

The Vajrasamadhi Sutra (The Diamond-Absorption Sutra)

Translated into Chinese by Anonym, Northern Lrng Dynasty

(Taisho Tripitaka, No. 273)

Chapter One: Prologue

Thus have I heard. The Buddha was once in the great city of Rajagrha (King's House), on Mount Grdhakuta (Vulture Peak), together with a great assembly of some ten thousand bhiksus (ordained monks), all of whom had attained the [full] arhat path. They included arhats Sariputra, Mahamaudgalyayana, Subuti, etc.

Also present were some two thousand bodhisattvas, mahasattvas (ad-epts on their way to full enlightenment). Their names were Liberation (Vimukti) Bodhisattva, Mind King (Cittaraja) Bodhisattva, Non-Abiding (Apratisthita) Bodhisattva, etc.

Furthermore, there were eighty thousand elders (grhapati). Their names were Elder Chastity (Brahmacarya), Elder Great Chastity (Mahabrahmacarya), Elder Luminary (Jyotiska), etc.

In addition, there were devas, dragons, yaksas (demons), gandharvas (demigod-musicians), asuras (titans), garudas (mystical birds), kinnaras (half horses/half men), mahoragas (great snakes), humans and non-humans - some six hundred million of them.

At that time the Lord was surrounded by the great assembly. He expounded a Mahayana sutra to them, entitled 'The Practice and Benediction of the Single-Taste, Definite, Signless, Beyond-Creation, Absolute Reality of Self-Enlightenment' (Vajrasamadhi Sutra). If one hears this sutra or retains only one four-line stanza of it, that person will be able to access the Buddha's wisdom [in future]. He will be able to liberate, with appropriate expedients, sentient beings [who, in turn, can] become great spiritual mentors to all sentient beings.

After the Buddha expounded this sutra, he folded [his legs] into full-lotus pose and entered into diamond absorption (vajrasamadhi), with his body and mind motionless. At that time, a bhiksu (ordained monk) in the assembly named Agada, rose from his seat [to pay respects to the Buddha]. He joined his palms together, with his right knee on the ground. Reiterating the essence [of the sutra expounded], he recited the stanza:

The Lord, the embodiment of compassion,
With wisdom penetrating without obstruction,
In order to ferry sentient beings across [to the other shore],

Has explained the essence of the One-Truth.
All this was accomplished via the path of Single-Taste,
Never by means of the Hinayana (incomplete realization).
Where the taste of the essence has been spoken,
It enabled all to abandon the unreal.
Accessing the wisdom-base of all the buddhas,
That Absolute Reality,
The entire audience (now) knows how to transcend the world,
With no one unable to attain liberation (ultimately).
All the innumerable bodhisattvas,
Know how to ferry all sentient beings across (to the other shore).
For the assembly, they inquired extensively and profoundly,
On the calm-void characteristics of all dharmas.
They accessed the Absolute domain [of enlightenment].
The Tathagata, through his wisdom and expedients,
Speaks so that [all beings] will be able to access Reality,
In accordance with the One-Vehicle,
Without extraneous tastes.
Like the soaking by a single rain,

Multitudes of plants grow verdantly.
According to the differences in their natures,
Being soaked by the Dharma of Single-Taste,
Everyone is completely fulfilled.
Just as being soaked by a single rain,
All their bodhi-sprouts are matured.
Accessing the Diamond-Taste [of the diamond samadhi],
They realized the absorption of the Reality of dharmas.
They are determined to transcend doubts and regrets,
Through the seal of the One-Dharma.

Chapter Two: The Signless Dharma

Arising from his samadhi, the Lord spoke thus, "The wisdom-base of all the buddhas accesses the nature and characteristics of all dharmas. From this definitive wisdom-base, the buddhas' expedients and spiritual powers in benefiting sentient beings are all done without signs. The essence of the One-Enlightenment is difficult to understand and access. It is not understood or recognized by adherents of the two vehicles [of sravakas and pratyekabuddhas]. It is only known by the buddhas and bodhisattvas who explain the Single-Taste to sentient beings capable of transcendence."

Then Vimukti (Liberation) Bodhisattva immediately rose from his seat, with his palms joined together and his right knee on the ground, addressed the Buddha, "Lord! After the Buddha's [physical] demise, the right dharma will vanish from the world and the semblance dharma will linger on. During the dharma-ending age, sentient beings [tainted

by] the five turbidities (such as calamities, wrong views, unending worries, shortened life-span etc., over infinite world-cycles) will perform all types of evil deeds and transmigrate amongst the three (form, formless and desire) realms of existence without respite. May the Buddha, out of his mercy and compassion, proclaim for the later generations, the Single-Taste Absolute Reality [Dharma], to enable all sentient beings to be liberated."

The Buddha said, "Good man, you asked about what caused my appearance in the world to liberate sentient beings to let them attain the fruition [of enlightenment] that transcends the world. This great matter [of a buddha's appearance in the world] is inconceivable, because it is performed out of great mercy [and] great compassion. If I do not respond [to your questions], I will fall into miserliness [for with-holding the Dharma I have awakened to]. You should listen attentively and carefully. I shall proclaim [the Dharma] for you.

"Good man, when liberating sentient beings, do not conceive whether it takes place or not; then it (such an act) is great indeed! Guide these sentient beings to abandon mind and ego, for both mind and ego are basically void [of independent existence]. If they realize the void of mind, the mind will not illusorily project anything. Free from all illusory projections, they will attain cessation [of birth-death cycles]. The mind that does not project anything derives from such non-projection."

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha, "The nature of the mind of sentient beings is fundamentally void [of independent nature]. The essence of the mind is void of sense-objects (rupa) and related characteristics. How are we to cultivate and train so that we may realize the fundamentally void mind? May the Buddha proclaim this for us, out of his mercy and compassion."

The Buddha replied, "Bodhisattva, fundamentally, the mind and its characteristics have no origin (non-substantial). [Therefore,] they fundamentally have no abode, [and the mind is] void and calm, projecting nothing. When the mind ceases to fabricate anything, it accesses void-calmness. At the base of the mind, where all is void and calm, one realizes the void of the mind. Good man! The signless mind is free from both mind [itself] and self (ego). It is the same with the characteristics of all dharmas (all phenomena and related principles)."

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: "Lord! For those sentient beings who conceive of a self (grasping of ego) or conceive of a mind (grasping of dharmas), what Dharma will awaken them and lead them to leave behind such shackles (bondage)?"

The Buddha replied, "Good man, when someone conceives of a self, he should be led to contemplate the twelve-fold inter-dependent origination (co-origination) [comprising: ignorance, volition, consciousness, body-mind formations, six sense-doors, contact, feeling/sensation, craving, clinging, becoming, birth and sickness/death]. The twelve-fold inter-dependent-origination derives from cause and effect. But both cause and effect are

fabrications of the mind! Since (basically) the mind does not exist, much less the body, [therefore] a person who conceives of a self, should be led to abandon the view that the self exists.

"[Similarly] a person who conceives of no-self should be led to abandon his view that the self does not exist. If a person conceives that the mind exists, he should be led to abandon [the view that] the nature [of the mind] is subject to creation. If a person conceives that the mind can be extinguished, he should be led to abandon [the view that] the nature [of the mind] is subject to extinction. Once all the views about the nature of the mind are extinguished, he immediately accesses Reality. Why? Because whatever that is basically unborn (not subject to the process of birth/creation) is beyond extinction [since everything arises and diminishes through co-origination]; and whatever that is extinct [being devoid of nature] is beyond creation. This is the same with all the dharmas."

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: "Lord! If a sentient being perceives that a dharma is subject to creation, what view should he be advised to abandon? What view should he be advised to abandon when he perceives that a dharma is subject to extinction?"

The Buddha replied, "Bodhisattva, if a sentient being perceives that a dharma [being beyond creation/extinction] is subject to creation, let him abandon his view on the non-existence [of dharmas]. When he perceives a dharma is subject to extinction, let him abandon his view on the existence [of dharmas]. Once these views are extinguished, he realizes the absolute non-existence of all dharmas and he accesses the definite non-projection [of the mind]."

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: "Lord! If a sentient being abides by non-creation, would it mean [he had realized] the non-creation [of dharmas]?"

The Buddha replied, "By abiding in non-creation, he would actually be creating something. Why? Only when one does not abide by non-creation is it really non-creation. Bodhisattva, if one abides by non-creation, this is creating (activating) [the mind] to extinguish creation! When creation and extinction are both being extinguished, creation cannot take place and the mind will be void and calm, without any abode. Only a truly non-abiding mind is non-creating."

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: "If the mind does not abide anywhere, is there need for learning and cultivation? Is there is still learning left to be completed or no more learning required?"

The Buddha replied, "Bodhisattva, a non-creating mind has neither egress nor access. Its basic tathagatagarbha (the un-manifested 'store' of every thing) is calm and motionless [by nature]. It need neither further learning nor free from further learning. When there is neither learning nor non-learning is where no further learning is necessary. 'Non-learning' means no need for learning." {Note: according to the texts, non-learning is only

applicable to those who have awakened to a minimum of third-stage arhat, or seventh-bumi (ground/level) bodhisattva along the spiritual path. }

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: "How is it that the nature of the tathagatagarbha is calm and motionless?"

The Buddha replied, "The characteristics of arising and demise of the tathagatagarbha's functions and discretions are [in accordance with] its concealed principle [of void-calmness], enabling it not to manifest [itself]. This is how the nature of the tathagatagarbha is calm and motionless."

Vimukti Bodhisattva inquired, "Why are the characteristics [of the tathagatagarbha's] functions and discretions subject to arising and demise?"

The Buddha replied, "Bodhisattva, the principle is free from either acceptance or rejection. If there is acceptance or rejection, all kinds of thoughts would be created. All conceptions and mentations are subject to arising and demise.

"Bodhisattva, contemplate the self-nature and characteristics [of the tathagatagarbha] and the principle will be perfected in and of itself. All the conceptions and mentations do not augment the principles of the path. They instead agitate [the mind,] so that one loses (forgets) the basic mind-king [of the One-Mind]. With neither conception nor mentation, there will be no creation or extinction [of the mind]. The mind will not arise and be in Reality. All [eight] consciousnesses will be peaceful and calm. The currents [of desire, existence, and ignorance] will not arise. [One then] accesses the purity of the five dharmas [relating to the five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, formation and consciousness]. This is called the Mahayana.

"Bodhisattva, by accessing the purity (void nature) of the five dharmas [of the five aggregates], the mind is free from delusions. When delusions vanish, one immediately accesses the base of the tathagata's self-enlightened, noble-wisdom. One who accesses this wisdom fully knows that everything is uncreated originally. Knowing that everything is uncreated originally, one is free from [all] illusory conceptions."

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: "Lord! One who is free from [illusory] conceptions should have nothing that need to be calmed or brought to an end."

The Buddha responded, "Bodhisattva, delusions are originally uncreated. [Hence,] there are no delusions to be brought to an end. Knowing that the mind is actually non-mind (void in nature), there is no mind to be calmed. [Being] free from both differentiation and discrimination, the consciousness that [otherwise] projects sensory objects will cease to be active. With nothing to be calmed, this is non-calming. Yet it is also not non-calming. Why? Because [true] calming actually calms nothing."

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: "Lord! If calming is non-calming, then calming would be created [by the mind]. How can it be said to be uncreated?"

The Buddha replied, "Bodhisattva, the moment when calming occurs it is being created, [but] after it has been done, no [further] calming is necessary. Do not linger in either non-calming or in non-abiding. How could it (calming) have been created?"

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: "Lord! What does a non-fabricating mind cling to or reject? Does it abide by any characteristics of dharmas?"

The Buddha replied, "The mind that fabricates nothing neither clings to nor rejects anything. It abides by non-mind and it abides by non-dharma."

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: "How does one abide by non-mind and abide by non-dharma?"

The Buddha replied, "Abiding by non-mind means mind not creating anything. Abiding by non-dharma means mind not being aroused by any dharma.

"Good man, when the mind is not being aroused, or not conceiving anything, it will be independent of everything. Not lingering over all the formations (samskara) [of subject, or object relative to the body, speech and mind], the mind will be constantly void and calm, without any projections. It is like the empty space - motionless and non-abiding, non-arising and non-doing, free from either this or that. One [thus] attains the eye (essence) of the void of mind, and the body (nature) of the void of dharmas. Thus the five aggregates [of being] and the six sense-bases will be void and calm.

"Good man, he who cultivates the Dharma of voidness will be beyond the three realms (form, formlessness and desire) of existence and need not abide by the specifics of the Vinaya (renunciate's precepts) [since all the precepts are embodied within this Dharma]. Being pure and free from thoughts, he neither grasps nor relinquishes anything. His nature is the same as that of diamond - not inferior to the triratna (the triple-gem comprising the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha). His mind, being void, is still, fully endowed with all the six paramitas (perfections)."

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: "Lord! All the six paramitas have characteristics. Can dharmas having characteristics capable of transcending [sentient beings]?"

The Buddha replied, "Good man, the six paramitas I speak of are formless and beyond practice. Why? If a person forsakes desires, his mind will always be pure. Through his purity in speech and skilful means, he benefits himself and others. This is danaparamita [perfection of charity].

"With firm determination and constant non-abiding, his mind is pure, untainted. He does not cling to the three realms of existence. This is silaparamita [perfection of morality].

"Cultivating [the practices relating to the various aspects of] the void and extricating himself from all the knots (fetters), he is not attached to anything. He calms and silences the three karmic formations [relative to the body, speech and mind] and does not abide by either body or mind. This is ksantiparamita (perfection of patience).

"By leaving all sense-objects (forms), classifications and all ego-generating activities, he overcomes the views of both nonexistence and existence and delves deeply into the void of the aggregates (skandhas) [and their related ramifications - the six-roots (sense-doors), twelve entrances (the six sense-doors and their six objects), and eighteen sense realms (the six consciousness of the sense-doors added to the twelve entrances)]. This is viryaparamita (perfection of courage).

"Completely abandoning [attachment to] both the void and calmness, yet not lingering in any void, the mind is without abode, nor does it dwell in the great void itself. This is dhyana-paramita (perfection of meditation).

"Free of all projections [and being void in nature], the mind does not even cling to the void [itself]. In all activities, the mind is not aroused, nor does it look forward to any realization of calm-extinction (Nirvana). It neither egresses nor accesses. Its nature is in perpetual equanimity. The Reality of all dharmas has this Absolute nature. It does not rely on any of the bhumis (the normal ten stages of spiritual progression), nor abide by any wisdom. This is prajna-paramita (perfection of wisdom).

"Good man, all the six paramitas are endowed with Self-Benediction [leading to Self-Enlightenment). They access the Absolute therein and transcend the world. This is unobstructed liberation."

"Good man, the characteristics of such Dharmas that accord liberation are all beyond signs and practices. They are also beyond both liberation and bondage. This is called liberation. Why? Because the characteristics of liberation are beyond both sign and practice. It is motionless and beyond distraction. [It is] the calm and silent Nirvana, [yet] without clinging to any characteristics of Nirvana."

After hearing these words, Vimukti Bodhisattva's mind was greatly pleased as it never had before. Wishing to proclaim the essence and intent [of the Dharma expounded], he recited the stanza:

The Lord, replete with Full Awakening,
Has expounded the Dharma for the assembly.
It was explained from [the view of] the One-Vehicle,
Not the pathways of the dualistic vehicles.
The formless benevolence of the Single-Taste,
Is like great space,
Nothing it does not embrace or accept,
According to the differences of individual nature.
All attain the fundamental Self-Domain.

Thus they abandon mind and self (ego),
The One-Dharma (signless and non-practice) established.
All [past] practices with identification and differentiation,
Being rewarded by Self-Benediction [instead],
With all dualistic views extirpated.
The calm and silent Nirvana,
All do not dwell or cling to it.
Accessing the Absolute domain,
With neither characteristics nor practices.
Within the calm-extinct void mind-base,
The calm-extinct mind is non-creating.
Such [a mind], like the nature of diamond,
is not inferior to the triratna (triple-gem).
Endowed with all the six paramitas,
Ferrying all sentient beings across.
Transcending the three realms of existence,
Not relying on the Hinayana (Nirvana for oneself).
The Dharma seal of the Single-Taste,
Is perfected by the One-Vehicle.

When the great assembly heard the exposition of the Doctrine, their minds were greatly pleased. They were able to abandon mind and self (ego). They accessed the signless void which is broad and expansive, vacant and vast (without obstruction). All gained the Absolute Reality, cutting all fetters (mental afflictions) and eliminating all leakages (defilements).

Chapter Three: The Practice of Non-Creation

At that time Cittaraja (Mind King) Bodhisattva heard the Buddha's discourse of the Dharma that transcends the three realms of existence, which is inconceivable. Arising from his seat, he joined his palms together and asked in stanza:

The Doctrine the Tathagata has pronounced,
Transcends the world without signs.
It enables all sentient beings,
To completely abandon the leakages (the three realms).
Eradicating the knots and emptying both mind and self,
Is this [the state of] non-creation?
If nothing is being created,
How can one attain the non-creation [of dharmas]?

Then the Buddha proclaimed to Cittaraja Bodhisattva, "Good man, the Dharma relating to the non-abidance and non-creation of dharmas is basically unborn [as all dharmas are essentially void of self-nature]. [Being void of nature,] all practices lead to nothing, not

that there is a practice on non-creation. [Therefore] any attainment through abidance by non-creation is a deception."

Cittaraja Bodhisattva asked, "Lord! Since attainment through abidance by non-creation is a deception, non-attainment and non-abidance should not be deceptions?"

The Buddha replied, "Not so. Why? In non-attainment and non-abidance exists attainment (mental activity). [Similarly,] in attainment and abidance there exists creation (arising of the mind). Both the creation through attainment and the creation of dharmas are [therefore] deceptions."

Cittaraja Bodhisattva asked, "Lord! What is a non-attaining and non-abiding mind which is beyond deception?"

The Buddha replied, "A mind which is free from both abidance and attainment, has neither form nor impermanence (existence-extinction). It is like [the nature of] fire, though latent in wood, cannot be found there; as its presence has no absolute location

(depending on other co-originating factors). [Therefore] all names and descriptions of everything [being void ultimately], are beyond grasping (should not be depended upon). They (names and descriptions) have been provisionally given to facilitate understanding [in communication]. [Similarly,] the mind and all its characteristics, being void ultimately, are beyond grasping - they have no abode. Know the mind to be thus and it will not fabricate anything.

"Good man, the nature and characteristics of the mind are like the example of the myrobalan (amalaka) fruit. They are not: self-generated, generated by an external agent, generated jointly with something else, or generated in the absence of a [co-originating] cause. Why? Because conditions appear and disappear alternately [according to co-origination]. When conditions arise [resulting in fruition through co-origination], it is not [considered] creation. When conditions subside [after fruition through co-origination], it is not [considered] extinction. Whether hidden or manifesting, [the nature and characteristics of the conditions] are without form. Their fundamental principle is the calm-void. There is nowhere they abide and no abode can be located. This is due to their Absolute nature.

"This Absolute nature is neither one nor different; neither transient nor permanent. It has neither access nor egress and it can neither be created nor destroyed. It abandons all the four perimeters (fullness, void, both-fullness-and-void, and neither-fullness-nor-void). [In this way] the path-ways of words and speech are being abandoned. The unborn nature of the mind is the same. How can it be said that something is being created or extinguished; or that there is abidance or non-abidance?"

"If [a person] says that the mind is capable of attainment, abidance, or perception, that means he has not attained anuttarasamyaksambodhi (complete, perfect enlightenment). [This] prajna (wisdom) is for those who are willing to abandon the 'long night' of the mind and its characteristics. Know that the mind is thus and its characteristics are also thus. This is non-creation and non-practice."

Cittaraja Bodhisattva noted, "Lord! If the mind is basically thus [in its natural state], nothing will be produced out of any practice. All practices, [therefore,] lead to nothing. [Accordingly,] when one practises, it [ultimately] produces nothing. This non-production does not need to be practised. This is the practice of non-creation."

The Buddha asked, "Good man, you are employing [the practice of] non-creation [with the intention of] realizing the practice of non-creation."

Cittaraja Bodhisattva replied, "Not so. Why? Thusness (suchness) is beyond mind and practice. Both the nature and characteristics [of the mind] are void and calm, there is no [self-identification with] seeing or hearing, gain or loss, word or speech, perception, images, acceptance or rejection. How can there be any clinging or realization? If one clings to this realization, it amounts to disputation and contention [within the mind]. Only in the absence of disputation or contention lies the practice of non-creation."

The Buddha said, "Have you attained anuttarasamyaksambodhi?"

Cittaraja Bodhisattva responded, "Lord! I am free from any attainment of anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Why is this? The nature of bodhi (awakening) has neither gain nor loss, enlightenment nor [ordinary] consciousness, for it is free from all characteristics of differentiation. Within this non-differentiation is the pure nature [of bodhi]. This nature is free from any extraneous admixture [such as the dualities of creation/extinction, subject/object]. It is free from words and speeches. It neither exists nor does not exist. It is neither aware nor unaware."

"This is also the same for all the dharmas (techniques) that can be practised. Why? Because all dharmas and practices have neither abidance nor abode. This is their Absolute nature. Basically, they are free from any attainment or non-attainment. So how can one attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi?"

The Buddha replied, "So it is, so it is. As you have said, all the activities of the mind are without form and its body (nature of the mind) is calm and non-creating. It is the same with all consciousnesses. Why is this? Know that the eyes and sight are both void and calm [by nature]. [Eye] consciousness [itself] is also void and calm - free from any characteristic of movement or stillness. Internally it is free of the three feelings (pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral). [Thus,] the three feelings are calm and extinct. So are the hearing,

smelling, tasting, touching, mental (sixth consciousness), discriminating (seventh consciousness), and alaya (eighth consciousness). All of them are also unborn. [Therefore,] the mind is calm and extinct and non-creating. [If one tries to] create a calm, extinct and non-creating mind, it would be a practice that creates something; not the practice of non-creation.

"Bodhisattva, [thus] internally are generated the three feelings, the three [karmic] formations [of body, speech and mind], and the three moral precepts [comprising firstly the Vinaya discipline of vowing to end all evils, secondly the vow to cultivate all good deeds and thirdly, the vow to liberate all sentient beings]. If these are already calm and extinct, the [otherwise] fabricating mind will not fabricate and the mind will always be calm and extinct, still with nothing [mental] to be done. One does not cherish the realization of any characteristic of calm-extinction; nor does one dwell in non-realization. In non-abidance everywhere, lies the non-formation of all defilements. Thus, the three feelings, the three formations, and the three moral precepts will not arise. All [these] will be calm and extinct, pure and non-abiding. One does not [need to] access samadhi (mental absorption) or persists in dhyana (static mind-directed meditation). This is non-creation and non-practice."

Cittaraja Bodhisattva asked, "As dhyana can tame all agitations and stabilize all illusory distractions, why not dhyana?"

The Buddha replied, "Bodhisattva, [ordinary] dhyana is [in fact] motion (mental activity). Being neither distracted nor concentrated is the [true] non-creating dhyana. [Since] the nature of this dhyana is non-creating, [therefore] abandon any dhyana that fabricates sense-objects (rupa). The nature of [non-creating] dhyana is non-abiding. [Therefore, one should] abandon any sign of abidance in dhyana. If one knows that the [true] nature of dhyana is free from distraction and calmness, one immediately accesses the [wisdom of] non-creation [of dharmas]. [This] wisdom of non-creation does not depend on abidance. [Consequently,] the mind will not be distracted. With this wisdom, this is how one attains the unborn (beyond birth-death cycles) prajnaparamita."

Cittaraja Bodhisattva said, "Lord! The non-creating prajna, wherever it may be, is non-abiding. It is not apart from the mind and has no abode. There is no place where the mind abides. With non-abidance, the mind is non-creating. The mind is non-creating and non-abiding. The mind that so abides is in fact non-creating and non-abiding."

"Lord! [Your discourse on] the practice of non-abidance and non-creation of the mind is inconceivable. As it is inconceivable, it can [only] be spoken about but beyond speech (any description is not identical to the matter being described)."

The Buddha replied, "So it is, so it is."

Having heard the above, Cittaraja Bodhisattva, in praising its unprecedented qualities, recited the stanzas:

The Lord who is replete in immeasurable wisdom,
Has extensively expounded the Dharma on non-creation.
This has never been heard before.
What has yet to be explained has been explained now.
Like the amritha (pure sweet dew),
That appears but once in a long while,
[So is this Dharma] difficult to encounter and imagine.
Rare too it is to hear it.
It is the unsurpassed field of merit par excellence,
The supremely efficacious, miraculous medicine.
In order to ferry sentient beings across,
It has now been proclaimed.

Upon hearing these words, all in the assembly awakened to the non-arising [of dharmas] and the prajna (wisdom) on non-creation.

Chapter Four: The Benediction of Self-Enlightenment

At that time, Apratisthia (Non-Abiding) Bodhisattva heard the Buddha's discourse on single-taste Reality, which is inconceivable. From far-away land (most probably another world system) he had personally come near to the tathagata's seat with the sole intention of listening to the discourse on Noble-Truth. Accessing the pure domain [of the Absolute-void], his body and mind were motionless.

At that time, the Buddha addressed Apratisthia Bodhisattva: "Where have you come from? Where have you arrived now?"

Apratisthia Bodhisattva replied, "Lord! I come from where there is no origination, and have now arrived where there is [also] no origination."

The Buddha said, "You originally came from where there is no origination, and have now arrived where there is [also] no origination. You have attained the [Dharma of] Self-Benediction, which is inconceivable. You are a bodhisattva-mahasattva."

Immediately emitting a great light that pervaded the many thousands of world-systems, the Buddha recited the stanza:

Oh Great bodhisattva,
Replete in wisdom,
Constantly by means of Self-Benediction,
To benefit sentient beings.
In all four postures [walking, standing, sitting, lying],

You constantly abide by Self-Benediction,
Guiding all beings,
Neither coming nor going (silently without signs).

Apratisthia Bodhisattva then addressed the Buddha: "Lord! Through what skilful means can one transform the defiled consciousness of sentient beings so that they can access the amala (ultimate-fruitful consciousness transformed from the eighth consciousness)?"

The Buddha replied, "All the buddhas, the tathagatas, constantly transform all the [defiled] consciousness of sentient beings by means of the One-Enlightenment so that they can access the amala. Why? As all sentient beings are endowed with Self-Enlightenment (primordially enlightened), the buddhas, constantly awaken all beings by guiding them to regain Self-Enlightenment. Once enlightened, all the defiled consciousnesses will be [realized to be] void, calm and non-arising. Why? [Because] the Absolute Self-Nature is motionless."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, "As every one of the eight consciousness arises [through co-origination] vis-a-vis the sense-realms, how could they be motionless?"

The Buddha answered, "All the sense-realms are basically void [of independent existence]. [Similarly] all consciousnesses are basically void. Since the nature of the void is not affected by co-origination, how can they be created by co-origination?"

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, "If all the sense-realms are void, how can there be perception?"

The Buddha replied, "Perception is [ultimately] a delusion. Why? All the tens of thousands of manifestations are [ultimately] unborn and without form. Originally they are without names. They are all void and calm. The characteristics of all dharmas are the same. The bodies of all sentient beings are also the same. Since the bodies do not [ultimately] exist, how can perception exist!"

Apratisthia Bodhisattva said, "If all the sense-realms are void, all bodies are void, and all consciousnesses are void, then enlightenment must also be void."

The Buddha replied, "The One-Enlightenment is beyond both destruction and decay since it is the Absolute. It is neither void nor non-void as it is free from being void or non-void."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva remarked, "It is the same for all the sense-realms. They are not characterized by being void or non-void."

The Buddha agreed, "So it is. The nature of all the sense-realms is basically within the Absolute [void]. The base of the Absolute [void] has no abode."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva said, "Enlightenment is also the same: it is not located anywhere."

The Buddha agreed, "So it is. As enlightenment has no abode, it is pure [and void]. Being pure, it is free from [any sign of] enlightenment. Sense-objectification has no abode, it is pure. Being pure, it (purity) is free from [any characteristic of] sense-object."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva remarked, "The mind and eye consciousness are also the same. This is inconceivable!"

The Buddha said, "Yes, the consciousness of the mind and eye consciousness are similarly inconceivable. Why? A sense-object (rupa) has no abode; it is pure without name. It does not intrude internally [into the sense-bases]. Eye consciousness has no abode; it is pure and non-seeing [without the sense of a self that sees]. It does not go towards the external [sense-objects]. The mind [too] has no abode. Its purity is without ceasing, without a birth-place. [Similarly as well as ultimately the other] consciousnesses have no abode. They are pure and motionless, not affected by conditions [of co-origination] or differentiations. The nature [of all dharmas] is void and calm. This nature is [therefore] free from any sign of enlightenment. This is how enlightenment is being realized.

"Good man! When one awakens [to the wisdom] that there is ultimately no [attainment in] enlightenment, all the [eight] consciousnesses will access [enlightenment]. Why? At the stage of the diamond (a buddha's Absolute) wisdom, the path (practice) leading to liberation is being dropped [as there is neither liberation nor bondage]. Having abandoned the path, one accesses the non-abiding stage [of unexcelled enlightenment] where there is neither egress nor access - the Absolute Domain where the mind has no abode. The base [of that state] is pure, like the transparent lapis lazuli [representing dharmakaya, attainment of the great, perfect mirror-like wisdom]. It is in perpetual equanimity, like the great earth [representing the attainment of liberation of the impartial wisdom]; enlightened, miraculous, contemplative wakefulness [representing the ultimate prajna], like the effulgence of the sun of wisdom; perfected through Self-enlightenment, like the great rain of Dharma. One who accesses this wisdom is accessing the buddhas' domain of wisdom. For one who has accessed this domain of wisdom, none of the consciousnesses will arise."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva said, "The Tathagata has explained that the sacred power of the One-Enlightenment [where] the four wisdoms (mentioned in the last paragraph) [are perfected] are in fact the self-enlightened nature of all sentient beings. Why? Because these are fully replete within the bodies of all sentient beings basically."

The Buddha agreed, "So it is. Why? All sentient beings are basically free from outflows with all wholesome Self-Benediction innate in them. Now they are being pricked by the thorns of desire, which they have yet to overcome."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, "If sentient beings have yet to awaken to the Self-Enlightenment continues to [have the desire to] gather and accumulate [mundane things and experiences], how can they overcome that which is difficult to overcome?"

The Buddha replied, "Whether [sentient beings are within] a group or an individual, when discriminations and taints occur, [or even] with consciousness abiding within a cave of emptiness (leading to a state of mental cessation), they can overcome that which is difficult to overcome and be liberated from the bonds of demonic forces. Get them to sit transcendently on the open ground (without abidance), where the consciousnesses and the aggregates can be transformed to [the Absolute] parinirvana [where all the aggregates dissolve]."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva remarked, "The mind that attains Nirvana is aloof without companionship, abiding perpetually in Nirvana. [Such a mind] must be liberated."

The Buddha responded, "Abiding perpetually in Nirvana is the bondage of Nirvana. Why? Nirvana is the benediction of the Self-Enlightenment. This benediction is the primordial Nirvana. The enlightened aspects of Nirvana are in fact the aspects of Self-Enlightenment. [As these aspects are void in nature,] the nature of enlightenment is non-discriminatory and Nirvana is undifferentiated. [Accordingly,] enlightenment is basically unborn and Nirvana is [also] unborn. [Thus] enlightenment is basically free from extinction and Nirvana is free from extinction. Since the enlightened aspect of Nirvana is beyond differentiation, there is no attainment of Nirvana. Since Nirvana is beyond attainment, how can one abide in it?"

"Good man, enlightened beings do not abide in Nirvana. Why? Enlightenment basically is unborn; it is detached from the defilements of sentient beings. Enlightenment is basically free from calmness. For one who is attached to Nirvana, his mind is agitated the moment he is detached from Nirvana. [On the other hand], the mind of one who abides by the ground of thusness (suchness), has no abidance. Free from both egress and access, it accesses the amala-consciousness."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, "If the amala-consciousness has somewhere to be accessed, it ought to be something attainable, therefore, an attained Dharma?"

The Buddha replied, "No, it is not. Why? It is like the example of a deluded son with gold coins in his hands, not knowing that he has them. Roaming about the ten directions, he

spent fifty years in poverty, destitution, hardship and suffering. Though devoted to seeking out a living, he was unable to support himself adequately. [Finally,] when the father saw his son in such a state, he told him, "The gold coins you are carrying around, why not make use of them? [Then you can be] free to satisfy all the needs." The son awakened and found the gold coins. His mind greatly joyous, he shouted that he found the gold coins. His father replied, "Deluded son! You need not be elated. The gold coins have always been yours, not something you have discovered. What is there to be happy about?"

"Good man, it is the same with the amala-consciousness. [Since] basically it has never left [you], it is not something to be acquired now. Being unaware of it in the past, it does not mean that it is not non-existent. Now that you have awakened to it, it is not that you have accessed it."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, "Since the father knew that his son was deluded, why did he let [the son] spend fifty years roaming about the ten directions in poverty, destitution, hardship and suffering, before he told him about the gold coins he was carrying?"

The Buddha replied, "The [example of] passage of fifty years is but the movement of a single thought. Roaming about the ten directions is the fantasy of distant travel [exemplifying unending delusions blocking the return to Absolute Enlightenment]."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, "What is 'the movement of a single thought?'"

The Buddha replied, "Within the movement of a single thought, all the five aggregates arise. And all fifty evils [arising from the five aggregates as mentioned in the Shurangama Sutra] are contained within the five aggregates."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, "Since the fantasy of distant travel and roaming about the ten directions is the arising of a single thought comprising all the fifty evils, how can sentient beings be guided not to give rise to a single thought [so that the evils do not arise]?"

The Buddha replied, "One should guide sentient beings to calm their mind by abiding in the diamond-base [of undistracted awareness], with no arising of thoughts. The mind being thus calmed will always be calm and at peace, without a single thought."

Apratisthia Bodhisattva said, "It is inconceivable that in enlightenment thoughts do not arise, and one's mind is calm and at peace. A calm and peaceful mind itself is the benediction of Self-Enlightenment. The benediction is motionless; it exists perpetually and is not without. It is beyond both existence and non-existence. There is nothing that it does not [have the capacity to] enlighten. It is ever aware without one having [to set up the mind] to be aware. Self-Benediction [itself] is Self-Enlightenment. One awakened to it is beyond defilement and is non-abiding. This is because the nature [of enlightenment] is the unchanging and immutable Absolute. It is inconceivable!"

The Buddha replied, "It is so."

After hearing these words Apratisthia Bodhisattva attained what he never had before and recited the stanza:

The Lord is the Lord of Great Enlightenment.
He explains the Dharma on non-creation of thoughts.
A thought-free mind is non-creating.
That mind is in perpetuity, never extinct.
The Single-awakening of Self-Enlightenment,
Guides all [beings] who are self-endowed.
It is like [the example of] one who [recovered] gold coins,
But what he recovered [being his own] was not a discovery.

After the assembly heard these words, all awakened to the Self-Benediction of the prajnaparamita.

Chapter Five: Accessing Reality

Later the Tathagata stated: "All the bodhisattvas and the others [in the assembly] who have deeply accessed the Absolute will be capable of liberating sentient beings. During the Dharma-degenerating age, they must disseminate the Absolute Dharma so that the listeners can reap the benefit of Self-Benediction, irrespective of whether the beings are sympathetic or unsympathetic [towards the Dharma]. The speech (teaching) should be done without abidance, be it through identification or differentiation (without bias). Such thusly speech guides all defiled consciousness [of sentient beings] so that it flows towards the sea of wisdom of the buddhas. This will prevent them from being swept away by the empty breeze [of ignorance], leading them towards the spiritual milk of the Single-Taste [instead].

"Whether in the mundane or supra-mundane world, abiding (by the Dharma) or non-abiding (against the Dharma), the egress and access of the five voids {please see the Buddha's explanations given later} are done with neither clinging nor rejection. Why? [Because] the characteristics of all dharmas (phenomena) are devoid [of independent nature]. The nature [of all dharmas] neither exists nor does not exist, neither nonexistent nor extant. Being neither extant nor nonexistent [it is non-abiding], it has no absolute nature. They (dharmas) do not abide by existence or non-existence as they are beyond existence or nonexistence. The [buddhas'] wisdom that transcends both the sagely and the lay, though invisible, is beyond error.

Once the bodhisattvas and the others have awakened to this Benediction, they immediately attained to bodhi (awakening to enlightenment)."

At that time there was a bodhisattva in the assembly named Mahabala (Great Power). Arising from his seat, he came before the Buddha and addressed: "Lord! As the Buddha has said that the egress and access of the five voids are done with neither clinging nor rejection, how is it that there is no clinging or rejection with regard to the five voids?"

The Buddha replied, "Bodhisattva, the five [ultimate] voids are: [firstly,] the three realms of existence are void; [secondly,] the shadows (the karmic effects) of the six realms of existence (hell, animals, hungry ghosts, humans, asuras, and gods) are void; [thirdly,] the characteristics of all dharmas (everything)[being devoid of independent existence] are void; [fourthly,] sense-organ objects and related characteristics are void; [and lastly] the mind and related consciousnesses are void.

"Bodhisattva, as these voids are void [of nature], they are unable to linger in the void, for the void is without form. How can dharmas which are formless cling to or reject [anything]? Being free from clinging [and rejection] is identical to accessing the three voids."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "What are the three voids?"

The Buddha replied, "The three voids are: [First] the characteristics of the void are void [in nature]; [Second] the void of void is void; [Third] that which is void of void is also void. These voids [being equal] do not abide by the characteristics of the three voids. They are not devoid of Reality [of the Absolute]. [Being beyond] the pathways of words and speech they are inconceivable."

Mahabala Bodhisattva said, "If they are not devoid of Reality, then they must have characteristics."

The Buddha disagreed, "[Being the Absolute-void,] nonexistence does not abide in nonexistence; existence does not abide in existence. There is neither nonexistence nor existence. A nonexistent (non-abiding) dharma cannot linger in nonexistence. A nonexistent characteristic cannot have abidance in existence. The principle of non-abidance cannot be understood in terms of either existence or nonexistence.

"Bodhisattva, the principle which is beyond naming and characteristics is inconceivable. Why is this? The name of the nameless is not without existence; the principle beyond principle is not without principle (essence)."

Mahabala Bodhisattva said, "Such names and principles [of sameness, equality, and non-obstruction] are the characteristics of Reality-thusness. They are [also] the characteristics of thusness of the tathagatas. Thusness does not abide in thusness. Thusness has no characteristic of thusness, because it is free from any characteristic. The characteristic of thusness is not different from that of the tathagatas'. The characteristics of the mind of sentient beings are the same as those of the tathagata's. Hence, the mind of sentient beings ought to be free of the sense-realms."

The Buddha said, "So it is. The mind of sentient beings is actually free of any sense-realms. Why? Because the mind is basically pure, and the principle [of the purity] unsullied. It is the soiling by the dusts (sensory objects) that culminates in the three realms of existence. [This is how] the mind that is involved with the three realms of existence is called 'the other realm'. Such realms are empty and delusive. They are the projections of the mind. When the mind is free from delusions, there will be no other realms."

Mahabala Bodhisattva reiterated, "If the mind is pure (non-creating), no sense-realms will arise. When the mind is pure, the three realms of existence therefore should not exist."

The Buddha responded, "So it is. Bodhisattva, if the mind does not project sense-realms, sense-realms will not arise in the mind. Why? All sense-objects are nothing but the mind that sees them. If the mind does not illusorily project them, there will be no [deceptive] visual-objects.

"Bodhisattva, if sentient beings [know that] sentient beings are [ultimately] non-existent internally (within their mind) and the three natures [of kindness, aggression and mental-blankness] are void and calm, there then will be no grasping of the self, or the grasping of others. Even the two accesses {please see the Buddha's explanation to follow} will not activate the mind. For one who has thus attained, there will be no three realms of existence."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "What is meant by: 'The two accesses will not activate the mind'? The mind is basically unborn; how can there be an access?"

The Buddha replied, "The two accesses are: one is called the access via principle (understanding); the second one is called the access via actualization (realization).

"One who has accessed via the principle means one is convinced [through understanding and insight] that sentient beings are not different from enlightened (buddha) nature. This [nature] is neither one nor different. [But this nature] has been obscured and obstructed by foreign dusts (sense-objects). Without [the mind] either going or coming, one abides in contemplative awareness. One contemplates on the noble-truth that the buddha-nature is neither existent nor nonexistent; neither self nor others and it is not different in an ordinary person or a sage. One abides firmly without wavering in the state of the diamond base of the mind, calm, quiet, non-doing and free from differentiations. This is called the access via principle.

"The mind of one who has accessed via actualization has no bias or inclination; free from the shadows of the fluxes [of the sense-objects]. Wherever it may be, the mind is without any thought, seeking nothing. Not affected by the winds and noise [of ignorance], it is [motionless] like the great earth. Relinquishing as well as abandoning all [the otherwise]

grasping of the mind and self-identification, he saves sentient beings. It (such a mind) is beyond creation, has no characteristics, and is free from both clinging and rejection.

"Bodhisattva, the mind has neither egress nor access. As the mind is free from either egress or access, it accesses without accessing anything, [for convenience sake] it has been referred to as 'access'.

"Bodhisattva, the Dharma which thus accesses is not devoid of characteristics; and the Dharma itself is not void. That Dharma is [in fact] all-pervading. Why? The Dharmas (the Buddha's definitive teachings) which are not non-existent are replete with merits. They are beyond [the creations of] the mind and its shadows. They are naturally pure (please see the Buddha's explanation later)."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "How is it that the Dharma that is beyond [the creations of] the mind and its shadows is serene and pure?"

The Buddha explained, "The void, thusly Dharma, is not a dharma created by the consciousness of the mind. It is [also] not fabricated by the mind [itself]. This Dharma is not marked by any characteristics of the void, nor does it have any characteristics of corporeality (form). This Dharma does not belong to the mind. Therefore, it is not a dharma generated through co-origination.

"[However,] being not something [created] by the mind, yet [being the result of] non-doing, it is [therefore, also] not devoid of co-origination. It is neither a shadow nor a projection from any of the sense objects. It has neither independent nature nor any differences thereof. It has neither name, characteristics, nor definitions (differences). Why? Because the Absolute [Dharma] does not [even] have thusness.

"Those dharmas that are not in accord with thusness are not lacking in thusness. Those [dharmas] that have no existence do not lack thusness. It is not that they are lacking in thusness. Why? The Dharma with basic principle is beyond [any] principle or base. It is beyond all controversies and characteristics.

"Bodhisattva, the pure Dharma of thusness cannot be created through creation [as its essence is unborn]; nor can it be extinguished by extinction [as its essence, being void, is beyond extinction]."

Mahabala Bodhisattva exclaimed, "Inconceivable! The characteristics of the Dharma of thusness exist neither in combination (produced in association with other causes) nor independently [as they have no independent self-nature]. They are neither bridled (being neither form nor object) nor bound (by the senses) [since they are self-liberating]. [Being ultimately void as well as unborn,] they are neither assembled nor scattered. They are beyond creation and extinction. They are also free from any characteristics of arrival or departure from abidance. This is inconceivable!"

The Buddha said, "So it is. It is inconceivable! The inconceivable mind! The mind [of sentient beings] is also thus. Why? Thusness is not different from the mind. The mind is basically thus.

"The buddha-nature of all sentient beings [and that of the buddhas] is neither one nor different. The nature of all sentient beings is originally free from both creation and extinction. This nature of creation and extinction originally is the nature of Nirvana. The nature of the characteristics [of creation and extinction] are originally thus (void of independent existence), for thusness is motionless.

"The characteristics of all dharmas are not generated by co-origination. [Because] the nature of the characteristics of creation is thusness, but thusness is motionless. The characteristics of all the factors of co-origination are basically void and nonexistent. As all such factors are [ultimately] void, and co-origination itself is also void [of existence], there is no co-origination. All dharmas generated through co-origination are the illusory visions of the deluded mind. The appearance [of such visions] is basically uncreated, as the co-originating factors [supposedly responsible for their creation] are basically nonexistent. The mind and its thusness are like the principle of dharmas, being devoid of self-nature. It is like the [non-abiding] 'King of Space' which is without any abode. The mind of ordinary people misperceives and differentiates [everything].

"The characteristics of thusness are basically beyond existence and nonexistence. The characteristics of existence and nonexistence are perceptions by the mind and [its] consciousness.

"Bodhisattva, so it is with the nature of the mind. It is not devoid of self-nature, but its self-nature is [also] nonexistent. It is beyond existence and nonexistence.

"Bodhisattva, nonexistence is not without characteristics. They (the characteristics of both existence and nonexistence) are beyond speech and language. Why? The Dharma of the Absolute thusness is void, all-pervading and devoid of characteristics. It is not something that can be fathomed by [followers of the] dualistic vehicles.

"The realm of the [Absolute] void cannot be fathomed from within [by the mind and related consciousness - being void in nature it is beyond grasp,] or from without [through the sense-realms]. Only masters of the six practices know them."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "What are the six practices? Please kindly explain."

The Buddha replied, "First is the practice of the ten faiths. Second is the practice of the ten abidings. Third is the practice of the ten practices. Fourth is the practice of the ten transferences. Fifth is the practice of the ten bhumis. Sixth is the practice of equal enlightenment. Practitioners of these practices will then know [the realm of the void]."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "Since the Absolute Enlightenment of Reality has neither egress nor access, through which Dharma or [frame of] mind can one be in it?"

The Buddha replied, "The Dharma of Reality has no boundary. A boundless (non-abiding) mind is [already] within Reality."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "The wisdom of this boundless mind has no limit. The boundless mind is one that has attained liberation. Liberated wisdom accesses Reality [directly]. In the case of ordinary, feeble-minded sentient beings, whose mind is subject to frequent panting (agitations), through which Dharma can they be led to control that [panting], and to steady their mind [in order] to access Reality?"

The Buddha replied, "Bodhisattva, one whose mind is panting is driven both internally [by the sense organs and the sense of self-hood (ego)] and externally [by sense-objects and the sense-realms]. [These defiled subjects and objects (klesas)] flow along with the impulses, until their drips (accumulations) become a sea [of defiled consciousnesses]. The winds [of ignorance] stir [the 'sea' of tendencies, creating] the waves [of the consciousnesses], thereby startling the great dragon [of ignorance]. As the mind is startled and alarmed, one pants frequently.

"Bodhisattva, urge all sentient beings to preserve the three and abide the one, [in order] to access the tathagata-dhyana. With undistracted absorption, their mind will be free of panting."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "What is 'preserve the three and abide the one, [in order] to access the tathagata-dhyana'?"

The Buddha replied, "To 'preserve the three' means to preserve the three liberations; to 'abide the one' means to abide in the thusness of the mind, and to 'access the tathagata-dhyana' means [knowing] the principle and the practice of contemplation (natural thus-awareness). Accessing this base of the mind is accessing Reality."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "What are the three liberations? Through what Dharma may one access the samadhi of the [natural] thus-awareness?"

The Buddha replied, "The three liberations are: [firstly] the liberation of the void [that everything is ultimately void in nature, whereby one is free from entanglements of all dharmas]; [secondly] diamond liberation [that everything is ultimately formless, whereby one is free from all mental agitations]; [and thirdly] prajna liberation [that everything, being void in nature, is beyond grasping, whereby one awakens to the primordially pure and silent nature of the mind]. The mind of one who is in accord with the principle [of the void, formlessness, and purity] is in contemplation [of thus-awareness] (free of abiding and obstruction) with no affirmation or negation to be differentiated."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "How does one go about this preservation? How can one contemplate it?"

The Buddha answered, "Preservation is putting into operation where the mind and its objects are non-dual (undivided). Be it internally [via the sense organs], or externally [through the sense-objects and the sense-realms], with neither egress nor access, the mind remains non-dual. By not abiding by any thing, the mind is free from gain or loss. The mind, thus purified, freely accesses the one-and-many bhumis (levels of spiritual attainment). This is what is meant by 'contemplation (thus-awareness)'.

"Bodhisattva, such a person does not dwell on any dualistic characteristics. Although he does not leave home (going forth into homelessness) he does not abide by the home (no longer considers himself as part of the household). For this reason, he does not: wear the dharma-robos, observe all the Pratimoksha precepts [monk's disciplinary guide], or participate in the posada [half-monthly (lunar calendar) religious observance]. With a [taintless] mind in non-doing, without any egoistic thoughts, he attains the fruition of sage-hood. Without lingering over either of the two [dualistic] vehicles, he accesses the bodhisattva path. Subsequently he will perfect all the [ten] bhumis and attain the bodhi of the buddhas."

Mahabala Bodhisattva remarked, "This is inconceivable! Although he has not gone forth into homelessness, this person is not unlike one who has. Why is this? He has accessed the domain of Nirvana, where he dons the robes of the tathagatas and sits on the bodhi-seat (bodhimanda). Such a person should be respected and offered dana (food and other essentials) even by sramanas (novice renunciates)."

The Buddha said, "So it is. Why? Accessing the domain of Nirvana, the mind [of this person] transcends the three realms of existence. Donning the robe of the tathagatas, he accesses the void realm of the dharmas. Seated on the bodhi-seat, he ascends to the bhumi of perfect enlightenment. The mind of such a person transcends the two types of selfhood (the selfhood of one's ego and that of dharmas). Why should the sramanas not respect and offer dana to him?"

Mahabala Bodhisattva remarked, "Followers of the two [dualistic] vehicles are unable to see such Single-bhumi [of buddhahood] or the sea of the [Absolute-] void."

The Buddha responded, "So it is. Followers of the two [dualistic, lesser] vehicles are attached to samadhi (mental absorption), [in order] to gain the samadhi-body [through the trance of cessation (nirodhasamapatti), whereby they attain 'neither perception nor non-perception']. They are like alcoholics who are drunk and unable to sober up, as far as the Single-bhumi [of buddhahood] or the sea of [the Absolute] void is concerned. Continuing through countless tests, they are unable to attain enlightenment. Until the liquor has dissipated off, they finally wake up. They will then be able to cultivate these practices, eventually attaining the body (realization) of buddhahood. When a person abandons the [status of] icchantika (a person blocked from attaining enlightenment), he will be able to

access the six practices. Along the path of practice, his mind is purified [by devotion to contemplating thus-awareness] and he definitely knows [the path]. The power of his diamond-like wisdom renders him (not subject to spiritual retrogression). He ferries sentient beings across to liberation with boundless mercy and compassion."

Mahabala Bodhisattva remarked, "Since such a person ought not maintain the codes of morality, he will not be respected [even] by the sramanas (novice mendicants)."

The Buddha replied, "The moral codes have been prescribed for those with unwholesome actions and pride, owing to the waves and swells (disturbance by the first seven consciousnesses) from the sea [of the mind]. [Being primordially pure and awakened to the void nature of dharmas] this person's sea of the eighth consciousness of his mind-ground is settled (calm), its [consequential] flow into its ninth consciousness (the amala buddha-mind) is pure (silent). The winds [of the sense-realms] become inactive [unable to agitate such an awakened mind, thus] the waves and swells do not arise.

"The moral codes are void in nature; the custodians (followers) who hold fast to them are being deluded and confused. [On the other hand,] for a person (an adept) [who knows the true nature of the precepts], the seventh and sixth [consciousnesses] and all related factors of co-origination cease [to arise]. [Having awakened to as well accessed] the contemplative absorption, he is not away from the three [aspects of] buddha-hood (dharmakaya, nirmanakaya and sambhogakaya). Thus the bodhi [within] has sprouted. Within the three formless characteristics [of neither birth nor death, of neither Nirvana nor non-Nirvana, and neither formlessness nor non-formlessness], mysteriously his mind deeply penetrates [the Dharma of the One-mind]. He deeply reveres the triratna. As he is not without dignified demeanor and moral codes, all the sramanas do not fail to venerate him!

"Bodhisattva, a person who has thus awakened (enlightened) will not linger over any worldly dharmas, be they active [leading to rebirth in the (impermanent) desire-realm] or passive [leading to rebirth in the form and formless realms of much longer duration]. Instead, he accesses the three types of void [comprising the three liberations through the void, formlessness and vows] and extinguishes the mind that is involved in any way with the three realms of existence."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "The virtuous one upon attaining the full fruition of buddhahood with the [three] qualities of [1] (sambhogakaya) buddhahood with all meritorious qualities and merits; [2] (dharmakaya) buddhahood of the tathagatagarbha-buddha [the Self-Enlightenment innate in all sentient beings]; and [3] (nirmanakaya) buddhahood [of the physical buddha, engaging in actively liberating all beings]. He accesses the three aggregates of morality [comprising the abandoning of all evils, doing all good and liberating all sentient beings], but does not linger over their characteristics. He extinguishes all thoughts of the three realms of existence, but does not abide in the

calm domain [of Nirvana]. Not forsaking all the sentient beings, he [forsakes the unsurpassed bodhi and] stays (physically) in the world (repeated birth-death cycles and related experiences like ordinary sentient beings). It is inconceivable!"

At that time, Sariputra rose from his seat, came forward, and recited these stanzas:

The Buddha, replete with the sea of prajna,

Without abiding in the city of Nirvana,

Is like the wonderful lotus,

That is not grown in the high plains.

All buddhas underwent countless tests,

Without forsaking any defilement.

Only after saving the world did they access [Nirvana],

Like the lotus rising from the mud.

The six practices,

The bodhisattvas cultivate.

So are the three liberations,

The true path to bodhi.

Whether I now abide [by Nirvana] or not,

It will be as the Buddha has said.

I will return repeatedly to this place whence I came,

And leave only after completing [the bodhisattva path].

Furthermore, I will urge all sentient beings,

To join me [in pursuing the same vow],

May those who came before, or will come in the future,

All be led to climb (realize) the awakening of Reality.

Then the Buddha proclaimed to Sariputra: "This is inconceivable! You will certainly accomplish the path of bodhi in future. Countless sentient beings will transcend the sea of birth and death."

At that time, the [sub-] assembly [of Mahayanists] all awakened to bodhi, and the [sub-] assembly [of Hinayanists] accessed the sea of the five voids (possibly the inner void, the outer void, the void of both the inner and outer, the big void, and the void (emptiness) of void - mentioned in the Sastra on Emptiness by Nagarjuna).

Chapter Six: True Nature of the Void

Then Sariputra addressed the Buddha: "Lord! The cultivation of the bodhisattva path is free of both signs and characteristics. The three moral precepts (abandoning all evils, doing all good and liberating all sentient beings) are also beyond observance. How should we maintain and observe [the precepts] so that we can transmit them to sentient beings? May the Buddha proclaim this for us, out of his mercy and compassion."

The Buddha replied, "Good man! You listen with full attention. I will proclaim this for you.

"Good man, all wholesome and unwholesome dharmas are illusory projections of the mind. All the sense-realms are the discriminations and differentiations of mentation and speech. Fix (tether) them on one spot and all the co-originating factors will cease to exist. Why? Good man! The one [primordial Enlightenment] basically is beyond generation. Thus, the functioning of the three outflows [via the body, speech and mind] becomes inoperative. By abiding within the principle of thusness, the gates leading to the six roads (sense-organs) are shut and the four co-originating factors which are in accord with thusness become replete with the three moral precepts."

Sariputra asked, "How do the four co-originating factors that accord with thusness become replete with the three moral precepts?"

The Buddha replied, "The four co-originating factors are: Firstly, the power of Nirvana in bringing about the cessation of these factors [that otherwise require the observance of the precepts] maintains both the discipline and the departments of the moral code. Secondly, the power of Self-Benediction generated from the pure bases [of the five roots (comprising faith, courage, thought, concentration and wisdom) and their five respective strengths], is the moral code that culminates in wholesome Dharmas. Thirdly, the power of the great compassion inherent within the Self-Wisdom is the moral code that incorporates the vow to save all sentient beings. Fourthly, the power of the penetrative wisdom of the One-Enlightenment is in accord with abidance in thusness [which embraces all the spiritual powers and wisdom through the working of co-origination]. These are the four co-originating factors.

"Good man, thus the power of the four great factors does not linger over the substance as well as the characteristics of its work, nor lacking in the scope or efficiency in its

functioning (although absolutely quiet in its work, it impartially helps transcend all sentient beings). As it does not have any abode, it cannot be sought (being free of abiding, its six roots cease to attach to the six dusts).

"Good man, the One-Enlightenment of thusness completely embraces all the six practices. It is the buddhas' sea of bodhi and wisdom."

Sariputra remarked, "[The Lord said that] 'The power [of the four great factors] does not linger over the substance as well as the characteristics of its work, nor lacking in the scope or efficiency in its functioning.' This Dharma is on the True void - permanent, blissful, [with] selfhood, and pure. Transcending the two types of selfhood (the self-hood of the ego and dharmas), it is the great parinirvana. Such a mind has no bonds (non-abiding). It is a powerful contemplation (direct awareness of the mind by itself). All the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment must be within this contemplation."

The Buddha said, "Indeed it does. It is inclusive of the Thirty-Seven Requisites of Enlightenment. How? Because it includes the four applications of mindfulness, the four right effort, the four bases of spiritual power, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment and the noble eightfold path; or whatever name/title it is being called. Although they are many classifications (titles and names), they have but one essence [that they all lead to enlightenment]. They are neither one [although they are of the same transcendental essence], nor different [although they are under different names].

"Despite their manifold names, such names are merely names and letters. [As they are ultimately void in nature, therefore, beyond differentiation], the dharmas [relating to the respective names] are beyond grasp. A dharma that is beyond grasp has only a single essence and is free from [all] descriptions. The characteristic of being free from description is the nature of the Absolute void-. The essence of that void nature is in accord with the Reality of thusness. The principle of thusness [therefore] embraces all dharmas.

"Good man, a person who abides by (accesses) this principle [of thusness] crosses (transcends) the sea of the three sufferings (pain, decay and unnecessary deviated practice)."

Sariputra asked, "All the myriads of dharmas are but [the expressions of] speeches and writings. Anything characterized through speech and writing has no essence. Essence that accords with Reality is beyond [the images conveyed via] language and disputation. How does the Tathagata now proclaim the Dharma?"

The Buddha replied, "I proclaim the Dharma for the sake of you sentient beings. I proclaim that which cannot be spoken about (beyond words). [As the Dharma, being void in nature, is beyond description,] this is why I expound [the Dharma for the sake of communication with sentient beings]. What I speak of is the language of [transcendental] essence, not merely words. [But] the speeches of sentient beings are mere words and languages, without [transcendental] essence. Non-[transcendental] essence and words

must be understood to be all empty (devoid of essence) and delusory. Empty and delusory words convey nothing relating to the [transcendental] essence, and anything that does not convey this essence is false speech.

"Speech that is in accordance with essence is truly void and yet not void [for] the void is real and yet unreal. [Such speech] is beyond all dualistic characteristics and is also not centred between [characteristics]. The dharma that is not so centred is beyond the three characteristics [of creation, abidance, and related cessation]. It has no abode to be found.

"Speech [that is beyond the three characteristics] is made according to thusness. Thusness is nonexistent and yet not nonexistent. Thusness [being a non-abiding Dharma] is beyond both -existence and nonexistence. [Being void of nature,] its existence cannot exist within existence. There is nowhere that thusness does not exist. As one should not be attached to [the mere wordings] of speech, one should not even abide by thusness. [As the Dharma of] thusness neither exists nor does not exist, it can only be thusly said."

Sariputra said, "[As the spiritual path of] all sentient beings begin as icchantikas (persons blocked from enlightenment). In order to attain the [level of] the tathagatas' and the tathagatas' absolute characteristics [of anuttarasamyaksambodhi (complete, perfect enlightenment)] how should the mind of an icchantika abide,?"

The Buddha said, "From the mind of the icchantika upwards, until one reaches the tathagata's and the absolute characteristics of the tathagata's, one passes through five levels.

"First is the attainment of [the ten] faith[s]. [A follower who has no faith previously,] now has faith that within his body is a seed of the Absolute-Thusness, which is being obscured by delusions. By relinquishing and abandoning the deceptive thoughts, the [primordially endowed] mind will be pure and taintless and one will know that all the sense-realms are only the dis-criminations of the mind and speech.

"Second is the attainment of contemplation [comprising the ten abidings, ten practices, and ten transferences,] where one is aware that all the sense-realms are nothing more than the mentation and verbalization [of the mind]. They manifest according to the mind's discriminatory mentation and verbalization [tendencies]. The sense-realms perceived are not my (the tathagata's) Absolute (base) consciousness. Understand that the Absolute (base) consciousness is not: a dharma, an essence, the sense-objects to which one clings, or the mind and the other sense-organs which cling.

"Third is the attainment of cultivation [from first to seventh bhumi]. Cultivation involves the constant generation [of bodhicitta, a mind set on awakening of the six paramitas] and training thereof. Both the generation and training are to be carried out at the same time. Initially [one should be guided by wisdom (preparatory view) to overcome all hindrances and difficulties. This is [how] one leaves and abandons all hindrances (sensual desire, hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt) and shackles

(shamelessness, apathy, jealousy, miserliness, regret, sleepiness, excitement, lethargy, anger, and belligerence).

"Fourth is the attainment of practice. Practice means abandoning all practices. The mind is free from both acceptance and rejection, [manifesting] the extremely pure, fundamental benediction [of Self-Enlightenment]. The thusness of the mind is motionless, and one's Absolute nature is being realized. This is the great parinirvana where [amongst the six elements (earth, water, fire, wind, void, and consciousness)] the void is the biggest (most powerful).

"Fifth is the attainment of detachment (perfect enlightenment - buddhahood). Without abiding by its void nature, wisdom proper flows freely. Great compassion is characterized by thusness but that characteristic does not linger in thusness. The samyaksambodhi being void in nature, is therefore, nothing to be realized. [Such a] mind has no boundary and without focus. This is how tathagata-hood is being arrived at.

"Good man, [all] the five attainments arise from the One-Enlightenment and are accessed through the Self-Benediction [of primordial enlightenment]. [When one] helps transform sentient beings it must be from that Self-Base [of enlightenment]."

Sariputra asked, "How does one go about 'from that Self-Base'?"

The Buddha replied, "Basically there is no origin. The functioning of [thusness] is without base. This Absolute void is the base-Reality [responsible for the manifestation] of everything. By generating bodhicitta (leading to realization of void nature of the mind that culminates in all the merits therein) one completes the sagely path (journey). Why? Good man! Like a hand grabbing air, [enlightenment] is neither attainment, [as all dharmas are void of nature,] nor non-attainment [as all dharmas, being void of nature, arise out of co-origination]."

Sariputra remarked, "As the Lord has explained, at the beginning of one's journey [of the five attainments], one should aim at the Self-Benediction of Self-[Enlight-enment]. Such a [state of] mind is calm and non-fabricating, and that calm non-fabrication is thusly. [Thusness] holds all the merits [of full enlightenment] and embraces all the Dharmas. This is perfect, non-dual, fusion. It is inconceivable! We should know this Dharma is the mahaprajnaparamita (perfection of great wisdom). It is the great spiritual mantra, the mantra of great clarity, the unexcelled mantra, the unequalled mantra."

The Buddha said, "So it is, so it is! This void-nature of the Dharma is thusly. As its nature is void, it is the fire of wisdom that incinerates all knots (defilements and sufferings). [Knowing all dharmas are void of nature] they are equal in every respect. The three [final] stages of complete en-lightenment and the three bodies (dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya) of sublime enlightenment shine brilliantly, without shadows, in the ninth consciousness.

"Good man, this Dharma is beyond cause or co-origination, since it is wisdom functioning of its own. It neither moves nor is it still, as its functioning is void in nature. Its essence neither exists nor does not exist, since the characteristic of the void is void [itself].

"Good man, when liberating sentient beings, one should guide them to access this essence [of the Absolute void] through contemplation. One who accesses this essence will meet the tathagatas [by virtue of the realization of the single dharma-body (dharmakaya) of all buddhas]."

Sariputra remarked, "The essence of the contemplation of the tathagata means not lingering in any [mind-prompted] currents. One should abandon the four [ordinary] dhyanas (mental absorptions generated through concentration) as well as their limiting tops (heavenly states of such absorptions)."

The Buddha said, "So it is. Why? Because all dharmas are [merely] names and classifications. The four [ordinary] dhyanas [being object-based concentrations] are the same. [On the other hand,] if one meets the tathagatas (the realization of the single-body, the dharmakaya of all buddhas) [one's own] tathagata-mind [being the thusness, without coming or going] is [totally] liberated, eternally in a state of extinction, neither away from [that state] nor accessing it. [This is] because there is equality (no difference) inside or outside [the tathagata-mind].

"Good man, similarly, all [types of ordinary] dhyana contemplations are absorptions directed towards the cessation of perception. But thusness contemplation, is not the same as those [types of dhyana]. Why? One who contemplates thusness-upon-thusness has no perception (sign) that he is contemplating thusness. All the characteristics relating to thusness are already calm and extinct. Calm-extinction is the essence of thusness.

"The dhyana absorption [directed towards] the cessation of perception is, in fact, mental activity and is not [true] dhyana. Why? The nature of dhyana [proper] is detached from all [mental] activities. It neither taints nor is being tainted. It is neither a dharma nor its shadow. It is beyond all differentiations, since its essence is that of Self-Benediction. Good man! This contemplative absorption of thusness is to be called dhyana [proper]."

Sariputra asked, "It is inconceivable! The Tathagata constantly employs Reality which accords with the essence of thusness in liberating sentient beings. [Since] the essence has many meanings and is vast [in scope], only sentient beings with sharp faculties are able to cultivate it. Sentient beings of dull faculties will find it difficult to understand its meaning. Through what expedient means can those of dull faculties be led to access this Truth?"

The Buddha replied, "One should encourage those of dull faculties to receive and maintain one four-line stanza; [this will ultimately allow them] to access the truth of Reality. All Buddha-Dharmas can be condensed within a single four-line stanza."

Sariputra asked, "What is the four-line stanza? I beg [the Lord] to proclaim it."

Thereupon, the Lord recited the stanza:

The essence of everything created by causes and originations,

Such essence [being void] is extinct, beyond creation.

Essence that extinguishes all that is subject to creation-extinction,

Such essence [being void] exists and not extinct (beyond co-origination).

When the great assembly heard the proclamation of this stanza, all were joyous.

Everyone awakened to the state where creations (phenomenal illusions) cease to arise [through their understanding of extinction and creation]. All [now having their mind silenced] awakened to the wisdom-sea of prajna on the nature of the void [as it is within the silent void that the inherent Self-Wisdom manifests].

Chapter Seven: The Tathagatagarbha (The Perpetual Store)

At that time, the Elder Brahmacharya (Chastity) rose from the Self-domain [of Reality, the enlightened state] and spoke to the Buddha, "Lord! The essence (nature of the void) that exists is beyond extinction [since it is beyond co-origination]. The essence which can cause extinction is unborn (the essence of extinction itself is beyond extinction). [Therefore,] the essence of thusness is the bodhi of the buddhas. The nature of bodhi is free from differentiation. The non-differentiating wisdom [being void in nature] can [thusly] fathom infinite differentiations. These unlimited characteristics [of wisdom] result in the cessation of [all] differentiations. Therefore, both the essence and characteristics [of the void] are inconceivable; and within its inconceivable essence, lies its non-differentiation.

"Lord! The number of dharmas is immeasurable and limitless, but the unlimited characteristics of dharmas have only one [common] essence of abidance by one (single) nature. How does this come about?"

The Buddha replied, "Elder! It is inconceivable! I proclaim all the Dharmas for the sake of those who are deluded. Hence, they (the Dharmas) are only expedient means. All the characteristics of dharmas possess [only] one essence of Reality. Why? They are like the example of the four gates that open upon a city. All four gates lead to the [same] city. Just as the populace [of that city] may freely enter [through any gate], the same is with the various tastes of the myriad dharmas [leading ultimately to the same essence of Single-taste]."

The Elder Brahmacharya remarked, "If dharmas are like this, by abiding in the Single-Taste, I should be able to access all the tastes."

The Buddha replied, "So it is, so it is! Why? The essence of the Single-Taste is like a big sea (an ocean). There is not a single one amongst all the streams that does not flow into it. Elder! The tastes of all the dharmas are just like all the streams. [Whilst] their names and classifications may differ, the water [from all the streams] is not different. From the perspective of the sea, its water embraces all [the water] from those streams. [In the same way,] if one abides by the Single-Taste, then all tastes are being accessed."

The Elder Brahmacharya asked, "If all dharmas are of a single taste, how is it that there are paths of the three vehicles? Is the wisdom behind each different?"

The Buddha replied, "Elder! This is like the example relative to the stream, the river, the canal, and the sea. In view of the differences in their sizes and depths, they are named differently. When water is in the stream, it is called the stream water. When it is in the canal it is called the canal water. When it is in the river it is called the river water. But once [all the water] is in the sea, it is just called seawater. The dharmas [of the three vehicles] are also the same. [As] they are all within the Reality of thusness, they are all called the path to buddhahood.

"Elder! One who accesses the path to buddhahood accesses three practices."

The Elder Brahmacharya asked, "What are the three practices?"

The Buddha replied, "First is the practice in accord with phenomena [knowing them to be void ultimately]. Second is the practice in accord with consciousness [knowing the characteristics of everything (all phenomena) to be the projections of the mind]. Third is the practice according to thusness [of the non-abiding mind that functions without obstruction under all circumstances].

"Elder! These three practices fully embrace all approaches. Of all the approaches to the Dharma, there is not one that does not access thereof. One who accesses these practices does not generate any characteristics of the void. And one who so accesses (these practices) can be said to have accessed the tathagatagarbha. One who accesses the tathagatagarbha accesses that which is beyond access."

The Elder Brahmacharya asked, "This is inconceivable! Upon accessing the tathagatagarbha is like a bud that matures into a fruit. It has no access point. Through the strength of the fundamental Self-Benediction, it (the Self-Benediction) accesses the Self-[Reality]. In attaining that Self-[Reality], how many types of wisdom would one have?"

The Buddha replied, "One's wisdom would be inexhaustible. Briefly speaking, one would have four categories of wisdom. What are the four? First is the perpetual wisdom that accords with thusness [working without obstructions for sentient beings, according to co-

origination]. Second is adaptive wisdom that expediently extirpates the sicknesses (defilements) [of sentient beings, according to co-origination]. Third is nirvanic wisdom [of Nirvana] that removes lightning (momentary) wisdom [of the cultivator]. Fourth is Absolute-Wisdom that accesses Reality perfectly, replete with the path to buddhahood.

"Elder, this is the working of these four great matters. The sayings of all the buddhas of the past act as big bridges and ships [to ferry sentient beings across]. [When you] liberate sentient beings, you should employ this wisdom.

"Elder, further, the operation of these great functions involves three important aspects. Firstly, there is the mutual non-infringement between the internal (for self-liberation) and the external (when liberating others) within the three sa-madhis {please see the Buddha's explanation later}. Secondly, use discriminatory wisdom within the great matrix of subject [in ending all obscurations related to the four elements and the base consciousness]. Thirdly, the wisdom and non-distraction of thusness propelled by compassion, when liberating oneself and others. These three aspects will culminate in [the perfection of] bodhi. One who does not practise these, will be unable to flow into the sea of the four wisdoms and will be subject to the whims of all the great demons.

"Elder, until the attainment of buddhahood, you and the others in the assembly should constantly cultivate and practise, without any temporary respite."

The Elder Brahmacharya asked, "What are the three samadhis?"

The Buddha replied, "The three samadhis are the samadhi of the void, the samadhi without characteristics, and the sama-dhi of non-expectation. These are the samadhis."

The Elder Brahmacharya asked, "What is the great matrix of subject?"

The Buddha replied, "'Great' means the four basic elements (earth, water, fire, and wind). 'Subject' means the [five] aggregates (skandha), and others [such as the sense-realms, and the twelve-fold co-origination]. 'Matrix' means the base (eighth) consciousness. This is called the great matrix of subject."

The Elder Brahmacharya said, "It is inconceivable! Such wisdom [comprising the four wisdoms and the three related matters that bring about their perfection] benefits oneself and others. [It enables a cultivator to] transcend the three realms, [yet] without abiding by Nirvana, to access the bodhisattva path.

"Such characteristics [created through the functioning of differentiation in co-origination] belong to dharmas that are subject to creation-extinction, since they involve differentiation. If one were to abandon differentiation, then these dharmas would not be subject to extinction."

In proclaiming the essence, the Tathagata then recited the stanza:

Dharmas created from differentiations (co-origination),

Are duly extinguished by differentiations,

Abandon all dharmas that are subject to differentiations,

Then they will neither be created nor extinguished.

When the Elder Brahmacharya heard this stanza, his mind was jubilant and elated.
Wishing to proclaim its essence, he recited the stanza:

All dharmas are originally calm and extinct.

This calm-extinction is also unborn (beyond creation).

All dharmas that are subject to creation-extinction,

Such dharmas are not beyond creation.

They are not the same [as those beyond creation-extinction],

As each is subject to either permanence or impermanence.

This [Dharma of the Buddha] leaves all dualities,

But also does not linger in oneness.

If dharmas are [illusorily] said to be one,

It would be like the [illusory] hair of fire-rings,

[Or] mistaking heat-waves (mirages) for water.

All [such perceptions] are false and deceptive.

[Also] if one perceives the nonexistence of dharmas,

[This perception creates] a dharma of nothingness.

Like a blind man who [ignorantly] believes otherwise,

Preaching a dharma like (nonexistent) hair of a tortoise.

I have now heard the Buddha's exposition [on],

The Dharma beyond dualistic views,

Also not relying on abidance between [such views].

Therefore it is beyond grasping or abiding.

The Dharmas spoken by the tathagatas,

Are completely from non-abidance.

I, from the place with non-abidance,

Pay respect to the tathagatas from here.

Respectfully saluting the characteristics of the tathagatas,

Their motionless wisdom equals to empty space.

Free from grasping and lingering,

I respectfully salute their non-abiding bodies.

Everywhere I,

Always see all the tathagatas.

I only wish all the tathagatas,

Will explain the perpetual Dharma to me.

Then the Tathagata stated: "All good men! You lis-ten attentively and I will explain for you the perpetual Dharma.

"Good man, the perpetual Dharma is not a perpetual dharma. It is neither the spoken nor the written word. It is neither the noble truth nor liberation. It is neither non-existence nor the sense-realms (existence). It is beyond all deception (grasping) and impermanence. This Dharma is also not impermanent. [For] it is beyond all views of permanence and impermanence. Permanence is revealed once [the impermanent deceptive] consciousness [of the eighteen sense-realms,] is realized to be void. The [eighth consciousness, as the base of the other seven] consciousness is perpetually calm and extinct. This calm-extinction [itself] is also calm and extinct.

"Good man, one who knows that dharmas are calm and extinct need not calm his mind, nor extinguish it. His mind is always calm and extinct. The mind of one who attains calm extinction (through realization that mind and dharmas are void of nature) is constantly

aware that all mentation (nama) and sense-objects (rupa) are nothing but the [creations of the] ignorant mind. The ignorant mind differentiates all the dharmas. [But all the dharmas] are nothing apart from mentation (nama) and sense-objects (rupa). [One who] knows the thusness of dharmas does not follow (being conceptualized by) written and spoken language. The mind will only be with the essence and will not differentiate self and others [thus transcending duality]. Knowing that the self is [only] a hypothetical name is the attainment of calm-extinction. If one attains calm-extinction, one attains anuttarasamyaksambodhi."

After Elder Brahmacharya heard this exposition, he recited the stanza:

Mentation and forms, the phenomena [created by] differentiation,

Together with dharmas - these are called the three [delusions].

Absolute thusness and sublime wisdom (the two of Reality),

[The above] altogether makes five.

I now know these dharmas,

Are latched by permanence and impermanence.

Accessing the path of creation and extinction,

Is impermanence not permanence.

The Dharma on the Void spoken by the Tathagata,

Is beyond impermanence and permanence.

Being without co-origination, [this Dharma] is unborn.

Since it is beyond creation, it has no extinction.

Grasping at existence [of co-origination],

Is like plucking a flower from the sky,

Or expecting a barren woman's child -

The Absolute is beyond grasping.

Abandoning all clinging to co-originations,

One also does not linger on all that is subject to extinction,
Or on Self-essence (base consciousness) and the [four] great [elements].

By relying on thusness, therefore, one attains Reality.

Therefore the Dharma of Reality-thusness,
Is constantly free within thusness.

All the tens of thousands of dharmas,
Are not the fabrications of the consciousness of thusness.

As the Dharma once detached from the eight consciousnesses is void,
Hence it is explained from the perspective of the void.

By abandoning all dharmas subject to creation-extinction,
One dwells in Nirvana.

Being overcome by the great compassion [within],
[One] does not linger within the extinction of Nirvana.

Transmuting both object and subject of clinging,
One accesses the tathagatagarbha.

When the great assembly heard this essence, all attained right vocation (spiritual mission)
and accessed the beyond-coming-and-going (beyond creation-extinction) sea of the
tathagatagarbha.

Chapter Eight: Concluding Summary

At that time, Ksitigarbha (Earth-Store) Bodhisattva, rising from amidst the assembly,
came before the Buddha. Joining his palms together [to pay respect] with his right knee
on the ground, he addressed the Buddha, "Lord! I observe that the assembly has [some]
doubts that have yet to be resolved. As the Tathagata is now willing to remove the doubts
[for us], I will now ask on behalf of this assembly on doubts that still remain. I beg that
the Tathagata, out of mercy and compassion, to take pity on us and grant this request."

The Buddha replied, "Bodhisattva-mahasattva! The way you are saving and liberating sentient beings shows great compassion and empathy. It is inconceivable. You should ask extensively. I will speak for you."

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, "Why are all dharmas not created through co-originations?"

Proclaiming the essence, the Tathagata recited the stanza:

If dharmas are created by co-originations,

No dharmas can exist when co-originations are absent.

Since dharmas are void of [independent] nature,

How can co-originations create dharmas?

Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, "If dharmas are beyond creation, how can the Buddha expound a Dharma that dharmas are created by the mind?"

Thereupon, the Lord recited the stanza:

Dharmas that are created by the mind,

Such dharmas cling to subject and object.

Like the sky-flowers in a drunkard's eyes,

Such dharmas are still not the otherwise (thusness).

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva then remarked, "If dharmas are like this, then they would be without parallels (be like thusness). Dharmas that have no parallels ought to be self-generated (without causes)."

Thereupon the Lord recited the stanza:

Dharmas are basically free from existence and nonexistence,

So is the case for existence of self (ego) and others.

With neither beginning [of existence] nor end [of nonexistence],

The success and failure [of everything] are non-abiding (void).

Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva said [quoting the Buddha], "The characteristics of all dharmas are the bases of Nirvana. Nirvana [itself] and the characteristics of the void are also the same. From the perspective of thusness, all dharmas without [characteristics of] thusness ought to be the same."

The Buddha agreed, "All dharmas without [characteristics of] thusness are the same [since they are mutually non-obstructing]."

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva said, "This is inconceivable. The characteristics of thusness is neither one nor different [from one]. Any clinging [related to speech and mind] by the mind and action [by the body] are void and calm. The void and calm mind and its dharmas are beyond grasping. Thus, they (mind and dharmas) too ought to be calm and extinct."

Thereupon, the Lord recited the stanza:

All dharmas which are void and calm,

Such dharmas are calm but not void,

When the mind has not [awakened to the] void,

This is a grasping mind that is not calm.

Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva said, "This Dharma [of the One-mind] is not of the three truths. For [the three truths relating to] sense-objects, the void and mind are also nonexistent. Since these [three] Dharmas are basically non-existent, the Dharma [of the One-mind] should also be nonexistent."

Thereupon the Lord recited the stanza:

Dharmas are basically without self-nature,

They arise through co-originating factors.

By not [abiding by] thusness,

Is how they are in thusness.

Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, "As all dharmas are beyond creation and extinction, how is it that they are not all one (identical)?"

Thereupon, the Lord recited the stanza:

An abode for dharmas does not exist,

Their characteristics and classifications are void, hence, nonexistent.

These two, naming and speech, and all dharmas,

Are the graspings by the subjects (sense-organs).

Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva remarked, "The characteristics of all dharmas do not abide by the two shores [of subject or object]. [Being non-abiding] they also do not linger mid-stream between them. Mind and consciousnesses are similarly [beyond creation-extinction]. How can all the sense-realms be created by consciousness? If consciousness is capable of creation, then consciousness [itself] must be created [by something else]. So how can consciousness be beyond creation? The subject that can create must have the object of its creation."

Thereupon, the Lord recited the stanza:

The object and subject of creation are two,

These two are subject and object of co-origination.

Since both are without independent nature,

Clinging to their existence is an illusion, like a sky-flower.

When consciousness has not arisen,

Sense-realms also are not being created.

When sense-realms have not been created,

Consciousness is also being extinguished (non-arising).

As these both are basically nonexistent.

They both neither exist nor do not exist.

Consciousness that is not created is also nonexistent,

How does sense-realms derive their own existence?"

Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva remarked, "Similarly, the characteristics of dharmas are void [both] internally (within consciousnesses of sense-organs) and externally (in sense objects). These two groups: sense-objects and [sense-organs] consciousnesses, are

basically calm and extinct. The Tathagata's explanation relates to a dharma's Absolute characteristic. A dharma that is absolutely void and thusly is beyond co-origination."

The Buddha responded, "So it is. A dharma that accords with Reality is beyond sense-objectification and is non-abiding. It can neither be co-originated nor can it co-originate. It is neither the subject [of the aggregates and the sense-realms], nor the great (elements). [It is] the Dharma of the one Self-Benediction (enlightenment). [Thus it is] the conglomeration of profound merits."

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva said, "It is inconceivable! It is an inconceivable conglomeration [of merits]! The seventh [consciousness] and the five [consciousnesses of the five sense-organs] are beyond creation. The eighth and sixth [consciousnesses] are calm and extinct. The characteristics of the ninth [consciousness, being the Absolute-void] are [therefore,] void and nonexistent. [Hence, within the ninth consciousness, it being the Absolute-void,] the void is also void [of existence]. The non-void is [similarly] void and nonexistent. As the Lord has explained, dharmas and essence are all void [ultimately]. Accessing the void (gate to liberation), there are no practices [that need to be cultivated], yet one does not neglect any action [such as the six paramitas]. There is neither self nor object-of-self, neither subject nor object of the body or object of perception. All the internal and external knots (defilements) are calm and still. Therefore, vows are also being extinguished. This thusly contemplation is the true thusness in which wisdom and concentration [are perfectly balanced]. The Lord constantly explains that the Dharma on the void is an excellent medicine."

The Buddha replied, "So it is. Why? Because the nature of the dharma (being nonexistent) is void. As this void-nature is beyond creation, the mind [that accesses the void] is perpetually non-creating. As this void-nature is beyond creation, the mind is perpetually beyond creation. As the void-nature is non-abiding, the mind is also non-abiding. As the void-nature is beyond any doing (beyond practice), the mind is also non-doing (beyond practice). The void, being free from both egress and access, is free of all gains and losses. The aggregates, sense-realms, etc., are also nonexistent. Therefore the mind is thusly and non-grasping! Bodhisattva, I have expounded the Dharma on the void in order to prick all [the graspings relating to] existence."

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva said, "Lord! Knowing that existence is unreal, like heat-waves (mirages) that appear as water, and that Reality is not nonexistent, like the nature of fire [inherent in wood], is a person who so contemplates wise?"

The Buddha replied, "So it is. Why? This person is contempla-ting Reality. [He is] contemplating on the one [characteristic of non-characteristics, i.e.,] calm-extinction. All characteristics and non-characteristics, being void [of nature], are being equally absorbed by the void, in the process where the void is being cultivated (understood/realized). [With a non-abiding mind where all characteristics arising during contemplation are being self-liberated, one accesses the dharmakaya and thus] does not fail to meet the buddhas. Since [when] one meets the buddhas, one does not follow the three currents (types) [of cultivators who are not able to awaken to buddhahood during their life-time].

"Within the Mahayana, the path of the three liberations [of the void, formlessness, and non-practice] has a single body (essence) which is void in nature. Since it is void in nature, it is [called] the void. Since it is void, it has no characteristics. As it has no characteristics, it is non-doing. As it is beyond practice, it seeks nothing. As it seeks nothing, it is free from expectation. As it is non-expecting, it is beyond vows. Since it is beyond vows, it understands all karmas [are the creations of the mind], and the need to purify (calm) the mind. As the mind is purified, one sees the buddhas. As one meets the buddhas, one then will be born in the Pure Land.

"Bodhisattva, this profound Dharma on the three liberations should be diligently cultivated. Wisdom and [right] concentration will then be perfected, leading to the transcendence of the three realms of existence."

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, "What the Tathagata has expounded on non-creation and non-extinction is the Dharma on impermanence [of dharmas]. Extinction arises by virtue of creation and extinction. But creation and extinction are self-extinguishing. [Once creation and extinction have been extinguished,] calm-extinction will be permanent. Once it is permanent, it cannot be broken. This is the perpetual Dharma which is beyond the three realms of existence. All the active (impermanent) dharmas [of the desire realm] and static (longer duration) dharmas [of the form and formless realms] that involve practices (doings), should be avoided like fire pits.

"Through what dharma may one rely upon as well as admonish oneself in order to access the one approach [to the perpetual Dharma]?"

The Buddha replied, "Bodhisattva! Admonish the mind on the three great matters, and access this practice via the three noble truths."

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, "How may one admonish one's mind on the three matters? How may one access the one practice via the three noble truths?"

The Buddha replied, "As regards the three great matters: the first is called cause, the second is called effect, and the third is called consciousness. These three matters are void and nonexistent basically. They are neither the self [as they are void in nature] nor are they the True-Self (Buddha-nature). How do the taints of craving arise in them? Contemplate these three matters. They are being bound by the bonds of attachment, causing sentient beings to aimlessly drift in the sea of suffering. On these matters one should constantly admonish oneself.

"As for the three noble truths: the first is called the path of bodhi. This is the noble truth of equality [as bodhi-nature is inherent in all sentient beings]. It is not a truth about inequality. The second truth is called the noble truth of wisdom attained through great enlightenment. It is not deviated-truth [of other pathways]. The third truth is that noble truth accessed through the simultaneous cultivation of wisdom and concentration. This truth is not accessed by practising them lopsidedly. Anyone who cultivates these three

truths along the path to buddhahood, will not fail to attain the great enlightenment. Accessing the wisdom of the great enlightenment, one exudes extremely great compassion, benefiting both one-self and others, and attains the bodhi of the buddhas."

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, "Lord! Such a Dharma [on the void] would be free from causes and co-originations. If a dharma is not co-originated, there should be no causes that can be generated. So how can such a motionless dharma access the [path of the] tathagatas?"

Wishing to proclaim the meaning, the Tathagata recited the stanza:

The characteristics of all dharmas,

Are void, nonexistent, and motionless by nature.

These dharmas at a specific time,

Are not arisen (not affected) through such time.

[As] dharmas have no differences in time,

They do not arise through differences in time.

Dharmas are beyond motion and stillness.

They are calm and extinct as their natures are void.

When their natures are void, calm, and extinct,

Then dharmas can appear [through co-origination].

When detached from all characteristics, they abide calmly.

As they abide calmly, they do not co-originate.

All co-originated dharmas,

Are co-originated, [but] not created.

As co-originating factors are not created or extinguished,

The nature of creation-extinction is hence void and calm.

The nature of co-origination gives rise to subject and object,

These co-originations arise from basic co-originating [nature].

Hence dharmas' arising is not [directly due to] co-origination.

This is also the case with the non-arising of co-origination.

All dharmas that arise through co-origination,

Such dharmas [being ultimately void] are purely co-originated.

The co-originating characteristics of creation and extinction,

Are themselves free from creation and extinction.

Those characteristics [being the Absolute] are thusly and real,

Basically neither manifest nor disappear.

All dharmas [being void of nature] at a specific time,

Co-originate manifestations and disappearances themselves.

Therefore the absolutely pure base,

Is not caused by other forces,

Precisely when this is subsequently attained,

One [re-]attains the Self-attainment (Self-Enlightenment).

When Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva heard what the Buddha said, his mind-ground (deepest part of the mind) was blissful and free. All in the assembly had no more doubts. Knowing their mind-state, [Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva] recited the stanza:

I knew the doubts in all their mind,

And accordingly inquired sincerely and extensively,

[Through] the Tathagata's great compassion and kindness,

[He] has analyzed [the doubts] with none remaining.

Everyone in the two [sub-] assemblies,

Has clearly understood.

From the Absolute-Domain,

I [vow to] liberate all sentient beings.

Like the great compassion of the Buddha,

Not abandoning the great vow.

Hence at the only-child state (viewing everyone as one's child),

[The bodhisattva] abides amidst defilements [to liberate others].

Then the Tathagata addressed the assembly: "This bodhi-sattva is inconceivable! He constantly relieves sentient beings from their sufferings through his great compassion. If there are sentient beings who keep the Dharma of this sutra, or keep this bodhisattva's name, they will not fall into the evil realms [of hell, hungry ghosts and animals], with all obstructions and difficulties completely eradicated. If there are sentient beings with no remaining stray thoughts, recite [or contemplate] exclusively on the Dharma of this sutra, cultivate and practise it, this bodhisattva will always manifest a transformation body to expound the Dharma to them. He will support them unceasingly, leading them to attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi quickly.

"You bodhisattvas, when liberating sentient beings, you should lead all of them to cultivate and practise this Absolute-Essence of the Mahayana."

Epilogue

At that time, Ananda arose from his seat, came forward and addressed the Buddha: "What the Tathagata has spoken is the conglomeration of merits of the Mahayana. It will definitely eradicate the knots (fettters). The perpetual benediction of enlightenment is inconceivable! What should the title of the sutra of this Dharma be? How much merit will those who receive and keep such a sutra accrue? May the Buddha be merciful and compassionate to explain this for us."

The Buddha replied, "Good man, the name of this sutra is inconceivable. It has been kept and maintained by all the buddhas of the past. It enabled them to access the tathagatas' all-embracing sea of wisdom. If a sentient being keeps this sutra, he then need seek no more from other sutras. The Dharma of this sutra is inclusive of [the essence of] all other Dharmas. It embraces the essence of all sutras. It is the unifying tie of the Dharmas of all the sutras. As for the title of this sutra, it is named Mahayanasamgraha-sutra; (Compendium of Mahayana sutras). It is also called Vajrasamadhi. It can also be called the Source of Immeasurable Doctrine. If a person receives and keeps this scripture, the merits therein is like one who supports hundreds of thousands of buddhas. Such merits are

comparable to the inconceivable limitless space. I now charge you with the dispensation of this sutra."

Ananda asked, "What sort of mentality and what type of person can receive and keep this sutra?"

The Buddha replied, "Good man, the mind of the person who receives and keeps this sutra ought to be free from gains or losses and constantly cultivating the spiritual life. Even in non-essential discussions, his mind is always blissful and calm. In the midst of crowded environment, his mind is collected (undistracted). Even if he lives at home (householder's life), he does not grasp at the three realms of existence.

"This person's appearance in the world is endowed with five merits. First, he is respected by the masses. Second, he will not meet with accidental or untimely death. Third, he will expertly rebut perverse views. Fourth, he will gladly ferry sentient beings across [to the other shore]. Fifth, he will be able to access the sagely path. Such a person will receive and keep this sutra."

Ananda asked, "Will a person who ferries sentient beings across [to the other shore] be worthy of receiving offerings, or not?"

The Buddha replied, "Such a person is able to become a great field of merits for sentient beings. He constantly exercises great wisdom [of the unexcelled bodhi] and displays both skilful means and wisdom. He is as worthy of receiving offerings as [any of] the four [levels of ascetic discipleship]. [Even if such a person dies] one may make offerings (pay respect) to his [partially cremated] head, eyes, marrow, and brain. So how could he not receive clothes and provisions? Good man, such a person is your mentor, your bridge. How could an ordinary person not pay respect to him?"

Ananda asked, "If, at that person's residence, one receives and keeps this sutra and pays respect and makes offerings to that person, how much merit would one accrue?"

The Buddha answered, "Besides, if, a person donates a city-full of gold and silver to charity, it would not be comparable to the inconceivable [merits] of one who maintains a four-line stanza of this sutra. Paying respect and making offerings to that person [the merits accrued thereof] is inconceivable!

"Good man, a person who guides all sentient beings to hold this sutra, his mind will always be collected and he will never forsake his mind-base (buddha-nature). Should he forget his mind-base, he must immediately repent. This Dharma of repentance produces coolness [of the mind]."

Ananda asked, "If one repents, would past evil deeds not be receded?"

The Buddha replied, "So it is. Like a dark room, when a bright lamp is brought into it, its darkness is being extinguished instantly. Good man! Talking about repentance from [evil deeds]; all evil deeds committed can be said to have receded into the past."

Ananda asked, "What is repentance (how repentance can be realized)?"

The Buddha replied, "By relying on the teachings of this sutra, one accesses the contemplation on Reality. Once contemplation has been accessed, all evil deeds will be completely extinguished. Leaving behind all evil realms, one will be born in the Pure Land, where one will quickly attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

When the Buddha completed expounding this sutra, Ananda, the bodhisattvas and the fourfold assembly [comprising the monks, nuns, lay male and lay female followers - alternatively it could mean the four groups in the assembly as mentioned in the first chapter] were all immensely elated. Their mind attained the certainty [of enlightenment]. They paid due respect to the Buddha by touching his feet with their foreheads. They gladly practised [the Buddha's teachings] respectfully.

07/01/2004

Introduction by Translator:

This translation into English from Chinese has been done, firstly, after consulting the excellent exposition on this sutra in Chinese by the late Venerable Shi Zhi Yu (from Taiwan) under the title: Jin-Gang-San-Mei-Jing-Yi-Bo-Ji (Notes on A Wave from Vajrasamadhi Sutra - ISBN 957-99267-5-1). Secondly, it is modeled after the format as well as adopted some of the vocabularies used in the original English translation forming part of a dissertation by Robert E. Buswell, Jr., Professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles, under the title: THE FORMATION OF CH'AN IDEOLOGY IN CHINA AND KOREA (ISBN 0-691-07336-8). All inadequacies and mistakes are entirely mine!

This sutra, although comparatively short, encompasses the essence of many, if not all the sutras, as clearly explained by the Buddha himself in the last chapter. It expounds the principle of DHARMAS, which means literally everything. For someone on the spiritual path, it gives a definitive view on what does not lead to enlightenment! Although this is a pre-eminent companion text for all followers of Ch'an (Zen), Dzogchen, Mahamudra, Taoism, and all non-dual spiritual paths, it can also act as a compass for all serious spiritual seekers.

As this sutra is full of gems, its reading should be done slowly with frequent reflections, if an uninitiated wants to reap maximum benefit out of it. It should be borne in mind that the wordings within small brackets () represent alternative terms for the word or phrase

immediately preceding it. On the other hand, wordings within large brackets [] are to help bring out the meanings more clearly, particularly in view of the fact that very often the same Chinese word can have more than one meaning.

Readers who are not familiar with the Buddha's spiritual attainments, may be flabbergasted by the enormous size of the audience mentioned in the first chapter which could put some fiction novels to shame. However, as one progresses, it should not be difficult to realize that the Buddha is a Master of Non-duality. The taste of the pudding, however, is to put what is being expounded in this sutra through personal practice and experimentation.

May I thank those friends who helped me in one way or another in the completion of the translation, especially to Martin Ng with the proof-reading.

May all be blissful from moment-to-moment. K C Oon