is 13,965 years long. One thousand such kalpas constitute a small kalpa (*hinakalpa*; *xiao jie*). Twenty small kalpas make a medium kalpa (*antarakalpa*; *zhong jie*), and four medium kalpas make a great kalpa (*mahakalpa*; *da jie*). The creation, continuation, destruction,

and emptiness - four phases of a world cycle - are four kalpas.

KARMA (*ye*): Lit. "action." Basically, the law of cause and effect to which all sentient beings - indeed all things - are subject. Karma is broadly construed in Buddhism to include physical, verbal, and mental actions. It is also the cumulative causal situation affecting one's destiny as a result of past acts, thoughts, and emotions.

KUNG-AN: Lit. a "public case," as in a law case. A Ch'an method of meditation in which the practitioner energetically and singlemindedly pursues the answer to an enigmatic question either posed by the master or that arises spontaneously. The question can be answered only by abandoning logic and reasoning, through directly generating and breaking through the "doubt sensation" under natural causes and conditions. Famous kung-an encounters were recorded and used by masters to test their disciples' understanding, or they served as a catalyst for enlightenment. The term "kung-an" is often used interchangeably with "hua-t'ou."

MAHAYANA (*da cheng*): Lit. "great vehicle," a branch of Buddhism, whose followers vow to attain Supreme Enlightenment for the sake of delivering all other sentient beings from suffering.

MANI JEWEL (*mo ni zhu*): Symbolic of the precious inherent Buddha-nature (*fo xing*) in all sentient beings.

NIRMANAKAYA (*hua shen*): See Transformation Body.

NIRVANA (*nie pan*): Total extinction of desire and suffering, the state of liberation through full enlightenment.

NO-SELF (*anatman; wu wo*): The Buddha's central teaching that there is no isolated, self-existing entity that can be grasped as the self; it is merely a conceptual construct from the illusory mind.

PARAMITAS (*bo luo mi*): "Perfections" or ways for transcendence to liberation. The six paramitas are the main practices of Mahayana bodhisattvas: giving (*dana; bu shi*), morality (*sila; chi jie*), patience (*ksanti; ren ru*), diligence (*vira; jing jin*), meditation (*dhyana; chan ding*), and wisdom (*prajna; bo re*). The ten paramitas, practiced by great bodhisattvas above the Ten Grounds, consist of four more additions to the six paramitas: expedient means (*upayakausalya; fang bian*), vows (*pranidhana; yuan*), power (*bala; li*), and all-knowing wisdom (*jnana; zhi*).

PLATFORM SUTRA (*Tan Jing*): A scripture attributed to the seventh century Ch'an master, Huineng (638-713), who was the Sixth Patriarch in the Ch'an school and perhaps the most famous of Chinese patriarchs. He was the founder of the southern school of Ch'an, which emphasized sudden enlightenment.

PRATYEKABUDDHA (*bi zhi fo*): A self-enlightened being (*du-jue*), one who has attained liberation from all suffering by contemplating dependent origination (*yuan-jue*).

RETRIBUTION BODY (*bao shen*): "Sambhogakaya." One of the three bodies of the Buddha: body of beatitude - the form of the Buddha that enjoys the fulfillment of vows in the Pure Lands.

SAMADHI (*ding*): Like dhyana, samadhi also refers to states of meditative absorption, but it is a broader and more generic term than dhyana. Although numerous specific samadhis are mentioned in Buddhist scriptures, the term "samadhi" itself is flexible and not as specific as dhyana. In Mahayana sutras, the term samadhi is inseparable from wisdom.

SAMATHA (*she mo ta*): A term designating the practice of calming or stilling the mind. However, in this sutra *samatha* refers to a practice after enlightenment, in which a practitioner emphasizes the cultivation of the still, mirrorlike nature of mind. See the chapter on Bodhisattva at Ease in Majestic Virtue for further inquiry.

SAMAPATTI (*san mo bo ti*): A term referring to the four formless states of meditative absorption. However, in this sutra *samapatti* refers to a practice after

- enlightenment, in which a practitioner relies on illusory means of delivering sentient beings to eliminate illusions. See the chapter on Bodhisattva at Ease in Majestic Virtue for further inquiry.
- SAMBHOGAKAYA:** See Retribution Body.
- SAMSARA** (*lun hui*): The relentless cycle of birth and death and suffering in which ordinary, unenlightened sentient beings are deeply entangled. There are three realms within samsara: the desire realm (*yu jie*), the form realm (*se jie*), and the formless realm (*wu se jie*).
- SAMSKRTA** (*yo wei*): With many nuances, *samskrta* can mean activity, production, contrived effort, conditioned things, or any process that results from karma. In this sutra, “practicing with *samskrta*” can mean practicing with attachments.
- SASTRA** (*lun*): One of the “three baskets” of the Tripitaka. Sastra is a book of treatise, discourse, discussion, or commentary clarifying, or sometimes systematizing, Buddhist philosophical ideas from the sutras.
- SRAVAKAS** (*shen wen*): Associated with the Hinayana tradition. Literally, “sound-hearer,” one who has attained arhatship or at least the first of the four levels of sainthood from having heard the Buddha's teaching.
- SRIMALA SUTRA** (*Sheng man*): A Mahayana scripture, it is outstanding for its commentary on the Tathagatagarbha theory and for the teaching that all sentient beings have the potential for Buddhahood.
- SURANGAMA SUTRA** (*Leng yen Jing*): This Mahayana sutra is extremely important in shaping the uniqueness of Chinese Buddhism. It describes twenty-five different perfect penetration samadhis to reach thorough enlightenment, the positive and negative experiences a practitioner may encounter, and fifty different outer-path practices that one can stray into.
- SUTRAS** (*jing*): Generally, scriptures. Specifically, the recorded “open” teachings of the Buddha that can be practiced by anyone. The distinctive mark of a Buddhist sutra is the opening line, “Thus have I heard.” This indicates that what follows are the direct teachings of Buddha, as remembered and recorded by his disciples.
- TATHAGATA** (*Ru lai*): One of the ten epithets of a Buddha, which can mean “thus-come” or “thus-gone.” The Chinese translation of Tathagata means “thus-come.”
- TATHAGATAGARBHA** (*ru lai zang*): Womb, or store of the Tathagata - the potential for Buddhahood in each sentient being. Another name for Buddha-nature.
- TEN DIRECTIONS** (*shi fang*): An expression for all directions: the four cardinal directions, the four intermediate directions, and the directions above and below.
- TEN TITLES OF THE BUDDHA:** Thus-come, Worthy of Offering, Right and Universal Knowledge, Perfect Clarity and Conduct, Understanding the World, Unsurpassable Worthy One, Instructor of People, Teacher of Heavenly and Human Beings, Buddha, the World Honored One.
- TEN POWERS** (*shi li*): The complete knowledge of a Buddha: what is right or wrong in every situation; what is the karma of every being in the past, present, and future; all stages of dhyana and samadhi; the powers and dispositions of all beings; the desire and moral direction of every being; the actual condition of every individual in all the different vehicles of practice; the direction and consequence of all teachings; all causes of morality and the good and evil in their realities, i.e., to know all previous lives of sentient beings and their causes for rebirth; to know the future lives of all beings and their entrance to nirvana; and the destruction of all illusions of every kind.
- THIRTY-SEVEN AIDS TO ENLIGHTENMENT** (*san shi qi dao pin*): The thirty-seven aids to enlightenment are: four foundations of mindfulness (*si nian chu*), four proper fines of exertion (*si zheng qin*), four advance steps to power of ubiquity (*si*

ru yi zu), five positive capacities (*wu gen*), five forces intensifying the five positive capacities (*wu li*), seven aspects toward enlightenment (*qi jue zhi*), and the eight fold noble path (*ba zheng dao*).

TRANSFORMATION BODY: (*hua shen*) Nirmanakaya. One of the three bodies of the Buddha, the form that a Buddha manifests to facilitate the deliverance of sentient beings.

TWENTY-FIVE EXISTENCES (*er shi wu you*): This is a classification of the samsaric realm of existence: the four continents, the four evil destinies, the six heavenly realms of desire, the four dhyana stages, the four stages of formlessness, the realm beyond conceptualization, and the realm of *anagamin* (*a na han*, those arhats who are reborn into the heavens in the realm of form or formless heavens where they will attain nirvana).

TWELVE ENTRANCES (*shi er ru*): The six sense faculties and the six sense objects, or "dust."

TWO VEHICLES (*er cheng*): Paths or approaches to Dharma practice. The two vehicles refer to the vehicles of *sravaka* and *pratyekabuddha*.

VAJRA (*jin gang*): A term that means as indestructible as a diamond and powerful as a thunderbolt.

VEXATION (*klesa, fan nao*): The innate mechanism to possess and to act, tainted by an attachment to self, which in turn continues the cycle of samsara. Vexations include all kinds of mental states such as joy and resentment, sadness and happiness, as well as greed, hatred, delusion, arrogance, and doubt.

WISDOM-EYE (*hui yan*): That which perceives the true empty nature of all phenomena.

NOTES

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- ¹ Great Illuminating Storehouse of Spiritual Penetration (*shen tong da guang ming zang*). Spiritual (*shen*) signifies inconceivability; penetration (*tong*) refers to nonobstructedness; great illuminating (*da guang ming*) signifies the manifestation of the Buddha's merit and wisdom; storehouse (*zang*) refers to the repository or essence from which all dharmas arise and manifest. One can understand the Spiritual Penetration and Great Illumination as the function (*yong*) whereas the Storehouse is the essence, (*ti*).
- ² Quiescent-extinction is a rendering for *ji mie*, which is a Chinese rendering for the Sanskrit word nirvana. Quiescent, *ji* signifies the stillness of the nature of emptiness; extinction (*mie*) signifies the purity of nirvana, free from defilements.
- ³ "Equal and identical" is one of the many shades of meaning of *ping deng*. *Ping* can be translated literally as level or equal but also connotes impartiality. In this context, *deng* may be rendered as identical, same, or indistinguishable. Within the context of time (past, present, and future), the translator has chosen to render *ping deng* as equal and identical. Elsewhere, the term has been rendered as impartial equality.
- ⁴ Literally, this should be translated as "joined his palms together with the tips of the fingers crossed" (*cha shou*). This is one of the ancient Indian gestures for respect. It symbolizes the nonduality of the realm of the Buddhas (the left hand) and the realm of ordinary sentient beings (right hand).
- ⁵ Causal ground (*yin di*) can also be understood as the mind-ground (*xin di*). It refers to both the circumstance when the Buddha first initiated the bodhi-mind (*chu fa pu ti xin*) and to the intrinsic nature of mind (*xin xing*) or Buddha-nature (*fo xing*). Original arising, *ben qi* simply means the fundamental starting point of Dharma practice (*fa xing*), which refers to the practice that accords with the nature of all dharmas (*fa xing*), that is, emptiness, (*kong xing*).
- ⁶ Dharani (*zong chi*) means universal control. See glossary for further information.
- ⁷ From the perspective of the result, Complete Enlightenment (*yuan jue*) refers to the state of Buddhahood. From the perspective of the path, where practice is still necessary, Complete Enlightenment refers to the state reached by bodhisattvas first *bhumi* and above. From the perspective of the cause, it designates the perfection and completeness of Buddha-nature intrinsic to all beings (*yuan man xian cheng zhi fo xing*).
- ⁸ Ignorance (*wu ming*) is *avidya* in Sanskrit. See glossary for further information.
- ⁹ The four great elements (*si da*) are: earth, water, fire, and wind. Together, they constitute the physical body of a living human being.
- ¹⁰ Impressions (*ying*) may also be translated as reflections or shadows.
- ¹¹ Tathagatagarbha (*ru lai zang*) is synonymous with Buddha-nature (*fo xing*). See glossary for further information.
- ¹² The four conditions (*si yuan*) of vision, hearing, perception, and awareness (*jian, wen, jue, zhi*) refer to the ability to experience external phenomena. These four qualities occur because of the illusory six sense faculties. When the internal six sense faculties and the external four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind combine, they create an "energy" (*qi*) that comes into existence due to these different conditions. In this case, "energy" refers to the conditioned impressions (*yuan yin*) or mental images of the perceived external sense objects. Because of attachments, this energy or impression does not disperse, and thereafter gives rise to the six corresponding consciousnesses, or awareness of these impressions. In this process, there seems to be a separate existing mind which is cognizant of the illusory external world.
- ¹³ See glossary for further information about these technical terms.
- ¹⁴ Here, nature, (*xing*) should be understood as *te xing* or characteristics and activities.
- ¹⁵ Resolute faith (*jue ding xin*) is a stage where one's faith no longer backslides (*xin xin cheng jiu*). This is a stage where a bodhisattva has reached at least the first level of the Ten Faiths. This level in the doctrinal system is referred to as the Path of Seeing. See glossary for further information on Bodhisattva positions.
- ¹⁶ "In motion" refers to "samsaric."
- ¹⁷ Illness or *yi* refers to ignorance.
- ¹⁸ Flower signifies birth and death and nirvana
- ¹⁹ These four terms - affection, love, craving, and desire (*en, ai, tan, yu*) - are subtle distinctions of

attachment and desire, which, despite their role in the secular world, are all causes for the continuance of cyclic existence. Here love (*ai*) should be understood as attached love (*zhi ai*) or self-centered love. The translator has simply translated this term as attached love or grasping in some later passages. The same word is sometimes translated into like, as in the case of like and dislike, in later paragraphs and chapters.

²⁰ “The different types of births in the world ... are created by sexual desire” points to the fact that all samsaric beings still have within them the roots and potential of sexual desire (*yin yu xing*), and (*yin yu xi qi*), which perpetuates cyclic existence. This sentence does not mean that all births literally come into being through sexual activity, because births through humidity and transformation are not results of sexual activity. Births through humidity and transformation are either caused by the combination of various conditions in the natural environment such as moisture, sunlight, and air or by the power of a deity or spirit. Bodhisattvas can also manifest transformation bodies for the purpose of liberating sentient beings.

²¹ Activity is a rendering of *xing*, which is usually translated as nature, as in “the nature of Complete Enlightenment.” However in this context, *xing* refers to *te xing*, which means characteristic, quality, function, or activity.

²² Obstruction of principle (*li zhang*) is an obstruction one may have in understanding or accepting the ultimate truth or view of Reality.

²³ Obstruction of phenomena (*shi zhang*) refers to all the vexations and afflictions one may have that bind one to samsara.

²⁴ Here, nature (*xing*) should be understood as capacities or dispositions.

²⁵ The Two Vehicles (*er cheng*) are the sravaka (*sheng wen*) and pratyekabuddha (*bi zhi fo*) vehicles.

²⁶ This sentence is difficult to understand because in each case the word *xing* - sometimes translated as nature - refers to different things. One interpretation is: even though there are five distinct natures or capacities as mentioned previously, each nature or capacity is endowed with the intrinsic nature of Complete Enlightenment. What the sutra is saying is that the five distinct natures make the nature of Complete Enlightenment possible. For example, one perceives existence because of nonexistence; one perceives nonexistence only through existence. Therefore, the five natures are not apart from the nature of Complete Enlightenment.

²⁷ “Those who extinguish vexations” refers to sravakas and pratyekabuddhas; “those who do not” refers to bodhisattvas.

²⁸ “The succession of arising and perishing thoughts” refers to the sixth consciousness (*di liu shi*). The mind or self is just the continuous stream of deluded thoughts (*wang nian*). “That which grasps on to the self” refers to the seventh consciousness (*di qi shi*). Because of attachment, this continuous flux of thoughts creates karmic seeds (*ye zhong*) which are planted in the eighth consciousness (*di ba shi*), the *alaya* (*a lai ye shi*). Although the *alaya* cannot grasp itself - it is just a storehouse of karmic seeds - the seventh consciousness attaches to the *alaya* as the self. See glossary for an explanation of the eight consciousnesses.

²⁹ There are two sets of five desires (*wu yu*). The most obvious or coarse desires are for wealth, sex, food and drink, fame, and sleep. The subtle desires refer to the five sense objects. In themselves the sense objects are not defilements, but they are potential objects of desire.

³⁰ This stage is equivalent to an ordinary person’s realization of emptiness. In the Ch’an tradition, it is referred to as seeing one’s self-nature (*jian xing*). In the doctrinal system, this is referred to as the Path of Seeing (*jian dao wei*) within the stages of Ten Faiths (*shi xin*). After perceiving emptiness, usually one’s realization is not deep enough to eradicate all vexations. Therefore, one is still an ordinary person and still needs to continue ones practice. However, after reaching the position of Ten Faiths, one’s faith will never regress (*xin bu tui*). Beyond the position of Ten Faiths are the Ten Abodes (*shi zhu*), Ten Practices (*shi xing*), and Ten Transferences (*shi bui xiang*), which elevate one to the level of sagehood (*xian wei*). After one fulfills all the practices and realizations in the position of Ten Faiths, one enters the position of Ten Abodes, which is the beginning of Path of Practice (*xiu dao wei*). When one fulfills the three stages of Ten Abodes, Ten Practices, and Ten Transferences, one enters the position of Ten Grounds (*shi di*) or *bhumis* and moves to the position of sainthood (*sheng wei*). This is referred to as the Path of Ultimate Attainment (*jiu jing wei*). The above are gradual levels of realization and practice. However, depending on the depth of one’s realization of emptiness, it is possible for a practitioner to ascend to the highest position, bypassing (*dun chao*) the lower stages.

³¹ This is the attainment of one of the three positions (*san xian wei*), of Ten Abodes, Ten Practices, and

Ten Transferences, depending on one's realization. These three positions are all subsumed under the Path of Practice (*xiu dao wei*).

³² Illumination is a literal translation of *zhao*. In this context, *zhao* refers to understanding, as in understanding (*jie*) of Dharma. Realization is a rendering for (*jue*), which can mean awareness of, awakening or realization. In this case, *jue* refers to realization or perception (*jian*).

³³ This section refers to the attainment of at least the first stage of the Ten Grounds. At this stage, one's practice will never regress (*xing bu tui*). If one attains the eighth ground or *bhumi*, one's position will never regress again (*wei bu tui*).

³⁴ These are what are known as the Three Higher Studies (*san zeng shang xue*), which subdue the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion.

³⁵ Wisdom of All Aspects (*yi qie zhong zhi*) is one of three wisdoms of a Buddha. Wisdom of All Things (*yi qie zhi*), *sarvajnata* in Sanskrit, is the omniscient wisdom that realizes the emptiness of all things. Wisdom of the Path (*dao zong zhi*), *margajnata* in Sanskrit, refers to the wisdom of knowing all there is to know about the conventional realm, especially with regard to saving sentient beings. Wisdom of All Aspects, or Universal Wisdom, *sarvakarajnata* in Sanskrit, refers to the perfect knowledge of Reality as it is.

³⁶ "Body and mind" refers to the six sense faculties (*liu gen*) and consciousnesses (*liu shi*). "Guests and dust," (*ke cheng*) refers to the six sense objects (*liu cheng*).

³⁷ At this stage one is free from the bondage of the five skandhas and the eighteen realms of existence.

³⁸ There are different degrees of "lightness and ease" (*qing an*). Sometime it means an experience of physical and mental pliancy. On a deeper level, it is an experience of enlightenment, where one is free from the burden of body and mind. In this case it refers to an enlightened state since it is experienced in the state of quiescence and stillness (*ji jing*).

³⁹ In this paragraph, "quiescence" signifies the state of dhyana, while the wisdom derived from "stillness" signifies the previous practice of samatha. Therefore, even though the bodhisattva in this section solely practices samapatti, since the bodhisattva is holding dharani - which means the essence of all methods - he is actually upholding all three Dharma doors of dhyana, samapatti, and samatha.

⁴⁰ The nature of enlightenment is quiescent and extinct, free from all dualities. Therefore, this state refers to dhyana.

⁴¹ The essence of all dharma natures is stillness. Therefore, this state refers to samatha.

⁴² Phenomena are illusory projections. Therefore, this state refers to samapatti.

⁴³ "Practices of purity" refers to, on the one hand, severing sexual desire, and on the other hand, the bodhisattva practice of overcoming afflictions and benefiting sentient beings.

⁴⁴ Sign (*xiang*), includes many shades of meaning such as form, mark, trace, appearance, feature, characteristic, aspect, and phenomenon. These words differ slightly in meaning. The translator will choose one of these words to bring out the meaning of the text.

⁴⁵ "Principle" refers to enlightenment.

⁴⁶ "Realized" (*liao*) in this and next paragraph actually means to be done with or to end.

⁴⁷ "Practicing with attachments" is a rendering of *you wei*, *samskrta* in Sanskrit. See glossary for further information.

⁴⁸ Storehouse consciousness (*a lai ye shi*) is also known as the eighth consciousness (*di ba shi*), *alayavijnana* in Sanskrit.

⁴⁹ "Attachment to the dharma of nirvana" (*fa at*) refers to the arhats who have realized the emptiness of the self (*ren wu wo*) and have not yet realized the emptiness of dharmas (*fa wu wo*).

⁵⁰ In this context, the Bodhisattva of Universal Enlightenment is referring back to the answer that the Buddha gave to the previous bodhisattva about the teaching as a guiding vision for future practice. Therefore, the translator has taken the liberty to add this line in the text.

⁵¹ "Perfect enlightenment" refers to anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.

⁵² Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down.

⁵³ "Wisdom of Equality" (*ping deng xing zhi*), *samatajnana* in Sanskrit, is the enlightened realization that self and others are equal and identical.

⁵⁴ “The three kinds of periods of retreat” refers to 120 days, 100 days, or 80 days.

⁵⁵ “Counting” is a literal translation of (*shu*). This approach actually includes methods such as counting and following the breath, Five Contemplations of Stilling the Mind (*wu ting xin guan*), Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*si nian chu*), Sixteen Special Practices (*shi liu te sheng*) associated with the Four Noble Truths (*si shen ti*), and Contemplation of the Four Immeasurable Minds (*si wu hao xin*).

⁵⁶ The mind of Complete Enlightenment.

⁵⁷ The seven treasures are: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearl, and camelian.

⁵⁸ Thunderbolt.

⁵⁹ Mahabrahma-devaraja (*ta fan wong*) is the king or controller of the world of samsara.

⁶⁰ Twenty-eight heavens are the three realms in samsara. There are six heavens in the realm of desire, eighteen heavens within the realm of form, and four heavens within the formless realm.

⁶¹ *Yojana* (*you xun*) is a measurement in India. One *yojana* is approximately forty miles.

⁶² The eight groups are: devas, nagas, yaksas, gandharvas, asuras, garudhas, kinnaras, and mahoragas.