

The Great Prajna Paramita Sutra

Volume 29

(Fascicles 561-580)

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Da Bo Re Bo Luo Mi Duo Jing (600 Juan)

Translated from Sanskrit by

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Fascicle 561

Chapter 13

The Very Profound Dharma

(In the Fifth Assembly)

At that time, ten thousand heavenly sons from the realm of desire led by Heavenly Emperor Indra and twenty thousand heavenly sons from the world of Brahma led by great heavenly king Brahma all came to the Buddha's place. They bowed down on the ground before the Buddha's feet, stood to one side, and asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, what are the forms of the very profound dharma that you teach?"

The Buddha replied to the heavenly beings, "The very profound dharma that I teach adopts emptiness, formlessness, non-aspiration, nondoing, nonarising, nonextinction, nonreliance, and nonnature as forms."

(The Buddha explained the forms of the very profound dharma that he teaches to heavenly beings.)

In the meantime, the heavenly beings said to the Buddha again, "The dharma that the Buddha teaches does not rely on anything; it is like empty space that cannot be manifested. The forms of the very profound dharma that the Thus-Come One teaches cannot be established or destroyed by the heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth of the world. Why? The heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth of the world are the dharmas with forms. The dharmas with forms cannot establish or destroy the formless dharmas. The forms of the dharma that the Thus-Come One teaches does not fall into the category of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness, or into the category of humans and nonhumans. The humans and nonhumans cannot establish or destroy them."

At that time, the Buddha asked the heavenly beings, “Suppose that someone asks, ‘Who has made empty space? Who can destroy it?’ Does this person ask appropriate questions?”

The heavenly beings replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why? Empty space has no body, action, and forms, so how can such a question be asked: can empty space be established and destroyed?”

At that time, the Buddha said to the heavenly beings, “Yes, it is as you say. You must know, heavenly beings, the very profound dharma that I teach is like empty space. The very profound dharma cannot be established or destroyed. This dharma is always as it has been whether the Buddhas appear in the world or not. The Buddhas have been awakened to these forms as they really are, so they are called the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One.”

In the meantime, the heavenly beings said to the Buddha again, “The forms that the Thus-Comers have been awakened to are too profound to be seen or realize. As the Thus-Comers awaken intuitively to these forms, their knowledge of all dharmas has no more hindrances or hesitation. All Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones have dwelled in the realization of these forms to explicate respectively the fathomless prajna paramita. They have assembled all dharma forms and explained them expediently for sentient beings, so to let them attain unhindered knowledge in prajna paramita. The fathomless prajna paramita is where the Thus-Comers always practice. The Buddhas have in prajna paramita realized insightfully sarvajnaḥ, the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, and explain it respectively for sentient beings.”

(The Thus-Comers are called Thus-Comer because they are awakened to the forms of this very profound dharma. This dharma is the profound prajna paramita. After attaining the perfect knowledge, they teach and explicate it to sentient beings.)

At that time, the Buddha replied to the heavenly beings, “Yes, it is as you say. You must know, heavenly beings, the Thus-Comers have accurately awakened to the forms of all dharma as formless. Because of this cause and condition, I say that the Buddhas have attained unhindered knowledge; no one other than the Buddhas can do that.”

At that time, the World-Honored One said to Well-Appearing One, “The fathomless prajna paramita is the mother of all Buddhas; it can show the real phenomena of the dharmas in the world. Therefore, the Buddhas dwell in the dharma, and make offerings respectfully to esteem, acclaim, absorb, accept, protect, and keep the dharma in which they dwell. This dharma is the fathomless prajna paramita. All Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones have relied on the fathomless prajna paramita and made offerings respectfully to, esteemed, acclaimed, absorbed, accepted, protected, and kept it. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita can give birth to the Buddhas, serve as the abode where the Buddhas can dwell, and show the real phenomena of the dharmas in the world.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, all Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones know the favor granted by others. They also love to repay the favor with gratitude. If someone asks, ‘Who knows the favor and returns the favor,’ the correct answer is, ‘The Buddha knows the favor and returns the favor.’ Why? No sentient beings in the world can do better to know and return the favor than the Buddha.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “How do the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones know and repay the favor?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “All Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones have ridden this vehicle and

walked on the right path to reach the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. After attaining the bodhi, they make offerings respectively to esteem, acclaim, absorb, accept, protect, and keep this vehicle and this path uninterruptedly. You must know that this vehicle and this path are the fathomless prajna paramita. This is how the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones know and return the favor.

(The Buddha repays the favor by esteeming and protecting the profound prajna paramita of the great vehicle.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, all Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One rely on the fathomless prajna paramita to awaken to the truth that all dharmas have no real making because makers are nonexistent. All Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One rely on the fathomless prajna paramita to awaken to the truth that all dharmas can accomplish nothing because the forms and the substances are unattainable. You must know, Well-Appearing One, because the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones have relied on the fathomless prajna paramita to become awakened to the truth that all dharmas have no making and can accomplish nothing, they have always made offerings respectfully to esteem, acclaim, absorb, accept, protect, and keep the fathomless prajna paramita uninterruptedly. This is how they know the favor and repay it.

(The Buddha explained how Thus-Comers acknowledge the favor and repay the favor.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, all Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones have relied on the fathomless prajna paramita to understand how all dharmas turn without operation, accomplishment, and arising. You must know that the fathomless prajna paramita can

give birth to the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones and show the real phenomena of the dharmas in the world.”

(The Buddha taught that prajna paramita gives birth to Thus-Comers and shows them the real phenomena of all dharmas in the world.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “The Thus-Comer often says that all dharma natures have no arising, initiation, knowledge, or views. Then how can we say that the fathomless prajna paramita gives birth to the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones and shows the forms of the world as they really are?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes. As you say, all dharma natures have no arising, initiation, knowledge, or views. Why does the dharma natures have no arising, initiation, knowledge, and views? It is because all dharmas are empty and not existent and have nothing to rely on or belong to. Because of this cause and condition, they have no arising, initiation, knowledge, or views. You must know, Well-Appearing One, the fathomless prajna paramita can give birth to the Buddhas and show the real forms of the world, but it truly neither gives birth nor shows anything. You must know, Well-Appearing One, because the fathomless prajna paramita does not see matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness, it has shown the forms of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness.”

(Prajna paramita reveals the true nature of all dharmas by demonstrating that all dharmas are essentially nonexistent.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “How does the fathomless prajna paramita reveal the forms of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness when it does not see matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Prajna paramita does not initiate

consciousness through matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness, so it does not perceive matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. Because it does not perceive matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness, it reveals the forms of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. Because of this meaning, the fathomless prajna paramita can reveal the real forms of the dharmas in the world. Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the fathomless prajna paramita can show emptiness, getting away, purity, and tranquility of the world to the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones, so it is said that it can reveal the real forms of the world; namely, the real forms of the world are empty, getting away, pure, and tranquil.”

(The Buddha explained why prajna paramita can reveal the real forms of the world.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “The fathomless prajna paramita has appeared in the world for the sake of one great thing as well as for the sake of the inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal thing.”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes, it is as you say. Well-Appearing One, what is meant by saying that the fathomless prajna paramita has appeared in the world for the sake of one great thing? It means that the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones have been dedicated to one great thing, namely, rescuing all sentient beings uninterruptedly without a brief break. The fathomless prajna paramita has appeared in the world for the sake of this great thing.

(The Buddha clarified the meaning of the statement that prajna paramita appears in the world for the sake of one great thing.)

“Well-Appearing One, what is meant by saying that the fathomless prajna paramita has appeared in the world for the sake of the inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal thing? It means that the Buddha nature, Thus-

Comer nature, natural awakening nature, and the nature of the perfect knowledge of everything of the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones are all inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal. The fathomless prajna paramita has appeared in the world for the sake of this thing.”

(The Buddha clarified the meaning of the statement that prajna paramita appears in the world for the sake of the inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal thing.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Are only the Buddha nature, Thus-Comer nature, natural awakening nature, and the nature of the perfect knowledge of everything of the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal? Are matter, feeling, thinking, action, consciousness, and so forth, and all dharmas also inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Not only the Buddha nature, Thus-Comer nature, natural awakening nature, and the nature of the perfect knowledge of everything of the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones are inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal, but also matter, feeling, thinking, action, consciousness, and so forth, and all dharmas are inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal. Why? In the real nature of all dharmas, the mind and the associated images are unattainable.

(Not only the Buddha nature, Thus-Comer nature, natural awakening nature, and the nature of all perfect knowledge of everything are inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal, but also the five aggregates, even all other

dharmas, are inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal. It is because the mind and the associated images are unattainable within the real nature of all dharmas.)

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, because matter, feeling, thinking, action, consciousness, and all dharmas cannot be established, they are inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal. Why? It is because all dharmas have no self-nature, their self-natures are empty, and all dharmas are unattainable. Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, because matter, feeling, thinking, action, consciousness, and all dharmas are unattainable, they are inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal. Why? It is because all these dharmas are limitless in quantity, nonexistent, and their self-natures are empty. Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, because matter, feeling, thinking, action, consciousness, and all dharmas are limitless in quantity, they are inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “What cause and condition make matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness and all dharmas limitless in quantity?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One by asking him, “What do you think about this? Does empty space have mind and the associated images? Are the mind and the associated images limited in quantity?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness and all dharmas are much like empty space. Because their self-natures are empty, the mind and the associated images are limitless. Because of this cause and condition, matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness, as well as all dharmas are limitless in quantity; therefore, these dharmas are inconceivable,

immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal. You must know, Well-Appearing One, because all dharmas are inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal, all Buddha dharma, Thus-Comer dharma, natural awakening dharma, and the dharma of the perfect knowledge of everything of the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones are also inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal.

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, all these dharmas are inconceivable because conceivability extinguishes. They are immeasurable because measurement extinguishes. They are uncountable because quantity extinguishes. They are unequaled equal because equal equality extinguishes. You must know, Well-Appearing One, all these dharmas are inconceivable because they transcend conceivability. They are immeasurable because they transcend measurement. They are uncountable because they transcend quantity. They are unequaled equal because they transcend equal equality. You must know, Well-Appearing One, the inconceivable, the immeasurable, the uncountable, and the unequaled equal are merely designated statements of non-nature. You must know, Well-Appearing One, they are all like empty space that is nonexistent. Because of this cause and condition, all Buddha dharma, Thus-Comer dharma, natural awakening dharma, and the dharma of the perfect knowledge of everything of the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones are inconceivable, immeasurable, uncountable, and unequaled equal. No voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth of the world can conceive, measure, count, and equal all these dharmas.”

(The statement that all dharmas are inconceivable, immeasurable, and so forth is the designated names for the non-nature of all dharmas.)

As the Thus-Comer was teaching this inconceivable, immeasurable,

uncountable, and unequaled equal dharma, five hundred bhiksus (monks) and twenty bhiksunis (nuns) in the assembly attained mind liberation and removed all flaws permanently; sixty thousand upasakas (laymen) and thirty thousand upasikas (laywomen) developed pure dharma eye and stayed far away from the defilements in all dharmas; and twenty great bodhisattvas attained forbearance of nonarising and were conferred by the Buddha a prophecy of becoming the Buddhas in the Kalpa of the Sages to deliver sentient beings.

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Does the fathomless prajna paramita appear in the world really for the sake of one great thing?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes. The fathomless prajna paramita appears in the world really for the sake of one great thing. Why? As the fathomless prajna paramita leads to the achievement of the perfect knowledge of everything, both stages of voice-hearer and self-enlightened one are also contained.

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, Ksatriya, the great king of Pouring Water on Head possessed great authority and virtues capable of surpassing all others, however, he delegated all administrative responsibilities to his high-ranking officials, choosing instead to enjoy leisure and personal freedom. Likewise, the Thus-Comers, who are supreme dharma kings with authority and powers to overcome all, entrusting all Buddha dharma, including the dharma of self-enlightened one or voice-hearer, to the fathomless prajna paramita for their fulfillment. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, the fathomless prajna paramita has appeared in the world really for the sake of one great thing.

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, the fathomless prajna paramita appears in the world not for the sake of absorbing and grasping matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness, and so forth, and stream-entry effect, once-return effect, nonreturn effect, arhat effect, self-enlightenment bodhi, or the perfect knowledge of

all perfect knowledge.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Why does prajna paramita appear in the world not for the sake of absorbing and grasping the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge?”

The Buddha replied by asking, “Well-Appearing One, what do you think about this? Have you seen arhat effect absorb and grasp any dharma?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One, I have not seen arhat effect absorb and grasp any dharma.”

The Buddha said, “Excellent, Well-Appearing One, I have not seen the Thus-Comer dharma absorb or grasp any dharma either. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, the fathomless prajna paramita appears in the world not for the sake of absorbing or grasping the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.”

At that time, the heavenly sons from the realm of Brahma said to the Buddha, “Such prajna paramita is very profound; it is difficult to see and awaken to, and extremely difficult to believe and understand. Only those who have taken great vows at innumerable Buddhas’ places and planted many virtuous roots can believe and understand it. Suppose that the sentient beings in the large threefold thousand-world have achieved the actions in accord with the belief and cultivated the actions of their current stages for one kalpa or longer, the merits and virtues thus gained will be less by innumerable times than the merits and virtues gained by one person who has practiced the pleasure of forbearance in the profound prajna paramita and reflected on, measured, contemplated, and investigated it for one day.”

At that time, the Buddha said to the heavenly sons, “Yes, it is as you say. You must know, heavenly sons, if good gentlepersons hear the fathomless prajna paramita and attain nirvana quickly, then they are superior to the sentient beings who have achieved the actions in accord with belief and cultivated the actions of their current

stages for one kalpa or longer, let alone the person who has practiced the pleasure of forbearance in the profound prajna paramita, and reflected on, measured, contemplated, and investigated it for one day.”

When hearing the Buddha’s teaching, the heavenly sons rejoiced, jumped, and danced. They bowed down to the ground before the Thus-Come, walked around him clockwise three times, and then disappeared. They returned to their own palaces and encouraged the heavenly beings there to cultivate the superior actions.

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “If bodhisattvas can deeply believe in and understand prajna paramita, where are they from before being reborn here?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas can develop deep belief in and understanding of the fathomless prajna paramita without skepticism and suffocation when hearing it; love to see, hear, stay in mindfulness of, and reflect on its profound essential meanings; follow the dharma teachers as a baby cow following her mother without a brief break; and never ever stay far away from prajna paramita and its dharma teachers until thoroughly understanding the essential meanings correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita, then these bodhisattvas must have been reborn here from the human world owing to previous superior causes.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Are there the bodhisattvas who have achieved such superior merits and virtues reborn here after serving and making offerings to the Buddha in other directions?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Some bodhisattvas have achieved such superior merits and virtues and are reborn here after serving and making offerings to the Buddha in other directions.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, some bodhisattvas have achieved such merits and virtues because they had served and made offerings to Bodhisattva

Maitreya in the Heaven of Tusita in previous lives. They had heard the fathomless prajna paramita and inquired about its essential meanings there, then they were reborn here from that heaven.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, some bodhisattvas had heard the fathomless prajna paramita in previous lives, but they did not inquire about its profound essential meanings. In current life, they have also heard prajna paramita and remained skeptical and confused and cannot understand it. Why? Those who do not understand the profound and ultimate meaning of the dharma will get lost; they will be skeptical and suffocated.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, some bodhisattvas had heard the fathomless prajna paramita in their previous lives; they inquired about its essential meanings, but they did not cultivate as they were taught long enough; no more than one day, two days, and so forth, and five days. In this lifetime, they have also heard the fathomless prajna paramita, their minds have remained solid and indestructible for a certain period. But as they stay away from prajna paramita or dharma teacher, they will not inquire about its profound meanings and will regress soon. Why? These bodhisattvas did not cultivate prajna paramita diligently as they were taught in previous lives although they had heard it and asked about its profound essential meanings. In present life, they are not stable in cultivating prajna paramita. Sometimes they love to listen to its teaching while sometimes they do not. Sometimes they are solid and determined while sometimes they are not. Their minds are unsteady, like cotton flying in wind. These novice large vehicle practitioners have belief, but not pure and strong enough, so they cannot always follow the fathomless prajna paramita with belief and joy. They will fall into one of the two vehicles.”

Chapter 14

The Similes of the Ship and Others

(In the Fifth Assembly)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, a shipwreck occurred in the ocean, the merchants on the ship struggling to get to the seashore should grab a piece of wood, a floating bag, or a corpse when they swam. This is the only thing they can rely on in to reach the other shore safely without being hurt. So do bodhisattvas. If they have developed perfect belief, forbearance, fondness, motivation, diligence, definitive understanding, self-restraint, superior joyful intention, equanimity, respect, and the mind of purity in the great vehicle; if they can further hold well the yoke of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and absorb the fathomless prajna paramita as something that they can rely on, you must know that they will never regress halfway and fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. They certainly will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if good gentlepersons hold the well finished vases to draw water from river, pond, well, spring, or ditch, the vases will not be worn out soon. Why? It is because these vases are perfectly produced, they are very solid and can carry water for a long time. Similarly, if bodhisattvas have developed perfect belief, forbearance, fondness, motivation, diligence, definitive understanding, self-restraint, superior joyful intention, equanimity, respect, and the mind of purity in the great vehicle, and further hold well the yoke of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and absorb the fathomless prajna paramita as something that they can rely on, you must know that they will never regress halfway nor fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. They certainly will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.

(The Buddha used similes to explain and distinguish the bodhisattvas who do not regress from those who will fall into the two vehicles.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if the merchant has skillful wisdom, he will have the ship well fixed and maintained at the pier, making sure that it is not leaky before loading the goods on it, so the ship will arrive at its destination in peace and safety. Similarly, if bodhisattvas have developed perfect belief, forbearance, fondness, motivation, diligence, definitive understanding, self-restraint, superior joyful intention, equanimity, respect, and the mind of purity in the great vehicle, and further hold well the yoke of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and absorb the fathomless prajna paramita as something that they can rely on, you must know that they will never regress halfway nor fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. They certainly will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, a man aged one hundred and twenty years old was very weak and suffered from one of the three kinds of illness: wind, heat, and phlegm, or from a mixture of them. This old man was too ill to get up from his bed to go anywhere by himself. Two strong men then appeared to assist him under his armpits on each side. They said to him, ‘Don’t be worried. We will help you wherever you go. We will never leave you alone so you can arrive at the destination in safety.’ Similarly, if bodhisattvas have developed perfect belief, forbearance, fondness, motivation, diligence, definitive understanding, self-restraint, superior joyful intention, equanimity, respect, and the mind of purity in the great vehicle, and further hold well the yoke of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and absorb the fathomless prajna paramita as something they can rely on, they will never regress halfway and fall in the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. They certainly will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.”

Chapter 15

The Thus-Comer

Section 1

(In the Fifth Assembly)

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “How should novice bodhisattvas learn the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “If novice bodhisattvas would like to learn prajna paramita, they should first stay with and serve the virtuous friends. Those who can lecture on the fathomless prajna paramita and give teachings and cautions to bodhisattvas are virtuous friends. They will say, ‘Come here, good gentlemen, you should cultivate diligently giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas. When practicing them, you should adopt nonattainment as skillful means and transfer the merits and virtues toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. When undertaking transference, you should not grasp the bodhi for the sake of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. Why? The nature of the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge cannot be grasped. You good gentlemen should not be attached to the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one.’ Those who can teach and caution the novice bodhisattvas this way and guide them gradually to enter prajna paramita are virtuous friends for bodhisattvas.”

(The Buddha described the traits of virtuous friends for bodhisattvas.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “When bodhisattvas aspire to and cultivate the bodhi, they undertake a very difficult thing.”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes. Bodhisattvas always do difficult things. They aspire to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi to bring benefits and happiness to sentient beings in the world. They will vow: ‘I swear to cultivate diligently toward the great bodhi to rescue sentient beings in the world, serving as houses, refuge, isles, ultimate path, mentors, and destination for them.’

Well-Appearing One, why do bodhisattvas vow to aspire to the great bodhi to rescue sentient beings of the world? The bodhisattvas have observed that the sentient beings of the world are sinking in the suffering of birth and death unable to get rid of it. The bodhisattvas would like to teach them the essential meanings of the correct dharma to relieve their suffering, so they make vows to work diligently and realize the great bodhi. Well-Appearing One, how do bodhisattvas aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to serve as houses for sentient beings? Bodhisattvas will aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to teach sentient beings that all dharmas do not combine.

Well-Appearing One asked, “How do bodhisattvas teach sentient beings that all dharmas do not combine?”

The Buddha replied, “Well-Appearing One, bodhisattvas will teach that both five aggregates and all dharmas do not combine; they are without bondage and relief, arising and extinction. This is how they provide houses for all sentient beings.

“Well-Appearing One, how do bodhisattvas aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to serve as refuge for sentient beings of the world? Bodhisattvas will aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to expediently and skillfully teach the essential meanings of the correct dharma for sentient beings, so they can be liberated from the suffering of birth, old age, illness, death, worry, sorrow, upset, and misery.

“Well-Appearing One, how do bodhisattvas aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to serve as islets for sentient beings of the world? Bodhisattvas will

aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to teach sentient beings that the five aggregates in the past and the five aggregates in the future are not connected. Because of this disconnection, all dharmas are disconnected. This disconnection is the tranquil, subtle, and exquisite nirvana; it is the not upside-down nature as it really is. In ocean, river, or pond, a piece of raised land is called islet. Similarly, nirvana is a peaceful and comfortable place in the world.

“Well-Appearing One, how do bodhisattvas aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to reveal the ultimate path for sentient beings of the world?

Bodhisattvas will aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to teach sentient beings of the world that matter is not matter in its ultimate nature; feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness are not feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness in their ultimate natures. It is because the ultimate dharma natures are not matter, feeling, and so forth.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said, “World-Honored One, if the ultimate dharma natures of matter, feeling, and so forth are not matter, feeling, and so forth, then bodhisattvas should have attained the bodhi due to the non-differentiation among various ultimate dharma natures.”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes. There are no differentiations among the ultimate dharma natures. But bodhisattvas can do very difficult things; they can contemplate all dharmas this way, but they do not grasp it, nor are they sunk or drowned. They just think, ‘I have awakened intuitively to this dharma, now I am ready to teach sentient beings of the world about this dharma so that they can understand the forms of the ultimate path.’

“Well-Appearing One, how do bodhisattvas aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to serve as mentors for sentient beings of the world? They will aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to teach that the original nature of matter is

without arising and extinction; so are feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness.

They will also teach sentient beings of the world that the original natures of stream-entry, once-return effect, and so forth, and the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi are without arising and extinction.

“Well-Appearing One, how do bodhisattva aspire to and cultivate diligently the great bodhi to serve as destination for sentient beings of the world? The bodhisattvas will aspire to and cultivate the great bodhi to teach and explicate that matter adopts empty space as destination; feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness and all dharmas also adopt empty space as destination. The bodhisattvas will teach and explicate that as matter is without destination, it is equivalent to empty space; feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness and all dharmas are without destination, so they are equivalent to empty space. Like great empty space which is without coming and going, doing and dwelling, and arising and extinction, so are all dharmas. Much like empty space, all dharmas are also without differentiation. Why? Matter is empty, so it is without coming and going; feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness and all dharmas are empty, so they are without coming and going. Why? All dharmas have adopted emptiness, formlessness, nonaspiration, nonmaking, nondoing, nonarising, non-nature, dream-like nature, illusion-like nature, selflessness, boundlessness, tranquility, nirvana, nongrasping, nonrenunciation, noncoming, nongoing, and utmost tranquil extinction as destinations. All dharmas cannot transcend these destinations.”

(The Buddha said that all dharmas, like empty space, do not come and go, arise and extinguish, and so forth, and differentiate. They do not have destination.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Who can believe in and understand such profound dharma?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas have cultivated

great actions long enough, made offerings to innumerable Buddhas, made great vows at the Buddhas' places, planted virtuous roots that now are mature, and been absorbed by innumerable virtuous friends, they can develop deep belief in and understanding of this profound dharma.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “What do bodhisattvas adopt as the natures of this profound dharma?”

The Buddha replied, “The bodhisattvas adopt modification, taming, and getting far away as natures. Because of these natures, they can get to understand the fathomless prajna paramita.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “As the bodhisattvas understand the fathomless prajna paramita, what destination will they approach?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “They will approach the perfect knowledge of everything as destination.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha again, “As bodhisattvas reach this destination, they will be able to serve as the destination for innumerable and boundless sentient beings.”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes. If bodhisattvas realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they will be able to serve as the destination for innumerable and boundless sentient beings.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “These bodhisattvas can do very difficult things; namely, they can wear solid armor to ferry innumerable and boundless sentient beings to enter nirvana, while all sentient beings are unattainable.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Yes, it is as you say.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the armor that bodhisattvas wear does not

belong to matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness; it does not belong to voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, bodhisattvas, the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, and all dharmas. Why? All dharmas belong to nothing.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha again, “When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas do not dwell in the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “Based on what meanings do you say so?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “The fathomless prajna paramita has no dwelling and attachment. If one cultivates prajna paramita, they do not cultivate any dharma; the cultivator, the time and the place of cultivation, and the cause of cultivation are all unattainable. World-Honored One, the fathomless prajna paramita is not a fixed dharma. If cultivating all dharmas, cultivating boundlessness, and cultivating nonabsorption like cultivating empty space, then they do cultivate prajna paramita.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Yes, it is as you say.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, we should contemplate and investigate the great bodhisattvas of nonregression based on the fathomless prajna paramita. If they do not greedily desire for the fathomless prajna paramita, do not grasp the words and teaching given by others as genuine and important, do not believe and follow others’ advice to act, and will not be shocked, frightened, scared, sunk, drowned, skeptical, regretful, getting lost, and suffocated when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita; rather, they will love hearing it and deeply believe in and accept it, then these bodhisattvas certainly will not regress in their pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. They must have heard all essential meanings of the fathomless prajna paramita in previous lives, so they are not shocked, frightened, and overwhelmed upon hearing the fathomless prajna paramita in this life.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “If bodhisattvas are not scared, frightened, and so forth when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita, how do they contemplate and investigate the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “These bodhisattvas will contemplate and investigate prajna paramita with a mind in compliance with the perfect knowledge of everything.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “How will they contemplate and investigate prajna paramita with a mind in compliance with the perfect knowledge of everything?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas contemplate and investigate prajna paramita with a mind in compliance with empty space, they do it with a mind in compliance with the perfect knowledge of everything. Why? The perfect knowledge of everything is innumerable and boundless. Being innumerable and boundless means that it is not matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness; it is not attainment, intuitive contemplation, perfect knowledge, perception, arising, extinction, cultivation, and doing; it comes from nowhere and goes nowhere; it has no direction, area, or dwelling; it can only be said innumerable and boundless. You must know, Well-Appearing One, empty space is innumerable and boundless, so the perfect knowledge of everything is innumerable and boundless. The perfect knowledge of everything is innumerable and boundless, so no one can realize it. No matter, feeling, and so forth, and consciousness can realize it; no giving paramita, pure-precept paramita, and so forth, and prajna paramita can realize it. Why? Matter, feeling, and so forth, and consciousness are the perfect knowledge of everything; they are neither dualistic nor separate. Giving paramita, pure-precept paramita, and so forth, and prajna paramita are the perfect knowledge of everything; they are neither dualistic nor

separate.”

(The Buddha instructed how bodhisattvas should hold correct realization of the real forms of all dharmas when practicing prajna paramita.)

At that time, the heavenly sons of Brahma from the realm of desire came to the Buddha’s place and said to the Buddha, “Such prajna paramita is very profound. It is difficult to see and awaken to.”

The Buddha said to the heavenly sons, “Yes, it is as you say. When I contemplated this meaning and became the Buddha, I sat, once thinking that it would be better not to teach this dharma, ‘This dharma is very profound; the sentient beings of the world will not believe in and accept it.’ The dharma that I realized at that time is prajna paramita. This dharma is very profound; the one who realizes, the dharma realized, the time and place of realization, and the cause of realization are all unattainable. You must know, heavenly sons, because empty space is very profound, this dharma is very profound. Because the ‘I’ is very profound, this dharma is very profound. Because all dharma natures have no coming and going, this dharma is very profound.”

(The Buddha acknowledged that the dharma he realized upon enlightenment was extremely profound and difficult to understand, so he considered not to teach it to sentient beings.)

Meanwhile, the heavenly sons said to the Buddha again, “It is unique and rare, World-Honored One. The dharma that the Buddha teaches is very difficult to believe and understand. The dharma that the Buddha teaches has no grasping and renunciation, but the sentient beings of the world have grasping and renunciation.”

At that time, the Buddha said to the heavenly sons, “Yes, it is as you say.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “The dharma that the Buddha teaches is very subtle and exquisite; it can be compliant with all

dharmas. It has no hindrances. It is equivalent to empty space. The dharma that the Buddha teaches is without arising in the final analysis only because all dharmas of arising are unattainable. The dharma that the Buddha teaches dwells nowhere because all places are unattainable.”

The Buddha replied, “Yes, Well-Appearing One.”

In the meantime, the heavenly sons said to the Buddha, “The great virtuous Well-Appearing One is really a Buddha’s son. He is born by following the Thus-Comer; all what he says are correspondent with emptiness.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One said to the heavenly sons, “You say that I am born by following the Thus-Comer. Why is Well-Appearing One born by following the Thus-Comer? It is because he arises by following the realness of the Thus-Comer. All dharmas that may arise are unattainable. The realness of the Thus-Comer does not come and go and inherently does not arise. The realness of Well-Appearing One does not come and go and inherently does not arise. So, it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer is the realness of all dharmas, and the realness of all dharmas is the realness of the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer has no realness nature, nor non-realness nature. So is the realness of Well-Appearing One. Therefore, it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer. The form of the realness of the Thus-Comer is endurance, but it dwells nowhere. So is the realness of Well-Appearing One. Therefore, it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer has no hindrances and worries, and the realness of all dharmas has no hindrances and worries. So is the realness of Well-Appearing One. Therefore, it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer and the realness of all dharmas share the same realness; they are not dualistic and separate; they do not make or act. Such

realness is as it has always been without exception, even for a brief instant. Therefore, the realness is neither dualistic nor separate. So is the realness of Well-Appearing One. Therefore, it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer has no memory, mindfulness, and differentiation in all places; the realness of all dharmas has no memory, mindfulness, and differentiation in all places either. So is the realness of Well-Appearing One. Therefore, it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer has no different realness and is unattainable; the realness of all dharmas has no different realness and is unattainable. So is the realness of Well-Appearing One. Therefore, it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer is not apart from the realness of all dharmas, and the realness of all dharmas is not apart from the realness of the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer is as it has always been. So is the realness of Well-Appearing One. Therefore, it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer. Although it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer, such birth has never really happened. It is because the realness of Well-Appearing One is not different from the Buddha. The realness of the Thus-Comer does not go and come; the realness of all dharmas does not go and come either. So does the realness of Well-Appearing One. Therefore, it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer. The Thus-Comer is the realness of the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer follows the realness in the past, and the realness in the past follows the realness of the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer follows the realness in the future, and the realness in the future follows the realness of the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer follows the realness in the present, and the realness in the present follows the realness of the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer follows the realness of the three phases

of time, and the realness of the three phases of time follows the realness of the Thus-Comer. The realness of the Thus-Comer and the realness of the three phases of time are neither dualistic nor separate. The realness of all dharmas and the realness of Well-Appearing One are neither dualistic nor separate. So, it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer. The realness of the bodhisattva is the realness of the Buddha. Because of the realness, when the bodhisattvas attain the bodhi, they are called the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One. When the Thus-Comer realizes insightfully this realness, the six kinds of quake happen in the large threefold thousand-world. I have developed deep belief in and understanding of the realness of all dharmas, so it is said that Well-Appearing One arises by following the Thus-Comer.

(Well-Appearing One guided all heavenly sons to the realization that all dharmas, including Thus-Comer, bodhisattvas, Well-Appearing One, and other dharmas, share the same realness.)

“You must know, heavenly sons, Well-Appearing One is born by following the Thus-Comer not because of matter, feeling, and so forth, and consciousness; not because of stream-entry effect, once-return effect, and so forth, and self-enlightenment bodhi; nor because of the perfect knowledge of everything. It is because of the realness. You must know, Well-Appearing One is thus born not by following matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness or by following stream-entry effect, once-return effect, and so forth, and self-enlightenment bodhi. He is born by following the Thus-Comer.”

In the meantime, Sariputra said to the Buddha, “So the Thus-Comer is very profound, subtle, and exquisite.”

The Buddha said to Sariputra, “Yes, it is as you say. The Thus-Comer is very profound, subtle, and exquisite.”

When the forms of the Thus-Come were taught, three thousand bhiksus attained mind liberation and became the arhats with all their flaws terminated permanently. Five hundred bhiksunis had developed pure dharma eye and stayed far away from defilements. Five thousand heavenly beings attained dharma forbearance of nonarising. Sixty bodhisattvas attained mind liberation with their flaws eliminated permanently.

At that time, the Buddha said to Sariputra, “Now in this assembly, sixty bodhisattvas had in the past stayed closely with and made offerings to five hundred Buddhas. They had cultivated giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna, but they did not absorb the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, so they turned away to cultivate other actions than prajna paramita. Although they encounter the great dharma today, they can only achieve the elimination of all flaws and the attainment of mind liberation. Sariputra, if bodhisattvas practice the bodhisattva path of emptiness, formlessness, and nonaspiration without absorbing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they will grasp reality and fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one.

“Sariputra, a bird was as big and wide as one hundred yojanas, two hundred yojanas, and so forth, and five hundred yojanas. Her wings were not well grown yet, or they had become weak and powerless because the bird was old. This bird threw herself down to the continent of Jambudvipa from the Heaven of Thirty-Three Smaller Heavens and thought halfway: ‘I want to fly back to the Heaven of Thirty-Three Smaller Heavens.’ What do you think about this? Could this bird fly back to the Heaven?”

Sariputra replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Sariputra, “This bird might think in the middle of the flight,

‘I hope I can get to the continent of Jambudvīpa safe and uninjured.’ What do you think about this? Could the bird have this wish fulfilled?”

Sariputra replied, “No, World-Honored One. When the bird arrived at the continent of Jambudvīpa, she would get hurt or die. Why? The bird’s body was huge and her wings were not mature and not power enough.”

The Buddha said to Sariputra, “So do the good gentlepersons of the bodhisattva vehicle. They have aspired to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment and cultivated diligently giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, and meditation. They have also cultivated the liberation gates of emptiness, formlessness, and nonaspiration. But they do not absorb the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, so they will grasp reality and fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. Sariputra, these bodhisattvas have stayed in the mindfulness of the aggregates of precept, concentration, and so forth, and the knowledge and the views of the liberation of the Buddhas in the three phases of time, but their minds have been attached to forms. They do not truly understand the merits and virtues of the five aggregates, once hearing the voice of emptiness they will be attached to the forms and transfer them toward the bodhi, they thus will fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. Why? Sariputra, because these bodhisattvas have stayed far away from the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita, they are inevitable to receive such effect due to natural law.”

Meanwhile, Sariputra said to the Buddha, “My understanding of the meanings taught by the Buddha is that if bodhisattvas stay far away from the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita, they will either attain or not attain the bodhi even if other merits and virtues for nurturing and fulfilling the cultivation are seemingly well prepared. Therefore, if bodhisattvas would like to attain the bodhi, they absolutely should not stay far away from the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita.”

At that time, the Buddha replied to Sariputra, “Yes, it is as you say.”

(The Buddha confirmed Sariputra’s statement that the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita is essential for achieving the unsurpassed bodhi.)

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Chapter 15

The Thus-Comer

Section 2

(In the Fifth Assembly)

At that time, the heavenly sons from the Brahma world in the realm of desire joined their palms respectfully and said to the Buddha, “Such prajna paramita is very profound and extremely difficult to believe and understand. The unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of the Buddhas is also very profound and extremely difficult to believe and understand.”

The Buddha replied to the heavenly sons, “Yes, it is as you say.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “If my understanding of the meanings taught by the Buddha is correct, the unsurpassed bodhi is not difficult to believe in and attain. Why? All dharmas are empty in the final analysis. In emptiness, not a dharma can believe and attain another dharma. Why? The self-natures of all dharmas are empty. As teaching the dharma to terminate permanently all dharmas, this dharma itself is also empty. Because of this cause and condition, in the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of the Buddha, the one who can realize, the dharma realized, the one who knows, and the dharma known are all empty and tranquil. Therefore, the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi is not difficult to believe and understand; it is not difficult to realize and attain either. All dharmas are empty; believing and knowing this, one will be able to realize and attain it.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Because the one who can believe in and realize the unsurpassed bodhi is unattainable, and because the unsurpassed bodhi

is unreal and nonexistent and does not accumulate, the unsurpassed bodhi is difficult to believe in and attain.”

In the meantime, Sariputra said to Well-Appearing One, “Because all dharmas are empty in the final analysis, the unsurpassed bodhi is extremely difficult to believe in and attain. Why? It is because all dharmas, like empty space, have no self-natures. Empty space does not think: ‘I must believe in and attain the unsurpassed bodhi,’ so do all dharmas. Therefore, the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi is extremely difficult to believe in and attain.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if the Buddha bodhi is not very difficult to believe in and attain, then there would not be as many bodhisattvas as the sands of the Ganges to regress after aspiring to the unsurpassed bodhi. Therefore, the Buddha bodhi is extremely difficult to believe in and attain.”

Well-Appearing One asked Sariputra, ‘What do you think about this? Does matter regress in the pursuit of the bodhi?’”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

“Do feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness regress in the pursuit of the unsurpassed bodhi?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

“Does any dharma, apart from matter, regress in the pursuit of the bodhi?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

“Does any dharma, apart from feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness, regress in the pursuit of the bodhi?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

“Does the realness of matter regress in the pursuit of the bodhi?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One!”

“Does the realness of feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness regress in

the pursuit of the bodhi?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

“Does any dharma, apart from the realness of matter, regress in the pursuit of the bodhi?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

“Does any dharma, apart from the realness of feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness, regress in the pursuit of the bodhi?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

“Does realness regress in the pursuit of the bodhi?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

“Does any dharma apart from realness regress in the pursuit of the bodhi?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

In the meantime, the long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to Sariputra, “If the entity and the dwelling of all dharmas are nonexistent, then how can any dharma regress in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi?”

Sariputra said, “As you say, no dharma or sentient being can regress in the pursuit of the bodhi. If this is the case, why does the Buddha say that there are three kinds of bodhisattva vehicle instead of one? Why does the Buddha establish the differences among the three vehicles: the vehicle of voice-hearer, the vehicle of self-enlightened one, and the vehicle of bodhisattva, instead of only one vehicle, the vehicle of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment?”

In the meantime, Fully Loving-Kind One said to the long-lived sage Sariputra, “You should ask Well-Appearing One: is only one bodhisattva vehicle allowed? Then you will challenge him by saying that there should be only one vehicle, the vehicle of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, instead of three different vehicles.”

Therefore, Sariputra asked Well-Appearing One, “Is there only one bodhisattva vehicle allowed?”

Well-Appearing One replied by asking Sariputra, “Does realness have three kinds of bodhisattva and three vehicles?”

Sariputra said, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

“Does realness have only one bodhisattva vehicle, namely the Buddha vehicle?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

“Does realness see any dharma called one bodhisattva or one vehicle?”

Sariputra replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

Meanwhile, the long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to Sariputra, “If the entity and the dwelling of all dharmas are nonexistent and unattainable, and so are the three vehicles, then how can we demand that there should be one or three? If the bodhisattvas are not frightened, scared, sunk, and drowned when hearing that realness has no different forms, then these bodhisattvas will realize insightfully the bodhi quickly and will not regress.”

At that time, the World-Honored One admired Well-Appearing One, “Excellent, excellent! Now you can lecture on the essential meanings of the dharma for bodhisattvas. You have spoken with the support of the Buddha’s authority and supernatural powers; all Thus-Comers have also joyfully participated in your speech. If bodhisattvas deeply believe in and understand the not differential forms of realness and are not frightened, scared, sunk, and drowned when hearing about the realness of all dharmas, then these bodhisattvas will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly and will not regress.”

(The Buddha confirmed Well-Appearing One’s statement and clarified the bodhisattvas who can attain the unsurpassed bodhi quickly without regression.)

Meanwhile, Sariputra asked the Buddha, “Will bodhisattvas certainly realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment if they fulfill this dharma?”

The Buddha replied to Sariputra, “Yes. These bodhisattvas certainly do not fall into the stage of voice-hearer, and so forth.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “If bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the bodhi, where should they dwell? What should they learn?”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas would like to realize the bodhi, they should dwell in a mind of equality toward all sentient beings. Namely, they should initiate a mind of equality, loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity; a mind that is without differentiation, hatred, and anger; a mind of humility; and an intention to bring benefits, peace, and happiness to others. They should treat and speak to all sentient beings as if they were their parents. You must know, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas would like to realize the bodhi, they should dwell and learn this way.”

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas should treat all sentient beings equally, loving-kindly, compassionately, and so forth, and stay away from anger and hatred to cultivate and fulfill the unsurpassed bodhi.)

Chapter 16

No Regression

(In the Fifth Assembly)

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “What are the actions,

features, and forms of the great bodhisattvas of nonregression?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “The bodhisattvas of nonregression can accurately know the stages of ordinary sentient being, voice-hearer, self-enlightened one, bodhisattva, and the Thus-Come as they really are. They know that these stages are different, but in the real nature of all dharmas, they are not changing, different, dualistic, and separate. They are not skeptical and hesitant when hearing that the realness and all dharmas are not dualistic and separate. They are not attached to various forms of the dharmas when hearing about them. The bodhisattvas of nonregression do not speak thoughtlessly; what they speak can always bring benefits and justice to the listeners. They will speak mercifully and equally to all sentient beings without differentiation whether the listeners are good, bad, tall, or short. If the bodhisattvas have achieved these actions, features, and forms, they will not regress in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.

(The Buddha delineated the qualities of great bodhisattvas who do not regress.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas of nonregression will not contemplate sramanas and other-paths celibacy practitioners, including their forms, features, and speeches. They do not think these other-paths practitioners have genuine knowledge and views to establish the dharma gate of correct views. So, they will not pay homage to the other-paths practitioners and their heavenly deities or make offerings to them to invite blessings.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas will not fall into the negative destinies or be reborn in female bodies, nor will they be reborn in inferior species and lower class except they volunteer to do so to deliver sentient beings and absorb them expediently by demonstrating that they belong to the same species or class.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas of nonregression

constantly remain interested in practicing the path of the ten virtuous karmas; they also expediently encourage others to do so. They do not do things in conflict with the path even in dreams.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas will accept, embrace, reflect on, read, and recite various sutras fluently and thoroughly to bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings. They always think, ‘I will lecture on and explain this dharma for sentient beings to satisfy their dharma aspiration.’ They will further transfer the virtuous roots caused by dharma-giving along with all sentient beings equally toward the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge that they pursue.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas certainly are not skeptical, confused, hesitated, lost, or suffocated about the profound dharma gate that the Buddha teaches. They rather joyfully believe in and accept it. What they speak is always beneficial for others. They speak carefully and thoughtfully, and their voice always remains tender and soft. They do not sleep much and are not worried. They are not puzzled and do not make mistakes. They always dwell peacefully in correct mindfulness and correct knowledge. They stay or move in good demeanor. Wherever they travel, they carefully observe the places, walk peacefully with eyes looking straight ahead, and never speak or move abruptly. They keep bedding and clothes clean and fragrant, not smelly, dirty, and greasy, and no louses and eggs. They always enjoy an easy time. They keep bodies healthy; no eighty thousand kinds of small worms in their bodies. Why? These bodhisattvas have fostered virtuous roots to grow and increase and thus will surpass the sentient beings of the world. As their virtuous roots continue to grow, their bodies and mind will become purer.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “How do bodhisattvas purify their minds?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “As bodhisattvas’ virtuous roots

continue to grow and increase, all flattery, crookedness, arrogance, and deception in their minds will disappear forever. Because of this cause and condition, all vexations and the not virtuous dharmas will be eliminated permanently. They will transcend the stage of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one and reach the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly. That's why they can keep their minds pure.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas do not care about self-interest or the offerings made by others; they are not reputation chasers either. Their minds are far away from jealousy and stinginess. They do not make mistakes. They listen to the teaching of profound dharma attentively; they do not lose concentration, nor feel confused. They have deep and firm wisdom and believe in and accept respectfully the fathomless prajna paramita. Whatever they hear will be merged into the fathomless prajna paramita. All their worldly affairs will be integrated into the dharma nature through the wisdom of prajna paramita. Nothing worldly is excluded from the dharma nature. Those not correspondent with the dharma nature will also be made expediently and skillfully to become congruent with the profound essential meanings of prajna paramita. Therefore, they will not see anything apart from the dharma nature.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, an evil demon made eight transformed great hells; in each of them, innumerable hundreds of thousands of bodhisattvas were suffering from fiercely burning fires. The demon showed these hells to bodhisattvas and said, ‘All these bodhisattvas have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression, so they are suffering severely now in hells. Once being conferred the prophecy of nonregression, you will also suffer from such great pains. So, you must give up the aspiration to the great bodhi quickly to get rid of such suffering. You then will be reborn in heaven or in human world to enjoy a life of wealth, nobility, freedom, ease, and pleasures.’ These bodhisattvas saw and heard what was happening, but they were

not moved at all, nor were they frightened or confused. They just thought, ‘It does not make sense that the bodhisattvas of nonregression will fall into the bad destinies and suffer as ignorant ones. This must be an illusion made by evil demon. What I saw and heard was not true.’

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, an evil demon pretended to be a monk and said to bodhisattvas, ‘The sutras correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita that you have heard, accepted, embraced, read, and recited so far are incorrect; you should discard them immediately and do not mistake them for the real ones. I will teach you the real pure Buddha dharma so you can realize insightfully the unsurpassed bodhi before long. What you have so far heard are not the real Buddha’s words; they are faked by writers. What I am speaking are the real Buddha’s words.’ You must know, Well-Appearing One, if the bodhisattvas are frightened and confused when hearing these words, they should not have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression. If they are not frightened and confused upon hearing these words, and rather continue to dwell in the dharma nature of nondoing, formlessness, and nonarising, then they should have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression. They will not act and turn in accord with teachings and words other than the Buddha’s. The arhats act without following the words other than the Buddha’s because they have realized intuitively the dharma nature with no more puzzlement and doubt and cannot be moved by all evil demons, so do the bodhisattvas of nonregression who will not be harmed and destroyed by all voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, other-paths practitioners, and evil demons and withdraw from the pursuit of the bodhi.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, suppose that an evil demon pretended to be a relative or friend and said to the bodhisattvas, “What you are practicing is the dharma of birth and death instead of the bodhi. Now you should cultivate the path of

ceasing suffering to attain nirvana quickly. You should discard the present suffering, not to mention the suffering coming up in the future. You must think it over carefully and give up what you believe.’ When hearing his words, the bodhisattvas are not frightened or confused, but think, ‘This must be an evil demon.’ In the meantime, the demon continued to say, ‘Do you want to know what the actions useless for the bodhisattvas are? The bodhisattvas make the best offerings to the Buddhas for as many great kalpas as the sands of the Ganges, cultivate innumerable difficult celibacy actions at as many Buddhas’ places as the sands of the Ganges, stay in close relationship with and serve as many Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, as the sands of the Ganges, and inquire about what path bodhisattvas should cultivate and how bodhisattvas should dwell, act, and learn. Many Buddhas will teach them the bodhisattva paths in sequence, and the bodhisattvas will dwell, act, and learn for innumerable kalpas as they are taught, but they still cannot realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi that they are pursuing; not to mention they can realize it presently.’ At that time, the bodhisattvas were not moved or confused when hearing the demon’s words.

“Meanwhile, the evil demon transformed innumerable bhiksus and said to the bodhisattvas, ‘These bhiksus had in the past cultivated innumerable difficult celibacy actions for countless kalpas, but they could not attain the unsurpassed bodhi. Now they have regressed and stayed in arhat effect. Why do you still insist on pursuing the bodhi?’ After seeing and hearing what was happening, the bodhisattvas thought, ‘This must be evil demon trying to stop me from doing what I am doing. It does not make sense that the bodhisattvas who have cultivated prajna paramita to its perfection cannot realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi but will regress and fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one.’ The bodhisattvas thought again, ‘If bodhisattvas cultivate bodhi actions as the Buddha

teaches, it is unreasonable that they will not realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. What I saw and heard must be transformed by evil demon.’

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, an evil demon pretended to be a bhikṣu, came to the bodhisattvas and said, ‘The perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge is equivalent to empty space; it adopts non-nature as nature; its characteristics are originally empty. So are all dharmas; they are nonexistent. In them, no dharma can realize nor can it be realized. In them, the place where and the time when the realization happens, and the cause of the realization are all unattainable. Given the truth that all dharmas are equivalent to empty space, all dharmas adopt non-nature as nature, and their characteristics are originally empty, why do you work hard and suffer to realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi when all will turn out in vain? What you heard previously that bodhisattvas should aspire to pursue the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi is spoken by demons instead of the Buddha. You should stop pursuing the great bodhi so you will not suffer in vain.’ When hearing these words, the bodhisattvas correctly understand, ‘The evil demon intends to make me withdraw from the pursuit of the great bodhi. I must stay with my aspiration more firmly and should not believe and accept the demon’s words.’

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas like to modify and adjust their minds so they can enter the four meditations. They can freely enter contemplation at ease. To deliver sentient beings, they will be reborn in the realm of desire but will not be contaminated by desires or withdraw and get lost in the meditation that they cultivate.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas do not long for reputation or seek admiration. They do not hate sentient beings; rather, they like to assist them to gain the pleasures of superior benefits. Their minds are not restless

when they come, go, enter, or get out. Whether they move or stay, they always stay in good demeanor and correct mindfulness. They will live at home for the sake of sentient beings, but they are not greedy and attached to it. They act as if they receive, while they are disgusted with, desires. It is like walking on perilous roads where people should always stay alert; although they can eat, they are worried and not fully at peace and always wonder when they will be free from the threats. It seems that they enjoy various kinds of rarities and properties, but they are not attached to them. They do not earn a living by means of evil and unjust ways. They would rather die than damage others. Why? These bodhisattvas have practiced the fathomless prajna paramita; they are the noble and virtuous ones, the dragons and the elephants, the lotus, the leaders, and the brave and powerful ones of all human beings. They are born originally with an attempt to bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings. Now they live in homes only because it will be more convenient to bring benefits and happiness to others. How can they harm others for the sake of their own lives? Why? These bodhisattvas have embraced the powers of the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas are always guarded and protected closely by the gods of medicine, the diamond fork carriers, so no humans and nonhumans can bewitch them and damage their bodies and minds. Because of this cause and condition, these bodhisattvas always stay in carefree mind and body without restlessness and turbulence until attaining the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. They possess perfect features of a great person. They have well tamed and adjusted minds and actions, and do not live impure lives. They do not earn a living by practicing magic tricks, divination, fortune telling, and cursing. They do not appeal to ghosts and deities, and practice medical treatment by chanting spells. They do not deceive or abduct people of lower social classes or flatter high-ranking

officials. They do not think that they are superior to other holy ones or sages or look down on them. They do not have inappropriate intimate relationships with men or women. They do not boast themselves or slander others for reputation or other interests. They do not joke and laugh at others with contaminated minds. They observe pure precepts and their views are pure. They have unpolluted personalities and intentions.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas are expert in writing articles and other skills, but they are not attached to them because knowing that all dharmas are unattainable, mixed with defiled words, and not totally virtuous. They also know very well about other-paths books and treatises, but they are not fond of them or indulged in them not only because they know that the original natures of all dharmas are empty, but because the worldly and other-paths books and treatises have fundamental principles and applications more or less imperfect and thus are not in compliance with the bodhisattva path.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, there are more actions, features, and forms of the bodhisattva of nonregression that I am going to teach you respectively. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas thoroughly understand that all dharmas are empty, so they do not like to contemplate, investigate, and argue about public affairs, kings, robbers, military affairs, wars, cities, villages, elephants, horses, vehicles, clothes, drinks, food, beds, bedding, flower fragrances, men and women, pretty and ugly things, gardens, woods, ponds, swamps, mountains, and seas. They do not like to contemplate, investigate, and argue about spirits and ghosts, such as yaksas, raksasas, and so forth. They do not like to contemplate, investigate, and argue about streets and blocks, downtown markets, buildings, pavilions, merchants, and so forth. They do not like to contemplate, investigate, and argue about singing, dancing, music, entertainment, dramas, drama actors, banters, jokes, and so forth.

They do not like to contemplate, investigate, and argue about islets, ships, rafts, bridges, pearls, gems, and so forth. They do not like to contemplate, investigate, and argue about stars, wind and rain, cold and heat, good luck and bad luck, and so forth. They do not like to contemplate, investigate, and argue about the meanings in conflict, writing, verses, and so forth. They do not like to contemplate, investigate, and argue about the things correspondent with ordinary sentient beings, voice-hearers, and self-enlightened ones. They only like to contemplate, investigate, and argue about the things correspondent with prajna paramita. These bodhisattvas never stay far away from the intention correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita. They never stay far away from the perfect knowledge of everything. They dislike confrontation but like to conciliate conflicts. They love to aspire to correct dharma and do not like incorrect dharma. They love to make friends with virtuous ones, while they will stay away from the wicked. They like to speak in accord with the dharma but not that contrary to the dharma. They love to see the Thus-Come and like the monastics. Wherever there are the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones in the ten directions teaching the essential meanings of the dharma, they will go there to stay with and make offerings to the Buddhas and listen to their teachings. Most of the bodhisattvas are reborn in this continent of Jambudvīpa as human beings from the realm of desire or the realm of form in heaven. They have mastered techniques, spells, sutras, geography, astronomy, and the meanings of various dharmas. Some of them are reborn in big city or big country in borderland to greatly benefit the sentient beings living there.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas neither worry about regression nor doubt their current stage. They know very well about demonic hindrances. Like stream-enterers, they do not doubt their current stage. In case evil demons try to disturb them in all possible ways, they will not be moved. Like those

who make karmas uninterruptedly will always chase something incessantly until the end of their lives and no other thoughts can stop it, so do the great bodhisattvas who will always pursue the great bodhi with successive minds to dwell in the bodhisattva stage of nonregression. The dharma that they have attained will not be changed or destroyed by heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth. They are aware of demonic hindrances very well and are not skeptical about the dharmas that they have insightfully realized. Even if they are reborn in the world other than this one, they will not initiate a mind correspondent with voice-hearer or self-enlightened one. They have never doubted that they will certainly realize the unsurpassed bodhi of the Buddha in the future. They neither dwell in their current stage, nor follow other conditions. The dharma in their current stage will not be damaged.

“Why? It is because these bodhisattvas have achieved the unmovable and nonregressive perfect knowledge; their minds are as solid as diamond, which cannot be damaged or ruined by negative conditions. An evil demon pretended to be a Buddha, came to their places and said, ‘Now you should pursue arhat effect so you can terminate all flaws and enter nirvana. You are not entitled to the prophecy of attaining the great bodhi, nor have you realized the dharma forbearance of nonarising. You have not attained the actions, features, and forms that the bodhisattvas of nonregression possess, so the Thus-Come will not confer on you the prophecy of attaining the great bodhi.’ When hearing these words, the bodhisattvas are not moved. They do not withdraw, nor are sunk, drowned, frightened, and terrified, but think, ‘This figure must be transformed by demon or associates. The genuine Buddha’s teaching should not be different from what I have heard.’ If bodhisattvas contemplate and find that something is wrong with the demon’s words, they should think, ‘This figure must be transformed by evil demon with an attempt to divert me from the fathomless prajna paramita, dissuade me from the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect,

and universal bodhi. Therefore, I should not follow his words.’ The demon then will be scared and disappear. These bodhisattvas must have dwelled peacefully in the stage of nonregression. They must have been conferred by the Buddhas in the past the prophecy of attaining the great bodhi. Why? These bodhisattvas possess the actions, features, and forms that a bodhisattva of nonregression does; they are aware of the demonic hindrances and can successfully drive the demons away.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, to absorb and protect the correct dharma, these bodhisattvas will not care about their own bodies and lives, not to mention their treasures, properties, friends, and family. They act diligently and bravely to protect the correct dharma, and always think, ‘Such correct dharma is the pure dharma body of the Buddhas. All Thus-Comers have made offerings respectfully to it. To protect the correct dharma is to absorb and protect the dharma body of the Buddhas.’ They will further think, ‘This correct dharma belongs to all Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, of the three phases of time. I am also counted as a Buddha in the future. The Buddha has conferred on me the prophecy of attaining the great bodhi. The correct dharma of all Buddhas is also my dharma, so I am now protecting my own dharma. When I become a Buddha in the future, I will also teach this dharma to sentient beings.’ These bodhisattvas have seen such justice and benefits, so they will tirelessly protect the correct dharma that the Thus-Comer teaches without caring about their own bodies, lives, family, relatives, treasures, and properties until attaining the bodhi.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas are not confused or skeptical when hearing the dharma taught by the Buddha. After hearing the dharma, they will accept and embrace it and never forget it or lose it.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Are the bodhisattvas not confused and skeptical about the Buddha’s words? Will they never forget or lose the Buddha’s words after hearing them? Will they remain the same when hearing the

correct dharma taught by the bodhisattvas, voice-hearers, and so forth?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “After hearing the voices, words, and the meanings spoken by all sentient beings, these bodhisattvas can understand them thoroughly. They will not be confused and skeptical, nor will they forget and lose them. Why? These bodhisattvas have attained forbearance of nonarising; they have also understood fully the real natures of all dharmas. Therefore, whatever they hear will be clear and will not puzzle them. In addition, because they have heard, embraced, and mastered the dharani, they possess superior memory and will not forget or lose what they have heard. You must know, Well-Appearing One, these are the actions, features, and forms of the great bodhisattvas of nonregression.”

Chapter 17

The Enthusiastic Practitioners

Section 1

(In the Fifth Assembly)

At that time, Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “It is rare, World-Honored One. These bodhisattvas can achieve such great accumulation of merits and virtues. The World-Honored One can teach the actions, features, and forms of the nonregressive bodhisattvas for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges. We are begging Thus-Come, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One to kindly teach us the meanings correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita so that bodhisattvas will be able to dwell peacefully in it and cultivate the bodhi actions perfectly and quickly.”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Excellent, excellent! Now you can inquire about this issue. Please listen to me carefully. I am going to speak about it. You must know, Well-Appearing One, the meanings correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita are expressed by designated statements, such as emptiness, formlessness, nonaspiration, nondoing, nonarising, nonextinction, nonexistence, noncontamination, and nirvana.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Are only these dharmas correspondent with the meanings of the fathomless prajna paramita? Are all dharmas also correspondent with the meanings of the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “The rest of the dharmas are also correspondent with the meanings of the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? All kinds of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness are also called very profound.

“Well-Appearing One, why are matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness also called very profound? Because realness is very profound, matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness are also very profound. Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, where there is no matter there is the very profound matter; and so forth, where there is no consciousness there is the very profound consciousness.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha again, “It is rare, World-Honored One. You have exquisitely and expediently cast off the five aggregates to manifest nirvana.”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes. If the bodhisattvas can carefully contemplate and investigate the meanings correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita and think, ‘I should dwell and learn as the fathomless prajna paramita teaches,’ and cultivate it diligently for one day, then these bodhisattvas will gain innumerable and boundless blessings.

“A passionate man was looking forward with fervent desire to dating a pretty girl. For some reason that girl could not come, so this man’s passions were burning and overflowing. Well-Appearing One, what do you think about this? Where will this man’s passions flow to?”

“World-Honored One, this man’s passions will flow around that girl and think, ‘When will she come so we will have a good time?’”

“Well-Appearing One, what do you think about this? How many desires will arise in this man’s mind day and night?”

“World-Honored One, this man will have many desires day and night.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “If great bodhisattvas contemplate and investigate carefully the meanings correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita and cultivate and learn accordingly for one day, then they will surpass as many kalpas of drifting in birth and death as the desires arising in this man’s mind for one day and night.

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas can contemplate and investigate carefully the meanings correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita and cultivate and learn diligently and attentively, then they will be able to immediately get rid of the faults caused by hindering the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Therefore, if they can contemplate and investigate carefully the meanings correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita and cultivate and learn tirelessly, they will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.

(The Buddha described how many exquisite merits and virtues will be caused and gained by contemplating and investigating the meanings of the fathomless prajna paramita and cultivating it accordingly. It will be highly superior to engaging in such cultivation without the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita.)

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas contemplate and investigate carefully and cultivate diligently the meanings correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita for one day and night, then the merits and virtues thus gained will be superior to those gained by practicing giving apart from the fathomless prajna paramita for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges by innumerable and boundless times.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas contemplate and investigate carefully and cultivate diligently the meanings correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita for one day and night, then the merits and virtues thus gained will be superior to those gained by making offerings to stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, self-enlightened ones, bodhisattvas, and Thus-Comers apart from the fathomless prajna paramita for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges by innumerable and boundless times.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas dwell as the fathomless prajna paramita teaches and cultivate diligently giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna for one day and night, then the merits and virtues thus gained will be superior to those gained by cultivating diligently giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna apart from the fathomless prajna paramita for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges by innumerable and boundless times.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas dwell as the fathomless prajna paramita teaches and teach the exquisite dharma to sentient beings for one day and night, then the merits and virtues thus gained will be superior to those gained by giving exquisite dharma to sentient beings apart from the fathomless prajna paramita for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges by innumerable and boundless times.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas dwell as the fathomless

prajna paramita teaches and cultivate the thirty-seven factors for enlightenment and the rest of virtuous roots for one day and night, then the merits and virtues thus gained will be superior to those gained by practicing the thirty-seven factors for enlightenment and the rest of virtuous roots apart from the fathomless prajna paramita for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges by innumerable and boundless times.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas dwell as the fathomless prajna paramita teaches to cultivate various kinds of property giving and dharma giving, reflect on and stay in the mindfulness of the bliss-inviting karmas previously cultivated in a spacious, easy, and tranquil place and transfer them toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi for one day and night, then the merits and virtues thus gained will be superior to those gained by cultivating property giving and dharma giving, reflecting on and staying in mindfulness of the bliss-inviting karmas previously cultivated in a spacious, easy, and tranquil place and transferring them toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi apart from the fathomless prajna paramita for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges by innumerable and boundless times.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas dwell as the fathomless prajna paramita teaches to universally connect with the merits and virtues of the Buddhas and their disciples in the three phases of time, assemble them together, measure them, and joyfully take part in them and transfer the merits and virtues thus derived toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi for one day and night, then the merits and virtues thus gained will be superior to those gained by doing the same things apart from the fathomless prajna paramita for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges by innumerable and boundless times.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “The Thus-Come often says that all actions are caused by differentiations and they are not real. Then, based

on what cause and condition do you say that the merits and virtues gained by these bodhisattvas will be innumerable and boundless?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas should contemplate and investigate the virtuous things that they are doing as nonexistent and illusory. As they constantly contemplate and investigate this way, they will not stay away from the fathomless prajna paramita. Because they do not stay away from the fathomless prajna paramita, the merits and virtues gained by them will be innumerable and boundless.”

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas should avoid staying away from the fathomless prajna paramita.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Is the meaning of ‘the innumerable’ different from the meaning of ‘the boundless’?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “The innumerable means the quantity is countless, while the boundless means the number is inexhaustible.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Is there cause and condition to suggest that matter, feeling, and so forth, and consciousness are also innumerable and boundless?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes, there is.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Based on what cause and condition to say that matter, feeling, and so forth, and consciousness are innumerable and boundless?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Matter, feeling, and so forth, and consciousness are empty, so they are innumerable and boundless.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Are only matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness empty? Are all dharmas empty too?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “I will say that all dharmas are empty.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “What do the designated statements of innumerable and boundless indicate?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “The innumerable and the boundless are the designated statements of emptiness, formlessness, and nonaspiration.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Are there other meanings included in the innumerable and the boundless in addition to emptiness, formlessness, and nonaspiration?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One by asking him, “What do you think about this? Did I not say that all dharma gates are empty?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “The Thus-Come did say that all dharma gates are empty.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Emptiness is inexhaustible; emptiness is innumerable; emptiness is boundless. Emptiness has other meanings. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, although all dharma gates have various ways of expression, their meanings do not differ.

(Many different expressions are used to describe the emptiness of all dharmas.)

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, the emptiness of all dharmas is unspeakable. The Thus-Come has expediently expressed it as inexhaustible, innumerable, boundless, empty, formless, without aspiration, without doing, without arising, with extinction, nonexistent, tranquil, decontaminated, or nirvana. All these numberless dharma gates share the same meaning. They are all adopted expediently in the Thus-Come’s teachings.”

(The Buddha has used different expressions to explain the same reality of all dharmas

to help sentient beings understand it. In the following, the Buddha and Well-Appearing One discussed on the topic of the real nature of all dharmas.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “It is very rare, World-Honored One. The real nature of all dharmas is unspeakable; it is expediently and skillfully manifested for sentient beings. If my understanding of the Buddha’s teaching of the meanings is correct, the real nature of all dharmas is unspeakable.”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes. Why? All dharma natures are empty in the final analysis. One cannot lecture on the emptiness in the final analysis.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Do the unspeakable meanings increase or decrease?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “The unspeakable meanings do not increase or decrease.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha again, “If the unspeakable meanings do not increase or decrease, then giving paramita, pure-precept paramita, and so forth, and prajna paramita do not increase or decrease either. If these six paramitas do not increase or decrease, then how can bodhisattvas aspire to and approach the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi based on the six paramits that do not increase or decrease? If bodhisattvas make the six paramitas increase and decrease, they will not be able to reach the unsurpassed bodhi.”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes. The unspeakable meanings of the paramitas do not increase or decrease. When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas do not think, ‘These six paramitas have increased or decreased.’ Rather, they will think, ‘Giving paramita, pure-precept paramita, and so forth, and prajna paramita are merely names and forms.’ When cultivating giving paramita, pure-precept paramita, and so forth, and prajna

paramita, bodhisattvas will embrace these six paramitas to initiate virtuous roots, transfer them along with sentient beings equally toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Like the transference initiated by the subtle, exquisite, profound, unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of the Buddha, so this transference undertaken by bodhisattvas will also be strengthened by the powers of the expedient skillfulness to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “What is the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “The realness of all dharmas is the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. You must know, the realness of all dharmas does not increase or decrease, so the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of the Buddhas does not increase or decrease. If the bodhisattvas dwell peacefully in the intention correspondent with realness, they are close to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, although the unspeakable meanings do not increase or decrease, bodhisattvas should not stay away from the intention correspondent with realness. Although paramita does not increase or decrease, bodhisattvas should not lose the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi that they pursue. If bodhisattvas can dwell peacefully in the intention correspondent with realness and cultivate the six paramitas, they are close to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.”

(The Buddha taught that the realness of all dharmas is the unsurpassed bodhi. Great bodhisattvas should always stay with the intention correspondent with realness.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Do bodhisattvas approach and reach the bodhi due to the arising of the initial mind or the arising of the later mind? If because of the initial mind, then when the initial mind arises, the later mind has not arisen yet; these two minds will not go together. If it is because of the

later mind, then when the later mind arises, the initial mind must have become extinguished; these two minds will not go together either. Given this condition, these two minds and the associated images will not be connected or combined, then how can virtuous roots be accumulated? If the virtuous roots cannot be accumulated, how can bodhisattvas reach the bodhi?"

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, "what do you think about this? When an oil lamp burns, does the first flame or a later flame ignite the wick?"

Well-Appearing One replied, "As my understanding, the wick is not lit by the initial flame, although it cannot burn apart from the initial flame. The wick is not lit by the later flame either, although it cannot burn apart from the later flame."

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, "What do you think about this? Is the wick burning?"

Well-Appearing One replied, "It looks like so."

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, "So do the bodhisattvas. It is not because of the arising of the initial mind or the later mind that the bodhisattvas become close to the bodhi. It is not apart from the arising of the initial mind or the later mind that they become close to the bodhi. It is because the bodhisattvas have practiced the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita that their virtuous roots grow perfectly and thus they can reach the bodhi."

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, "The essential meaning of dependent origination is very profound. It is not because of the arising of the initial mind or the later mind that the bodhisattvas can reach the bodhi. It is not apart from the arising of the initial mind or the later mind that they can reach the bodhi. Nevertheless, the bodhisattvas can approach and reach the bodhi."

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, "What do you think about this? Can the mind arise again after its extinction?"

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One. The mind cannot arise again after its extinction.”

“What do you think about this? If the mind has arisen, is there the law of extinction?”

“Yes, World-Honored One. If the mind has arisen, certainly there is the law of extinction.”

“What do you think about this? If there is the law of extinction, will the mind extinguish?”

“Yes, World-Honored One. If there is the law of extinction, the mind certainly will extinguish.”

“What do you think about this? If there is no law of extinction, can the mind arise?”

“No, World-Honored One; if there is no law of extinction, the mind will not arise.”

“What do you think about this? If there is no law of arising, does the mind extinguish?”

“No, World-Honored One? If there is no law of arising, the mind will not extinguish.”

“What do you think about this? If there is no law of arising and extinction, will the mind arise and extinguish?”

“No, World-Honored One; if there is no law of arising and extinction, the mind will not arise or extinguish.”

“What do you think about this? If the dharma has extinguished, can it extinguish again?”

“No, World-Honored One; if the dharma has extinguished, it cannot extinguish again.”

“What do you think about this? If the dharma has arisen, can it arise again?”

“No, World-Honored One; if the dharma has arisen, it cannot arise again.”

“What do you think about this? Does the real nature of all dharmas arise and extinguish?”

“No, World-Honored One; the real nature of all dharmas does not arise and extinguish.”

“What do you think about this? Does the mind dwell as the realness of the mind?”

“Yes, World-Honored One. If the mind is like realness, it dwells as realness.”

“What do you think about this? If the mind dwells as realness, does it dwell permanently as reality?”

“No, World-Honored One; the mind is not like realness and reality, which always stay without movement.”

“What do you think about this? Is the realness of all dharmas extremely profound?”

“Yes, World-Honored One. The realness of all dharmas is extremely profound.”

“What do you think about this? Is realness equivalent to the mind?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

“What do you think about this? Is there the mind apart from realness?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

“What do you think about this? Is the mind equivalent to realness?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

“What do you think about this? Is there realness apart from the mind?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

“What do you think about this? Can realness see realness?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

“What do you think about this? Can you really see realness?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

“What do you think about this? If bodhisattvas practice this way, do they practice the fathomless prajna paramita?”

“Yes, World-Honored One. If bodhisattvas practice this way, they practice the fathomless prajna paramita.”

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Chapter 17

The Enthusiastic Practitioners

Section 2

(In the Fifth Assembly)

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas can practice this way, where will they practice?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “If bodhisattvas practice this way, they will practice nowhere. Why? All present dharmas do not turn.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, what meaning do they practice?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “If bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they practice the ultimate meaning.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? If bodhisattvas practice the ultimate meaning, do they grasp its forms?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Do bodhisattvas practice the forms of ultimate meaning without grasping its forms?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? If bodhisattvas do not practice the forms, do they destroy the forms?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? If bodhisattvas do not destroy the forms of the ultimate meaning, do they cast off the forms?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas do not cast off the forms of the ultimate meaning, how can they cease the thought of grasping the forms?”

Well-Appearing One said, “These bodhisattvas will not think, ‘Now I destroy the forms, cast off the forms, and cease the thought, but I have not cultivated and learned the path of ceasing the thought.’ If the bodhisattvas cultivate diligently the path of ceasing the thought but are not well equipped with the Buddha dharma, they will fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. Because of the expedient skillfulness, these bodhisattvas know very well that grasping the forms and holding the thought of grasping the forms are not right, but they will not destroy or cast them off or cease the thought right away to enter formlessness. Why? It is because their Buddha dharma is not fulfilled yet.”

The Buddha replied, “Yes.”

In the meantime, Sariputra said to Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas cultivate the three liberation gates in dreams, will they foster the fathomless prajna paramita? If bodhisattvas can foster the fathomless prajna paramita by cultivating the three liberation gates when they are awake, then they should be able to do so in their dreams. Why? The Buddha says that being awake and dreaming are not different.”

Well-Appearing One said, “If bodhisattvas cultivate the fathomless prajna paramita when they are awake, they are called dwelling peacefully in the fathomless prajna paramita. If they cultivate the fathomless prajna paramita in dreams, they are also called dwelling peacefully in the three liberation gates of the fathomless prajna paramita. So, they should also be able to foster the fathomless prajna paramita in dreams.”

Sariputra said, “Will the karmas in dreams bring about effects? The Buddha

says that all dharmas, like dreams, are unreal. Therefore, making karmas in dreams should not produce effects. They cause effects only when the dreamer is awake and can remember what is experienced in dreams.”

Well-Appearing One said, “Someone committed a murder in a dream. When awake, this person was not happy about what happened in the dream. Will the karma in dream cause negative effects?”

Sariputra said, “Both thinking and actions arise due to conditions. Without conditions, no thinking or actions can arise. Which conditions in dreams contribute to the arising of thinking and actions?”

Well-Appearing One said, “You are right when you say that both thinking and actions arise out of conditions whether one is awake or in dreams. Why? Sariputra, one first sees and hears the phenomena and then their awakening wisdom starts to operate, followed by defiled or pure ideas. If there is no seeing and hearing, there will be no perception and ideas. Therefore, thinking and actions only arise when the conditions are available whether one is awake or dreaming.”

In the meantime, Sariputra asked Well-Appearing One, “The Buddha says that conditions have no self-natures. How can we say that thinking and actions arise when the conditions are available?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Thinking and actions and their conditions are without self-natures, but one’s mind often grasps and perceives the forms. It is in terms of the worldly perspective to establish that thinking and actions arise relying on conditions. Nothing other than conditions.”

In the meantime, Sariputra asked Well-Appearing One, “Suppose that the bodhisattvas practice giving in their dreams and transfer the merits toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Do these bodhisattvas really practice giving and undertake the transference toward the unsurpassed bodhi of the Buddha?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Bodhisattva Maitreya has been conferred the prophecy of attaining the great bodhi for a long time. You may ask him this question. He will answer your question.”

In the meantime, Sariputra asked Bodhisattva Maitreya this question respectfully as Well-Appearing One suggested.

Bodhisattva Maitreya asked Sariputra, “What does it mean to say Bodhisattva Maitreya can answer your question? Is he matter, feeling, thought, action, consciousness, or their emptiness? But matter is not Bodhisattva Maitreya and it cannot answer the venerable one’s question; feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness are not Bodhisattva Maitreya and they cannot answer the venerable one’s question. The emptiness of matter is not Bodhisattva Maitreya and it cannot answer the venerable one’s question; the emptiness of feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness is not Bodhisattva Maitreya and it cannot answer the venerable one’s question either. I do not see any dharma that is called Bodhisattva Maitreya. I do not see the dharma that can answer the question, nor do I see the answer, the time, the place, and the cause of answering the question. I do not see the dharma that can confer the prophecy, the prophecy conferred, and the time, place, and the cause of conferring the prophecy. Why? The self-natures of all dharmas are empty; as you examine them deeply and ultimately, you cannot find any dharma attainable.”

Meanwhile, Sariputra asked Maitreya, “The benevolent one, do you say what you have realized?”

Maitreya replied, “I do not say what I have realized. Why? The dharma that I have realized is unspeakable.”

Meanwhile, Sariputra thought to himself, “Maitreya has very profound awakening wisdom. He has cultivated the fathomless prajna paramita for a long time, so he can say so.”

At that time, the World-Honored One could read Sariputra's mind, so said to him, "You have become an arhat through this dharma. Do you believe that it can be expressed in words?"

Sariputra replied, "No, World-Honored One."

The Buddha said, "When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the dharma nature that bodhisattvas have realized cannot be talked either. Because of the expedient skillfulness, these bodhisattvas do not think, 'I had been conferred, will be conferred, and am conferred the prophecy of attaining the great bodhi because of this dharma.' Nor will they think, 'I will realize the bodhi because of this dharma.' If bodhisattvas can practice this way, they do practice prajna paramita and will not be afraid of attaining the bodhi. It is because they know that they certainly will realize the bodhi. Therefore, these bodhisattvas are not shocked, frightened, sunk, or drowned upon hearing the profound dharma.

"These bodhisattvas will not be frightened in the wilderness where fierce beasts are very active. Why? To benefit all sentient beings, they are without any reluctance to renounce all they have owned internally and externally. They always think, 'If wild animals want to eat me, I will give my body to them. The virtuous roots thus gained will enable me to fulfill giving paramita quickly, so I can realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi before long. When I cultivate diligently the correct actions and finally realize and attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, I wish in my Buddha land there will be no more animals and hungry ghosts.'

"These bodhisattvas will not be frightened in the wilderness where evil robbers are active. Why? To benefit all sentient beings, they are willing to renounce all they have internally and externally. They are wholeheartedly dedicated to the cultivation of all virtuous dharmas without caring about their own bodies, lives, and

properties. They will always think, “If others forcefully take my possessions or even harm me, I will not react with anger or hatred. Because of this cause and condition, I will be able to fulfill forbearance paramita quickly and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi before long. When I cultivate diligently the correct actions and realize and attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, I wish in my Buddha land there will be no more thieves, robbers, and the bad things such as killing and robbery. Because my Buddha land is extremely pure, there will be no other evil things either.’

“These bodhisattvas will not be frightened in the wilderness where there is no water. They will think, ‘I should lecture on the unsurpassed exquisite dharma, to let sentient beings terminate their thirst and craving. If I should die because of thirst and tiredness, I am not reluctant to give them the wonderful dharma water of great compassion. It is very strange! These sentient beings are so underprivileged to live in such a world short of water. When I cultivate diligently the correct actions and realize and attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, I wish in my Buddha land there will be no more such thirsty and dry wilderness. I will expediently teach sentient beings to cultivate bliss-inviting karmas, so that they can enjoy plenty of fresh water featured by eight merits and virtues.’

“These bodhisattvas will not be frightened in famine. They will think, ‘I should diligently dignify and purify Buddha lands. When I realize insightfully and attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, I wish there will be no famine in my Buddha land; all sentient beings will be happy and can get whatever they need just by thinking as heavenly beings do. I will initiate solid and powerful diligence to satisfy the dharma aspiration of all sentient beings. All sentient beings will not be short of living supplies, in all places, at all times.’ If bodhisattvas are liberated from fears, they certainly will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect,

and universal bodhi.

“These bodhisattvas will remain unafraid even when a plague occurs. Why? They have always reflected attentively: ‘No dharma is called illness or sick person. All are empty, so no one should be afraid. I will diligently cultivate correct actions, and when I realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, I wish all sentient beings in my Buddha land will have no three kinds of illness, and they will cultivate diligently and tirelessly superior virtuous dharmas as the Buddha teaches.’

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita diligently to fulfill giving and forbearance paramitas, for instance, vowing to help sentient beings by building Buddha lands in which there are no various bad things, such as wild animals, robbers, illness, plagues, shortage of water, and so forth.)

“If bodhisattvas maintain sustained mindful of the bodhi over a long time and finally attain the bodhi, they will become fearless. Why? There were innumerable kalpas in the past, each consisting of many individual moments of mindfulness, just as future kalpas will. Therefore, the bodhisattvas should not be intimidated by the term ‘long time.’ Why? The kalpas in the past and future correspond to the state of mind in each brief instant. If bodhisattvas can reflect carefully on terrible things fearlessly, they will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi very soon.”

Chapter 18

The Sister

(In the Fifth Assembly)

At that time, a heavenly lady in the assembly stood up from her seat. She bowed down before the Buddha's feet with her left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground. She joined her palms together and said respectfully, "World-Honored One, I am fearless in all these respects. I wish when I become a Buddha in the future, I will be able to teach this dharma to sentient beings too."

Then the heavenly lady made golden flowers as offerings to spread respectfully on the Thus-Comer. Because of the supernatural powers of the Buddha, these golden flowers were tossed high up in the sky and stayed there in bloom.

At that time, the World-Honored One smiled. Golden lights emitted from his face to shine all over the ten directions and then entered the top of his head.

Meanwhile, Ananda saw and heard what was happening. He joined his palms together in reverence and said, "World-Honored One, what cause and condition has made you smile? The Buddhas do not smile without cause and condition."

At that time, the Buddha replied to Joyfully Celebrating One, "This heavenly lady will become a Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One in the generation to come, in the Kalpa of Stellar Simile, with Golden Flower as her name. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, this heavenly lady is now in her last female body. After this lifespan, she will become a male and will remain so. She will be reborn in the east in the land of the Unmovable Buddha to cultivate diligently celibacy with the name Golden Flower. After passing away from the world of the Unmovable Buddha, she will be reborn in other Buddha worlds and will never stay away from the Buddhas wherever she is born. It is like a wheel-turning

king who moves from one palace to the other and enjoys all kinds of entertainments and pleasures without walking on the ground until the end of life; so does the Bodhisattva Golden Flower, who moves from one Buddha country to the other and consistently cultivates celibacy and never stays away from the Buddhas until attaining the bodhi.”

In the meantime, Ananda thought to himself, “When this sister becomes a Buddha in the future, she must also conduct an assembly like the one we have today.”

The Buddha knew his thought and said to Joyfully Celebrating One, “Yes, it is as you think. As Bodhisattva Golden Flower becomes a Buddha, she will teach the fathomless prajna paramita in a similar assembly. The number of the bodhisattvas attending that assembly will be the same as we have today. Her voice-hearer disciples will be innumerable and countless. In her land, there will be no fierce beasts, evil robbers, thirst, hunger, and diseases. There will be no other vexations and terrible things either.”

At that time, Joyfully Celebrating One said to the Buddha, “At which Buddha’s place had this sister initially aspired to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, planted the virtuous roots, made transference, and made vows?”

The Buddha replied to Joyfully Celebrating One, “This lady had initiated great aspiration at Burning Lamp Buddha’s place. She also at that time spread golden flowers on the Buddha, made transference, and made vows. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, I had in the past at Burning Lamp Buddha’s place spread five-stem flowers as offerings to the Buddha, made transference, and made vows. Burning Lamp Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One knew that my roots were mature, so conferred on me this prophecy: ‘In the generation to come, you will become a Buddha with Benevolence and Tranquility

(Skyamuni) as your name; the world you conduct is named Barely Tolerable, and that will be in the Kalpa of the Sages.’ Witnessing the Buddha conferring on me the prophecy, the heavenly lady was so excited that she danced and jumped; she spread golden flowers as offerings to the Buddha and transferred the merits toward this vow: ‘In my future life, when this bodhisattva becomes a Buddha, I wish he will confer on me the prophecy of attaining the great bodhi as the Buddha is doing to him now.’ Therefore, I conferred on her the prophecy now.”

At that time, hearing what the Buddha said, Joyfully Celebrating One was so excited that he danced and jumped. He said, “World-Honored One, this sister has cultivated and learned the great bodhi long enough; her transference and vow have matured too.”

The Buddha replied to Joyfully Celebrating One, “Yes, it is as you say.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “How will the bodhisattvas enter the concentration of emptiness when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas will contemplate the emptiness of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness without being restless in their minds. If their minds are not restless, they will see the dharmas as they really are. Although they see the dharmas as they really are, they will not grasp them.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “How will bodhisattvas see the emptiness of the dharmas without grasping it?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “When contemplating the emptiness of the dharmas, bodhisattvas will first think, ‘I should contemplate all dharmas as their forms are empty, but I should not realize them for the time being. I contemplate the emptiness of the dharmas for the sake of learning instead of realizing.

Now it is time for learning instead of realization.’ These bodhisattvas have not entered concentration yet; they will absorb the phenomena into their minds before entering concentration. At that time, the bodhisattvas do not regress in cultivating the thirty-seven factors for enlightenment, but their flaws are not exhausted. Why? These bodhisattvas have achieved the broad and great wisdom of virtuous roots, and can undertake a careful self-reflection, ‘At this moment, I should learn emptiness but not realize it. I should absorb the fathomless prajna paramita, contemplate the emptiness of all dharmas, and fulfill perfectly the thirty-seven factors for enlightenment, but I should not realize the reality at this moment, otherwise I will fall into the two vehicles and cannot attain the bodhi.’

“There is a brave, healthy, and vigorous man, who stands up firmly and has magnificent stature. He possesses sixty-four kinds of abilities as well as other techniques and skills and has mastered all of them to their perfection. He has also acquired the most superior merits and virtues caused by observing precepts. He is smart and can converse with others fluently and properly. He is a person of justice, loving-kindness, great power, and authority. He can accomplish all he intends to do with the least effort to achieve the best possible effects. Therefore, he is respected and adored by all. For some reason, he has to leave along with his parents, wife, and other family members for somewhere far away. They have to travel through some dangerous and difficult wilderness where there are plenty of wild animals and robbers. All his family members are fearful, but this man stays in easiness and relaxation because he is skillful, courageous, strong, and confident. He soothes his family and says, ‘You do not need to worry. I promise to keep you all in safety and comfort.’ They then pass through the wilderness quickly and safely. At that time, this person transforms many brave elite troops, thus and all wild animals, enemies, and robbers are scared away. So this person can guard all his family expediently and

skillfully to go through perilous areas and arrive at their destination in safety. So do the bodhisattvas. They have pity on sentient beings suffering in birth and death, so they stay in the mindfulness of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity and absorb expediently and skillfully the superior virtuous roots of prajna paramita. As the Buddha has approved, they further transfer the merits and virtues toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. They have cultivated emptiness, but they do not realize reality. They have stayed in a deep compassion for all sentient beings and intended to bring peace and happiness to all of them. These bodhisattvas have transcended all vexations, evil demons, and the two vehicles. They have dwelled in the concentration of emptiness, but they do not eliminate all their flaws; they have learned emptiness very well, but they do not realize reality. At that time, these bodhisattvas have dwelled in the concentration of emptiness; they are not attached to the forms, but they do not realize formlessness either.

“The birds with strong and powerful wings can fly high up in empty space freely for a long time without falling to the ground. These birds ride and play in emptiness; they do not occupy emptiness, nor are they hindered and limited by emptiness. So do the bodhisattvas, who learn the liberation gates of emptiness, formlessness, and nonaspiration, but do not dwell in emptiness, formlessness, and nonaspiration and eliminate all flaws until they can perfectly fulfill the Buddha dharma.

“A brave and powerful master arrow shooter wants to show his shooting skills. He shoots arrows to empty space in the sky and keeps the arrows from falling by continuously shooting at each of the last ones so all stay in the sky until he stops doing so. The same are the bodhisattvas, who practice the fathomless prajna paramita and absorb superior expedient skills and do not realize reality halfway until their virtuous roots fully mature. When their virtuous roots mature, they will realize reality

and thus can attain the great bodhi immediately.

“Therefore, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas should contemplate and investigate carefully the profound dharma nature. If they have not perfectly fulfilled the Buddha dharma, they should not realize reality.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “It is very unusual, World-Honored One. It is very rare, Well-Gone One. These bodhisattvas can do very difficult thing. They learn the profound dharma without realizing reality.”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes. These bodhisattvas swear not to turn away from all sentient beings, so they can do this difficult thing to relieve the sentient beings from the suffering of birth and death. They frequently initiate and activate the three liberation gates, but they do not realize the reality in the middle of the way. Why? They do not want to turn away from the sentient beings that they would like to deliver. Because they are protected and kept by the expedient skillfulness, they do not realize reality in the middle of the way.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas would like to contemplate and investigate carefully based on prajna paramita the very profound sphere where the samadhi of emptiness, formlessness, and nonaspiration leads, they should think, ‘The sentient beings have for a long time initiated the thought of attainment and thus elicited different kinds of incorrect views that cause their endless reincarnation of suffering in birth and death. To cease their incorrect views, I should pursue the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and teach the profound dharma of emptiness to them, let them cease attachment and get rid of the suffering of birth and death. Therefore, although I have learned the liberation gate of emptiness, I will not realize reality in the middle of the way.’ Because of this expedient and skillful mind, the bodhisattvas will not regress in the four superior concentrations of loving-kindness,

compassion, joy, and equanimity although they do not realize reality in the middle of the way. Why? These bodhisattvas have been deeply absorbed by the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita; their roots of the positive and pure dharmas become doubly sharper, so their powers, awakening, and the cultivation of the path of the factors for enlightenment grow and increase.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas should think, ‘The sentient beings have for a long time practiced the forms and thus elicited many kinds of attachment. They thus drift in endless suffering. To eliminate their attachments, I should pursue the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, teaching them the dharma of formlessness and assisting them to get rid of the suffering of birth and death. For this reason, I have entered formless samadhi frequently.’ Because of the expedient skillfulness that they have achieved earlier and the ideas that the expedient skillfulness has caused, these bodhisattvas have entered the samadhi of formlessness frequently without realizing reality in the middle of the way. Although they do not realize reality, they do not regress in the practice of the four immeasurable concentrations. Why? These bodhisattvas have been deeply absorbed by the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita; their roots of the positive and pure dharmas become doubly sharper, so their powers, awakening, and the cultivation of the path of the factors for enlightenment grow and increase.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas should think, ‘The sentient beings have for a long time continuously elicited the thoughts of permanence, pleasure, selfness, and purity. Because of these thoughts, they fall into upside-down attachments and thus drift in birth and death and suffer endlessly. To cease their four upside-down thoughts, I should pursue the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, teach the correct dharma to them. I will teach them that birth and death are impermanent, unpleasant, selfless, and impure; only the subtle and exquisite nirvana

is full of all kinds of real merits and virtues. For this reason, I have frequently entered the samadhi of nonaspiration.’ Because of the expedient skillfulness that they have achieved earlier and the ideas that the expedient skillfulness has caused, these bodhisattvas are able to enter the samadhi of nonaspiration frequently without realizing reality in the middle of the way. Although they do not realize reality, they do not regress in the practice of the four immeasurable concentrations. Why? These bodhisattvas have been deeply absorbed by the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita; their roots of the positive and pure dharma become doubly sharper, so their powers, awakening, and the cultivation of the path of the factors for enlightenment grow and increase.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas teach sentient beings through expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita to practice the three liberation gates to get rid of reincarnation in birth and death.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas should think, ‘The sentient beings have long practiced attainment, forms, upside-down ways, the thought of combination, thought of delusion, and incorrect views, and thus have drifted and suffered endlessly. To correct their faults, I should pursue the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi to teach them the very profound dharma, so their faults will be terminated, and they will never drift in the suffering of birth and death any longer. They will realize the permanent, real, and pure nirvana before long.’ Because of their deep mercy and compassion for sentient beings, the bodhisattvas achieve superior expedient skillfulness. Because of being absorbed by the fathomless prajna paramita, they love to consistently contemplate and investigate the profound dharma nature, such as emptiness, formlessness, no aspiration, no doing, no arising, no extinction, and the reality which is without nature. Because these bodhisattvas have achieved such superior knowledge and views, it does not make sense to say that they will fall

into the dharmas of formlessness and nondoing, or dwell in the three realms. It does not make sense either to say that these bodhisattvas will turn away from sentient beings and enter nirvana, or cease to realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi to benefit the sentient beings.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas teach and relieve sentient beings from attachment to attainment, form, and incorrect views.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas would like to attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should ask other bodhisattvas, ‘How should bodhisattvas cultivate all factors for the bodhi? What mind should be elicited so they can learn emptiness, formlessness, nonaspiration, nondoing, nonarising, nonextinction, and reality, without realizing reality for the time being?’ If other bodhisattvas reply, ‘Bodhisattvas should reflect on emptiness, formlessness, and so forth without manifesting and explaining them; they should stay in mindful of sentient beings and not turn away from them and thus absorb superior expedient skillfulness,’ then these bodhisattvas must have not been conferred the prophecy of nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Why? These bodhisattvas cannot explain, analyze, and manifest respectively the forms of the bodhisattvas of nonregression. They do not know accurately what the actions, features, and forms of the bodhisattvas of nonregression really are. They thus cannot answer this question.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Are there other cause and condition that enable one to know the bodhisattvas of nonregression?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Yes. There are other cause and condition that enable one to recognize the bodhisattvas of nonregression. If bodhisattvas have or have not heard about the fathomless prajna paramita but can accurately answer the question mentioned above and practice the actions of the

bodhisattvas of nonregression, then they are not regressive.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Why have so many bodhisattvas practiced the bodhi actions, but only few of them are able to answer this question?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Many bodhisattvas can practice the bodhi actions, but few of them have been conferred the prophecy of attaining the subtle and exquisite wisdom. Those who are granted such prophecy will be able to answer this question. You must know, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas have bright and sharp virtuous roots and profound and broad wisdom; their great bodhi mind cannot be destroyed by heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth of the world.”

Chapter 19

Actions in Dreams

(In the Fifth Assembly)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas are not attached to the three realms and do not admire the two vehicles in their dreams; if they contemplate all dharmas as in dreams and refrain from realizing reality for the time being, then they are the bodhisattvas of nonregression.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas, when dreaming, can see the Buddha, surrounded by innumerable hundreds of thousands of listeners, is teaching the dharma, and the dreamers themselves are also in the assembly, then they are the bodhisattvas of nonregression.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas in their dreams see that

the Buddha has perfect features and a circle of bright light shining constantly as wide as one yojana around his body, who is teaching the essential meanings of the correct dharma to numberless audience, while all the listeners jump up and stay in the sky due to the supernatural powers of the Buddha. The bodhisattvas also dream that the Buddha has made transformed bodhisattvas and let them go to boundless Buddha countries to do Buddhist services. They dream that they are among them. This is the form of the bodhisattvas of nonregression.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas dreamed that the wild robbers broke and damaged the city, the village was on fire, fierce beasts came to kill them, adversaries came to cut off their heads, parents were dying, and all kinds of suffering were oppressing them. But these bodhisattvas were neither frightened nor worried. After awaking from the dream, they thought, ‘The three realms appeared in the dreams are unreal. When I attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, I will teach sentient beings that all dharmas in the three realms are as illusory as dreams.’ This is the form of the bodhisattvas of nonregression.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas saw in their dreams the sentient beings of hells, the realm of animals, and the realm of ghosts, and thought, ‘I should diligently cultivate the bodhisattva actions to attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly. In my Buddha land there will be no hells, the realm of animals, the realm of ghosts and their names.’ After they were awake from dreams, they would also think so. You must know, Well-Appearing One, as these bodhisattvas become the Buddhas, there will be no bad destinies and the names of these bad destinies in their pure lands. This is the form of the bodhisattvas of nonregression.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas saw in their dreams that hells, villages, or cities in which the sentient beings live were on fire and they thus made this vow, ‘I wish these fires will cease immediately and all will become nice and

cool if I have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression.’ When making this wish, the fires in the dreams were put out right away, then these bodhisattvas must have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression. If the fires continued, they must not have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression. It is the same when they are awake.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas saw cities were on fire when they were awake. Then they thought, ‘If I truly have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression, I wish the fire would become extinguished immediately and all become nice and cool.’ After having this thought, the fires did not extinguish right away; they continued to burn one mile and skip the next mile, burn one house and skip the next house, and so on, until the fires extinguished. You must know that these bodhisattvas have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression. The owners of the burned houses were once the dharma slanderers who had to receive the remaining retribution, or it just showed the suffering that they would receive in the future.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas saw that some men or women were bewitched by nonhuman spirits; they suffered and could not get rid of them. The bodhisattvas thought, ‘If the Thus-Comers know that my intentions are pure and joyful and I have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression, have attained the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one, and will attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, then please look into my mind and what I think. If I can really cultivate the bodhisattva actions, realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly, and relieve sentient beings from the suffering of birth and death, please let these men or women be rid of the disturbance of the nonhuman spirits right away.’ If the nonhumans did not leave right away, then these bodhisattvas must not have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression. If the nonhumans left immediately, you must know that these bodhisattvas must have been

conferred the prophecy of nonregression.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, some bodhisattvas have not been conferred the prophecy of nonregression. As they saw that some men or women were bewitched by the nonhuman spirits and suffered and could not get rid of them, these bodhisattvas made such a vow thoughtlessly, ‘If I have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression, please let these men or women be rid of the disturbance and let the spirits leave immediately.’ At that time, the evil demon wanted to deceive the bodhisattvas, so he drove the nonhumans away. Why? This demon had more powerful magic than spirits, so the latter were forced to leave. The bodhisattvas thought, ‘The nonhumans left because of my powers. Why? They left and the men or women became free just after I made the vow. This is the only condition that makes this happen.’ These bodhisattvas did not know the truth; they were not aware of the demonic hindrance and thought that it was because of their own powers, so they became arrogant and looked down on other bodhisattvas. They thus will fall into the stages of the two vehicles and cannot attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi even if they work diligently. Besides, they will be deceived by demons frequently. Therefore, bodhisattvas should know well and be cautious of the demonic hindrances. They should cultivate virtuous actions.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, some bodhisattvas have not been conferred the prophecy of nonregression; they have stayed far away from the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and cannot avoid demonic hindrances. An evil demon pretended to be many different figures, said to the bodhisattvas trying to deceive them, ‘Do you know that? You had been conferred the prophecy of attaining the great bodhi by the Buddha in the past. I know you and your family and all the names as far as seven generations in the past. I know where you were born, in which direction, country, city, and community. I also know when you

were born, in which year, month, day, hour, stellar, and king.’ Seeing that these bodhisattvas had soft personality and dull sense roots, the demon said to them, ‘You had the same personality in your previous life.’ Seeing that these bodhisattvas had tough personality and sharp roots, the demon said to them, ‘You had the same personality in your previous life.’ Seeing that these bodhisattvas were well equipped with different merits and virtues of ascetic as well as other superior actions, the demon said to them, ‘You had possessed such and such merits and virtues in your previous life. So, you should be proud of yourself; don’t look down on yourself.’ When hearing what the demon said, the bodhisattvas were excited; they jumped and danced and became arrogant, started to insult and scold other bodhisattvas in contempt. The evil demon further said to them, ‘You will achieve superior merits and virtues. The Buddha has conferred on you the prophecy of attaining the great bodhi in the future. I can see the signs of that.’ To confuse the bodhisattvas, the demon again pretended to be many different figures and said to them in tender and affectionate voices, ‘You have now possessed the merits and virtues of nonregression. You should esteem yourself, do not esteem others so easily.’ After hearing what the demon said, these bodhisattvas became more arrogant and stayed farther from the perfect knowledge of everything. Therefore, if bodhisattvas would like to attain the bodhi, they should be well aware of the demonic hindrances.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, some bodhisattvas do not know well about the real forms of the names, so once hearing the names they will be attached to them. An evil demon pretended to be many different figures and said to the bodhisattvas, ‘Your cultivation of the actions that you have aspired to is almost perfectly done. You will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi soon. When you become a Buddha, you will have such and such superior merits and virtues with such and such names.’ The demon knew that these bodhisattvas had for a long

time thought and made this wish, ‘I hope when I become a Buddha, I will have such and such venerable names.’ So, this demon gave the bodhisattvas the prophecy according to what the bodhisattvas had long wished and thought.

In the meantime, the bodhisattvas had stayed far away from the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, so when hearing what the demon said, they thought, ‘This person is very unusual! He can prophesy that I will become a Buddha with such and such venerable names just as I have thought of for a long time. So, I know that I will become a Buddha and have names superior to other Buddhas.’ As the demon continued to confer on them the prophecy, these bodhisattvas became more arrogant and started to disdain other bodhisattvas, and as a result, they stayed farther away from the unsurpassed bodhi. They thus will fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. If the bodhisattvas have, in current life, stayed closely to the virtuous friends and sincerely repented of what they have done, they will return to the correct path and finally realize the unsurpassed bodhi after drifting for a long time in birth and death. If, in this life, they do not encounter virtuous friends or sincerely repent of their wrongdoings, they will continue to drift in birth and death for a longer time and stay in upside-down ignorance. Although later they return to cultivate virtuous actions, they will fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. The sins of disdaining other bodhisattvas are heavier by numberless times than the four grievous sins and the five uninterrupted sins. Therefore, the bodhisattvas should be aware of the subtle demonic hindrances such as the deceptive prophecy, and so forth, and should not disdain other bodhisattvas. (The Buddha provided many examples to caution bodhisattvas, guiding them to know well demonic hindrances and avoid arrogance.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, some bodhisattvas cultivate getting away and lived as a recluse in wilderness. In the meantime, evil demon comes and say with

respect and admiration, ‘Great bodhisattvas, you can cultivate such real getting away actions, which are admired by holy ones and protected by heavenly beings and dragons.’ You must know, Well-Appearing One, I do not regard these actions as real, so I do not admire them.”

(The Buddha taught how to tell true getting away from false getting away.)

Well-Appearing One asked, “If these actions are not genuine getting way, then how about other actions?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Whether living in cities or in mountains, bodhisattvas should stay away from vexations associated with two vehicles and practice the fathomless prajna paramita instead. This is a true getting away which is admired by the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones. Bodhisattvas should learn these actions to realize the bodhi quickly. You must know, Well-Appearing One, the actions admired by demons, such as sitting and meditating in wilderness, mountains, and countryside, mixed with vexations and the intentions of the two vehicles, are far away from the fathomless prajna paramita and cannot lead to the fulfillment of the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. Some bodhisattvas love to cultivate getting away admired by demons but disdain the bodhisattvas who practice genuine getting away in cities. You must know, Well-Appearing One, because these bodhisattvas have stayed away from the fathomless prajna paramita, they cannot understand the real getting away. Those who retreat to mountains seeking seclusion cannot achieve true enlightenment. They become arrogant, attached to the stages of two vehicles, and stay away from prajna paramita. The Buddha does not endorse them. Bodhisattvas should avoid this path.

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas cannot achieve the real and pure getting away that I admire. They even cannot experience similar getting away. But evil demons deceive them and make them disdain other bodhisattvas. The

demons coming from the sky will say to them in hospitality, ‘This is the real getting far away.’ You must know, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas live in mountains, but their minds remain restless, so they cannot cultivate and learn the real getting away actions. Some bodhisattvas living in cities can constantly cultivate genuine getting away actions with tranquil minds. You must know, Well-Appearing One, those ignorant ones disdain and slander the genuine practitioners as if they were candelas, the violent and rude people of very low social class but make offerings to and esteem the false practitioners as if they were the Buddha, the World-Honored One.

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, the ignorant ones have stayed far away from prajna paramita and initiated many kinds of differentiation and attachment. They think and say, ‘What I cultivate is the real getting away, so nonhumans come to my place and admire, protect, and keep me. Who will protect, admire, esteem, and keep those who live in cities restlessly in body and mind?’ These bodhisattvas have conceited minds; their bad karmas and vexations grow day and night. You must know that they are the candelas of bodhisattvas. They have tarnished and dishonored other bodhisattvas. They are thieves of heavenly beings. They have deceived all heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth. They wear sramana robes, but with the mind of a thief, full of hatred and complaint. All bodhisattva-vehicle aspirants should not stay with them or make offerings to them. Why? These arrogant persons look like a bodhisattva, but their vexations and evil karmas are growing. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas are truly reluctant to discard the perfect knowledge of everything; if they truly want to pursue the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi to bring universal benefits and happiness to all sentient beings, they should not stay with such evil persons.

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, bodhisattvas should always cultivate diligently the real worthwhile karmas; being disgusted with birth and death and not

attached to the three realms. They should treat candelas with loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity and think: 'I must not initiate any wrongdoing like evil people. In case I do, I should extinguish it immediately.' Therefore, if bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should be aware of demonic hindrances, working diligently to stay away from wrongdoing but toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. If bodhisattvas learn this way, they do know demonic hindrances expediently and skillfully."

(The Buddha encouraged bodhisattvas to avoid wrongdoing and become aware of demonic hindrances.)

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Chapter 20

Superior Joyful Intentions

(In the Fifth Assembly)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi with superior joyful intentions, they should stay closely with real, pure, virtuous friends and make offerings respectfully to esteem and acclaim them.”

At that moment, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, "Who may be considered the virtuous friends of bodhisattvas?"

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “All the Buddhas are the virtuous friends of bodhisattvas. Those who can teach the fathomless prajna paramita and give cautions to bodhisattvas so they can insightfully enter the profound dharma gate of prajna paramita are also the virtuous friends of bodhisattvas. Giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas are the virtuous friends of bodhisattvas. These six paramitas can serve as teachers and mentors, brightness and torches, light and illumination, houses and protection, refuges and destinations, islands and islets, and fathers and mothers for bodhisattvas. The Buddhas in the past, future, and present accomplish merits, virtues, and services based on these six paramitas. Why? These six paramitas can absorb all Buddha dharma. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should learn the six paramitas.

(The Buddha told Well-Appearing One who the virtuous friends of bodhisattvas are, and taught that bodhisattvas should learn the six paramitas.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas would like to learn the six

paramitas, they should wholeheartedly listen to, accept, embrace, read, and recite the profound sutras of prajna paramita. They should further contemplate and investigate the essential meanings of these sutras and inquire about the points that they cannot understand. Why? These profound sutras of prajna paramita are the guide, leader, birth mother, and foster mother of the six paramitas. You must know, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas would like to practice the Buddha's teachings instead of others' and dwell in the Buddha stage instead of other stages, and if they would like to solve all sentient beings' doubts and satisfy their wishes, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita."

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas ought to learn the six paramitas.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, "What is the form of the fathomless prajna paramita?"

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, "The form of the fathomless prajna paramita is no hindrance."

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, "Do cause and condition also underlie the statement that no hindrance constitutes the form of all other dharmas in addition to the form of the fathomless prajna paramita?"

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, "Yes. In addition to the fathomless prajna paramita, all dharmas have the same form: no hindrance. Why? All dharmas, like the fathomless prajna paramita, are empty and far away."

(The Buddha said that all dharmas, like prajna paramita, share the same form: no hindrance.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, "If all dharmas are empty and far away, then why are some sentient beings contaminated while others are purified? Why? No empty and faraway dharma can be contaminated or purified; no empty and faraway dharma can realize the bodhi; and no empty and

faraway dharma can attain any other dharma. Can you teach me to understand these meanings?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One by asking him, “What do you think about this? Do sentient beings have the mind of the ‘I,’ the sentient being, and so forth? Are they attached to the ‘I,’ the sentient being and so forth for a very long time?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Yes, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One again, “What do you think about this? Are the ‘I’ and the associated images to which sentient beings are attached empty and far away?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Yes, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Do sentient beings reincarnate in birth and death because of the ‘I’ and the associated images?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Yes, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Because sentient beings have been reincarnated in birth and death, the contaminated and the purified ones are established. Because sentient beings are delusively attached to the ‘I’ and the associated images, the term contamination is established although truly nothing is contaminated. Because sentient beings are not delusively attached to the ‘I’ and the associated images, the term purification is established while nothing is truly purified. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, all dharmas are empty and far away, but sentient beings still can be established as contaminated or purified. If bodhisattvas practice with such realization, they are called practicing prajna paramita.”

(The Buddha explained why contamination and purification are established for sentient beings as all dharmas are empty and far away.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “It is rare, World-Honored One! Although all dharmas are empty and far away, some of the sentient beings are contaminated and some are purified. If bodhisattvas practice with this realization, they will not practice matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. They will not be subjugated by heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth of the world. Their actions are unsurpassed, and superior to the actions practiced by voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones. Because of the intentions correspondent with prajna paramita, these bodhisattvas will be able to dwell peacefully in expedient skillfulness day and night when moving toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. They will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Yes, you are correct. Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, what do you think about this? Suppose all sentient beings in the continent of Jambudvīpa are simultaneously reborn as human beings. They all aspire to the bodhi and practice giving for the rest of their lifespans and transfer the merits and virtues thus derived toward the bodhi. Will these sentient beings be much blessed because of these cause and condition?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “They will be very much blessed, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “If some bodhisattvas stay in an intention correspondent with prajna paramita for one day, the merits and virtues thus gained will be much more than the former ones by numberless and countless times. Why? As the bodhisattvas stay in the intention correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita, they will serve as the field of bliss for all sentient beings. The loving-kindness thus derived in their minds will be unsurpassed by all sentient beings except the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened

Ones.

“These bodhisattvas have possessed superior exquisite wisdom. With their profound wisdom, bodhisattvas feel deep compassion for suffering sentient beings, experiencing their pain as if it were their own. They further use their heavenly eyes to see that some sentient beings have fallen into inferior destinies where no access to correct dharma due to their incessant negative karma. The sentient beings suffer from all kinds of pains and vexations, concealed by incorrect views so unable to reach the correct path. After seeing all situations that the sentient beings encounter, the bodhisattvas feel sorry for them, so initiate an intention correspondent with great loving-kindness and great compassion, and make this vow, ‘I swear to become a great mentor for all sentient beings to liberate them from all sufferings.’ However, these bodhisattvas do not grasp this or other thoughts. This is the brilliant light of the bodhisattvas’ great wisdom. Because of dwelling in this abode, they can serve as the field of bliss for the world. Although they have not yet realized the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, they will not be regressive in the pursuit of the bodhi and will be worthy of the offerings made by almsgivers.

“When bodhisattvas dwell peacefully in prajna paramita, they not only repay the favor granted by almsgivers, but stay close to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. Therefore, if bodhisattvas would like to repay the favor, show the real and pure road for sentient beings, bring great benefits to them, serve as a great bright illumination for the world, liberate sentient beings from the prison of birth and death, and bring them pure dharma eye, they should dwell peacefully and constantly in the intentions correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita. Because of these intentions, all their speeches will be correspondent with the essential meanings of prajna paramita, and no intentions other than this one are allowed to arise. Why? These bodhisattvas can incessantly remain their intentions correspondent with prajna

paramita. Someone had no pearls before. Then this person got one and greatly rejoiced. Later he lost it and was very upset. From that time on he kept thinking how he could recover it. This constant desire made his mind focused on the pearl. Similarly, bodhisattvas should always dwell peacefully in the intention correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita. Without maintaining this intention, they will risk losing the intention correspondent with the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge forever.”

(The Buddha advise bodhisattvas should stay in joy intentions with prajna paramita constantly.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “If all dharmas and intentions are apart from self-natures, why are the bodhisattvas not apart from the intentions correspondent with prajna?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas know that all dharmas and intentions are apart from self-natures, these bodhisattvas are not apart from the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge based on prajna. Why? The self-natures of the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, the fathomless prajna, and the intentions are empty; they do not increase and decrease.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “If the self-nature of the fathomless prajna paramita is always empty and is without increase and decrease, then how can bodhisattvas become close to the bodhi as his prajna paramita grows?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and get to know that all dharmas are without increase and decrease, they will also know that the fathomless prajna paramita is without increase and decrease. If bodhisattvas have attained such knowledge and are not shocked, frightened, sunk, or drowned when hearing that all dharmas are without increase and

decrease, then these bodhisattvas have practiced the fathomless prajna paramita to its ultimate stage: they have dwelled peacefully in the bodhisattva stage of nonregression and will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi before long.”

(The Buddha taught how to recognize that bodhisattvas have achieved the stage of nonregression.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, can one practice prajna paramita being with prajna paramita?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice prajna paramita apart from prajna paramita?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice prajna paramita being with the emptiness of prajna paramita?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice prajna paramita through attaining the dharma apart from the emptiness of prajna paramita?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice prajna paramita being with emptiness?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice prajna paramita through attaining the dharma apart from emptiness?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice emptiness being with emptiness?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice emptiness through attaining the dharma apart from emptiness?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice emptiness being with prajna paramita?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice emptiness through attaining the dharma apart from prajna paramita?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice prajna paramita being with matter, feeling, thinking, action, consciousness, and so forth?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice prajna paramita and emptiness through attaining the dharma apart from matter, feeling, thinking, action, consciousness, and so forth?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice prajna paramita and emptiness being with the emptiness of matter, feeling, thinking, action, consciousness, and so forth?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, can one practice prajna paramita and emptiness apart from the emptiness of matter, feeling, thinking, action, consciousness, and so forth?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Given these conditions, how can bodhisattvas practice prajna paramita and emptiness?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One by asking him, “What do you think about this? Do you see any dharma that can practice prajna paramita and

emptiness?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Can you see prajna paramita and emptiness in the place where bodhisattvas practice?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked, “What do you think about this? Are the dharmas that you do not see attainable?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Do the unattainable dharmas arise?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “The real forms of the dharmas that cannot be seen and attained are the dharma forbearance of nonarising of bodhisattvas. If bodhisattvas achieve such forbearance, they are entitled to the prophecy of attaining the unsurpassed bodhi. This is called the fearless path of the Thus-Comer. If bodhisattvas cultivate this path diligently, it does not make sense that they will not be able to attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal knowledge, the great knowledge, the exquisite knowledge, the natural knowledge, the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, and the knowledge of the Thus-Comer.”

(The Buddha explained that the real forms of dharmas that cannot be seen and attained are the dharma forbearance of nonarising. Those who achieve such forbearance is close to the unsurpassed bodhi.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Are the bodhisattvas conferred by the Buddha the prophecy of attaining the bodhi because they have realized that all dharmas are without arising?”

“No, Well-Appearing One.”

“World-Honored One, if this is the case, how will bodhisattvas be conferred the prophecy?”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Have you seen any dharma that can be conferred the prophecy of attaining the Buddha bodhi?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One. I have not seen any dharma that can be conferred the prophecy of attaining the Buddha bodhi or any dharma that can realize insightfully the Buddha bodhi. I have not seen the time, place, and cause of realization and the dharma realized either.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “As all dharmas are unattainable, we should not say or think that someone can realize the Buddha bodhi or the Buddha bodhi can be realized.”

In the meantime, Heavenly Emperor Indra said to the Buddha, “Such prajna paramita is very profound; it is difficult to see and become awakened to because it is apart in the final analysis. The sentient beings with few virtuous roots are not privileged to write, hear, accept, embrace, read, and recite the fathomless prajna paramita.”

At that time, the Buddha said to Heavenly Emperor Indra, “Yes, it is as you say. Kausika, suppose that in this continent of Jambodvipa, all sentient beings have achieved the path of the ten virtuous karmas. Their blessings thus gained, in comparison, are fewer than the merits and virtues gained by writing, hearing, accepting, embracing, reading, and reciting the sutras of the fathomless prajna paramita by one hundredth, one thousandth, and so forth, and one upanisadam-api.”

In the meantime, a bhiksu asked Heavenly Emperor Indra, “Do the persons who write, hear, accept, embrace, read, and recite prajna paramita acquire more merits and virtues than those gained by you, the benevolent Heavenly Emperor?”

Heavenly Emperor Indra replied, “The merits and virtues gained by the sentient beings who just begin to aspire to the bodhi will be more than the merits and virtues gained by me, not to mention if they can write, hear, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate and learn diligently and attentively, and reflect reasonably on the sutras of prajna paramita.

“You must know, bhiksu, these sentient beings are the bodhisattvas. The blessings accumulated by these bodhisattvas are universally superior to all heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth of the world. The blessings that they have accumulated are also superior to those gained by stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, and self-enlightened ones. They are even superior to those gained by the bodhisattvas who have cultivated giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas apart from the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita. You must know, bhiksu, if bodhisattvas can practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita as they are taught by the Buddha, they are superior to all heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth of the world. All heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth should make offerings to them. Why? These bodhisattvas can practice and turn the fathomless prajna paramita by following Buddha’s teachings. They can inherit the seeds of the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge and ensure their continuation in the endless future. They have never been far away from the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones. They have never been far away from the throne of the exquisite bodhi. They can always relieve sentient beings from the mud of birth and death in which they are drowned. These bodhisattvas always learn the dharma that bodhisattvas should learn instead of the dharma the two-vehicle practitioners learn. The heavenly deities always follow them and protect them. The four heavenly kings also come to their places, make offerings to them, and say, ‘Excellent, great bodhisattvas! You should learn diligently the

dharma that bodhisattvas should learn. You will sit firmly on the throne of the exquisite bodhi and realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly. Now we are making the four bowls as offerings to you as the previous heavenly kings did.' You must know, bhikṣu, to these bodhisattvas the Heavenly Emperor and the four heavenly kings have made offering respectfully, let alone other heavenly deities. You must know, bhikṣu, as bodhisattvas learn this way, all Thus-Comers, bodhisattvas, the heavenly dragons, and so forth will stay with and protect them. Because of such cause and condition, these bodhisattvas will not be disturbed or harmed by dangerous things, bad luck, and illness of the world. You must know, bhikṣu, these bodhisattvas will not only acquire superior benefits in the present, but also innumerable and boundless merits and virtues in the future."

(Heavenly Emperor Indra stated that the bodhisattvas who stay with the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita are superior to ordinary sentient beings, two-vehicle practitioners, and bodhisattvas apart from prajna paramita. All heavenly beings will always respect and protect them.)

Meanwhile, Ananda thought to himself, "Did the Heavenly Lord Indra admire the merits and virtues of the bodhisattvas because of his own talent of debate or because of the support of the Thus-Comer's supernatural powers?"

Heavenly Emperor Indra could read Ananda's mind through the Buddha's authority and powers, so he said to Ananda, "Great virtuous one, it is not my own talent of debate; it is because of the support of the Thus-Comer's authority and supernatural powers."

At that time, the Buddha said to Ananda, "Yes. It is because of the Buddha's authority and powers that Heavenly Emperor Indra could speak so well today. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, when bodhisattvas reflect on, cultivate, and learn the fathomless prajna paramita, all evil demons in the large threefold thousand-

world are worried and frightened. They will think, ‘These bodhisattvas either may realize reality in the middle of the way and fall into the stages of the two vehicles or will approach the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, turn the wheel of the exquisite dharma, and empty my realm.’”

Chapter 21

Cultivation and Learning

(In the Fifth Assembly)

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, when bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita diligently day and night without interruption, demons and their associates are worried and terrified as if their hearts were shot by arrows and do not know what to do.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, when bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita diligently day and night to its perfection, demons and their associates will come to bodhisattvas’ places, they will do many terrible things to scare bodhisattvas trying to prevent them from pursuing the great bodhi.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, not all bodhisattvas who cultivate and learn prajna paramita are disturbed and hindered by evil demons. Some bodhisattvas did not believe in and understand the fathomless prajna paramita when hearing it in their previous lives; they rather defamed it. Once cultivating and learning prajna paramita presently, they will be harassed and disturbed by evil demons.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas wonder if the fathomless prajna paramita is existent when hearing it, they will be disturbed by evil demons when they cultivate and learn prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas stay far away from virtuous friends, stay with and are absorbed by evil friends, do not hear the profound meanings of prajna paramita, and thus do not know and see how to cultivate and learn the fathomless prajna paramita, they will be disturbed by evil demons when cultivating and learning prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, when bodhisattvas absorb evil dharmas, evil demons will think, ‘Now I have a new companion; he will inspire numberless people to discard correct dharma and this will satisfy my wishes.’ These bodhisattvas will be disturbed by evil demons when cultivating and learning prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, upon hearing the teaching of the profound sutras of prajna paramita, some bodhisattvas say to other bodhisattvas, ‘The essential meanings of prajna paramita are very profound and difficult to believe and understand, so why are we bothered to write, accept, embrace, read, and recite them? I cannot know their origins and basic principles, let alone other less blessed ones,’ then these bodhisattvas will be disturbed by evil demons when cultivating and learning prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, some bodhisattvas look down on other bodhisattvas and say to them, ‘I can dwell peacefully in the genuine getting away, but you cannot.’ At that time, evil demons rejoice. These bodhisattvas will be disturbed by evil demons when cultivating and learning prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, some bodhisattvas are very proud of their names and the merits and virtues caused by practicing ascetic actions. They disdain other bodhisattvas who cultivate superior virtuous dharmas. They always boast their own strengths and slander others. They assert that they possess the actions, features, and forms that a bodhisattva of nonregression should possess, although they

do not. Their vexations thus arise. At that time, evil demons are very happy and think, ‘These bodhisattvas will make my palace, hells, the realm of animals, and the realm of ghosts crowded.’ The evil demons thus assist these bodhisattvas by giving them supernatural powers to increase their talent of debate so they can convince more people to follow their evil views, learn their evil actions, and invite more burning vexations. Owing to their upside-down minds, their three karmas of the body, speech, and mind will bring about undesirable effects to foster the growth of evil destinies and make demonic palaces expand quickly. The evil demons are so excited that they jump and dance and can do whatever they want easily and freely now. These bodhisattvas will be disturbed by evil demons when cultivating and learning prajna paramita. (The Buddha taught Ananda why some bodhisattvas encounter demonic hindrances and become very vexed and fail when they cultivate prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas argue with voice-hearer vehicle practitioners or self-enlightened one vehicle practitioners, and they slander and scold each other, evil demons will think, ‘These bodhisattvas are far away from the bodhi but not very far; they are close to bad destinies but not very close.’ If two groups of bodhisattvas argue against, slander, and scold each other, the evil demons will say, ‘These two groups of bodhisattvas now are very far away from the bodhi but very close to the bad destinies.’ After having this thought, the evil demons are so excited that they dance and jump and further instill more energies in both parties so they will continue to fight against each other. This will make the rest of innumerable and boundless sentient beings disgusted with the large vehicle. These bodhisattvas will be disturbed by evil demons when cultivating and learning prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas, who have not been conferred the prophecy of nonregression, initiate a mind of damaging, fighting

against, disdaining, insulting, and slandering the bodhisattvas who have been conferred the prophecy of nonregression, then the former bodhisattvas will lose many superior actions that they have cultivated for kalpas because of their evil minds; they will stay far away from virtuous friends, continuing to drift in birth and death for a long time. In case they have not completely discarded the aspiration to the great bodhi and fortunately wear the armor of great vows again to cultivate diligently superior actions uninterruptedly for many kalpas, they will be able to make up for the merits and virtues that they lost.”

At that time, Joyfully Celebrating One asked the Buddha, “As bodhisattvas drift in painful birth and death for a long time due to the sins caused by their evil minds, can they get rid of the suffering of reincarnation in the middle of the way? As bodhisattvas decide to return and cultivate diligently and uninterruptedly for many kalpas to make up for the superior actions lost, can they do that anytime?”

The Buddha replied to Joyfully Celebrating One, “There are good ways for bodhisattvas, self-enlightened ones, and voice-hearers to repent their sins and make up for the lost merits and virtues.

(The Buddha reminded Ananda of the dharma gate used by voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, and bodhisattvas for repent and restore lost merits and virtues.)

“You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas do not feel shameful and are reluctant to remove evil actions so they do not sincerely and rightly repent their sins, they will not be able to compensate for their sins in the middle of the way.

“If bodhisattvas feel shameful and are determined to cease evil minds and repent their sins sincerely and rightly, they will think, ‘In this life I have acquired a human body that is very difficult to acquire; how can I allow such faults and evil things to occur and thus lose great virtuous benefits? I should bring benefits to all

sentient beings; how can I harm them? I should respect all sentient beings as a servant serves master; how can I arrogantly insult and slander them? I should be patient and tolerant when sentient beings reproach and beat me; how can I fight back with violent bodily actions and speech? I should conciliate all sentient beings when they fight each other in conflict, helping them respect and love each other; how can I argue with them with brutal and violent words? I should serve as a road or a bridge so all sentient beings can travel on me; how can I insult them instead? I should aspire to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi to relieve all sentient beings from the suffering of birth and death and bring them ultimate peace and happiness of nirvana; how can I do them harm and bring them suffering instead? I should from now on to the endless future treat all sentient beings without differentiation as if I were idiotic, dumb, deaf, and blind. If some want to cut my arms, dig out my eyes, mow my ears, cut off my nose, sever my tongue, and saw my body into many pieces, I will never hate them. If I allow hatred to infect my mind, I will withdraw from my aspiration toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, then my pursuit of the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge will be hindered. In that case, I will not be able to bring benefits, peace, and happiness to sentient beings.’ You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, these great bodhisattvas will be able to get rid of their crimes in the middle of the way without going through more kalpas of reincarnation in birth and death to compensate for their sins. The evil demons will not be able to disturb and hinder them. They will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.

(The Buddha taught the way of repenting sins and the method for developing forbearance paramita.)

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, bodhisattvas should not have a connection with voice-hearer or self-enlightened one vehicle practitioners. If they

have a connection, they should not live with them. If they live with them, they should not discuss or debate the meanings of the dharma trying to get a conclusion, so they will not argue against each other or burst out rude words in hatred, to hinder their pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and damage the boundless bodhisattva actions. If bodhisattvas live with or visit with other bodhisattva-vehicle practitioners, they should treat them as they do grand masters. They should think, ‘They are my genuine pure virtuous friends. We ride the same ship, share the same destination, walk on the same path, and practice the same karmas. The time of learning, the place of learning, the way of learning, and the cause of learning between us are not different.’ They will further think, ‘If those bodhisattvas have the intention other than that of the bodhisattva vehicle, I will not learn from them. If they have no intention other than that of the bodhisattva vehicle, I will learn from them.’ If bodhisattvas learn this way, they will realize insightfully the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge that they pursue quickly.”

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas work or live with other bodhisattvas, self-enlightened ones, or voice-hearers.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Do bodhisattvas learn the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge if they learn for the sake of exhaustion, nonarising, getting away, and extinction?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas learn this way, they do not learn the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Why do bodhisattvas not learn the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge if they learn this way?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One by asking him, “As the Buddha realizes realness perfectly, he is named the Thus-Come, One Worthy of Offerings,

Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One; can this realness be described as exhaustion, nonarising, getting far away, and extinction?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why? The realness has no form, so we cannot say that it is exhaustion, nonarising, getting far away, and extinction.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Therefore, when bodhisattvas learn this way, they do not learn the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. If bodhisattvas learn not for the sake of exhaustion, nonarising, getting far away, and extinction, they learn the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge; they also learn prajna paramita and the boundless Buddha dharma, such as the Buddha’s stages, abilities, and fearlessness. You must know, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas learn this way, they will be able to reach the ultimate other shore. They will not be subjugated by heavenly demons and other-paths practitioners. They will cease all evils and fulfill all virtuous dharmas. Very few sentient beings can learn this way. If bodhisattvas would like to become one of these very few sentient beings, they should learn and cultivate diligently the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita.”

(The Buddha taught Well-Appearing One the right way of cultivating the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita to attain the perfect knowledge.)

Chapter 22

Roots Plantation

Section 1

(In the Fifth Assembly)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas cultivate and learn the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita this way, no roots along with stinginess, precept violation, anger and hatred, laziness and tiredness, restlessness, wisdom abuse, and hesitation will be allowed to arise in their minds.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas cultivate and learn the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita this way, they will be able to absorb all paramitas. Just like incorrect view about body can absorb sixty-two incorrect views, so prajna paramita can absorb all paramitas. Just like the root of the living one can absorb all other roots, and like the root of the living one can extinguish all other roots, so prajna paramita can absorb all paramitas, and as we lose prajna paramita, we will lose all other paramitas too. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita can embrace all superior virtuous dharmas and eliminate all evil dharmas. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas would like to absorb all paramitas, they should learn prajna paramita. If bodhisattvas learn prajna paramita, they will become the most venerable and supreme ones among all sentient beings.

(The Buddha taught that prajna paramita can embrace all virtuous roots and eliminate all evil dharmas. Bodhisattvas who learn prajna paramita will become the supreme beings of all.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, what do you think about this? Are there many sentient beings in this large threefold thousand-world?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “There are many, World-Honored One. There are

many sentient beings in this continent of Jambudvīpa, not to mention in the large threefold thousand-world.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Suppose all sentient beings in this large threefold thousand-world have become bodhisattvas, and each of them has made the best entertainment instruments as offerings to all sentient beings in the rest of their lifespans, then what do you think about this? Will these bodhisattvas be much blessed because of such cause and condition?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “They will be much blessed, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “If some bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita briefly like the snap of a finger, the blessings thus gained by them will be more than the former ones by innumerable and boundless times. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita is very useful and can absorb the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Therefore, if bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, become the leaders of all sentient beings, benefit universally all sentient beings, serve as the refuge for all sentient beings, realize all perfect Buddha dharmas, practice at the same spiritual levels of the Buddha, play in the Buddha’s place, roar as great lion, and teach correct dharma with one voice to all sentient beings in the threefold thousand-world so all will gain great benefits, they should learn prajna paramita. Well-Appearing One, I have not seen any bodhisattva who has cultivated and learned prajna paramita cannot acquire the merits, virtues, and superior benefits of and beyond the world.”

(The Buddha described various benefits gained by learning prajna paramita.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “If bodhisattvas cultivate and learn the fathomless prajna paramita, can they also attain the merits, virtues, and virtuous roots of voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “These bodhisattvas can also attain the merits, virtues, and virtuous roots of voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones. But they do not grasp or dwell in them. They transcend the stage of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one with superior knowledge, superior views, and correct contemplation and investigation. They will explain and teach what they have achieved to voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones so they can also realize them. (According to the Buddha's teachings, prajna paramita enables bodhisattvas to achieve the dharma of the two vehicles; however, they transcend this attainment.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas learn this way, they will serve as the field of bliss for all heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth of the world and transcend the field of bliss of voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones. They will realize the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge quickly and never stay away from the fathomless prajna paramita. If bodhisattvas can cultivate prajna paramita, they will attain nonregression in the pursuit of the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, stay far away from the stage of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one, and develop intimate connection with the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas think, ‘This is prajna paramita; I will be able to initiate and activate the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge because of prajna paramita,’ then these bodhisattvas do not practice prajna paramita, nor do they understand or perceive prajna paramita. If bodhisattvas do not think, ‘This is prajna paramita; I will be able to initiate and activate the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge because of prajna paramita,’ then these bodhisattvas do practice prajna paramita; they also understand and perceive prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas do not see prajna

paramita; do not hear, awake to, and know prajna paramita; and do not see, hear, awake to, know, or differentiate among all dharmas, then they do practice prajna paramita.”

In the meantime, Heavenly Emperor Indra thought to himself, ‘If bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita, they will become superior to all sentient beings, not to mention if they can attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. If sentient beings can develop a deep belief in and understanding of the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge when hearing its name, they will attain many virtuous benefits and superior lifespan in human world, not to mention if they can initiate an aspiration toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment or can hear the fathomless prajna paramita. These sentient beings will be adored by other sentient beings in the world; they can also guide and tame all sentient beings.’”

After having this thought, Heavenly Emperor Indra made subtle and exquisite transformed fragrant flowers as offerings to and spread them on the Thus-Come and bodhisattvas. After doing this, he made such a vow, ‘If the bodhisattvas aspire to pursue the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, I swear with all my virtuous roots, merits, and virtues to pray that they will quickly and perfectly fulfill the Buddha dharma, the perfect knowledge of everything, and the flawless dharmas that they pursue.’”

After making this vow, he said to the Buddha, “If the good gentlepersons of the bodhisattva vehicle have aspired to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, I will never let them regress in the pursuit of the great bodhi. I will never let bodhisattvas be disgusted with the bodhi, fall back to the stage of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one, or let bodhisattvas lose the intentions correspondent with great compassion. If bodhisattvas have aspired to the great bodhi, I wish they will increase doubly in diligence. I wish these bodhisattvas can see

suffering in birth and death and will take a solid grand vow to bring benefits and happiness to all heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth of the world. I hope they will vow, ‘I will not only ferry myself, but diligently and assiduously ferry those who have not yet been ferried. I will not only liberate myself, but diligently and assiduously liberate those who have not yet been liberated. I will not only establish myself in peace and stability but also establish the restless and fearful ones in peace and stability. I will not only realize ultimate nirvana myself, but diligently and assiduously assist those who have not yet realized to realize ultimate nirvana.’

(Heavenly Emperor Indra made vows to help bodhisattvas attain the unsurpassed bodhi to benefit all sentient beings.)

“World-Honored One, if sentient beings joyfully take part in the merits and virtues of the bodhisattvas who just begin to aspire to the bodhi, how many blessings will they gain? If sentient beings joyfully take part in the merits and virtues of the bodhisattvas who have aspired to cultivate superior actions for a long time, the bodhisattvas of nonregression, or the bodhisattvas who are in the last phase of cultivation before becoming a Buddha, how many blessings will be gained by these sentient beings, respectively?”

At that time, the Buddha replied to Heavenly Emperor Indra, “The height of Mount Sumeru is measurable, but the merits and virtues produced by sentient beings’ joyful participation are immeasurable. And so on. The large threefold thousand-world is measurable, but the merits and virtues produced by sentient beings’ joyful participation are immeasurable.”

In the meantime, Heavenly Emperor Indra said to the Buddha again, “If sentient beings do not joyfully participate in the merits, virtues, and virtuous roots accumulated by the bodhisattvas since the moment first aspiring to the bodhi until attaining the Buddhahood, or if sentient beings do not hear or know about the joyful

participation in the merits and virtues, then they must have been captivated and bewitched by evil demons and their gang members, or they are reborn in human world from the realm of the heavenly demons. Why? If sentient beings can joyfully take part in the merits and virtues accumulated by the bodhisattvas who have aspired to the bodhi, cultivated the bodhisattva actions, achieved the state of nonregression, and finally reached the ultimate stage of cultivation, then they certainly will destroy demons and associates, and realize the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge quickly. If sentient beings deeply adore and respect the triple gem: the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha, and always enthusiastically look forward to seeing the Buddha, hearing the dharma, and encountering the sangha, then they should joyfully take part in the merits and virtues of the bodhisattvas without attachment. If they can do this, they will be able to realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly, bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings, and defeat demonic soldiers and followers.”

At that time, the Buddha said to Heavenly Emperor Indra, “Yes, it is as you say. Kausika, if sentient beings can joyfully take part in the merits and virtues of bodhisattvas and sincerely transfer the merits and virtues thus derived toward the bodhi, they will fulfill the bodhisattva actions quickly, and will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi before long. If sentient beings joyfully take part in the merits, virtues, and virtuous roots of the bodhisattvas and undertake the transference toward the bodhi, they will possess great powers and authority, serve the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, at all times, and well understand the essential meanings of the profound sutras. Wherever they are reborn, they will be respected and served with the offerings made by all sentient beings. They will not see ugly sights, hear unpleasant sounds, smell bad odors, taste not delicious food, feel uncomfortable touches, think about evil dharmas, or fall into bad destinies. They will always be

reborn in heaven or human world to enjoy superior pleasures. Why? Kausika, these sentient beings can joyfully and sincerely take part in the merits and virtues of bodhisattvas and undertake the transference toward the bodhi. Because their virtuous roots grow and increase, they will be able to realize and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge quickly, bringing benefits to immeasurable and countless sentient beings, assisting them to dwell in the realm of nirvana without remainder. Therefore, Kausika, the good gentlepersons dwelling in the bodhisattva vehicle should joyfully take part in the merits, virtues, and virtuous roots of the bodhisattvas and transfer the merits thus derived toward the bodhi to bring benefits and happiness to boundless sentient beings.”

(The Buddha encouraged the good gentlepersons dwelling in the bodhisattva vehicle to joyfully participate in the merits and virtues of bodhisattvas and transfer the merits thus derived toward the unsurpassed bodhi to relieve numberless sentient beings.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “As the mind is like illusions, how can bodhisattvas realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One by asking, “What do you think about this? Have you seen the illusion-like mind?”

Well-Appearing One said, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One again, “What do you think about this? Have you seen illusions?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “If you have not seen illusions and the illusion-like mind, do you see the mind that can attain the bodhi?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Do

you see the dharma apart from illusions and illusion-like mind attains the bodhi?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One. I do not see the dharma that is with or apart from the mind. How can I say that the dharma is existent or nonexistent? As all dharmas will get away in the final analysis, we cannot establish them as existent or nonexistent. If the dharmas cannot be established as existent or nonexistent, we should not say that one can attain the bodhi because no nonexistent dharma can attain the bodhi. So is prajna paramita that will get away in the final analysis; we should not cultivate it, cast it off, or elicit and activate it. The unsurpassed bodhi will also get away in the final analysis. Then how can we say that bodhisattvas can realize insightfully the bodhi based on the fathomless prajna paramita? Prajna paramita should not be able to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi because the getting-away dharma cannot attain the getting-away dharma.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Excellent, excellent! The fathomless prajna paramita and the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi will get away in the final analysis. Because the fathomless prajna paramita will get away in the final analysis, it can attain the getting-way unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. If the fathomless prajna paramita does not get away in the final analysis, it cannot be prajna paramita. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, one cannot attain the great bodhi without relying on the fathomless prajna paramita. Although getting-away dharma cannot attain the getting-away dharma, one cannot attain the great bodhi without relying on the fathomless prajna paramita. Therefore, if bodhisattvas would like to attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should diligently cultivate and learn the fathomless prajna paramita.”

(The Buddha concluded that one cannot attain the unsurpassed bodhi without relying on prajna paramita. Prajna paramita is getting far away in the final analysis. Great

bodhisattvas should cultivate prajna paramita to attain the unsurpassed bodhi.)

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Chapter 22

Roots Plantation

Section 2

(In the Fifth Assembly)

At that time, Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “These bodhisattvas are practicing the very profound meanings.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Yes, these bodhisattvas are practicing the very profound meanings. You must know, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas can do very difficult things. Although they practice the very profound meanings, they can refrain from realizing the stage of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “As my understanding of the meanings that the Buddha teaches, the things that these bodhisattvas do are not very difficult, so we should not say that they can do very difficult things. Why? It is because the profound meanings that these bodhisattvas realize and the realization of prajna paramita are unattainable; the dharma realized, the one who realizes, the place where the realization happens, and the time when the realization happens are all unattainable. If bodhisattvas are not sinking, drowned, worried, regretful, shocked, and frightened when hearing these words, they do practice prajna paramita. When these bodhisattvas practice this way, they do not see the forms or see that they are practicing prajna paramita. They thus become close to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and stay far away from the stage of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one. These bodhisattvas do not differentiate among all these things either.

“Empty space that does not think, ‘I am far away from or close to that thing.’

Why? It is because empty space is without movement and differentiation. So is the fathomless prajna paramita, it does not think, ‘The voice-hearer and the self-enlightened one are far away from me. The unsurpassed bodhi is very close to me.’ Why? The fathomless prajna paramita does not differentiate among all dharmas.

“The transformed person does not think, ‘The essence of illusion and the magician are close to me, while the audience is far away from me.’ Why? The transformed ones do not differentiate. Similarly, the fathomless prajna paramita does not think, ‘The voice-hearer and the self-enlightened one are far away from me, while the unsurpassed bodhi is close to me.’ Why? The fathomless prajna paramita does not differentiate among all dharmas. The same applies to shadows, images, and other similar cases.

“The Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones are without preference or dislike for all dharmas. Why? They have terminated all kinds of differentiation, preference, and dislike. The same applies to the fathomless prajna paramita. It has no preference or dislike for all dharmas. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita has terminated permanently all differentiations. (Well-Appearing One stated that prajna paramita and Thus-Comer are free from differentiation.)

“The transformed beings act without differentiation. So does the fathomless prajna paramita that accomplishes many things without differentiation.

“A skillful craftsman makes machines in the shapes of man and woman, and so forth. These machines act, but without differentiation. Same is the fathomless prajna paramita, it can accomplish many things without differentiation.”

In the meantime, Sariputra asked Well-Appearing One, “When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, do bodhisattvas practice the solid dharma or the not solid

dharma?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas practice the solid dharma instead of the not solid dharma.”

Meanwhile, innumerable heavenly sons from the realm of desire thought, ‘If the bodhisattvas can initiate the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, they will be able to practice the profound meanings of prajna paramita without realizing reality, so they will not fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. Because of this reason, they are very unusual and can do very difficult things. All sentient beings of the world should pay homage to them.’

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One knew what the heavenly sons thought, so said to them, ‘If bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita without realizing reality, they will not fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. This is not unusual and difficult. The bodhisattvas know that all dharmas and sentient beings are nonexistent and unattainable in the final analysis, but they still aspire to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, wear the armor of diligence, and deliver innumerable and boundless sentient beings to let them enter the realm of nirvana without remainder. Therefore, they are unusual and can do very difficult things.

“You must know, heavenly sons, the bodhisattvas know that all dharmas and sentient beings are unattainable, but they still aspire to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment and wear the armor of diligence to tame and guide the sentient beings as if they wore the armor to fight with empty space in order to tame and guide empty space. Why? As empty space gets away, sentient beings also get away; as sentient beings get away, the armor, the beneficial things for sentient beings, the five aggregates, and all dharmas also get away.

“If bodhisattvas are not sinking, drowned, worried, regretful, shocked, and

frightened when hearing these words, they do practice prajna paramita.”

At that time, the World-Honored One asked Well-Appearing One, “Why are the bodhisattvas not sinking, drowned, worried, regretful, shocked, and frightened when they hear these words?”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One replied, “World-Honored One, all dharmas are far away and nonexistent. Bodhisattvas should not attain any dharma, such as the one who is sinking, drowned, and so forth; the thing for which one is sinking, drowned, and so forth; and the place and the time of sinking, drowning, and so forth. All dharmas are unattainable. If bodhisattvas are not sinking, drowned, worried, regretful, shocked, and frightened when hearing this statement, they do practice prajna paramita. If bodhisattvas practice this way, Heavenly Emperor Indra, the great heavenly king Brahma, the lord of the world, and so forth will pay homage to them.”

(The bodhisattvas who are not shocked or overwhelmed upon hearing that all dharmas are unattainable are worthy of respect by heavenly beings.)

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “If bodhisattvas can practice the fathomless prajna paramita this way, they will not only be respected by Heavenly Emperor Indra, great heavenly king Brahma, and the lords of the worlds, but also by the heavenly beings in the Heaven of Extreme Brightness and Purity, Heaven of Universal Purity, Heaven of Expansive Rewards, Heaven of Pure Residence, the rest of heavens, dragons, asuras, and so forth. These bodhisattvas will also be protected by and kept in the minds of the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas in the countless and boundless worlds of the ten directions. You must know, Well-Appearing One, because these bodhisattvas are always protected by and kept in the minds of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, heaven beings, dragons, asuras, and so forth, their merits, virtues, and virtuous roots will continue to grow, and will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and

universal bodhi before long. You must know, Well-Appearing One, these bodhisattvas have dwelled in the stage of bodhisattva of nonregression. Suppose that all sentient beings in as many Buddha worlds of the ten directions as the sands of the Ganges are transformed to be demons. Each of them further makes more transformed evil demons and all these evil demons possess numberless and countless supernatural powers. By exhausting all their supernatural powers to hinder these bodhisattvas, the evil demons still cannot stop these bodhisattvas from practicing the fathomless prajna paramita or make them regress in the pursuit of the bodhi.

(The Buddha taught that the bodhisattvas practicing prajna paramita without being frightened when hearing that all dharmas are unattainable will not only receive respect from heavenly beings but also protection from Thus-Comers, bodhisattvas, heavenly beings and other dharma protectors. They cannot be hindered by all evil demons.)

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas can achieve two things, no evil demon can hinder them. What are the two? One is to contemplate and investigate the emptiness of all dharmas; the other is to be reluctant to leave all sentient beings behind. Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas can achieve two things, all evil demons will not be able to hinder them. What are the two? One is to practice all that is taught by the Buddha; the other is to be always protected by and kept in the minds of the Buddhas. If bodhisattvas can achieve these these superior ways, various heavenly gods will come often to pay homage, stay close, and make offerings to them; they will also come to ask questions and encourage them. They will say, ‘Excellent, great bodhisattvas! If you can really practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, you will dwell peacefully in the Buddha stage of perfect knowledge and serve as the asylum, rescue, houses, destinations, islets, and refuge for all sentient beings in need. You can also serve as the brilliant light for the people in darkness and the ears and eyes of people unable to

hear and see. Why? Good gentlemen, if you can dwell peacefully in the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, you will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly and no evil demon can hinder you.’

(The Buddha instructed the superior methods bodhisattvas are advised to achieve so they will not be hindered by demons.)

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas can dwell peacefully in the fathomless prajna paramita, the Buddhas, World-Honored Ones, in numberless, countless, and boundless worlds of the ten directions will naturally, publicly, and joyfully praise and acclaim the names, origins, appearances, features, merits, and virtues of these bodhisattvas as I naturally, publicly, and joyfully praise and acclaim the names, origins, appearances, features, merits, and virtues of Bodhisattva Treasure Banner and other bodhisattvas who dwell in the fathomless prajna paramita and cultivate celibacy at the Unmovable Buddha’s place.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Do all Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones naturally, publicly, and joyfully praise and acclaim the names, origins, appearances, features, merits, and virtues of all bodhisattvas?”

The Buddha replied, “No. The Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones will only naturally, publicly, and joyfully praise and acclaim the names, origins, appearances, features, merits, and virtues of the bodhisattvas who have attained nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita.”

(The Buddha stated that the bodhisattvas dwelling in expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita, practicing celibacy, or remaining not regressive, will be admired publicly by Thus-Comers.)

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “Do the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones only naturally, publicly, and joyfully praise and acclaim the names, origins, appearances, features, merits, and virtues of the bodhisattvas who have not yet attained nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi?”

The Buddha replied, “Yes. Some bodhisattvas who have not yet attained nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita are also naturally, publicly, and joyfully praised and acclaimed by the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones. Their names, origins, appearances, features, merits, and virtues are also mentioned. Some bodhisattvas have followed the Unmovable Buddha to cultivate, learn, practice, and dwell when cultivating the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita. Some others have followed Bodhisattva Treasure Banner to cultivate, learn, practice, and dwell when cultivating the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita. Although these bodhisattvas have not yet attained nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they are praised and acclaimed naturally, publicly, and joyfully by the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones; their names, origins, appearances, features, merits, and virtues are also mentioned.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, some bodhisattvas have not realized the dharma forbearance of nonarising, but they deeply believe in and understand the nonarising natures of all dharmas when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita. Some other bodhisattvas have not attained freedom and easiness of nonregression or have not entered the state of nonregression, but they deeply believe in and understand

the empty natures of all dharmas in the final analysis or dwell in the tranquil natures of all dharmas. These bodhisattvas and their names, origins, appearances, features, merits, and virtues are also naturally, publicly, and joyfully admired and acclaimed by the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones.

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, if the bodhisattvas and their names, origins, appearances, features, merits, and virtues are praised and acclaimed naturally, publicly, and joyfully by the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones, then these bodhisattvas have transcended the stages of the two vehicles and been very close to the great bodhi. They either have been conferred by Buddha the prophecy of nonregression or are very close to that.”
(Some bodhisattvas who have not yet reached nonregression may also be publicly praised by Thus-Comers due to their other achievements in cultivating prajna paramita with expedient skillfulness.)

Chapter 23

Entrustment

(In the Fifth Assembly)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas hear the essential meanings of prajna paramita and can develop a deep belief in and understanding of them without puzzlement, doubt, confusion, and suffocation, but with this thought in their minds, ‘The essential meanings taught by the Buddha must not be incorrect,’ then they will extensively hear about prajna paramita at the Unmovable Buddha’s and

various great bodhisattvas' places. They will develop a belief in and understanding of the profound essential meanings. After that, they will cultivate celibacy diligently, dwell in the state of nonregression, and realize the bodhi before long. You must know, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas only hearing prajna paramita can acquire boundless merits, virtues, and superior benefits, let alone if they develop a deep belief in and understanding of it and cultivate it as they are taught. These bodhisattvas are very close to the perfect knowledge of everything. They will dwell peacefully in realness, realize insightfully the bodhi quickly, and teach the essential meanings of the dharma."

At that time, Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, "The dharma can attain nothing other than realness. Does this statement suggest that any dharma close to the perfect knowledge of everything? Which dharma dwells peacefully in realness? Who can realize the bodhi and can teach the essential meanings of the dharma?"

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, "As no dharma is attainable other than realness, then what dharma is close to the perfect knowledge of everything? Which dharma dwells in realness? Who can realize the bodhi and teach the essential meanings of the dharma? As the self-nature of realness is unattainable, how can we say that the rest of dharmas can do something? It is in terms of the worldly way to say so."

Meanwhile, Heavenly Emperor Indra said to the Buddha, "The essential meanings of such prajna paramita are too profound to believe and understand. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas know well that all dharmas are unattainable, but they still aspire to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi to teach the correct dharma to all sentient beings. They are undertaking a very difficult thing. The bodhisattvas are not sinking, drowned, confused, skeptical, lost, and suffocated when hearing these words. This is truly unusual!"

At that time, Well-Appearing One said to Heavenly Emperor Indra, “As you say, ‘The bodhisattvas are not sinking, drowning, confused, skeptical, lost, and suffocated when hearing these words. This is truly unusual!’ Kausika, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas contemplate the dharmas as empty and nonexistent. Who is sinking, drowning, confused, skeptical, lost, and suffocated? Therefore, these things are not unusual. But ordinary sentient beings are ignorant and upside down; they cannot thoroughly understand that all dharmas are empty. Bodhisattvas thus aspire to the bodhi in to teach this expedient skillfulness. This is not extremely difficult.”

Heavenly Emperor Indra said, ‘What the venerable Well-Appearing One states is based on emptiness, so he can speak fluently without hindrance. Like shooting an arrow high up at empty space; there is no hindrance whether it goes far or near.’”

In the meantime, Heavenly Emperor Indra said to the Buddha, “Is what I talk with venerable Well-Appearing One in accord with the Thus-Come’s real dharma words and the dharma? Is it correct statement?”

At that time, the World-Honored One said to Heavenly Emperor Indra, “What you talk with Well-Appearing One is in accord with the Thus-Come’s real dharma words and the dharma; it is correct statement. Why? Kausika, the long-lived sage Well-Appearing One’s talent of debate is established completely on emptiness. Why? As the long-lived sage Well-Appearing One contemplates all dharmas as empty in the final analysis, he cannot attain prajna parramita, let alone attain the one who practices prajna parramita. He cannot attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, let alone attain the one who can realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. He cannot attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, let alone attain the one who realizes the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. He cannot attain realness, let alone attain the one who realizes realness and become a

Thus-Comer. He cannot attain the nature of nonarising, let alone attain the one who realizes the nature of nonarising. He cannot attain the bodhisattva, let alone attain the one who realizes the Buddha bodhi. He cannot attain the ten abilities and four kinds of fearlessness, let alone attain the one who fulfills the ten abilities and four kinds of fearlessness. He cannot attain the dharma, let alone attain the one who teaches the dharma.

“Kausika, the long-lived sage Well-Appearing One dwells in faraway dwelling and nonattainment dwelling of all dharmas; in comparison, his dwelling is inferior to the exquisite-action bodhisattva dwelling in prajna paramita by one hundredth, one thousandth, and so forth, and one upanisadam-api. Kausika, the exquisite-action dwelling in prajna paramita practiced by the bodhisattvas is superior to all kinds of voice-hearer dwelling, self-enlightened one dwelling, and other kinds of bodhisattva dwelling. It is the uppermost, superior, noblest, highest, subtlest, most exquisite, and unsurpassed of all kinds of dwelling; it is only second to the Thus-Comer dwelling. Therefore, Kausika, if bodhisattvas would like to become the uppermost, superior, noblest, highest, subtlest, most exquisite, and unsurpassed ones among all sentient beings, they should dwell in prajna paramita.”

(The Buddha suggested that bodhisattvas should dwell in prajna paramita to become superior ones to other sentient beings.)

At that time, innumerable and countless heavenly beings from the Heaven of Thirty-Three Smaller Heavens heard the dharma and rejoiced. They each grabbed the heavenly exquisite sound flowers and spread them around the World-Honored One and bodhisattvas as offerings to them. Sixty bhiksus stood up from their seats and knelt with their right knees touching the ground. They joined their palms together to pay homage to the Buddha. Owing to the supernatural powers of the Buddha, each bhiksu had a handful of exquisite sound flowers in their palms. These bhiksus were so

happy that they danced and jumped and threw the flowers above the Buddha. As the flowers spread, they all made this vow, ‘We swear to use the powers of these superior virtuous roots to dwell peacefully in the exquisite action abode of the fathomless prajna paramita so we can approach the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.’”

At that time, the World-Honored One smiled. As it usually happens to the Buddha, the light emitted from his face and shone over boundless Buddha lands in colors of blue, yellow, red, white, scarlet, purple, fresh green, gold, silver, and crystal. This light covered an expansive area up to the world of Brahma and down to the wheels of the wind. Then gradually it returned and moved around the Buddha clockwise three times and entered from top the Buddha’s head.

Meanwhile, Ananda rose from his seat. He joined his palms together to pay homage to the Buddha and said, “World-Honored One, what cause and condition make you smile?”

At that time, the Buddha replied to Ananda, “These bhiksus will become the Buddhas in the upcoming kalpa of Stellar Simile with the same name Spreading Flowers and the same other ten names. They will have the same number of monastic disciples, and all their lifespans will be twenty thousand kalpas. There will rain the five-colored flowers wherever they live. It is because of such cause and condition that I smile. If bodhisattvas would like to dwell peacefully in superior abode, they should dwell in prajna paramita. If bodhisattvas would like to dwell in the Thus-Come dwelling, they should dwell in prajna paramita. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas can cultivate diligently the fathomless prajna paramita to its ultimate perfection, they must have been reborn from the human world or from the Heaven of Tusita. Why? In these two areas, it is easier for bodhisattvas to cultivate prajna paramita than in other places. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, the

Thus-Comer has testified that if bodhisattvas cultivate diligently the fathomless prajna paramita without caring about their bodies, lives, and properties, they certainly will attain nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. (The Buddha conferred the monks the prophecy of attaining the Buddhahood in the upcoming kalpa. He also encouraged bodhisattvas to cultivate and dwell in prajna paramita.)

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas can hear, accept, embrace, read, recite, and write the fathomless prajna paramita and manifest it for the good gentlepersons dwelling in the bodhisattva vehicle, and further encourage, admire, and celebrate them to cultivate it, they must have planted various virtuous roots at numberless Buddhas’ places in the past. They not only planted virtuous roots in voice-hearers’ self-enlightened ones’ places.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita without shock and fright; accept, embrace, read, recite, and stay in mindfulness of it; reflect on its dharmas, meanings, sentences, and relevant intentions thoroughly; and cultivate them accordingly, then these bodhisattvas will see the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones presently.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas hear the essential meanings of the fathomless prajna paramita and develop a deep belief in and understanding of them without slandering or damaging them, they must have made offerings to numberless Buddhas, planted various virtuous roots at Buddhas’ places, and been absorbed by numberless virtuous friends.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, if sentient beings plant virtuous roots in the field of bliss of the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones, they will attain voice-hearer effect, self-enlightenment

effect, or Thus-Come effect and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi; but first, they should learn and understand the profound essential meanings of prajna paramita thoroughly and cultivate all bodhisattva actions to their perfection.

(According to Buddha, bodhisattvas should learn and understand the profound meanings of prajna paramita before they can plant virtuous roots to fulfill the effects of various vehicles.)

“Therefore, Joyfully Celebrating One, now I am entrusting the profound sutras of prajna paramita to you. You should correctly accept, embrace, read, recite, and thoroughly understand them, and do not forget or lose them. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, to forget or lose the sutras other than the profound sutras of prajna paramita will invite not very heavy sins; but if bodhisattvas cannot accept and embrace the profound sutras of prajna paramita or if they forget or lose them, their sins will be very heavy. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, if one can accept, embrace, and so forth, the profound sutras of prajna paramita and keep them in mindfulness and never forget or lose them, they will gain immeasurable blessings. If the bodhisattvas cannot accept and embrace the profound sutras of prajna paramita or if they forget or lose them, their sins will equal the blessings mentioned above.

Therefore, Joyfully Celebrating One, I am sincerely entrusting you with these very profound sutras of prajna paramita; you must correctly accept, embrace, read, recite, understand thoroughly, reflect reasonably on, lecture for others on, and explain respectively these sutras, so those who accept and embrace them can fully understand their sentences, meanings, and essential points. Why? If bodhisattvas can accept, embrace, read, recite, fully understand, reflect reasonably on, lecture for others on, and explicate respectively the fathomless prajna paramita, they equally accept and embrace the very profound dharma storage of the Buddhas in the past, future, and

present, and further explicate it extensively for sentient beings.

(Because the sutras of the profound prajna paramita are so important and indispensable for bodhisattvas in their pursuit of the unsurpassed bodhi, the Buddha was entrusting the sutras to Ananda, advising him to read and learn them thoroughly so that they can teach others.)

“You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, if sentient beings would like to initiate a sincere and pure mind to make various best offerings respectfully to the tireless ones, they should wholeheartedly listen to, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate and learn diligently, and reflect reasonably on prajna paramita and extensively and respectively explicate it for others; or further write prajna paramita, adorn it in many magnificent ways, and make offerings respectfully to it with no break. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas make offerings respectfully to esteem and acclaim the fathomless prajna paramita, they equally make offerings respectfully to esteem and acclaim the Buddhas of the three phases of time in the ten directions. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas initiate a sincere and pure mind to pay homage to and adore prajna paramita when hearing it, they equally initiate a sincere and pure mind to pay homage to and adore the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of the Buddhas in the past, future, and present. Joyfully Celebrating One, if you adore me, are fond of me, and are reluctant to leave me, you should also adore the profound sutras of prajna paramita and be reluctant to turn away from them. You should not lose or forget even a sentence of the sutras.

“Joyfully Celebrating One, the causes and conditions of why I entrust you with these very profound sutras of prajna paramita cannot be spoken exhaustedly for one great kalpa, two great kalpas, and so forth, and many great kalpas as the sands of the Ganges. All in all, if I am your grand master, then the fathomless prajna paramita

is also your grand master. If the Buddhas of the three phases of time are the unsurpassed grand masters of the heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth, then the fathomless prajna paramita is also the unsurpassed grand master of the heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth. As heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth adore and pay homage to me, they should also adore and pay homage to the fathomless prajna paramita. Therefore, Joyfully Celebrating One, as I entrust you with the very profound sutras of prajna paramita in innumerable expedient and skillful ways, you should accept and embrace them and should not lose or forget them. Now I am entrusting you with this fathomless prajna paramita in front of the heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth, you should correctly accept and embrace it; you should not lose or forget it. Joyfully Celebrating One, let me tell you honestly, if the good gentlepersons of pure belief are very reluctant to leave the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha and the unsurpassed bodhi of the Buddhas in the three phases of time behind, they should be also very reluctant to leave the fathomless prajna paramita behind. This is how the Buddhas teach and caution their disciples.

“You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, those who love to listen to, accept, embrace, read, recite, understand thoroughly, reflect reasonably on, write, and explicate prajna paramita will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly. Why? The unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of all Buddhas is born because of prajna paramita. Therefore, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas would like to attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should diligently cultivate and learn prajna paramita. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita is the mother of great bodhisattvas. It enables bodhisattvas to realize insightfully the bodhi quickly.

(The Buddha said that prajna paramita is the mother of great bodhisattvas.)

“You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, when the dharma is going to extinguish, if bodhisattvas protect it and keep it from extinction, they equally protect and keep the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge of the Buddhas in the three phases of time. They also protect and keep the unsurpassed dharma storage of the Buddhas in the three phases of time.

“You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas learn diligently the six paramitas, they will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly. Therefore, Joyfully Celebrating One, I am entrusting you with the six paramitas; you should correctly accept and embrace them and should not lose or forget them. Why? The six paramitas are the inexhaustible treasury of the Buddhas in the three phases of time. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, the essential dharma taught by the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, of the three phases of time in the ten directions flows from the inexhaustible dharma storage of the Buddhas in the three phases of time. The Buddhas and their disciples of the three phases of time in the ten directions had cultivated and learned diligently, will cultivate and learn diligently, and are cultivating and learning diligently based on this inexhaustible dharma storage to realize the unsurpassed bodhi and enter the nirvana without remainder.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, if you have taught voice-hearer vehicle practitioners about the dharma of the voice-hearer so all sentient beings in the large threefold thousand-world are able to attain the arhat effect, I will not think that you have done something that a Buddha’s disciple should do, and so I will not joyfully take part in it. But if you teach the bodhisattva vehicle practitioners only one sentence of the dharma correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita, I will regard you as a Buddhist disciple and will joyfully and sincerely take part in what you are doing.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, suppose that all sentient beings in the large threefold thousand-world have realized insightfully arhat effect. What do you think about this? Are the blessings thus caused by their bliss-inviting karmas of giving, precept, and cultivation many?”

Joyfully Celebrating One replied, “They are many, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said to Joyfully Celebrating One, “If voice-hearers can teach the dharma correspondent with prajna paramita to the bodhisattvas for one day and night, or even as brief as the snap of a finger, the blessings thus gained will be much more than the former ones. Why? The blessings gained by the later voice-hearers will be superior to the virtuous roots caused by all voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones.

“Furthermore, Joyfully Celebrating One, suppose that some bodhisattvas have taught the dharma of voice-hearer to voice-hearer vehicle practitioner and thus all sentient beings of the large threefold thousand-world will attain arhat effect. What do you think about this? Are the blessings gained by these bodhisattvas many?”

Joyfully Celebrating One replied, “They are many, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said to Joyfully Celebrating One, “Suppose that some bodhisattvas teach the dharma correspondent with prajna paramita to sentient beings for one day and night, or even as brief as the snap of a finger, the blessings thus gained are more than the former ones. Why? The dharma giving correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita is superior to the dharma giving correspondent with voice-hearer or self-enlightened one and the virtuous roots of the two vehicles. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, it does not make sense to say that the bodhisattvas who have achieved a mindfulness of such virtuous roots will regress in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.”

(The Buddha taught that teaching others with prajna paramita will always gain more blessings than teaching or guiding sentient beings to become an arhat.)

Chapter 24

The Unmovable Buddha

(In the Fifth Assembly)

At that time, the Thus-Comer, surrounded by the four groups of followers, admired prajna paramita and entrusted Ananda with prajna paramita. The Buddha further manifested supernatural powers in front of all bhiksus (monks), bhiksunis (nuns), upasakas (laymen), upasikas (laywomen), heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, and gandharvas so all could see the Unmovable Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One. The Unmovable Buddha was also surrounded by voice-hearers and bodhisattvas. He was teaching correct dharma in an ocean-like unmovable public assembly. The Buddha also manifested the magnificent and pure Unmovable Buddha land. The voice-hearer monastics in that land all had attained arhat effect, all their flaws were removed. They had attained real freedom and easiness with no more vexations. Their minds were liberated and their wisdom was released, like well tamed smart horses or great dragons. All they should do had been well done, heavy burdens discarded, self-benefit obtained, and all kinds of complexes and bonds are untied. They had all attained utmost ease and freedom. Well known bodhisattva monastics were also present in the assembly. They had attained dharani and unhindered talent of debate, and achieved inconceivable and immeasurable exquisite and subtle merits and virtues. Later, the Buddha withdrew his supernatural powers. The Unmovable Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One, voice-hearers, bodhisattvas, the rest of the public, and the dignified and pure phenomena of the Buddha land disappeared. The assembly conducted by the Unmovable Buddha and the magnificent Buddha land could not be perceived as Sakyamuni Buddha withdrew his supernatural powers.

At that time, the Buddha asked Ananda, “Now can you see the land of the Unmovable Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One and the assembly?”

Ananda replied, “No, I cannot see them any longer. They are so far away that my eyes cannot reach.”

In the meantime, the Buddha said to Ananda once more, “Just as the Unmovable Buddha’s land and its assembly are beyond the reach of physical sight in this world, so too are all dharmas beyond what can be perceived by the physical eye. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, the dharma does not practice the dharma; the dharma does not see the dharma; the dharma does not know the dharma; and the dharma does not realize the dharma. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, dharma nature cannot practice, see, know, and realize. It is without movement and doing. Why? All dharmas have no actions; the ones who can grasp and the dharmas grasped are like empty space because their nature is far away. All dharmas are inconceivable; the ones who can conceive and the dharmas conceived are like transformed ones because their nature is far away. All dharmas do not act and receive; they are like shadows because they are not solid. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas practice this way, they are called practicing prajna paramita; they are not attached to all dharma forms. If bodhisattvas learn this way, they are called learning prajna paramita; they do not grasp or renounce all dharmas. (According to the Buddha, all bodhisattvas should practice prajna paramita with the understanding that all dharmas are like empty space, transformed ones and so forth.)

“You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas would like to attain all paramitas and fulfill all dharmas to reach the ultimate other shore quickly, they should learn prajna paramita. Why? These learners are the superior, noblest, highest, most exquisite, subtlest, and uppermost ones among all kinds of learners;

they can bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings of the world. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, if bodhisattvas learn this way and serve as the refuge for the sentient beings in need, then the Buddha, World-Honored One, will admire their cultivation of prajna paramita. Joyfully Celebrating One, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas have learned this learning and dwelled peacefully in it; they are able to move the large threefold thousand-world with their right fingers or toes and relocate it in another place and then move it back to its original location without disturbing and scaring the sentient beings living within, who remain unaware of what is happening at all. Why? The authority and powers of the merits and virtues of the fathomless prajna paramita are inconceivable. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the past, future, and present learn this prajna paramita to attain unhindered knowledge and views of the dharmas in the past, future, and present, as well as the unconditioned dharmas. Joyfully Celebrating One, that is why I say that the learning of the fathomless prajna paramita is the superior, noblest, highest, most exquisite, subtlest, and the uppermost one among all kinds of learning.

(The Buddha explained why learning prajna paramita is the noblest and highest learning of all.)

“You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, those who would like to grasp the quantity and boundary of the fathomless prajna paramita are like ignorant ones who would like to grasp the quantity and boundary of empty space. Why? The merits and virtues of the fathomless prajna paramita are immeasurable and boundless. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, I will not say that the fathomless prajna paramita is like the names that have quantity and boundary. Why? The names, words, and sentences can be measured and have boundary, while the merits and virtues of the fathomless prajna paramita cannot be measured and have no boundary. We should not measure the merits and virtues of the fathomless prajna paramita with the criteria used

to measure the names, words, and sentences.”

(The Buddha said that the merits and virtues of prajna paramita are beyond the expressions of names, words, and sentences; they are immeasurable and inconceivable.)

The long-lived sage Joyfully Celebrating One asked the Buddha, “Based on what cause and condition do you say that the fathomless prajna paramita is immeasurable?”

The Buddha replied to Joyfully Celebrating One, “The nature of the fathomless prajna paramita is inexhaustible and far away, so it is immeasurable. You must know, Joyfully Celebrating One, all the Buddhas of the three phases of time learn prajna paramita, realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi perfectly and ultimately, and teach and explain it for sentient beings, but this prajna paramita remains unexhausted and undiminished. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita is unexhausted as empty space. Those who want to exhaust the fathomless prajna paramita equally want to exhaust the boundary of empty space. Therefore, Joyfully Celebrating One, the fathomless prajna paramita is inexhaustible, and thus it is innumerable.”

At that time, Well-Appearing One thought to himself, “It is very profound at this point. I should ask the Buddha about it.”

After having this thought, he asked the Buddha, “Why is the fathomless prajna paramita unexhausted?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “The fathomless prajna paramita is like empty space that is inexhaustible.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “How will bodhisattvas elicit prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Bodhisattvas should elicit prajna

paramita by contemplating matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness as inexhaustible. They should elicit prajna paramita by contemplating ignorance, action, and so forth, and old age and death as inexhaustible. Well-Appearing One, this is how the bodhisattvas should elicit prajna paramita. You must know, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas should contemplate the twelve links of dependent origination this way and stay far away from the two extremes. To contemplate the twelve links of dependent origination without being attached to the central part and the borders is an exquisite bodhisattva contemplation that is not shared by other sentient beings. The bodhisattvas should sit peacefully on the throne of the wonderful bodhi before they can contemplate the twelve links of dependent origination as they really are: their essential meanings are so profound that they are inexhaustible as great empty space, then they can realize insightfully the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. You must know, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and contemplate the twelve links of dependent origination as the inexhaustible mental images as empty space, they will not fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one; they thus will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.

(The Buddha taught Well-Appearing One how bodhisattvas elicit prajna paramita to achieve the unsurpassed bodhi.)

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas regress in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi because they do not know how to elicit prajna paramita with inexhaustible mental images through expedient and skillful intentions in contemplating the twelve links of dependent origination as they really are. You must know, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas regress in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi because they are unable to elicit the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita. Well-Appearing One, bodhisattvas do not

regress in their pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi because they are able to elicit the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas should contemplate through expedient skillfulness the twelve links of dependent origination as inexhaustible mental images of empty space. As they contemplate the dharmas in dependent origination, they do not see any dharma arise without causes, do not see the nature and forms of any dharma endure permanently, and do not see any dharma act or receive. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, these bodhisattvas will contemplate the twelve links of dependent origination as inexhaustible mental images of empty space, so they can elicit prajna paramita and realize insightfully the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge quickly.

“You must know, Well-Appearing One, when bodhisattvas contemplate the twelve links of dependent origination as they really are and elicit prajna paramita, they will not see matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness; they will not see this Buddha world and that Buddha world; they will not see any dharma that can see these and those Buddha worlds. If bodhisattvas can practice the fathomless prajna paramita this way, evil demons will be worried and upset as if they were shot by poisonous arrows; they will be very painful as if their parents were dead abruptly.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Will only one evil demon or all evil demons in the large threefold thousand-world be very worried and upset as if they were shot by poisonous arrows when seeing bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “All evil demons in the large threefold thousand-world will be worried and upset as if they were shot by poisonous arrows; they cannot sit on their thrones in ease and comfort. Why? If bodhisattvas dwell in the fathomless prajna paramita, no heavenly being, human being, asura, and

so forth can take advantage of them, disturb and damage them, and make them regress. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas would like to realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should dwell peacefully in the fathomless prajna paramita. If bodhisattvas can work diligently to dwell peacefully in the fathomless prajna paramita, they will be able to cultivate and fulfill giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas. If bodhisattvas can correctly cultivate the fathomless prajna paramita, they will be well equipped and ready to fulfill the expedient skillfulness of all paramitas, becoming aware of all demonic hindrances to stay far away from them.

(Prajna paramita is very useful for bodhisattvas. Through it they can accomplish many steps toward the unsurpassed bodhi.)

“Therefore, Well-Appearing One, if bodhisattvas would like to correctly absorb expedient skillfulness, they should correctly cultivate the fathomless prajna paramita. When bodhisattvas have cultivated to elicit the fathomless prajna paramita, the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, in the innumerable and boundless worlds will protect them and keep them in mindfulness. These bodhisattvas should think, ‘The Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones have also given birth to the perfect knowledge of everything because of prajna paramita.’ After having this thought, they should further think, ‘I should realize the dharma as the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones have done.’

(Bodhisattvas should understand how the Thus-Comers achieved perfect knowledge and strive to follow their example.)

“Well-Appearing One, the blessings gained by the bodhisattvas who practice the fathomless prajna paramita with the reflection of Thus-Comers’ merits and virtues briefly as the snap of a finger will be much more than the bodhisattvas who have

cultivated giving for as many great kalpas as the sands of the Ganges. Not to mention if the bodhisattvas can practice the fathomless prajna paramita with this reflection for one day or half a day. These bodhisattvas will soon dwell in the stage of nonregression and be always protected by and kept in the mindfulness of the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones. They will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. They will not fall into the stage of voice-hearer or the stage of self-enlightened one. They will not be reborn in bad destinies; rather, they will always be reborn in heaven or human world and never stay away from the Buddhas. If bodhisattvas can cultivate and elicit the fathomless prajna paramita, stay in the mindfulness of and reflect on the merits and virtues of the Buddhas briefly as the snap of a finger, they will acquire boundless merits, virtues, and superior benefits, not to mention if they can bravely and diligently cultivate and elicit the fathomless prajna paramita and stay in the mindfulness of and reflect on the merits and virtues of the Buddhas for one day or more than one day. They will be like the Bodhisattva Fragrant Elephant and so forth who have constantly cultivated celibacy at the Unmovable Buddha's place and never been away from prajna paramita."

When the Bhavagat completed the teaching of this sutra, innumerable bodhisattvas led by Bodhisattva Maitreya, the senior voice-hearers led by the long-lived sages Well-Appearing One and Sariputra, and all heavenly beings, dragons, gandharvas, and so forth rejoiced after hearing the Buddha's teaching. They joyfully believed in and accepted the Buddha's teaching and practiced as they were taught. (This completes the fifth assembly.)

Fascicle 566

Chapter 1

The Causes and Conditions of the Assembly

(In the Sixth Assembly)

This is what I heard.

There was a time the Bhagavat lived in Rajagriha on the top of the Mount Vulture (Grdhrakūta) along with 42,000 senior monks, who were all arhats and each had eliminated all flaws and had no more vexations. They had attained genuine ease. Their minds were well liberated, and their wisdom was well released. They had been as well tamed as smart horses and great dragons. They had accomplished all that should be done, abandoned all that should be renounced, and attained real self-benefit. They had ended all bonds and gained liberation through correct knowledge, achieved ultimate, uppermost easiness in their minds. They were all arhats except Ananda, who was still in the process of learning and had attained stream-entry effect by that time. Among all monks, the long-lived sages Ajñāta Kaundinya, Mahākāśyapa, Gavāṃpati, Revata, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Mahakātyāyana, Pilindavatsa, Sariputra, Fully Loving-Kind One (Purna), Vakkula, Upali, Rahula, Nonextinction (Aniruddha), and Well-Appearing One (Subhūti) were the leaders.

In addition, 72,000 great bodhisattvas came from this or other Buddha countries to listen to the dharma teaching. They had all fully understood the very profound dharma nature. They had well tamed themselves, smoothly engaged in self-improvement, and practiced exquisite actions of equality. They acquired dharani gate and unhindered debate, became genuine and pure virtuous friends of all sentient beings, and could turn the subtle dharma wheel of nonregression. Because of their mercy and compassion for all sentient beings of the worlds, these bodhisattvas

protected and kept the dharma storage. They consistently made offerings to innumerable Thus-Comers and inherited and fostered the triple gem so that it would not discontinue. They knew fully the very profound spiritual level of the Buddhas. They were the real princes of the dharma king, stayed in the last phase before becoming a Buddha, and could often substitute for the Buddhas to turn the correct dharma wheel. They lived in the world without being tainted by it. Because of possessing such innumerable merits and virtues, they could travel from one Buddha country to the other to visit with the Buddhas, listening to their dharma teachings. Various great bodhisattvas in this Kalpa of the Sages were present in the assembly: Bodhisattva Treasure Form, Bodhisattva Treasure Hand, Bodhisattva Treasure Seal, Bodhisattva Treasure Coil, Bodhisattva Treasure Crown, Bodhisattva Treasure Mountain, Bodhisattva Treasure Sea, Bodhisattva Treasure Flame, Bodhisattva Treasure Banner, Bodhisattva Treasure Storage, Bodhisattva Gold Storage, Bodhisattva Pure Storage, Bodhisattva Virtue Storage, Bodhisattva Concentration Storage, Bodhisattva Wisdom Storage, Bodhisattva Sun Storage, Bodhisattva Moon Storage, Bodhisattva Thus-Comer Storage, Bodhisattva Lotus Storage, Bodhisattva Diamond Storage, Bodhisattva Liberated Moon, Bodhisattva Universal Sage (Samantabhadra), Bodhisattva Universal Voice, Bodhisattva Universal Precept, Bodhisattva Universal Action, Bodhisattva Universal Eye, Bodhisattva Broad Eye, Bodhisattva Lotus Eye, Bodhisattva Knowledge and Wisdom, Bodhisattva Upper Wisdom, Bodhisattva Superior Wisdom, Bodhisattva Lotus Wisdom, Bodhisattva Diamond Wisdom, Bodhisattva Sunlight, Bodhisattva Moonlight, Bodhisattva Knowledge Light, Bodhisattva Knowledge Virtue, Bodhisattva Sage Virtue, Bodhisattva Flower Virtue, Bodhisattva Sun Contemplation, Bodhisattva Moon Contemplation, Bodhisattva Noncontamination, Bodhisattva Exquisite Voice, Bodhisattva Great Voice King, Bodhisattva Lion Roar, Bodhisattva Lion Play, and

Bodhisattva the Head of the Sages. They were led by Bodhisattva Maitreya, Bodhisattva Contemplation in Self-Ease and Freedom, and Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (Exquisite Auspicious One).

There were numberless heavenly beings present in the assembly. Numberless heavenly beings from the Heaven of Four Great Kings were led by the four great kings. Numberless heavenly beings from the Heaven of Thirty-Three Smaller Heavens were led by Heavenly Emperor Indra. Numberless heavenly beings from the Heaven of Yama were led by heavenly king Suyāma. Numberless heavenly beings from the Heaven of Tusita were led by heavenly king Saṃtuṣitatva. Numberless heavenly beings from the Heaven of Enjoying Self-Made Changes were led by heavenly king Well Changing One (Sunirmita-deva-rāja). Numberless heavenly beings from the Heaven of Enjoying Other-Made Changes were led by heavenly king Self-Freedom (Devādhīpatya). Numberless heavenly beings from the heavens of Brahma were led by heavenly king Brahma (Mahābrahma deva rāja). Numberless heavenly beings from the Heaven of Pure Residence were led by Great Self-Freedom (Maheśvara). All these heavenly beings, along with their fellows and associates, came to the Buddha's place to hear the dharma. There were also innumerable asura kings, each accompanied by hundreds of thousands of associates and fellows, present in the Buddha's place to hear the dharma teaching. Among them, the asura kings Possessing Powers, Solid Aggregates, Mixed Authority, and Violent Attachment were the leaders. There were innumerable dragon kings with great powers, led by the dragon kings No Heat, Rigorous Motives, Sea Dwelling, and Skillful Crafts, each with hundreds of thousands of followers, present in the Buddha's place to hear the dharma teaching. Furthermore, there were innumerable yakṣa deities and nonhumans along with their followers present in the Buddha's place to hear the dharma teaching.

At that time, entire Mountain of Vulture, forty yojanas wide, was full of

crowds and there was not a space unoccupied either in the air or on the ground.

At that time, the World-Honored One sat on the lion throne and was surrounded by innumerable listeners. They made offerings respectfully to esteem and acclaim the Buddha. Then they joined their palms together and looked up at him wholeheartedly. The Thus-Come manifested for the huge crowd by manipulating his supernatural powers to emit the light of varied colors from his face and illuminate universally the boundless worlds of the ten directions. The light unusually returned to the Buddha's place and then entered his face after cycling clockwise three times around him.

At that time, there was a Buddha land called Magnificence in the east of this Buddha land, as far as ten times the sands of the Ganges. The Buddha in that land was named Universal Light Thus-Come, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One, Perfect Knowledge and Actions, Well-Gone One, Knowing the World, Unsurpassed Gentleperson, Taming and Guiding One, Buddha, Teacher of Heavenly Beings and Human Beings, and Bhagavat. He was conducting that land very well. He was teaching great bodhisattvas about the correct dharma correspondent with one vehicle. In that Buddha land, the name of the two vehicles could not be heard, not to mention there were the diligent cultivators and practitioners of the two vehicles. All the bodhisattvas in that land had attained nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. The sentient beings in that land did not eat food; they nurtured themselves with liberation, meditation, and samadhi. They did not rely on sunlight, moonlight, and so forth. They were illuminated by the Buddha's body light that shone constantly day and night. The ground in that land was as plain and smooth as one's palm, and there were no things such as poisonous thorns, gravels, valleys, hills, and mountains. A bodhisattva in that land called Freedom from Hindrances saw the light and wondered, so went along with

other great bodhisattvas to the Buddha's place. They bowed down to the ground before the Buddha's feet. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, they joined their palms together and said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, why is there such auspicious sign?"

Universal Light Buddha said to Freedom from Hindrances, "In the west as far as ten times the distance of passing as many worlds as the sands of the Ganges from this land, a Buddha land is named Barely Tolerable; the Buddha's name in that land is Sakyamuni, who is fully entitled to the ten names and is teaching great prajna paramita for bodhisattvas. It is because of such cause and condition that the auspicious sign has appeared."

Bodhisattva Freedom from Hindrances said to the Buddha, "May I beg your kind permission to go to Barely Tolerable world, pay homage to and make offerings to Sakyamuni Thus-Comer, and listen to his correct dharma teaching?"

Meanwhile, Universal Light Buddha replied to Freedom from Hindrances, "Yes, it is a good time. You'd better go quickly!"

Freedom from Hindrances rejoiced and danced and jumped. He went with innumerable bodhisattvas to Mountain of Vulture, bowed down to the ground before the Buddha's feet, walked around the Buddha clockwise three times, and sat to one side.

In the south of this land, across ten times the distance of passing as many worlds as the sands of the Ganges, there was a Buddha world with Pure Flowers as its name. The Buddha's name in that land was Sunlight, who had also the ten names. A bodhisattva in that land was called Sun Storage. In the west of this land, across ten times the distance of passing as many worlds as the sands of the Ganges, a Buddha land was named Treasure Flowers. The Buddha's name in that land was Bright Merits and Virtues, who had also the ten names. A bodhisattva in that land was called Merits

and Virtues Storage. In the north of this land, across ten times the distance of passing as many worlds as the sands of the Ganges, a Buddha world was named Purity. The Buddha in that land was named King of Freedom and Ease, who had also the ten names. A bodhisattva in that land was called Extensive Hearing. In the southeast of this land, across ten times the distance of passing as many worlds as the sands of the Ganges, there was a Buddha world with Flame as its name. The Buddha in that land was named King Sweet Nectar, who had also the ten names. A bodhisattva in that land was called Nonregression. In the southwest of this land, across ten times the distance of passing as many worlds as the sands of the Ganges, a Buddha world was named Pure Merits and Virtues. The Buddha's name was Knowledge Torch, who had also the ten names. A bodhisattva in that land was called Great Wisdom. In the northwest of this land, across ten times the distance of passing as many worlds as the sands of the Ganges, a Buddha world was named Joyful Intentions. The Buddha in that land was named Exquisite Voices King, who had also the ten names. A bodhisattva living there was called Accumulation of Merits and Virtues. In the northeast of this land, across ten times the distance of passing as many worlds as the sands of the Ganges, a Buddha world was named Magnificent Wisdom. The Buddha in that land was named Utmost Knowledge, who had also the ten names. A bodhisattva living there was called Being Always Delighted. Above this land, across ten times the distance of passing as many worlds as the sands of the Ganges, there was a Buddha world named Unmovable. The Buddha in that land was named Diamond Form, who had also the ten names. A bodhisattva living there was called Treasure Banner. Below this land, across ten times the distance of passing as many worlds as the sands of the Ganges, a Buddha world was named Brilliant Moon. The Buddha in that land was named Magnificent Diamond Treasure King, who had also the ten names. A bodhisattva in that land was called Treasure Belief. All what happened in all these directions was the

same as what happened in the east.

Chapter 2

Thorough Understanding

(In the Sixth Assembly)

In the meantime, a heavenly king named Supreme One rose from his seat. He bowed down to the ground before the Buddha's feet. He joined his palms together with left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground and said, "World-Honored One, I have a little question that I'd like to ask the Buddha. Would you please explain it for us?"

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, "Heavenly king, the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One likes to answer your question and solve your problem."

In the meantime, Supreme One rejoiced and danced and jumped, so he said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, how can bodhisattva learn and cultivate one dharma to thoroughly understand all dharmas?"

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, "Excellent, excellent! You can ask Thus-Comer such profound meanings. I am going to explain so your problem can be solved. Please listen to me and reflect carefully on what I will say."

Supreme One said, "Yes, we are looking forward to your teaching."

At that time, the World-Honored One said to Supreme One, "You must know, heavenly king, the one dharma that bodhisattvas learn and cultivate to understand and fulfill all dharmas is prajna paramita. If bodhisattvas can cultivate and learn prajna

paramita, they will be able to understand and fulfill giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, prajna, expedient skillfulness, exquisite aspiration, abilities, and knowledge paramitas.

(Responding to Supreme One's question, the Buddha explained the bodhisattvas can cultivate only one dharma gate, the fathomless prajna paramita, to fulfill all other dharmas.)

“Heavenly king, how should bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill giving paramita? You must know, heavenly king, if bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice the exquisite dharma giving paramita. That is, when practicing dharma giving, the bodhisattvas will aspire with pure minds to nothing. When they teach dharma, they will not intend to gain reputation or self-interest; they will teach to cease others' suffering. They will not think that 'I' can teach the dharma or see that others can hear my teaching. Because the 'I,' the teacher, and the others, the listeners, are not dualistic and separate; their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to fulfill dharma giving.)

“If great bodhisattvas can cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice fearlessness giving paramita. That is, they will regard all sentient beings as if they were their parents, brothers, and relatives, so all sentient beings will stay close to and rely on them. Why? Since the time unknown, all sentient beings reincarnating in the six destinies have all been 'my' relatives. If sentient beings are in fear and tremble, they will rescue them by risking their bodies and their own lives, not to mention they will do harm to them. But bodhisattvas will not see that they can bring fearlessness to others or see that those in fear can receive it. The givers and the receivers are not dualistic and separate; their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to bring fearlessness to sentient beings perfectly—fulfilling fearlessness giving paramita.)

“If great bodhisattvas can cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice living supplies giving paramita. That means giving all kinds of supplies to sentient beings in need, so the receivers can practice the path of the ten virtuous karmas. But when practicing this giving, the bodhisattvas do not see that ‘I’ can give, nor do they see the receiver. It is because the givers and the receivers are not dualistic and separate; their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to bring living supplies to sentient beings perfectly, fulfilling property giving paramita.)

“If great bodhisattvas can cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice expecting-no-return giving paramita. That means when practicing giving, the bodhisattvas do not expect anyone to repay their favor; rather, they will think that it is intrinsic and natural to give. They will not see that ‘I’ can practice giving without expecting return, nor will they see giving itself. It is because both are not dualistic and separate; their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to practice giving without expecting repay—fulfilling formless giving paramita.)

“If great bodhisattvas can cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice great compassion paramita. When seeing the poor, old, and ill sentient beings are helpless, the bodhisattvas will have a mind of great compassion arise and make the vow, ‘When I attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, I swear to serve as the refuge for sentient beings. For the sake of sentient beings, I will transfer the virtuous roots toward the bodhi, but I will not differentiate between the rescuer and the ones rescued because both are not dualistic and separate; their self-natures are far away.’

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to practice giving to sentient beings compassionately without differentiation.)

“If great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice giving with respect paramita. That means the bodhisattvas will offer respectfully, without request, the things that sentient beings need, so the receivers will not be tired and humiliated. When practicing giving with respect, the bodhisattvas will not see the giver and the receiver because they are not dualistic and separate; their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to practice giving to sentient beings respectfully without differentiation.)

“If great bodhisattvas can cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice giving with esteem paramita. That means the givers will treat receivers as if they were monastic teachers or parents. If they are unable to give properties, they should speak virtuous words to them instead. When practicing the giving with esteem, the bodhisattvas will not see the givers or the receivers because they are not dualistic or separate; their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to practice giving to sentient beings with esteem.)

“If great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice offerings-making giving paramita. That means bodhisattvas will clean and wash the pagodas and the places where the monastics live. They will further make fragrant flowers, brilliant lamps, and so forth as offerings to the pagodas and so forth. If they see the Buddhas’ portraits are damaged or incomplete, they will work hard to repair them and then make offerings to them. They will also make food, drinks, bedding, and medicines as offerings to the monastics. But they will not see the ‘I’ who makes offerings or the receivers. It is because they are not dualistic and separate, and

their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to practice giving to pagodas or monastics by providing offerings respectfully.)

“If great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice unconditional giving paramita. That means, when practicing giving, they do not think, ‘I wish I can be reborn in the heaven or in the human world as the king to enjoy wealth, nobility, and pleasure.’ They should not grasp or chase anything when aspiring to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi because all dharmas are unattainable.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to practice unconditional giving paramita.)

“Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill giving paramita.

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill pure-precept paramita? You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice pure-precept paramita. The bodhisattvas will think, ‘The Buddha has taught the precept sutras correspondent with liberation in his pure vinaya (laws for monastics) teaching. The bodhisattvas should learn them but should not be attached to incorrect views of precept or the ‘I.’ It is because they are not dualistic or separate, and their self-natures are far away.’

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to fulfill pure-precept paramita without attachment.)

“If great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice pure-precept paramita. The bodhisattvas will think, ‘One cannot attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi by observing pure precept only; they should

learn universally all bodhisattva precept actions to attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. The nature of the precept is nice, cool, tranquil, without arising, not dualistic or separate, and far away.’

(The Buddha described the nature of precept.)

“If great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice pure-precept paramita. The bodhisattvas will think, ‘How can one observe precept to terminate vexations? There are three kinds of vexations: greed, hatred, and ignorance; each has three levels: the higher, the middle, and the lower. One should know efficient ways to terminate vexations. The particularly greedy ones should cultivate the contemplation of impurity, including the contemplation of the thirty-six parts of the body. The particularly angry ones should cultivate the contemplation of loving-kindness and compassion. The particularly ignorant ones should cultivate the contemplation of dependent origination. They will not see the ones who contemplate and the objects contemplated because they are not dualistic and separate and their self-natures are far away.’

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to learn the methods of eliminating greed, anger, and ignorance.)

“If great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice pure-precept paramita. The bodhisattvas will think, ‘How should bodhisattvas stay far away from incorrect thinking?’ It means that the bodhisattvas should not initiate this thought: ‘I am practicing tranquility, getting far away, and emptiness, but other sramanas, Brahmans, and so forth love to stay in the noisy and mixed environment and do not like emptiness.’ Seeing that all dharmas are not dualistic and their self-natures are far away, the bodhisattvas will be able to stay far away from incorrect thinking.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to eliminate incorrect

views.)

“If great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice pure-precept paramita. The bodhisattvas know that all dharmas are far away but should refrain from committing sins. Therefore, they observe pure precept as the Buddha teaches, cultivate the bliss-inviting karmas, and so forth, as well as prajna paramita, and always stay in great alert not to commit even minor sins. It is just as the World-Honored One says, ‘The poison is always harmful whether you take much or little.’

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas should avoid even very minor sins.)

“If great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice pure-precept paramita. The bodhisattvas will always stay in alert and behave in accord with their belief. Suppose that a bodhisattva lives alone in wilderness and a sramana comes to entrust him with gold, silver, crystals, pearls, and other treasures, this bodhisattva will not be greedy at all; he will think, ‘The World-Honored One always says that we would prefer to cut off and eat our own flesh rather than steal.’

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas should stay away from stealing.)

“If great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice pure-precept paramita. The bodhisattvas have observed precept steadily. If evil demons and associates tempt bodhisattvas with wonderful sights of matters, the bodhisattvas will not be moved but think, ‘The World-Honored One always says that matter, and so forth, are like dreams, illusions, and transformed things; they are not dualistic and separate, and their self-natures are far away.’

(Bodhisattvas should observe the rule of no greediness when cultivating prajna paramita.)

“If great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice pure-precept paramita. They strictly observe pure precept, do not look for the

king throne in heaven or human world. They stay away from three wrongdoings in body, four faults in speech, and three sins in mind. When observing the precept, they will not see the 'I' who is observing the precepts or the forms of the precept. It is because they are not dualistic and separate, and their self-natures are far away. (The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas observe precepts of body, speech, and mind.)

“Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill pure-precept paramita.

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill forbearance paramita? You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice forbearance paramita. They will always learn inner forbearance to remove worries, sorrows, misery, and distress. They will also learn outer forbearance to abstain from anger and hatred when they are beaten, scolded, deceived, stolen, insulted, and tortured. They will further learn dharma forbearance to be not frightened when hearing the Buddha's teaching that the very profound real nature is without selfness and arising; the real nature is rather tranquil, and that is nirvana. They will think, 'How can I attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi that I am pursuing and bring benefits, peace, and happiness to all sentient beings in the endless future if I do not learn this dharma?' As they carefully look at and reflect on the three poisons: greed, anger, and ignorance, they will ask, 'Where does each of them come from? What is the cause and condition of their arising? What is the cause and condition of their extinction?' As they contemplate, they will not see the dharmas that can give birth, can be born, can extinguish, and can be extinguished. Thus, their minds of forbearance continue incessantly day and night, and do not differentiate among all perceived phenomena from which they refrain; namely, they do not differentiate that they should treat kings, parents, and teachers with patience but treat

others badly. Bodhisattvas practice forbearance not for repaying favor, reputation, benefit, benevolence, justice, fear, or shame; they practice forbearance only because they should do so. They will not be moved if they are harmed, beaten, scolded, insulted, harassed, stolen, and bullied. The bodhisattvas, working as a king or a high-ranking official, are insulted and scolded by the poor or the ones of lower social class, but they will not get angry and punish these persons; rather, they will think, ‘I once made a grand vow in the Buddha’s place: I will rescue all sentient beings so they can attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. If I lose temper today, I will do things contrary to what I have sworn to do. It is like an excellent doctor who takes a vow to heal all blind people in the world. If the doctor becomes blind himself, how can he help others? If bodhisattvas allow anger and hatred to arise in their minds, how can they relieve others and cast off darkness for them? They will not see that they can forbear or the things from which they refrain because all are not dualistic and separate, and the self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to fulfill forbearance paramita.)

“Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill forbearance paramita.

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill diligence paramita? You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to understand and fulfill diligence paramita. That means, the bodhisattvas will let those whose vexations have not yet been terminated be terminated, those who have not yet been delivered be delivered, those who have not yet been liberated be liberated, those who have not yet been peacefully established be peacefully established, and those who have not yet been awakened be awakened. When bodhisattvas practice diligence

this way, evil demons trying to hinder them and will say to them, ‘Good gentlemen, do not cultivate such emptiness and suffer from diligent work. Why? In the past, I once cultivated such actions to let those whose vexations had not yet been terminated be terminated, those who had not yet been delivered be delivered, those who had not yet been liberated be liberated, those who had not yet been peacefully established be peacefully established, and those who had not yet been awakened be awakened. I worked very hard, but as a result, I gained nothing. From that time on, I have seen many bodhisattvas who learn such actions and withdraw at last. You may now change to cultivate the path of the two vehicles and acquire their effects to enter nirvana.’

After hearing this, the bodhisattvas knew what really happened, so said to the evil demons, ‘You’d better go home now. My mind is as solid as a diamond; your absurd words cannot change my mind and make me regress. If you try to hinder me, you will suffer for a long time.’ The demons thus disappeared upon hearing these words. As these bodhisattvas practice diligence this way, they will transcend other bodhisattvas who have not yet attained prajna paramita but have cultivated other five paramitas for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, not to mention these bodhisattvas will transcend the practitioners of the two vehicles. Because these bodhisattvas have cultivated prajna paramita this way, they can achieve the Buddha dharma and stay far away from all evils. They have practiced diligence neither too slow nor too fast, but they will initiate such a superior great aspiration, ‘I wish I will have a body like the Thus-Come’s one; there will be a flesh coil on the top of the head and white fine hair between the eyebrows when turning the dharma wheel.’ As the gold is decorated with brilliant treasures, it will become pure and magnificent. So is the diligence of the bodhisattvas. If bodhisattvas can stay away from defilements, such as laziness, slack, extreme tiredness, the lack of awareness and awakening, and the lack of correct reflection, then they will attain purity, blessings, virtues, knowledge, wisdom, and dignity. They

will not be tired in body and mind; they will not be disgusted with what they are pursuing; all evil dharmas that hinder the correct path will be removed; and all dharmas that foster the correct path leading to nirvana will grow. Not even a few evils will be allowed to arise, not to mention many evils. Suppose that in as many worlds of the ten directions as the sands of the Ganges, great fires expand fiercely and spread everywhere as if in uninterrupted hells. If there is only one sentient being still alive in the fires, the bodhisattvas will risk their lives to go through the fires to rescue that sentient being, not to mention if there are many sentient beings in the fires. These bodhisattvas will not think, ‘The unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi is difficult to attain. The bodhisattvas cultivate as if the fires were burning on their heads, and that kind of situation will last for hundreds of thousands of koti nayuta kalpas. This is a burden too heavy to take.’ Rather, they will think, ‘The Buddhas in the past and present have cultivated this to realize insightfully the great bodhi, and this is exactly what I should learn and cultivate. I would prefer to stay in hells for hundreds of thousands of kalpas so all sentient beings can be liberated rather than turn my back on all sentient beings to pursue my own nirvana.’ When practicing diligence this way, the bodhisattvas are not conceited and do not look down on others. They do not see ones who can practice and the dharmas practiced because all are not dualistic and separate and their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to fulfill diligence paramita.)

“Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill diligence paramita.

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill meditation paramita? You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to

practice meditation paramita. It means that the bodhisattvas will be able to plant virtuous roots deep in the great vehicle, always cultivate exquisite actions in many lives, and stay with virtuous friends closely. They will not be reborn in a poor family of low social classes or a family holding incorrect views; they will always be reborn in the noble family of Brahman or Ksatriya. They will correctly believe in the triple gem and foster virtuous dharmas. Because of their previous virtuous roots, they will think, ‘The sentient beings have reincarnated and suffered endlessly because of greed and craving.’ The bodhisattvas will initiate a mind of disgust and getting away after having this thought. They have realized that the existent beings are caused by delusive differentiation. ‘In the sutras, the Buddha has taught expediently that the desires are like spear, lance, knife, snake, bubbles, and foams; they are smelly and dirty, turning and changing, and are impermanent. How can a wise person be attached to them?’ So, the bodhisattvas decide to have their heads shaved and leave their families to cultivate the path. They will adopt nonseeing as seeing, nonattainment as attainment, and nonrealization as realization. They hear, accept, and embrace the truths from the perspective of the world as well as from the perspective of ultimate meaning. They cultivate as they should do and contemplate correctly, so they will develop right views, right thinking, right speech, right karma, right livelihood, right diligence, and right concentrations, and stay far away from noise and contamination. They do not chase reputation or offerings. They are diligent and tireless in body and mind. They will investigate their minds trying to find out where they usually go. Are they virtuous, evil, or neutral? If their minds go in evil and neutral spheres, they will cease them immediately. If their minds go in virtuous sphere, they will continue to work hard to foster superior virtuous roots. To deal with and overcome evil dharmas, they will elicit and activate the thirty-seven factors for enlightenment. The evil dharmas, namely, greed, anger, and ignorance, may be classified into three levels: the worst, the

less bad, and the slightly bad. The worst desire chasers will be excited by even hearing the names of the things they desire. They cannot see their faults and will not be disgusted with them only because they are so indulged in them. They will always chase after them unreasonably and shamelessly because their spirits always stay in incessant craving without knowing what bad effects will be caused. If their parents and teachers scold them, they will argue with them. These shameless ones will fall into bad destinies after the present life. The less serious desire chasers will have their craving mind activated when facing the desirable situations; once they leave the situations, their craving minds will disappear. The slightest desire chasers will be satisfied with talking and laughing about the desirable sensations. There are also three levels of anger and hatred. The worst ones will lose their minds and sights; they will create uninterrupted sins, slander the correct dharma, or commit other crimes that are heavier than the five uninterrupted sins by hundreds of thousands of times. The less bad level of anger will drive people to make evil karmas, but they will regret the result immediately. The slightest level indicates the people who speak improperly or reproach or slander others without anger and hatred but regret them right away. There are three levels of ignorance too. As bodhisattvas contemplate this way, they realize that all dharmas are like dreams, echoes, images, shadows, illusory images of water under sunlight, transformed things, and mirages because they are all illusory, unreal, and upside down. Seeing that all phenomena are extinguishable, their inner world will become calm and peaceful. They do not see that the ones who can practice the dharmas and the dharmas practiced are existent; it is because all are not dualistic and separate, and their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to fulfill meditation paramita.)

“Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna

paramita to understand and fulfill meditation paramita.”

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill prajna paramita? You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice prajna paramita. That means the bodhisattvas will correctly contemplate matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness and do not see that matters arise, assemble, or extinguish; the same are feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. Why? The self-nature is empty and unreal. The dharmas are only the names provisionally established. But to guide and convert sentient beings, bodhisattvas will not teach that the karmas and the effects are nonexistent. Although they know that all dharmas are like illusions, dreams, echoes, images, shadows, illusory images under sunlight, transformed things, and mirages and that the ‘I,’ the sentient being, the living one, the one who gives birth, the one who raises others, the gentleperson, and the individual in reincarnation are nonexistent, the bodhisattvas still teach that there are the karmas and the effects. As bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita this way, evil demons and their associates cannot take advantage and do harm to them. Why? These bodhisattvas have stayed close to virtuous friends, fostered the bodhi effectively, and stayed away from the dharmas of the world. They really adore, admire, and acclaim the very profound dharma of the Thus-Comers. All heavenly demons, Brahmas, other sramanas, and Brahmans cannot catch up with them. These bodhisattvas are only second to the Buddha in understanding the correct, perfect knowledge. They do not see the ones who practice the dharmas or the dharmas practiced because all are not dualistic and separate and their self-natures are far away. (The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to fulfill prajna paramita.)

“Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna

paramita to understand and fulfill prajna paramita.

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill expedient skillfulness paramita? You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice expedient skillfulness paramita. That means bodhisattvas will always make transference toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi in expedient skillful ways. When they see wonderful flowers and fruits, they will make them as offerings to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas during six periods of time in a day and night, incessantly and tirelessly. They will transfer the superior and virtuous dharmas toward the bodhi. The same also applies to flower trees and the trees. When hearing the very profound dharma meanings of the sutras, they will believe in and accept them delightedly, read and embrace them joyfully, teach them to others, and transfer the superior and virtuous merits thus derived toward the bodhi. They will make fragrant flowers as offerings to worship Buddha’s images in temples, making wish that sentient beings will not violate precept to enjoy the fragrance of pure precept. They will clean floors, sprinkle water, and pave roads with the hope that all sentient beings enjoy an orderly, dignified environment. They will plant flowers to keep everyone living in freedom and comfort. When entering monastic places, they wish for everyone to reach nirvana; when leaving, they hope sentient beings escape negative influences of demons. When seeing the gate of the monastery open, they wish to open the door for sentient beings to enter the knowledge beyond the world, so they can realize the dharma insightfully. When seeing the gate closed, they wish to close the door to three realms and four bad destinies for sentient beings. When sitting in peace, they wish that sentient beings can sit on the throne of the bodhi. When lying to the right side, they wish that all sentient beings can enter nirvana. When getting up, they wish that all sentient beings can solve their puzzles. When washing feet, they wish

that all sentient beings can stay far away from dust. When paying homage to the Buddha and walking around him clockwise, they wish that all sentient beings will become a Buddha. Although it is good to become a heavenly being or a human being to be esteemed and respected by others, it is not good enough. The other-paths practitioners embrace incorrect views and are difficult to convert, so bodhisattvas will think, 'If I work as their teacher, they will look down on what I hold and won't believe in me. Why do I not work as their fellow student or disciple? When living with the other-paths practitioners, because my precept actions and broad knowledge are superior to all of them, I will be able to subjugate them and all will honor me and believe me and treat me as if I were their teacher. I will teach them nirvana to replace their incorrect dharmas, and guide them into cool and pure dharma teaching, so they will cultivate attentively celibacy actions, meditation, and samadhi; attain superior supernatural powers; and cultivate extensively wonderful virtuous dharmas.' For the greedy ones, they will transform themselves into pretty ladies, and when they fall in love with the women, these bodhisattvas will manifest how impermanent the things are, such as how the beautiful body will swell, rot, and become smelly, so these men will feel disgusted. Then they will return to be their original images and teach them the profound essential dharma meanings, guide them to aspire to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, cultivate the great vehicle, and achieve unsurpassed effects. For the great-vehicle practitioners who stay away from virtuous intellectuals, the great bodhisattvas will encourage them to learn diligently the path of the two vehicles, but they will also teach them that they should not grasp them and stop there to lose the unsurpassed dharma benefits of great vehicle. They will teach them great vehicle according to different natures and roots, so they are able to convert to the unsurpassed path. They will help those who have aspired to the bodhi strengthen their aspiration. Some have committed minor sins, but they do not know

how to repent, so they worry, withdraw, become tired, and cannot move forward.

Great bodhisattvas will teach them how to confess, rid themselves of guilt, remove worries and sorrows, and continue to move forward on superior path. These great bodhisattvas have very few desires; they are easily satisfied; they are dedicated to the pursuit of the dharma, while the benefits thus will be brought about spontaneously.

They teach sentient beings to make offerings to the Thus-Comers to fulfill the six paramitas. Teaching sentient beings that dharma giving is giving paramita; to act in accordance with their words is pure-precept paramita; cannot be hindered and disturbed by heavenly demons is forbearance paramita; continuing incessantly and tirelessly is diligence paramita; concentrating on one mind without relating to outer conditions is meditation paramita; and offering dharma giving without grasping the 'I' and the associated images is prajna paramita, why? It is because we cannot see the dharma giver and the dharma given, due to the truth that all dharmas are not dualistic or separate and their self-nature is far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to fulfill the expedient skillfulness of the six paramitas.)

“Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill expedient skillfulness paramita.

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas practice prajna paramita to understand and fulfill exquisite aspirations paramita? You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice exquisite aspirations paramita. That means the bodhisattvas will initiate aspirations not for the worldly pleasures, for their own liberation from the three realms, for the cultivation of the two vehicles, or for the attainment of nirvana. They rather will make this vow, ‘I wish all sentient beings will enter nirvana of no remainder. When I finally attain perfect enlightenment, I will let those who have not yet aspired to the bodhi

aspire; those who have aspired to the bodhi practice great bodhisattva actions; those who have practiced great bodhisattva actions attain the bodhi; and those who have attained the bodhi teach the dharma upon request. And so on, I will let them build the pagodas to make offerings to my relics after I enter nirvana so that innumerable sentient beings will greatly benefit.' They will further make such wishes, 'When the Buddhas attain the perfect and universal enlightenment in the worlds, there will be no heavenly demons or other-paths practitioners to disturb and harass them. I wish to initiate the aspiration to the bodhi out of self-knowledge instead of relying on outer conditions so the aspiration will not withdraw easily. I wish to stay in human world to assist sentient beings to mature and bring benefits and happiness to them. I wish the novice bodhisattvas can understand insightfully the profound dharma without being shocked and frightened when hearing the Thus-Come's teaching. I wish all sentient beings can attain great knowledge and wisdom and understand thoroughly the boundless Buddha path, the boundless Buddha's spiritual level, and the boundless great compassion so they will benefit boundless sentient beings.' These bodhisattvas are mostly willing to stay in dirty lands instead of pure lands for a long time. Why? The doctors and medicines are useful only when there are illnesses. When bodhisattvas initiate such exquisite aspirations, they do not see the practitioners and the dharmas practiced because all are not dualistic and separate and their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to fulfill exquisite aspirations paramita.)

"Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand thoroughly and fulfill exquisite aspirations paramita.

"Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill powers paramita? You must know, heavenly king, if

great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice powers paramita. That means the bodhisattvas can subjugate heavenly demons and overcome other-paths practitioners. Because they are fully equipped with merits, virtues, and the powers of knowledge and wisdom, they can cultivate all Buddha dharmas and can realize and see all Buddhist levels. They can raise and move the continent of Jambudvipa, the four continents, the large threefold thousand-world, and so forth, as well as innumerable worlds of the ten directions as the sands of the Ganges with the tip of a hair elsewhere and relocate them in their original positions without doing any harm to them. They can also grab all kinds of treasures in the air with supernatural powers and give them to sentient beings. They can hear the Buddhas' teaching of the dharma in any of the boundless worlds in the ten directions. They do not see the practitioners and the dharmas practiced because all are not dualistic and separate and their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to fulfill power paramita.)

“Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to master and fulfill powers paramita.

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita to understand and fulfill knowledge paramita? You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas cultivate and learn prajna paramita, they will be able to practice knowledge paramita. That means the bodhisattvas will contemplate and investigate the five aggregates and realize that their arising is not real, and their extinction is not real either. They reflect on the five aggregates as empty in the final analysis; there is no ‘I,’ the sentient being, the living one, the one who gives birth, the one who raises others, the gentleperson, and the individual in reincarnation. But the ignorant ordinary sentient beings are attached to the upside-down delusions. They do

not accurately know that the aggregates are not the 'I,' and that there is no 'I' in the aggregates; nor do they accurately know that the 'I' is not the aggregates, and that there are no aggregates in the 'I.' They are attached to the reincarnation of birth and death in all destinies as they are attached to the spinning fire wheels. The truth is that the self-natures of all dharmas are originally empty; they are without arising and extinction. They arise when the causes and conditions integrate; they extinguish when the causes and conditions disintegrate. There are no arising and extinction. Nature is not nonexistent, so it is incorrect to say that it will arise; nature is not existent, so it is incorrect to say that it will extinguish. These bodhisattvas have understood thoroughly all phenomena in all dharmas. When cultivating this knowledge paramita, no two-vehicle and other-paths practitioners can make them dim and dull. When contemplating and investigating based on knowledge, they can see clearly from the moment first aspiring to the bodhi until attaining nirvana. They can know all levels and all phenomena through one single dharma, realizing that all levels and all phenomena are not apart from any single dharma. Why? It is because realness is always the one. When cultivating this knowledge, bodhisattvas do not see the practitioners and the dharmas practiced because all are not dualistic and separate, and their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to fulfill knowledge paramita.)

“Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to understand and fulfill knowledge paramita. This is also how bodhisattvas can thoroughly understand all dharmas through learning one single dharma.”

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Chapter 3

The Manifestation of the Forms

(In the Sixth Assembly)

At that time, Supreme One stood up from his seat again. He joined his palms together with left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground and said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, what are the forms of the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The World-Honored One replied to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, like the forms of the earth, water, fire, wind, and empty space, so is the fathomless prajna paramita.”

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “World-Honored One, why is the fathomless prajna paramita like the forms of the earth, water, fire, wind, and empty space?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, the form of the earth is universal, expansive, broad, great, and immeasurable, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? It is because the realness of all dharmas is universal, expansive, broad, great, and immeasurable. You must know, heavenly king, all medicine herbs grow on earth, so all virtuous dharmas grow because of the fathomless prajna paramita. You must know, heavenly king, the earth will not be happy if it increases; it will not be worried if it decreases. The earth is apart from the ‘I’ and the associated images; it has no dualistic forms. Similarly, the fathomless prajna paramita will not increase if you acclaim it; it will not decrease if you scold and slander it. It is apart from the ‘I’ and the associated images; it has no dualistic forms. The sentient beings in the world come and go and walk with their feet lifted off

the earth and lowered down on the earth. The same is applied to the fathomless prajna paramita. When sentient beings pursue the good destinies or nirvana, they all rely on the fathomless prajna paramita. Like various treasures that appear out of the earth, so various merits and virtues of the world come out of the fathomless prajna paramita. The earth cannot be moved or ruined by worms, ants, mosquitoes, and gadflies, so the fathomless prajna paramita cannot be moved or ruined because it is apart from the 'I' and the associated images and it has no differentiations. When hearing lions, dragons, and elephants roar, the earth is not shocked or frightened, so the fathomless prajna paramita is not shocked or frightened by all heavenly demons and other-paths practitioners. Why? It is because it does not see the 'I' or the dharmas. All their self-natures are empty.

(The Buddha used similes to explain the forms of prajna paramita.)

“You must know, heavenly king, water always flows downward, so does the fathomless prajna paramita, upon which all virtuous dharmas rely; it flows from real dharma realm to the world. Water can moisten grasses and trees and give birth to flowers and fruits, so the fathomless prajna paramita can moisten samadhi, give birth to the factors for enlightenment, accomplish the perfect knowledge of everything, attain the Buddha dharma effects, and bring benefits, peace, and happiness to all sentient beings. Water dips the roots of grasses and trees and carry them away with the flow, so the fathomless prajna paramita eliminates all incorrect views, bad destinies, vexations, and negative dispositions permanently. Water is originally clean and pure and without defilements, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. It is called ‘clean’ because its body has no vexations; it is called ‘no defilements’ because it stays away from all kinds of confusion and puzzlement; it is called ‘not turbid’ because it always has one form. Water will make the heat in summer cool, so the fathomless prajna paramita will relieve sentient beings from heat vexations and attain cool

refreshment. Water will relive one's thirst, so the fathomless prajna paramita will satisfy one's thirst for the dharma beyond the world. Spring in the pond is very deep, so the Buddhas' level of prajna paramita is profound and difficult to understand. The surfaces of all waters in holes and puddles equalize, so the fathomless prajna paramita treats self-enlightened ones, voice-hearers, and ordinary sentient beings equally. Pure waters clean and purify the dirt, so bodhisattvas are purified to stay away from all kinds of vexations as they thoroughly understand prajna paramita. Why? The self-nature of the fathomless prajna paramita is pure and away from all kinds of confusion and puzzlement.

(The Buddha used similes to describe the supreme qualities of the fathomless prajna paramita.)

“You must know, heavenly king, fire can burn trees, herbs, and grasses, but it does not think: ‘I can burn matters.’ Similarly, the fathomless prajna paramita can permanently extinguish all vexations and negative dispositions without thinking: ‘I can extinguish them permanently.’ Fire can make all matters mature; similarly, the fathomless prajna paramita can make all Buddha dharma mature. Fire can remove moisture from matters; similarly, the fathomless prajna paramita can exhaust the violent currents of flaws and prevent them from arising again. The torch on the top of the snow-mountains can illuminate as far as one yojana, and so forth, and ten yojanas without thinking: ‘I can illuminate very far.’ Similarly, the fathomless prajna paramita can illuminate voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, and bodhisattvas without thinking: ‘I can illuminate them all.’ Wild beasts are scared and will run away when they see fires at night. The less blessed ordinary sentient beings, voice-hearers, and self-enlightened ones are scared and will run away when they hear prajna paramita. It is difficult for them to hear the name of the fathomless prajna paramita, let alone cultivate and learn it. The people who get lost at night are excited upon seeing the

flames because they know that village is ahead, they will be safe and never be afraid any longer. In the lonely night of birth and death, those blessed by merits and virtues hear prajna paramita are excited and decide to accept, embrace, read, and recite it. They will attain peace and happiness as all their vexations are removed forever. Fire in the world treats all sentient beings equally; the fathomless prajna paramita treats holy ones and ordinary sentient beings equally too. Brahmans and Ksatriyas make offerings to fires, while the Buddhas and bodhisattvas make offerings to the fathomless prajna paramita. A small fire can burn up whole large threefold thousand-world, while the fathomless prajna paramita can burn up sentient beings' innumerable vexations when they hear even one sentence of it.

(The Buddha employed the metaphor of fire to illustrate the beneficial functions of prajna paramita for sentient beings.)

“Heavenly king, as wind can foster the growth of all species, so the fathomless prajna paramita can foster the growth of the virtuous dharmas in and beyond the world. As wind becomes very big, it can extinguish all species, so the fathomless prajna paramita can extinguish the vexations of birth and death when it becomes very powerful. As wind can drive away hot air and invite cool air, so the fathomless prajna paramita can remove hot vexations of sentient beings and bring them cool and permanent pleasure in nirvana. As wind blows and moves incessantly, so the fathomless prajna paramita does not dwell in all dharmas.

(The Buddha employed the metaphor of wind to illustrate the beneficial functions of prajna paramita for sentient beings.)

“Heavenly king, you must know that the fathomless prajna paramita is without defilements and attachment. It is tranquil, innumerable, and boundless knowledge and wisdom. It understands equally and thoroughly the real nature of all dharmas. Like the nature of great empty space, it dwells nowhere; it is apart from the phenomena,

realms, and forms and it transcends general contemplation and specific investigation. Within it, the minds and the associated images do not differentiate and are without arising and extinction because their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha talked more about the supreme qualities of prajna paramita.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings. They are rare and unusual because they benefit all as the sun and moon do. As the cool moon can remove the heat and anxieties of sentient beings, so the fathomless prajna paramita can remove the vexations of sentient beings. As the brilliant moon is welcomed by sentient beings, so the fathomless prajna paramita is welcomed by holy ones and sages. As in the white half-month, the moon goes from new to full, so great bodhisattvas will progress from the moment first aspiring to until attaining the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita. As in the black half-month, the moon goes from full to new, so bodhisattvas diminish their vexations and hidden roots of afflictions when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita. Right at the full moon night, all Brahmans and Ksatriyas will admire and acclaim the moon, so good gentlepersons, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, will be admired and acclaimed by heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth. Like the moon that moves around the four continents, so the fathomless prajna paramita goes around matter, mind, and so forth. Like the pure moon that always dignifies itself, so the fathomless prajna paramita always dignifies itself with its pure original nature. Why? Its self-nature is without contamination, arising, and extinction and is always present in all dharmas; its self-nature is far away. Like the bright sunlight that drives away the darkness without thinking: ‘I can break all darkness,’ so the fathomless prajna paramita can break all hidden roots of vexations without thinking: ‘I can break them all.’ Like the burning

sun that can make the lotus bloom without thinking: ‘I can make it bloom,’ so the fathomless prajna paramita can open the minds of great bodhisattvas without thinking: ‘I can open their minds.’ Like the beautiful sun that illuminates all over the ten directions without thinking: ‘I can illuminate universally,’ so the fathomless prajna paramita can illuminate the boundless areas without showing its forms. As the red brilliant signs appear in the east, the sunrise is anticipated; when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita, this person is not far away from the Buddha. Like the good gentlemen and gentlewomen who rejoice when seeing the sunrise, so all great holy ones rejoice when the name of the fathomless prajna paramita appears in the world. As the sun rises, the lights of the moon and the stars become dim, so when bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, the merits and virtues of other-paths and two vehicles become invisible. As the sun rises, holes and puddles on the ground can be seen clearly, so when bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, the differences between the correct path and the incorrect path of the world will be manifested. Why? The characteristics of the fathomless prajna paramita are equal and without arising and extinction because its nature is far away.

(The Buddha employed the metaphor of sun and moon to illustrate the supreme qualities and beneficial functions of prajna paramita for sentient beings.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas will cultivate consistently the actions of emptiness, non-dwelling, and non-attachment; they will cultivate and learn the bright path to eliminate darkness and hindrance, stay far away from evil friends, stay with the Buddhas, stay in a continuous mindfulness of the Buddha, and thoroughly understand equality in accord with dharma realm. Although they travel and play through all worlds in ten directions with supernatural powers, their bodies remain in the original lands without movement. They contemplate the Buddha dharma as if they could see it

intuitively and presently. Although they observe the worldly affairs, they are not contaminated by them, just like the lotus sprouting from muddy land. These bodhisattvas remain in birth and death, but they are not contaminated because of the powers of the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita is without arising and extinction; its characteristics are equal and cannot be seen and attached to; its nature is far away. Like the lotus on which no water drops can stay, so the fathomless prajna paramita does not allow a little bit of evil dharma to stay in it even for a brief instant. Where there is the lotus, there is the fragrance; similarly, where there are the bodhisattvas practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, either in human world or in heavens, cities or villages, there is always the fragrance of the precepts. Like the lotus that is adored and treasured by the Brahmans and so forth because of its original purity, so the bodhisattvas who practice the fathomless prajna paramita are adored and respected by heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, gandharvas, and so forth, and bodhisattvas and the Buddhas. Like the lotus that amuses people since it starts to bloom, so the bodhisattvas, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, will always smile before speaking to others without knitting brows; people like them. Dreaming of a lotus is an auspicious sign; so when heavenly beings and human beings see and hear the fathomless prajna paramita in their dreams, it is also an auspicious sign, not to mention if they see and hear it when they are awake. All humans and nonhumans love the lotus since it begins to bloom, so the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, heavenly emperor Indra, king Brahma, and so forth will always protect and keep the bodhisattvas since they begin to learn prajna paramita.

(The Buddha employed the metaphor of lotus to illustrate the beneficial functions of prajna paramita and how bodhisattvas benefit from learning prajna paramita.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna

paramita, great bodhisattvas initiate such a thought: ‘I should understand thoroughly and reasonably all paramitas, teach sentient beings to fulfill the Buddha dharma, sit on the diamond throne under the bodhi tree, realize insightfully and attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and turn the wonderful dharma wheel through twelve subtle forms, which cannot be turned by sramanas, Brahmins, and so forth, and heavenly beings, demons, Indra, and Brahma. I will relieve all sentient beings in the innumerable, countless, and boundless worlds of the ten directions equally from the ocean of birth and death and establish them in prajna paramita. I will serve as refuge and rescue for all in need, and guide those who like to see the Buddha to actualize their wish. I will play supernatural power of lion’s roar to acclaim the Buddha’s merits and virtues so all sentient beings will look up at him. I will let all sentient beings stay in unmovable pure mind without flattery and crookedness and stay away from the incorrect mindfulness, including the mindfulness of the two vehicles. I will let all sentient beings eliminate their hidden roots of vexations and have no more afflictions. They will have no more dishonest actions and misdemeanors. They do not lie. They are always grateful and repay favor, even more than they should, so their minds will not be regretful. They will always speak tenderly and kindly.’ As they cultivate and learn to purify their minds, they do not see the practitioners and the dharmas practiced. It is because all dharmas are not dualistic and separate; their self-natures are far away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas purify their minds.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas should believe in and understand the three kinds of purity of the Thus-Come. The bodhisattvas should reflect: ‘The sutras teach about the purity of the Thus-Come’s body; namely, the dharma body, the most tranquil body, the unequalled equal body, the innumerable body, the body not shared by others, and the

diamond body. I deeply believe in the pure body of Thus-Comer without doubt.’ This is a belief in and understanding of the purity of the Thus-Comer’s body. Furthermore, the bodhisattvas should reflect: ‘The sutras teach that the Thus-Comer’s speech is pure: Thus-Comers confer on sentient beings the prophecy of becoming a Buddha in the future; they also confer on bodhisattvas the prophecy of becoming a Buddha in the future. I must believe in these words as they are true and reasonable. Why? The Thus-Comers always stay away from all faults. They have permanently eliminated the hidden roots of vexations and have no more afflictions. They are tranquil and pure. No heavenly beings, demons, Brahmas, and the sramanas and Brahmins can be as perfect and faultless as the Thus-Comers in speech.’ This is a belief in and understanding of the purity of the Thus-Comer’s speech. Furthermore, the bodhisattvas should reflect: ‘The sutras teach that the Thus-Comer’s mind is pure. The voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, bodhisattvas, heavenly beings, human beings, and so forth, cannot understand the dharmas that the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones think of. Why? The Thus-Comers’ minds are very profound and difficult to understand. Their minds transcend contemplation and investigation; they are not in the sphere of reflection, like immeasurable and boundless empty space. I should believe in and know this without skepticism.’ This is a belief in and understanding of the purity of the Thus-Comer’s mind.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas believe in and understand the three kinds of purity of Thus-Comers.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas will reflect: ‘As the Buddha teaches, great bodhisattvas have borne a very heavy burden. But they stand firm and do not withdraw; they are neither scared nor tired. They cultivate giving, pure-precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, prajna, expedient skillfulness, exquisite aspiration,

powers, and knowledge paramita step by step. They have achieved the Buddha dharma, the unobstructed, unhindered, boundless, and unequalled dharma not shared by others. Their speech is definitive and their personality is brave and vigorous. They can accomplish broad and great karmas.’ These bodhisattvas deeply believe in and accept these words in the sutras without skepticism and confusion.

(The Buddha said that bodhisattvas deeply believe in and understand the Buddha’s description about bodhisattvas.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas will reflect: ‘As the Buddha teaches, great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and sit peacefully on the throne of the wonderful bodhi ultimately, then they will attain the unhindered pure heavenly eye and heavenly ear, the supernatural powers of reading others’ minds and knowing previous lives, the mindfulness in compliance with the Buddha, and so forth, and the supernatural power of the flawless knowledge. They are able to know fully and instantaneously the three phases of time with equal knowledge; accurately contemplate all sentient beings of the world and get to know which sentient beings have done evil actions in body, speech, and mind, slandered the sages, created evil karmas because of incorrect views, and fall into bad destinies. They will also know which sentient beings have done wonderful actions in body, speech, and mind; admired and acclaimed the sages; made correct karmas because of correct views; and that they will be reborn in good destinies after passing away from this life. After having contemplated and investigated this way, they will think: ‘I once made a vow to practice the bodhisattva-path actions to awaken myself and others. Now I should fulfill this aspiration.’ These bodhisattvas completely believe in and accept these things without skepticism and confusion. You must know, heavenly king, the place where great bodhisattvas become the Buddhas is the location of enlightenment. They

have been awakened themselves, so they are called attaining correct enlightenment. They have awakened the sentient beings, so they are called attaining perfect and universal enlightenment. You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, these bodhisattvas believe and know that the Thus-Come has appeared in the world to bring benefits, peace, and happiness to all sentient beings.

(The Buddha said that bodhisattvas believe and understand the facts that bodhisattvas become awakened to unsurpassed bodhi and teach sentient beings helping them awakened too.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas believe in and accept the one-vehicle when they hear it. Why? What the Buddha teaches is real; it is not an illusion. All vehicles come from the Buddha vehicle. There are many cities and villages in the continent of Jambudvipa, but all belong to this continent. There are many different names and forms for various vehicles, but all belong to the Buddha vehicle. These bodhisattvas will think: ‘All teachings given by the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, are real because of the Buddhas’ expedient skillfulness. Why? The Buddhas teach the dharma to sentient beings according to individual differences of roots and personality. Although they teach three vehicles, they truly teach one path.’ The bodhisattvas will further think: ‘When the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, teach the dharma, their voices can reach very far away and what they speak is true. Why? The heavenly emperor Indra, the heavenly king Brahma, and so forth, have only few merits and virtues, but they can speak in far reaching voices, not to mention the Thus-Comers who have accumulated merits and virtues for innumerable hundreds of millions of kalpas.’ These bodhisattvas will think again: ‘The Thus-Comers teach the dharma not in conflict with the roots of sentient beings. They will allow all sentient beings of the

higher, the average, and the lower levels to feel that the Thus-Comers are speaking to each of them personally although the Buddhas have not truly spoken or explained anything.’ These bodhisattvas will deeply believe in and accept these things without skepticism and hesitation.

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas deeply believe in and understand the Buddha’s assertion that there is only one vehicle. However, to help sentient beings most suited to each one, the Buddha expediently and skillfully establish three vehicles.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas attain the subtle mind and think: ‘The world is always ablaze with greed, hatred, and ignorance and a lot of flames have darkened sentient beings. How can I rid all sentient beings of such a world? If sentient beings can fully understand that all dharmas are equal, they will be able to get rid of the world because they will have no more contamination and attachment in their minds. They will know accurately that the dharmas are like dreams and so forth. They thus can well contemplate the causes and conditions without differentiation.’

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas attain subtle mind to contemplate all causes and conditions as dreams without differentiation.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas will think: ‘All dharmas have no origins, but they have karmic effects. I should understand the teachings given by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Once I understand their meanings, I should further reflect on their meanings. If I can reflect on their meanings, I will be able to see the truth, and then I will be able to deliver sentient beings.’

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas will teach the dharma to the public in an expedient and skillful way. They will teach that all dharmas are without the ‘I,’ the sentient being,

the living one, the one who gives birth, the one who raises others, the gentleperson, the individual in reincarnation, the mentally born one, the learned child, the maker, the receiver, the knower, and the viewer. All these dharmas are empty, nonexistent, without the nature of freedom and ease, and without delusive differentiation. They arise because of the combination of causes and conditions. They look as if they arise while they do not. You must know, heavenly king, to teach that all dharmas are without the 'I,' the sentient being, and so forth, as well as the viewer is in accord with reason; to teach that all dharmas are empty, nonexistent, and so forth, as well as without arising is also in accord with reason. You must know, heavenly king, because the teaching is following the dharma form, it is reasonable. If the teaching is not in conflict with the dharma form, and is in accord with the dharma, it will enter the equality and manifest the meanings and reason; then it is called the skillful and expedient teaching.

(The Buddha explained what skillful and expedient teaching is.)

“Heavenly king, you must know that when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas will attain the unhindered talent of debate. It is non-attachment debate, inexhaustible debate, consecutive debate, uninterrupted debate, fearless debate, not frightened debate, unshared debate, boundless debate, and the debate adored and esteemed by all heavenly beings. You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas will attain the pure talent of debate. It is debate without yell and reproach, debate without getting lost and distraction, debate without terror, debate without arrogance, debate with perfect rationale, debate with perfect tastes, fluent and smooth debate, and the debate with perfect timing.

(The Buddha explained the unhindered talent of debate and pure debate for bodhisattvas.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas are not afraid of the compelling authority and virtues of the public, so they debate without yell and reproach. The great bodhisattvas dwell firmly in understanding and fearless knowledge, so they do not get lost and go astray when they debate. The bodhisattvas are not afraid of the public as a lion king, so they debate without terror. They are far away from the vexations, so they debate without arrogance. They do not speak contrary to justice and the dharma, so they debate with perfect rationale. They know a lot about the books, treatises, and words, so they debate with perfect tastes. They have mastered expedient skillfulness for kalpas, so they debate smoothly and fluently. When giving the lectures on the dharma, the bodhisattvas will do it in compliance with the three seasons: hot, rainy, and cold seasons without mistakes; and in compliance with the three periods of time in a day: the earlier, the middle, and the later without mess, so they teach and debate with perfect timing.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas debate perfectly.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas have acquired these various talents of debate and thus will amuse the public. They speak loving-kind words; they smile before speaking; they do not knit their brows; they speak the truth; they do not deceive or insult others; they enjoy speaking definitively; they speak in kind and gentle words and that makes people delighted; their appearance looks relaxed and easy and that makes their speeches acceptable; they speak in accord with reasonable meanings and that makes the audience understand; they speak in accord with the dharma form in order to benefit the sentient beings; they speak in equality with no bias or prejudice; they speak definitively apart from nonsense; and they love to teach according to individual differences of roots and personality.

(The Buddha taught more how bodhisattvas become a perfect lecturer and debater.)

“You must know, heavenly king, these great bodhisattvas have practiced the fathomless prajna paramita and achieved great authority and virtues. Why? Only the promising ones for dharma-ware (useful for the dharma) can hear this teaching.”

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “The bodhisattvas have equal minds. Why are only the promising ones allowed to hear the teaching?”

The Buddha replied, “Heavenly king, the original nature of the fathomless prajna paramita is equal, so it does not see that this is a promising one or that is not a promising one. It does not see the one who speaks, or the dharma spoken. But the delusive sentient beings will mistake the promising one for the unpromising one and real speaking for not real speaking. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita is without arising, extinction, and differentiation among the phenomena; it is like empty space that permeates all. So, sentient beings are without arising and extinction. Voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, bodhisattvas, and Thus-Comers have provisionally established the names and said that these are sentient beings, this is prajna, this is the one who can speak, this is the one spoken, these are listeners, and this is the dharma that they hear. In ultimate meaning, all are with one form, namely, formlessness; all are not different. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas love to teach, but only the promising ones can hear their teachings because their authority and virtues are compelling.

“You must know, heavenly king, the fathomless prajna paramita will not be taught to the unpromising ones, the other-paths practitioners who embrace incorrect views, the lazy and tired ones who do not believe in it, the dharma pursuers with an attempt to trade the dharma, the greedy reputation and properties pursuers, the jealous and stingy ones, and those who are born blind, dumb, and deaf. Why? When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas are not stingy, nor do they

keep the profound dharma as if it were a secret. They have loving-kindness and compassion for sentient beings; they are also very reluctant to leave sentient beings behind. But only the sentient beings with the virtuous roots planted long enough are privileged to see the Thus-Comer and hear his correct dharma teaching. The Thus-Comer does not deliberately teach the dharma or teach it particularly for this one or that one, but the severely hindered ones cannot see or hear the Thus-Comer or the bodhisattvas even if they are very close physically.”

(The Buddha explained why some sentient beings should not be taught prajna paramita.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “What sentient beings are entitled to hear the dharma teaching given by the Buddhas or bodhisattvas?”

The Buddha replied, “Heavenly king, the sentient beings with correct belief and pure natures and roots are entitled to be the promising ware for the dharma. They had planted the virtuous roots at the Buddhas’ places in the past. They do not flatter, and their minds are not crooked. Their appearance is neat and demeanors are dignified. They do not pursue reputation and property, and they stay closely with virtuous friends. They are intelligent; they can teach the texts and well know their meanings. They work diligently for the sake of the dharma not contrary to the minds of holy ones and sages. These sentient beings are entitled to hear the dharma teaching given by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

(The Buddha replied to Supreme One which sentient beings can be taught the Buddha dharma.)

“You must know, heavenly king, great bodhisattvas can do a good job as a dharma teacher to teach the dharma skillfully. What is skillful teaching? It means that in order to benefit sentient beings, they teach about the Buddha dharma and say that the Buddha dharma is unattainable. They teach about paramitas and say that the

paramitas are unattainable. They teach about the bodhi and say that the bodhi is unattainable. They teach about the termination of vexations and say that the vexations are unattainable. They teach about the realization of nirvana and say that nirvana is unattainable. They teach about the four kinds of voice-hearing effects and say that they are unattainable. They teach about the self-enlightenment effect and say that it is unattainable. They teach about the termination of the assertion of selfness and say that the assertion of selfness is unattainable. They teach about the karmic effects and say that they are unattainable. Why? Names are not real dharmas. The dharmas are not names or phenomena. The dharmas are inconceivable and beyond the measurement of the mind. Names are not dharmas, while dharmas are not names either. But these unreal names are provisionally established for the sake of the sentient beings of the world. Names are created for the dharmas that originally have no names. The names are empty; they are empty and nonexistent. But this 'nonexistence' is not the real ultimate meaning; the non-ultimate meaning is the dharma produced by delusive and ignorant sentient beings. You must know, heavenly king, this is how bodhisattvas teach the dharma in a skillful way. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas attain unhindered talent of debate owing to the powers of skillful means. They lecture on the fathomless prajna paramita to sentient beings according to individual differences of their roots and personalities, so sentient beings can understand insightfully."

(The Buddha described how bodhisattvas can teach correct dharma skillfully.)

Chapter 4

Dharma Realm

Section 1

(In the Sixth Assembly)

At that time, Supreme One rose from his seat again. He knelt with right knee touching the ground and left shoulder covered, joined his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, how will great bodhisattvas learn the fathomless prajna paramita to thoroughly understand dharma realm?”

The Buddha replied to heavenly king Supreme One, “Excellent, excellent! Listen to me carefully! Please be very attentive to me! I am going to explain to you respectively.”

Supreme One said, “Yes, please go ahead. We look forward to your teaching!”

The Buddha said to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, when learning the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas will acquire exquisite wisdom, stay closely with virtuous friends, work diligently to remove all obstacles and puzzlements, and achieve purity, reverence, and esteem in their minds. They would love to learn the actions of emptiness and stay far away from all incorrect views. That is, they will cultivate the down-to-earth path to achieve dharma realm. You must know, heavenly king, because these bodhisattvas have exquisite wisdom, they can stay closely with virtuous friends and treat them as if they were real Buddhas. Because of this reason, they will not be tired and lazy; rather, they will eliminate all evil dharmas and plant virtuous roots to foster their growth. After eliminating vexations and removing obstacles, they will obtain purity in body, speech, and mind. Because of purity, they will have esteem and respect arise in their mind when cultivating and learning the actions of emptiness. Owing to the cultivation of the

actions of emptiness, they will stay far away from all incorrect views and can cultivate correct path and see dharma realm.”

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to thoroughly understand dharma realm.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “World-Honored One, what is the dharma realm?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, the dharma realm is the nature of nonillusion.”

“World-Honored One, what is the nature of nonillusion?”

“Heavenly king, it is the nature of changelessness.”

“World-Honored One, what is the nature of changelessness?”

“Heavenly king, it is the realness of all dharmas.”

“World-Honored One, what is the realness of all dharmas?”

“You must know, heavenly king, realness is very profound and exquisite; you can know it through knowledge instead of speech. Why? The realness of all dharmas is beyond written language and apart from spoken language. All actions of speech cannot practice realness. Realness is apart from nonsensical arguments and disconnected with differentiation; it has neither this nor that; it is apart from forms and has no forms; it is far away from general investigation and specific analysis and beyond investigation and analysis. It has no reflection and forms, transcending extremes. It stays far away from and transcends ordinary sentient beings. It goes beyond demonic hindrances and is away from obstacles and puzzlement. No conscious actions can understand it. It dwells nowhere other than in the tranquil holy knowledge and the acquired knowledge of nondifferentiation. It is without the ‘I’ and the associated images. It cannot be pursued and attained. It is without grasping and renunciation, contamination and attachment. It is pure and away from defilements. It

is the supreme one. Its nature is always changeless. Whether the Buddha appears in the world or not, its nature and form always endure. You must know, heavenly king, this is dharma realm. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas will experience hundreds of thousands of difficult and painful actions to cultivate and realize dharma realm, so that they can guide sentient beings to thoroughly understand it. Heavenly king, this is called the real form of prajna paramita, realness, reality, the form of non-differentiation, and the realm of the inconceivable; it is also called real emptiness, the perfect knowledge of everything, the perfect knowledge of all phenomena, and the nondualistic dharma realm.”

(The Buddha explained the meaning of dharma realm, that is realness, the real form of prajna paramita, without differentiation, not dualistic, and changeless.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, how can one realize and attain such dharma realm?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, dharma realm can be realized and attained through the prajna paramita beyond the world and latterly acquired knowledge of nondifferentiation.”

(The Buddha stated that dharma realm can be realized through prajna paramita beyond the world and latterly acquired knowledge of no differentiation.)

“World-Honored One, are realization and attainment different?”

“You must know, heavenly king, the prajna paramita beyond the world can be seen as it really is, so it is called realization, while the perfect knowledge can be understood thoroughly, so it is called attainment.”

Supreme One asked the Buddha, “You say wisdom from hearing, reflection, and cultivation leads to understanding prajna paramita. You also mention prajna paramita beyond the world can be realized, while knowledge of non-differentiation can be attained. Are these different?”

The Buddha replied, “No. Why? The real form of prajna paramita is very profound and subtle. The wisdom gained from hearing is too rough and superficial to manifest this truth. Ultimate meaning can be realized, not measured. The dharmas beyond the world can be cultivated but not directly practiced.

“You must know, heavenly king, the real form of prajna paramita is very profound and subtle. Ordinary sentient beings and the two-vehicle practitioners cannot perceive it. Why? Just as a person born blind cannot see shapes, or a newborn baby cannot recognize the sun, how could they comprehend or achieve such realization? Heavenly king, imagine a very hot summer day, one traveler heads west, another from the west. When they meet, the second asks if there is water and shade ahead. The first replies that by taking the right fork east, there's a spring and shade. Heavenly king, do you think simply hearing the things about spring and tree can truly relieve thirst?”

“No, World-Honored One, that person must first go to the pond, wash and drink, and take a rest under the tree to feel refreshed.”

The Buddha replied, “Yes, heavenly king. The wisdom gained through hearing, reflection, and cultivation is insufficient to fully comprehend the true nature of prajna paramita. Wilderness symbolizes the cycle of birth and death; the person stands for sentient beings; hot weather represents the confusion experienced by sentient beings; thirst refers to desire and craving; the person from the east signifies bodhisattvas; the left path at a crossroads denotes an incorrect route, while the right path signifies the correct way leading to perfect knowledge. When great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they know well and can discern both the realities of birth and death and the accurate course to follow. Spring symbolizes prajna paramita, and the tree signifies great compassion. As bodhisattvas cultivate both prajna paramita and great compassion, they remain distant from the paths of ordinary

sentient beings and that of the two vehicles. Heavenly king, it is essential to understand that the fathomless prajna paramita, though without physical form, can be realized by sentient beings through skillful teaching and guidance.

(The Buddha emphasized that the fathomless prajna paramita can be realized through skillful guidance by bodhisattvas.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they know accurately that the abilities, fearlessness, and the distinctive features of the Buddha’s wisdom and powers are empty; the precepts, concentrations, wisdom, liberation, and the knowledge and the views of liberation are empty; internal emptiness, external emptiness, internal-external emptiness, emptiness of emptiness, emptiness of space, emptiness of ultimate meanings, and so forth, are empty too. They know that all dharmas are empty; they also know that the phenomena of emptiness cannot be attained. They do not grasp the phenomena of emptiness, do not initiate the views of emptiness, are not attached to the phenomena of emptiness, and do not rely on emptiness. Because of non-grasping and non-attachment, bodhisattvas will not fall into emptiness. You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas will stay far away from forms. They will not see internal forms and external forms. They will stay away from nonsensical arguments, the forms of differentiation, the forms of pursuit, the forms of greedy attachment, the forms of spiritual levels, the forms of grasping, and the forms of the ones who know and the dharmas known.

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “If great bodhisattvas can contemplate the formlessness of all dharmas this way when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita, how will the Buddha, the Bhagavat, contemplate?”

The Buddha replied, “Heavenly king, the spiritual level of the Buddhas is inconceivable. Why? They are free from the levels. As sentient beings conceive of the

Buddha's level, they will feel confused and do not know what to do. Why? The Buddha's level is like the nature of empty space that is inconceivable and cannot be investigated or analyzed. When great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they do not see that the level of ordinary sentient beings as conceivable, not to mention the Buddha's level. They do not rely on exquisite aspiration. Although they practice giving, pure-precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas, they are not attached to their effects. They are not attached to the merits, virtues, and so forth, and nirvana. Why? They are apart from the 'I' and the associated images; they are neither dualistic nor separate; their self-natures are far away." (The Buddha said that great bodhisattvas practice the six paramitas without being attached to their effects.)

As the Buddha was teaching the great dharma gate, the fathomless prajna paramita, six kinds of quakes in this large threefold thousand-world occurred. All mountains, including Wonderful High Mountain King (Mount Sumeru), Mount Mucilinda, Mount Mahamucilinda, Circular Diamond Enclosure (Mount Cakravādaparvata), Grand Circular Diamond Enclosure (Mount Mahacakravādaparvata), Mount Fragrance, Mount Treasure, Black Mountain, and Grand Black Mountain, quaked. Innumerable hundreds of thousands of bodhisattvas took off their upper clothes, and with them they paved the Buddha's seat. The Buddha's seat was as high as Wonderful High Mountain King. Innumerable Indras, Brahmas, world-protection heavenly kings and their followers joined their palms together in reverence, spread all kinds of wonderful flowers, such as exquisite sound flowers, great exquisite sound flowers, auspicious flowers, great auspicious flowers, and the lotus flowers in colors of blue, yellow, red, white, purple around the seat.

In the meantime, Mount Vulture, as wide and long as forty yojanas, was covered with flowers high up to the Thus-Come's knees. Innumerable heavenly sons

stayed in the sky, playing heavenly music and singing, “It is excellent to witness the Buddha rising again in the world. It is wonderful to hear the dharma-wheel turning again! All sentient beings of the continent of Jambudvīpa must have planted diligently virtuous roots so they are privileged to hear the fathomless prajna paramita. Not to mention those who can believe in it in the future. All these sentient beings are practicing in the level of the Buddha, the Thus-Come.”

Furthermore, innumerable hundreds of thousands of dragon kings universally gave rise to vast clouds and showered fragrant rains on Mount Vulture, expanding to entire threefold thousand-world. All dharma listeners felt fragrant moisture without getting wet. Innumerable dragon ladies joined their palms together in front of the Buddha and acclaimed and praised. Innumerable gandharvas made wonderful music as offerings to the Buddha. Yaksas dispersed different kinds of flowers. Asuras, and so forth, made offerings respectfully to the Buddha. In innumerable and boundless worlds of the ten directions, numberless Thus-Come, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones emitted from between their brows brilliant lights to illuminate this threefold thousand-world; all darkness was driven away, while the shining radiance was astoundingly seen at the top of Mount Vulture. After doing all these things, the lights returned to their original places and circulated clockwise three times and then entered each Buddha’s head. At that time, numberless hundreds of thousands of Brahmans and Ksatriyas along with elders and laypersons made various kinds of spread fragrance, powdered fragrance, canopies, banners, and flowers as offerings to the Buddhas. At that time, seven billion and two hundred million great bodhisattvas attained the dharma forbearance of nonarising. Numberless hundreds of thousands of sentient beings stayed far away from defilements and attained pure dharma-eye. Numberless hundreds of thousands of sentient beings decided to initiate aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment.

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “The fathomless prajna paramita is not connected with spoken and written language. How can great bodhisattvas, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, lecture on it for sentient beings?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they lecture on this dharma for sentient beings to let them cultivate and learn the Buddha dharma while the Buddha dharma is unattainable in the final analysis. Great bodhisattvas lecture on this dharma to assist sentient beings to fulfill paramitas while the paramitas are unattainable in the final analysis, purify the Buddha bodhi while the Buddha bodhi is unattainable in the final analysis, achieve the nirvana of getting away and extinction while the nirvana of getting away and extinction is unattainable in the final analysis, attain the four voice-hearer effects while the four voice-hearer effects are unattainable in the final analysis, attain self-enlightenment bodhi while the self-enlightenment bodhi is unattainable in the final analysis, and terminate selfness grasping while both selfness and grasping are unattainable in the final analysis. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas do not differentiate among all dharma forms, the one who can differentiate and the dharmas differentiated are all unattainable. The bodhisattvas stay in accordance with prajna paramita without getting rid of birth and death. Although they do not get rid of birth and death, they stay with prajna paramita in compliance with dharma forms.”

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “How will great bodhisattvas follow the fathomless dharma forms without turning away from the world?”

The Buddha replied, “Heavenly king, bodhisattvas stay in compliance with the fathomless prajna paramita, but they do not stay far away from matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness and the realms of desire, form, and formlessness.

They do not stay far away from the dharmas based on non-grasping and non-attachment. This is how great bodhisattvas stay in compliance with prajna paramita without going astray from the path. Why? It is because they have great powers of expedience and skillfulness.”

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas adhere to prajna paramita without distancing from various worldly dharmas expediently.)

Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “What is the expedient skillfulness of bodhisattvas?”

The Buddha replied, “Heavenly king, it means that bodhisattvas possess the four immeasurable minds: great loving-kindness, great compassion, great joy, and great equanimity, and can always bring benefits and happiness to sentient beings. This is the expedient skillfulness of bodhisattvas.”

(The Buddha explained the meaning of the expedient skillfulness practiced by great bodhisattvas.)

“World-Honored One, why are these four minds called great?”

“You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they possess boundless loving-kindness, loving-kindness without differentiation, loving-kindness of dharma nature, loving-kindness without taking a rest, loving-kindness without harm and upset, loving-kindness extending to all, loving-kindness of the nature of equality, loving-kindness of universal benefits and happiness, and loving-kindness beyond the world, so it is called great loving-kindness.

“You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they see many sentient beings suffer because they cannot take refuge. To rescue these sentient beings, bodhisattvas pursue correct dharma diligently. After attaining it, they lecture on it for sentient beings. They will teach

greedy and stingy ones to practice giving, precept violators to observe precept, brutal and violent ones to practice forbearance, lazy and tired ones to practice diligence, restless and distracted ones to practice meditation, and ignorant ones to practice exquisite wisdom. To deliver sentient beings, they always encounter extremely difficult and painful things, but they have never stayed away from the aspiration toward the bodhi. Their minds thus are called great compassion.

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they will think, ‘I have been rid of the fires of the three realms, so I am joyful; I have cut off the connection with the rope of birth and death, so I am joyful. I have stayed away from the ocean of birth and death permanently and do not investigate and analyze and grasp the forms any longer, so I am joyful. I have broken the banner of arrogance that I had hung up since the time unknown, so I am joyful. I have destroyed forever the mountain of vexations, so I am joyful. I have established myself and others in peace and stability, disconnected the bonds with ignorance, darkness, greed, anger, and conceit and become awake after a long sleep, so I am joyful. I have been free from all bad destinies and can relieve sentient beings from bad destinies too, so I am joyful. I have shown sentient beings, who have been lost for a long time in the maze of birth and death, a way to the city of perfect knowledge of everything to rest in ultimate peace and happiness, so I am joyful.’ This is great joy.

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they are neither attached to nor apart from all the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and mental images that they have sensed, then they will give rise to a mind of equanimity. This is great equanimity.

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas will achieve these four great immeasurable minds. This is called expedient skillfulness.”

(The Buddha explained the meanings of four immeasurable minds, which are called expedient skillfulness.)

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Chapter 4

Dharma Realm

Section 2

(In the Sixth Assembly)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “World-Honored One, how should great bodhisattvas, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, manifest various forms to deliver sentient beings?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “Heavenly king, the forms of the fathomless prajna paramita are unattainable; the forms of bodhisattvas are unattainable too. But due to the authoritative powers of expedient skillfulness, the forms of the process of transformation from human embryo through birth and so forth and finally nirvana are manifested. Why? Heavenly beings have always thought that they do not degenerate, so great bodhisattvas, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, manifest how the Buddha is born through embryo, guiding heavenly beings to get rid of attachment and realize impermanence: ‘Even the supreme, highest, and unequaled one who is not contaminated by desires will have degeneration, let alone heavenly beings. Therefore, we should not be lazy and unrestrained. Rather, we should cultivate the path diligently and stay in mindfulness of it. As a solar eclipse is inevitable, fireflies’ light will not last forever.’ Some heavenly beings have indulged in pleasures and play unrestrictedly and do not cultivate correct dharma. They live in the same heavenly palace with bodhisattvas, but they do not go to pay homage to bodhisattvas or inquire of them about the dharma. They will think: ‘Let me enjoy the pleasures today. I will visit the bodhisattvas tomorrow to receive their teachings.’ They will also think: ‘We already

live with bodhisattvas here; there is no need to hasten my cultivation.’ Therefore, when bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they diligently cultivate the dharma as if they would put out a fire on someone’s head. They manifest degeneration to caution heavenly beings about their unrestricted and unbridled behaviors. This manifestation arises from two causes and conditions: firstly, to encourage heavenly beings to avoid unrestrained actions; secondly, to allow all sentient beings to learn from this example. Some inferior sentient beings in the world cannot afford to see how the Buddha attains the unsurpassed enlightenment and turns the wonderful dharma wheel, so bodhisattvas show them the babies and children playing in the inner court. The women in the inner court are not fond of the dharma teaching, and so forth, they do not believe in it. Therefore, bodhisattvas show them the babies and children. The high-level cultivators have gone beyond the average worldly interest, so bodhisattvas show them renouncing the family. Some heavenly beings think: ‘To sit and meditate and enjoy the pleasures cannot attain the holy path.’ So, bodhisattvas show them ascetic actions. To subjugate other-paths ascetic practitioners, bodhisattvas also show them various difficult and painful actions. Some other heavenly beings have made this vow for a long time: ‘As bodhisattvas ascend the throne of the bodhi, we heavenly beings will make offerings to them.’ So, bodhisattvas ascend the throne of the Bodhi for the sake of these heavenly beings. After making the offerings, innumerable heavenly beings can acquire the cause and condition related to the bodhi. Some other heavenly beings think: ‘Evil demons and other-paths practitioners have hindered the correct dharma; we wish bodhisattvas will be able to sit on the throne of the bodhi, subjugate all evil demons and other-paths practitioners, so all correct dharma believers can see the dharma.’ Therefore, as great bodhisattvas attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, the voices of admiration and acclamation are heard in the air of entire threefold thousand-world:

‘The Buddha’s sun appears in the world; the lights of fireflies dim.’ As heavenly beings swear: ‘When attaining the unsurpassed enlightenment in the future, we wish we will realize the bodhi that the bodhisattvas realize today.’ For the sake of these sentient beings, the bodhisattvas will sit on the throne of the bodhi. Some heavenly beings say: ‘We wish to see the grand master achieve the perfect knowledge of everything, the perfect knowledge of the forms of the paths, the perfect knowledge not taught by teacher, and the natural perfect knowledge.’ Although these sentient beings have not been liberated, their roots and natures are very pure and mature; they are indeed the promising wares for the profound dharma, bodhisattvas thus show them the unsurpassed dharma wheel given in three turnings and twelve categories. Some other heavenly beings are interested in perfect tranquility, so bodhisattvas show them nirvana.

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas skillfully and expediently manifest in various forms to inspire and guide heavenly beings in cultivating correct dharma. This includes demonstrating the birth, growth, cultivation, teaching of dharma, and entry into nirvana of the Thus-Come to instruct sentient beings on the principle of impermanence.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they can manifest such various forms of transformation.

“Heavenly king, various great bodhisattvas have practiced the fathomless prajna paramita and will not be reborn in the places where there is no access to the Buddha’s teaching of prajna paramita. Why? The people without blessings and virtues will not be able to hear the superior names of prajna paramita. These bodhisattvas will always be away from all evil karmas. They will not violate the precepts taught by the Buddha. They are not jealous. They have no faults in body and speech. They have planted many virtuous roots at innumerable Buddhas’ places and possessed blessings,

virtues, knowledge, wisdom, and skillful means. They have taken great aspirations, and their minds are fond of tranquility. They practice and cultivate diligently and stay away from all kinds of laziness and tiredness.

“Heavenly king, these bodhisattvas have no evil karmas and will not fall into hells because the path of the ten virtuous karmas is always present. They have not violated the precepts and will not fall into the destiny of animals because they have always protected and kept precepts. These bodhisattvas are not jealous and will not fall into the destiny of hungry ghosts or be reborn in the family holding incorrect views; they will always encounter virtuous friends and stay far away from evil friends. Why? They had in previous lives planted various virtuous roots at innumerable Buddhas’ places, so they are always reborn in noble, wealthy, free, and easy places where correct views are held and treasured. The physical bodies that these bodhisattvas receive are perfect and are not deficient in sense organs and thus can serve as the promising dharma ware of the Buddha. Why? In previous lives, they had made offerings to many Buddhas, heard the correct dharma, and paid homage to the public. Therefore, wherever they are born, their physical bodies are not deficient; their appearances and shapes are magnificent and can serve as the dharma ware of the Buddha. These bodhisattvas will not be born in borderlands. They are not dull; they are not ignorant and blind about the right and the wrong. They do not express meanings contrary to the purpose of dharma ware. They are not unaware of sramanas and Brahmins. Why? These bodhisattvas certainly will be reborn in the central countries. They are smart and intelligent and can speak and debate fluently. They know languages and meanings very well and are good dharma wares for the Buddha. In addition, they know sramanas and Brahmins very well too. Why? These bodhisattvas have possessed the powers of superior blessings, virtues, knowledge, and wisdom since previous lives. They will not be reborn in the heavens of longevity. If

they are reborn there, they will not be able to do beneficial things for others, and they will not see the Buddha there. These bodhisattvas are mostly reborn in the realm of desire to manifest the process of the birth to bring benefits and happiness to sentient beings. Why? It is because they possess the powers of expedient skillfulness. These bodhisattvas will not be reborn in the worlds where there are no Buddha, dharma teachers, correct dharma teachings, and the offerings made to monastics. Why?

Wherever the bodhisattvas are born, the three gems are always existent owing to their powerful aspirations initiated in previous lives. These bodhisattvas loathe hearing the evil worlds, so they cultivate vigorously and tirelessly the tranquility in their minds in replace all evil dharmas with virtuous dharmas.

(The Buddha described the abilities, intentions, merits, virtues, and blessings owned by great bodhisattvas and the beneficial endeavors they are undertake for the welfare of sentient beings.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they will not be reborn in the places where there is no access to the Buddha dharma because of these causes and conditions.

“You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they will not forget or lose the aspiration to the bodhi in their dreams, not to mention when they are awake. Why? All virtuous dharmas are born from the mind aspiring to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment. Without this mind, there will be no Buddha, dharma, and sangha. Because of this bodhi mind, the three gems are attained, and heavenly beings and human beings can cultivate virtuous dharmas and enjoy pleasures. These bodhisattvas are always away from flattery and deception; they have a straightforward, tender, and peaceful personality; their minds are pure and they are never skeptical and hesitant about the Buddha dharma. They never conceal the profound meanings from the Dharma

listeners. They stay far away from jealousy and the actions related to the three inferior destinies of animals, hungry ghosts, and hells. They remain the same in the past, present, and future. They act as they speak. They protect great vehicle. They deeply esteem those who learn the dharma of the great vehicle. They cultivate and learn diligently the great vehicle and always acclaim it. They treat dharma teachers as if they were the Buddhas. They stay close to virtuous friends and stay far away from evil friends. When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they achieve a great aspiration to the unsurpassed bodhi. Owing to this aspiration, they attain the supernatural power of knowing previous lives. Why? It is because they have made offerings to numberless Buddhas, protected correct dharma, cultivated pure precept, and stayed far away from evil karmas and all obstacles forever. They are always joyful. They are dedicated to diligent cultivation and learning. Their minds are not restless, and their mental abilities do not diminish. Why? These bodhisattvas treasure the correct dharma because they have made offerings to numberless Buddhas. Because they treasure the correct dharma, they lecture extensively for others on it. They are not hesitant to risk their bodies and lives to protect the correct dharma. They have purified all their karmas in body, speech, and mind. Their purified karmas are free from obstacles, so they are always in joy. Because they are always in joy, they can cultivate diligently and stay in straightforward mind, personality, and knowledge of mindfulness. Because of the knowledge of mindfulness, they know what happened previously in as many as one, ten, one hundred, one thousand, and numberless previous lives. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, they know accurately where they were reborn in the past. Owing to the knowledge of the past lives, they will stay close to virtuous friends. Because of the virtuous friends, they will not lose hearing, seeing, and mindfulness at all Buddhas' places. They love to hear the dharma, make offerings to the gem of the

sangha, and never miss any opportunity to do so. They always pay homage reverently to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and make offerings to them without a brief break. Whether they walk, stay, sit, or lie, they will never stay away from hearing as much as possible.

“You must know, heavenly king, because these bodhisattvas have observed pure precept; they can hear the merits, virtues, and the names of prajna paramita and cultivate constantly and diligently the dharmas for fostering the bodhi. They have never been far away from the three liberation gates. They cultivate the four immeasurable minds always and often hear the name of the unsurpassed perfect knowledge of everything.

(More superior qualities of great bodhisattvas were delineated by the Buddha.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they will stay close to virtuous friends because of this cause and condition.

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they do not stay close to evil friends even in dreaming, not to mention when they are awake. Why? They do not live with people who violate precept, hold incorrect views, act in bad demeanors, earn living with evil occupations, speak nonsensically, stay in laziness, indulge in reincarnate of birth and death, turn away from the bodhi, and love trivial worldly things. The bodhisattvas have pity on these people but will not live with them.

(The Buddha mentioned the kinds of people that bodhisattvas avoid.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas can follow this way to stay away from evil friends.

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas are able to attain the ten bodies of the Thus-Come. What are the ten? They are the equal body, pure body, unexhausted body, well

cultivated body, dharma-nature body, the body without general investigation and specific analysis, the inconceivable body, tranquil body, empty-space body, and the body of exquisite knowledge.”

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “In what stage do the great bodhisattvas attain the ten bodies of the Thus-Come when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Most Superior, “You must know, heavenly king, the great bodhisattvas will attain the equal body when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita and reach the first stage. Why? It is because they have thoroughly understood the dharma nature, been free from incorrect and crooked views, and seen equality. They will attain the pure body in the second stage. Why? It is because they have been free from violation of precepts and attained the purity of precepts. In the third stage, they will attain the unexhausted body. Why? It is because they have been free from greed and hatred and have attained superior concentrations. In the fourth stage, they will attain well cultivated body. Why? It is because they have diligently cultivated the factors for the Bodhi. In the fifth stage, they will attain the dharma-nature body. Why? It is because they have carefully contemplated the truth and realized the dharma nature. In the sixth stage, they will attain the body free from investigation and analysis. Why? It is because they have contemplated the law of dependent origination and been free from investigation and analysis. In the seventh stage, they will attain the inconceivable body. Why? It is because they have fulfilled the knowledge and actions of expedient skillfulness. In the eighth stage, they will attain the inconceivable body. Why? It is because they have been free from vexations and nonsensical arguments. In the ninth stage, they will attain the empty-space body. Why? It is because their bodily phenomena have spread over all and have been unexhausted. In the tenth stage, they will attain the body of exquisite knowledge.

Why? It is because they have cultivated perfectly all kinds of perfect knowledge.”

So Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “Then are the bodies of the Buddha and the bodhisattva not different?”

The Buddha replied to Most Superior, “You must know, heavenly king, their bodies are not different, while the merits and virtues do differ. What does it mean? It means that the Thus-Comer body and the bodhisattva body are not different. Why? It is because all dharmas share the same dharma forms. As to the difference in merits and virtues, it means that the Thus-Comer body has been equipped with all merits and virtues, while the bodhisattva body has not yet been. Why? Let me tell you a simile in this respect. No matter whether the pearls are decorated or not, they are the pearls. So are the bodies of the Thus-Comer and the bodhisattva. Their merits and virtues differ, while their dharma natures are the same. Why? The Thus-Comer has perfect merits and virtues in all aspects that reach as far as the ten directions and spread universally over all sentient beings. But the merits and virtues of bodhisattva body are not fully free from obstacles. It is like the moon that is full or not full, but its nature remains the same. So is the difference between the body of the Thus-Comer and the body of bodhisattva. These two bodies are as solid as the diamond that is not broken. Why? The three poisons cannot destroy them; the worldly dharmas cannot contaminate them; and the suffering of bad destinies, heavens, and human world cannot suppress them. They are far away from birth, old age, illness, and death; they can subjugate all other-paths practitioners, transcend demons, and do not orient toward the self-enlightenment vehicle or voice-hearing vehicle. Because of these causes and conditions, they cannot be destroyed.

(The Buddha stated that Thus-Comers and bodhisattvas share the same body, but their merits are different.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna

paramita, they inspire and guide the world well, all heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth, will believe in and rely on them. Like king, elders, and laypersons who will believe in and rely on the excellent inspiring and guiding ones, so voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, bodhisattvas, and Thus-Comers will praise and regard bodhisattvas as excellent inspiring and guiding ones. Like king, high-ranking officials, and Brahmans who will respect the excellent inspiring and guiding ones, so heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, asuras, and so forth, as well as the ones who need more learning and those who need no more learning will make offerings to excellent bodhisattvas. Like a good guide who can assist tired and weak travelers to walk in perilous wilderness and rest in comfort, so bodhisattvas can expediently and skillfully guide sentient beings to get rid of the birth and death and rest in comfort. Like poor ones who are able to get rid of danger with the support of wealthy elders, so the other-paths practitioners and Brahmans can get rid of birth and death with the support of bodhisattvas. Like great elders who give all people properties and supplies, so bodhisattvas will share correct dharma with sentient beings drifting in birth and death. Like great elders who pass through dangerous and difficult areas relying on a big crowd with companions and sufficient supply of drinks and food, so bodhisattvas will absorb sentient beings and expediently deliver whole world to attain the perfect knowledge of everything with bliss and wisdom and get out of the dangerous and difficult world of birth and death. Like someone traveling to a place far away will carry a lot of treasures and goods for trade to acquire more profits, so bodhisattvas will aspire to the perfect knowledge of everything in the ocean of birth and death and extensively cultivate and accumulate the treasures of bliss and wisdom to realize and attain the perfect knowledge of everything quickly. Like ordinary human beings of the world who pursue wealth greedily, so bodhisattvas pursue superior dharmas tirelessly. Like those who serve as inspirer and guide have four kinds of superior achievement:

wealth, high position, techniques, and reliability, so bodhisattvas possess superior merits and virtues, noble position, and ease and freedom in all dharmas and can always speak consistently. Like a good guide shows the way to big city, so bodhisattvas can show sentient beings the path to the perfect knowledge of everything.

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they well know the good and the not good paths for travelers: the incorrect and the correct, the crooked and the straight, the safe and the dangerous, with or without waters, and with or without hindrances. These bodhisattvas well know the not upside-down roads. What they demonstrate is not in conflict with the roots of the public. They speak about the unsurpassed path instead of the paths of voice-hearer and self-enlightened one for the great-vehicle practitioners. They speak about the path of self-enlightened one instead of the paths of bodhisattva and voice-hearer for the self-enlightenment practitioners. They speak about the path of voice-hearer instead of the paths of self-enlightenment and bodhisattva for the voice-hearer practitioners. They speak about the path of selflessness for those who are attached to selfness. They speak about the path of the emptiness of the dharmas for those who are attached to dharmas. They speak about the middle path for those who are attached to two extremes. They speak about samatha and vipasyana for those who are restless in mind. They speak about the path of realness for those who stay with nonsensical arguments so they can become liberated from nonsensical arguments. They speak about the path of nirvana for those who are attached to birth and death so they can get out of the world. They speak about straight, correct path for those who get lost so they can stay away from incorrect path. This is how great bodhisattvas, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, know the correct and incorrect paths and encourage and guide sentient beings to learn and become liberated.”

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas guide and help sentient beings expediently according to individual differences.)

Chapter 5

Mindfulness

(In the Sixth Assembly)

At that time, Supreme One rose from his seat and joined the palms together respectfully with left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground. He said to the Buddha, “When great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, where are the great bodhisattvas’ minds that well know the right way and wrong way?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, their minds are upright and steady; they are not restless. Why? These bodhisattvas have well cultivated the mindfulness of body, feeling, mind, and dharma. Therefore, when they travel to cities or villages and hear about benefits and offerings, their minds will remain free from greed and impurity. Like the Buddha says in the sutras of the precept, bodhisattvas should stay in correct mindfulness and be liberated from vexations.

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and dwell in the mindfulness of the body? They should know all dharmas as they really are, stay far away from all evil dharmas correspondent with the body, and contemplate their own bodies from feet up to the top of the head. They will see nothing in their bodies other than filth and faults. They will see that the body is without self and pleasure; it is impermanent and in decay; it is foul and dirty and has a smell of urine; all its tendons

and veins are twisted and connected. As you look at such ugly phenomena, will you be happy? When they look at them, their greed and attachment to the body will disappear immediately and never come back. It is through this way that they learn to stay in compliance with virtuous dharmas.

(The Buddha instructed bodhisattvas how to practice the mindfulness of body.)

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and dwell in the mindfulness of feeling when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita? These bodhisattvas should reflect: ‘All kinds of feeling are painful. The sentient beings are upside down to initiate the thought of pleasure, while the ordinary sentient beings are ignorant and will mistake suffering for pleasure. The holy ones only say that all are painful. To cease all suffering, I should cultivate diligently myself and encourage others to do so.’ After having such reflection, the bodhisattvas will stay in the correct mindfulness of feeling without following the flow of emotions. They cultivate and learn not to follow feelings themselves; they also teach others to do so.

(The Buddha instructed bodhisattvas how to practice the mindfulness of feelings.)

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and dwell in the mindfulness of the mind when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita? The bodhisattvas should reflect: ‘The mind is impermanent, but the ignorant ones think that it is permanent. They also incorrectly regard suffering for pleasure, selflessness for selfness, and impurity for purity. The mind does not endure; it rather rotates and changes swiftly. It is the root of the hidden bonds, the gate to all evils, the cause of vexation, and the destroyer of virtuous destinies. The mind is also the unreliable master of greed, anger, and ignorance. For all dharmas, the mind is the guide. Once we understand the mind, we know all dharmas. All dharmas of the world are created by the mind. The mind itself cannot see various faults, but the virtuous or the not virtuous dharmas are all initiated by the mind. The mind moves as quickly as the

turning fire wheel; it floats incessantly as wind and runs swiftly as wild horses. Like flood, it rises abruptly; like fire, it burns.’ Great bodhisattvas should contemplate this way to keep the mindfulness unmovable; they should follow their own will and intentions instead of the floating thoughts in mind. Those who can subjugate their minds will be able to subjugate all dharmas.

(The Buddha instructed bodhisattvas how to practice the mindfulness of the mind.)

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas cultivate and dwell in the mindfulness of the dharmas when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita? They should know accurately all evil dharmas of the world as they really are, including greed, hatred, ignorance, and the rest of vexations. They should also cultivate dealing with the vexations respectively, namely, greed, hatred, ignorance, and the rest of vexations. After knowing accurately the evil dharmas, they should determine immediately not to practice those dharmas any longer; they will also encourage others to stay away from the evil dharmas.

(The Buddha instructed bodhisattvas how to practice the mindfulness of the dharmas.)

“Heavenly king, how should great bodhisattvas initiate the mindfulness of the environment when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita? If bodhisattvas encounter sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental image, they should reflect: ‘Why do I crave for these unreal dharmas? As sentient beings are attached to these outer spheres out of ignorance, there will be the arising of not virtuous dharmas. Like the World-Honored One says, craving gives birth to attachment, and attachment makes one enchanted and act incorrectly. Because they cannot tell evil from virtuous dharmas, they will fall into bad destinies.’ Therefore, bodhisattvas should not make mistakes, get lost, and become attached to certain spiritual level; they should also caution others in this regard.

(The Buddha instructed bodhisattvas how to practice the mindfulness of outer

stimuli.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they should cultivate the mindfulness of aranya. The bodhisattvas should reflect: ‘Aranya is a quiet abode where people live and remain silent to all arguments. Heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, and those who can read others’ minds know my mind and the associated images, so I should not dwell in argument and initiate incorrect thinking.’ Because of this reflection, the bodhisattvas will be free from this mindfulness immediately and cultivate diligently the dharmas with correct mindfulness.

(The Buddha instructed bodhisattvas how to practice mindfulness of aranya.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they should reflect: ‘Cities and villages are crowded and noisy. The monastics should not go or stay there to drink wine, commit adultery, live in king’s palace, gamble, and sing and dance. They should stay far away from all these places.’

(The Buddha taught the things the monastics should avoid.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they should stay in correct mindfulness when hearing the names of gaining benefits and offerings. They should reflect: ‘I will receive the offerings not because of my greedy craving, but with an attempt to bring blessings to almsgivers. After receiving the offerings, I should give them back to all poor people universally. Such an action then is worthy of acclamation; it is without an attachment to the ‘I’ and the associated images.’ They will further think, ‘All people call me a well-known generous giver. But the world is impermanent and will perish soon. How can a wise person ignore a world that is impermanent, unreal, changing, and without lord and thus become attached to the ‘I’ and the associated images?’

(The Buddha instructed bodhisattvas how to receive offerings.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they should stay in the mindfulness of the precept that is taught by the Buddha. They should think: ‘The Buddhas in the past, future, and present learn precept, attain the unsurpassed enlightenment, and achieve great nirvana.’ After knowing this, they will cultivate and learn precept diligently.
(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas follow the Buddha to learn precept diligently to achieve nirvana.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they will cultivate diligently to deliver and convert all sentient beings. They have few desires and are easily satisfied. They always wear discarded, ragged, and patched clothes. Their minds are purified, while their belief is solid. They will not violate precept even if to risk their own lives. Their minds are free from arrogance. They do not feel shameful wearing ragged patched clothing and walking in cities. They remain distant from tiredness and laziness, always cultivate diligence and never stop halfway until they accomplish what they intend to do. They do not feel anything wrong with the ragged patched clothing and never look down on them because they are mainly concerned about virtues. Only those free from desires will be dressed like this. Those who have ceased stinginess, greed, and attachment will be admired by the Buddha. But they do not boast about their dressing or criticize others who are not dressed so. Heavenly beings will pay homage to them, Buddha will acclaim them, bodhisattvas will protect them, and Brahmans and others will make offerings respectfully to them.

(The bodhisattvas who observe pure precept are admired, respected, and protected by Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and others.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas can cultivate such pure and exquisite actions.”

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “Should the highly cultivated bodhisattvas wear ragged patched clothing when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha said, "Heavenly king, bodhisattvas wear ragged patched clothing to benefit the world. Seeing this encourages people to reject evil and cultivate virtue."

“Heavenly king, what do you think about this? Are highly cultivated bodhisattvas equivalent to the World-Honored One?”

Supreme One said, “They are less superior by one hundredth, one thousandth, and so forth, and one upanisadam-api. Why? The Buddha is the king of the dharmas who possesses the perfect knowledge of everything and can illuminate all dharmas.”

“Heavenly king, what do you think about this? Why does the Buddha often demonstrate ascetic actions to all heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, humans, and nonhumans and acclaim the merits and virtues of practicing ascetic actions?”

Supreme One replied, “World-Honored One, it is because he wants to deliver all teachable and convertible sentient beings and novice bodhisattvas and teach them the ways of dealing with the vexations without eliminating them forever.”

The Buddha said, “Yes, heavenly king. So do the highly cultivated bodhisattvas who wear the ragged patched clothing. When they practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they can benefit expediently all sentient beings this way. (The Buddha explained why highly developed bodhisattvas always wear ragged patched clothing.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they keep no more than three articles of clothing. Why? It is because they are easily and joyfully satisfied. They ask no more; that means they have very few desires. They do not crave more, so they will not store things. Because they do not store things, they will not lose them. Because they do not lose them, they will not be

worried or painful. Because they are not worried and painful, they are free from vexations. Because they are free from vexations, they are free from attachment. Because they are free from attachment, they are flawless.

(The Buddha explained why bodhisattvas keep no more than three articles of clothing.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they will enter cities to ask for food with the bowl they carry. Why? It is because they have great compassion. They have seen that many sentient beings are poor and live in difficulty; to let them become wealthy and happy, they receive their alms. When entering cities, bodhisattvas will appear in neat and good demeanor. They absorb all sense roots and stay in correct mindfulness. They walk slowly with eyes looking ahead as far as six elbows without looking to left or right. They ask for alms properly, one house after another, in sequence, and will not skip the poor ones. They take only appropriate amounts and reserve the space of the bowl for the poor, giving them the opportunity to plant on the field of bliss. Why? Like belief, the effects of giving never disappear in vain; they will bring about blessings.

(The Buddha explained why bodhisattvas practice asking for alms and how.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they remain unmovable during one meal with one sitting. Why? They remain unmovable to demonic disturbance once sitting on the seat of the wonderful bodhi; nor are they movable to the emptiness of concentration, wisdom, the knowledge beyond the world, reality, realness, the reasonable holy path, and all kinds of perfect knowledge. Why? The perfect knowledge of everything can be attained within one sitting. Therefore, bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita only during one meal and one sitting. Heavenly king, this is how great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita to expediently and skillfully demonstrate

‘begging for meals’ for sentient beings.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas demonstrate begging for meals to sentient beings and achieving expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita in a single meal and sitting.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they constantly cultivate aranya actions. That is the cultivation of celibacy. They will not initiate mistakes and faults in various roots. They love to hear more about abilities and are willing to cultivate correct actions. They stay away from self and fear. They neither care about their bodies, nor are they attached to it. They always stay in tranquility. These bodhisattvas are fond of leaving their families based on correct dharma. They observe the precept of the three wheels, the body, speech, and the mind, and well know dharma phenomena. They can thoroughly understand the precept for young, middle-aged, and old-aged people following Buddha dharma. They concentrate on the mindfulness of the self-mind independent of outer conditions. They disdain the dharmas of the world and acclaim the dharmas beyond the world. They tame various roots not to grasp negative phenomena. They feel no difficulty living in aranya. They beg for meals in cities neither too far nor too near. Where there are clean and pure springs, there is an easy life. Where there are flourishing flowers, fruits, and forests, there are no wild beasts; the rocks and caves are quiet, empty, and uninhabited. These are excellent sites for dwelling. They diligently recite the dharma they have heard three times a day with the voices not too high or too low. Their minds concentrate on correct mindfulness unconnected with outer conditions. When the Brahmans come to visit them, they will greet them joyfully and let them sit down; then they will teach about the correct dharma for them according to individual roots and disposition, so they are delighted to accept, believe, and cultivate it. They are well equipped with expedient skillfulness and stay away from self. They are not scared

living in aranya because they are selfless. As they are fearless, they become fond of tranquility. This is how bodhisattvas demonstrate the cultivation of aranya practice in an expedient and skillful way.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas demonstrate aranya practice expediently and skillfully.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they should well contemplate various kinds of actions, thinking: ‘All drinks and food are clean and fragrant; but once touched by human body, they become impure, smelly, and rotten. The ignorant people are attached to their bodies, drinks, and food only because they lack knowledge. As doing contemplation and investigation based on holy knowledge, they will become disgusted with worldly drinks and food and will not love them any longer.’

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they will think: ‘Anger and hatred drive one to do bad karmas. I must stay away from anger and hatred and walk on correct path. I should truly reflect not just speak.’

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas should reflect on anger and hatred to avoid them.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they should think: ‘The dharmas arise based on causes and conditions. The dharmas arise relying on conditions. How could a wise person do something wrong because of illusory conditions?’ As one’s virtuous dharmas are hindered by themselves, they should remove these obstacles immediately. If they cannot help others remove their obstacles, they should pity them and feel regretful, but do not allow ignorant vexations to arise in their minds.

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas should remove their own obstacles which

hinder virtuous dharmas.)

“What are the dharmas that will hinder the virtues? The following behaviors will hinder virtuous dharmas. Those who do not respect the Buddha, dharma, sangha, pure precept, and classmates. They look down on aged and young people, pursue five desires, turn away from nirvana, and hold incorrect views about selfness, sentient being, and so forth, and knower and viewer. Those who are attached to emptiness, hold incorrect view of discontinuation or permanent existence, stay away from sages and holy ones, stay closely with ignorant ones, turn away from precept observers, turn to the precept violators, stay closely with evil friends, stay away from virtuous friends, slander the profound dharma when hearing it, act in bad demeanor, speak evil words, and embrace crooked mind. Those who are concealed by vexations, crave for offerings, and are conceited about their surnames, castes, superior views, countries where they live, and their disciples and followers. Those who assist evil ones but reject virtuous ones; admire women, children, and other-paths practitioners but do not like cultivating aranya; know nothing about restriction of eating, stay far away from teachers and elders, read and recite repeatedly without knowing time and season, do not esteem virtuous people, and do not stay away from evil people. Those who are unrestricted and easily get angry as elephants without hook, or horses without reins and bits. Those who are not loving-kind and do not feel pity for those in suffering, do not show concern for ill people or the dead, do not try to get out of big fire, do not do what should be done but do what should not be done, do not think what should be thought but think what should not be thought, pursue what they should not pursue but boast that they have attained liberation although they have not yet, insist that this is the path although it is not and say that they have attained the right path although they have not, love to learn evil things and stay away from virtuous things, slander great-vehicle and its practitioners but acclaim small vehicle and its practitioners, like to

fight with others and speak rude evil words, have no loving-kindness and compassion in their minds and always make others terrified, always tell lies and speak vulgarly and coarsely, love nonsensical arguments and cannot get rid of them.

All these are the actions that will hinder virtuous dharmas.

(The Buddha taught the behaviors that would hinder one's virtuous dharmas.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they should cultivate and learn the actions of emptiness and the methods of eliminating nonsensical arguments. They will think: ‘The phenomena that I have contemplated are all empty and nonexistent; the mind that contemplates is also nonexistent. The difference between the mind that can contemplate and the dharmas contemplated does not exist. All dharmas have only one form, namely, the formlessness.’ When having such a reflection, both inner and outer phenomena are cast off, and the body, mind, and dharmas cannot be seen. They will continue to cultivate and learn concentration and contemplation in sequence. Contemplation means exploring the dharmas as they really are. Concentration means staying in one restless mind. After cultivating such contemplation, bodhisattvas will attain pure precept immediately. Because the precept is pure, their actions are pure too. This is how bodhisattvas practice the contemplation of pure actions when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas engage in practice pure actions contemplation when they practice prajna paramita.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they will protect the unsurpassed dharma store and listen to and accept the correct dharma. They practice prajna paramita not for the sake of self-interest or the offerings, but for the sake of protecting the dharma; not for the sake of being esteemed and respected by others, but for the sake of keeping the seeds of the three

gems never disconnected. They do this not to attract reputation, but to keep and protect the great-vehicle actions. They will provide refuge for the homeless and rescue for those needing help. They will bring peace and happiness to those in need, bring wisdom eye to those who lack wisdom. They will show the path of voice-hearer for small-vehicle practitioners and the path of self-enlightened one for medium-vehicle practitioners. They will show the unsurpassed path for great-vehicle practitioners so that they can hear the unsurpassed knowledge and will not fall into the inferior path. (The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to protect and preserve correct dharma, not for self-interest.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they should well know the vinaya dharmas; namely, the vinaya, vinaya actions, the profound vinaya, subtle vinaya, pure and impure viyana, flawed and flawless vinaya, alternative vinaya, vinaya for voice-hearers, and the viyana for bodhisattvas. This is how bodhisattvas know vinaya dharmas when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita.

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they well know the laws and rules of demeanor and behavior. They well learn the precept that voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, and bodhisattvas receive and observe. After cultivating the precept actions, if they find that the demeanor cannot be accepted by people, they should discard it; they will not follow the improper rules. They should stay closely with the sramanas who show pure and perfect demeanor and precept actions. They should give suggestions to and encourage Brahmans to cultivate vinaya and discard the other-paths actions. After cultivating the precept actions perfectly, their minds will become straightforward and honest and have no more jealousy. They will not only practice giving themselves but also acclaim giving and encourage others to cultivate and learn it. When they see others practice

giving, they will joyfully participate in them, but they will not think: ‘Practice giving to me instead of to others.’ Rather, they will think: ‘The sentient beings live in difficult situations and are poor, hungry, and cold. I hope they will acquire property, peace, and happiness in present life. I also hope they will hear the correct dharma and acquire peace and happiness in the future life. I should cultivate the correct path diligently and attentively in present life so that I can attain liberation together with these sentient beings.’ This is called the bodhisattva without jealousy; they will treat all sentient beings equally. If great bodhisattvas practice giving, pure-precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, prajna, and so forth, as well as the perfect knowledge of all phenomena, it will be merely for the sake of all sentient beings universally without having other intentions. Why? It is because they have cultivated with empathy for all sentient beings, with a hope that all sentient beings will fulfill the correct path quickly, so that they and the sentient beings will get out of the fire of birth and death together.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattva cultivate prajna paramita to achieve liberation and treat all sentient beings equally without jealousy.)

“Heavenly king, an elder had six children whom he loved equally. His house caught fire while he was away, would he try to save his children one by one?”

“No, World-Honored One, he will try to rescue them simultaneously because the father has an equal mind to all six children.”

“So do bodhisattvas. Ignorant people were stuck in the six destinies while the house of birth and death caught fire, but these ignorant ones have no idea that they should get rid of the house as quickly as possible only because of greed and attachment. Bodhisattvas will try to rescue them out of the fire through all possible expedient ways with equal mind and then relocate them in peace and tranquility.

“Heavenly king, similarly, great bodhisattvas treat all dharmas equally when

they practice the fathomless prajna paramita. To protect the correct dharma, they make offerings to the Thus-Comer. They not only make various best things as offerings to the Thus-Comer but also make ‘cultivating diligently as they should do’ as offerings to the Thus-Comer. They will bring benefits, peace, and happiness to all sentient beings; protect and allow all sentient beings to practice virtuous dharmas; and guide and convert sentient beings according to individual differences. They will practice bodhisattva-path actions not in conflict with what they speak and pursue the unsurpassed enlightenment tirelessly. If they can do this way, they make offerings to the Buddhas not merely by means of offering properties. Why? The dharma is the Buddha body; making offerings to the dharma is making offerings to the Buddha. All Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, come from down-to-earth cultivation. To bring benefits, peace, and happiness to all sentient beings, they have protected and allowed sentient beings to practice the virtuous dharmas according to individual differences. If they do not do this way, it will be contrary to their original vows. Laziness and tiredness will have nothing to do with fulfilling the bodhi mind. Why? The unsurpassed bodhi that bodhisattvas pursue is shared and connected with sentient beings. No one can attain the unsurpassed bodhi without sentient beings.

“You must know, heavenly king! The great bodhisattvas will cultivate correct Dharma and make it as an offering to the Thus-Comer; this is called a real offering. This offering making will make the bodhisattvas humble, stay far away from trivial matters of the world, have hair shaved, and treat their parents, brothers, and relatives as if they were gone. Their appearances and clothes are very different from other people. They will carry the bowls to beg for food in cities or villages. Even if they beg food from nearby neighbors or the families of very poor caṇḍāla, they will ask for almsgiving in humility. They will think: ‘My life belongs to them. I can survive because they give me food. Because of this cause-and-condition, my self-conceit

should be removed.’ They will further think: ‘I should accept what my teachers and friends suggest to please others. I would like to hear from them the Dharma that I have not heard yet. If I see someone angry and want to argue or fight, I must stay away with patience.’ This is how the bodhisattvas remove their self-conceit.

“You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they should develop a solid correct belief. Why? They have accumulated many merits and virtues due to the powerful virtuous roots planted from previous lives. They have established sufficient virtuous causes and developed correct views. They do not believe and look after outer conditions, while they have very pure inner minds. They do not follow other teachers. They follow their straight minds to move on. They stay away from flattery and deception. Their various roots have been sharpened. They are sufficiently equipped with prajna paramita and free from various covers and hindrances. Their minds are pure. They stay far away from evil friends but keep a close connection with virtuous friends. They have sought virtuous suggestions tirelessly. They hear the dharma taught by the Buddha and realize the merits and virtues of the Buddha.”

At that time, Supreme One said to the Buddha, “May I beg your great loving-kindness to teach us about the Thus-Come’s merits and virtues and their great, overwhelming, powerful, and magical forms?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “Heavenly king, listen to me and reflect carefully! I am going to tell you some of the merits and virtues of the Buddha.”

Supreme One said, “Great! We are looking forward to your teaching.”

The Buddha said, “Heavenly king, the Thus-Come has boundless great loving-kindness to illumine and absorb universally the realm of the sentient beings, and so forth, as well as the realm of empty space in the ten directions. His brilliant illumination is immeasurable. The Thus-Come has great compassion not shared by

the voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, and the bodhisattvas. Why? It is because this is an unshared Dharma. All sentient beings in the worlds of the ten directions are illuminated by the great compassion of the Thus-Comer. The Thus-Comer's Dharma teaching is ultimate and unexhausted; he can teach all sentient beings in the ten directions for innumerable kalpas through different causes and conditions, and the essential meanings he teaches are also unexhausted. All challenges raised by the sentient beings will not be able to do harm to the Thus-Comer's teaching because the Thus-Comer can easily defend and solve their problems instantaneously as quick as snapping fingers. The unhindered level of meditation that the Thus-Comer has achieved is too fathomless to measure. Suppose that the sentient beings of all the worlds have dwelled in the ten stages of bodhisattva and entered the superior samadhi for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, they still cannot measure and imagine what the Thus-Comer's level of meditation is. Why? The Thus-Comer can manifest instantaneously the bodies of the boundless species as he wishes. His heavenly eye is so pure that he can see clearly and easily the different forms of all sentient and insentient beings in all the worlds as if one is watching amalaka in his palm. No human or heavenly eyes can do this. The Thus-Comer's heavenly ear is so pure that he can easily and clearly hear the different voices of all sentient and insentient beings of the worlds and know their meanings. The Thus-Comer has also very pure power of reading others' minds; he can know instantaneously boundless differences of thoughts, karmas, and effects of all sentient beings in the worlds, as well as their four kinds of demeanors: walking, staying, sitting, and lying. Why? It is because the Thus-Comer is always in concentration without a restless mind.

“Heavenly king, the Buddha has never lost correct mindfulness; his mind is not restless, and his roots do not react improperly to stimuli. Why? It is because he has been free from worries and vexations and his mind is extremely pure, tranquil,

and has been uncontaminated. Those having vexations will lose correct mindfulness, will be restless in mind, and react to outer stimuli improperly. The Thus-Comer, the World-Honored One, is flawless and free from defilements; he treats all dharmas equally and freely because he is always in samadhi and samapatti. The Thus-Comer has only dwelled in one demeanor, played in one samadhi, and stay in one peace and tranquility. Human beings and heavenly beings cannot know these things, not to mention they know that the Thus-Comer has cultivated innumerable and boundless kinds of samadhi for immeasurable kalpas. Why? The merits and virtues of the Thus-Comer are immeasurable, inconceivable, and beyond contemplation.”

(The Buddha described the remarkable merits, virtues, and abilities of Thus-Comers.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “I heard that one needs to cultivate for three ‘countless kalpas’ to become a Buddha; but you just mentioned that the Thus-Comer has cultivated for innumerable kalpas?”

The Buddha replied, “Heavenly king, it is not like that. Why? The bodhi that bodhisattvas aspire to cannot be achieved without the powers of innumerable merits and virtues. Bodhisattvas should go through so many kalpas to realize insightfully the equality of the dharmas, cultivate to its ultimate perfection, and become a Buddha.”

Then Supreme One said to the Buddha, “Excellent, excellent! The World-Honored One can teach the essential meanings of the dharma quickly, inspiring all sentient beings to plant virtuous roots, stay far away from karmic hindrances, become fond of the Buddha effect, and cultivate bodhisattva actions. If sentient beings can hear about the merits, virtues, authority, and supernatural powers of the Thus-Comer and are delighted to believe and accept them, they will soon become the dharma ware for the Buddha’s merits, virtues, authority, and powers, not to mention if they can accept, embrace, read, recite, write, make offerings to, explain for others the essential meanings of the dharma. The blessing thus gained by them will be inconceivable.”

The Buddha said, “Yes, heavenly king! These sentient beings have planted virtuous roots for many kalpas with the protection and support of the Thus-Comer. Because they had made offerings to many Buddhas in the past, they are now able to hear the merits, virtues, and authoritative powers of the Buddha. Heavenly king, if good gentlepersons bathe, put on new and clean clothes, and make fragrant flowers as offerings to stay wholeheartedly without hesitation and wonder in a correct mindfulness of the merits, virtues, and authoritative powers of the Thus-Comer as mentioned above for seven days, then the Thus-Comer, because of his loving-kind and compassionate protection and mindfulness, will appear and let them see him and fulfill their wishes. If they do not have the flowers or other offerings, they can stay in a mindfulness of the merits, virtues, and authoritative powers of the Buddha, then they will also see the Buddha at the end of their lives.”

(The Buddha taught the blessings and benefits gained by those who stay in mindfulness of the merits, virtues, and powers of Thus-Comer.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “Will some sentient beings not develop belief but slander him upon hearing the merits, virtues, and the authoritative powers of the Thus-Comer?”

The Buddha replied, “Some sentient beings, upon hearing this dharma gate about the merits, virtues, and great authoritative powers of the Thus-Comer, will become angry, slander the statement and regard the dharma teacher as an evil friend. These sentient beings will fall into hells and suffer for many kalpas after passing away from present life. If sentient beings hear about the merits, virtues, and the great authoritative powers of the Thus-Comer and joyfully believe, accept, acclaim, and keep them in mind and further regard the dharma teacher as a virtuous friend, then they will be reborn in human world or heaven; they will gradually advance forward until becoming a Buddha.”

At that time, the World-Honored One spread his broad and long tongue to cover his face, then the top of his head, entire body, the lion seat, bodhisattvas, voice-hearers, other believers, Brahmans, the world, and all humans and nonhumans. He then withdrew his tongue and said to all, “The Thus-Come, the World-Honored One, has such a tongue, so will he lie? Believe and accept what I say, you all will be in lasting peace.”

When the Buddha was teaching the dharma, 84,000 bodhisattvas in the assembly attained dharma forbearance of nonarising; innumerable sentient beings stayed far away from defilements and acquired pure dharma eye; countless sentient beings initiated aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment.

Fascicle 569

Chapter 6

Dharma Nature

(In the Sixth Assembly)

At that time, Supreme One stood up from his seat again. He joined his palms together respectfully with left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground and said to the Buddha, “It is very rare, World-Honored One! You can teach very well about the subtle and exquisite merits and virtues and the great authoritative powers of the Buddhas. How will the Buddhas, Thus-Comers, attain such subtle and exquisite merits and virtues and the great authoritative powers? I beg the World-Honored One’s kindness to explain them respectively.”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king! What the Thus-Comer has done and the effects that he has attained are very subtle, exquisite, and inconceivable.”

Supreme One asked, “What are the profound, exquisite, and inconceivable dharmas that the Buddha has practiced?”

The Buddha replied, “The cause and effect of the dharma nature of the Thus-Comer is very profound, subtle, exquisite, and inconceivable; so are his merits, virtues, authoritative supernatural powers, and the dharma teaching that is beneficial for others.”

Supreme One asked again, “Why is dharma nature very profound, subtle, exquisite, and inconceivable?”

The Buddha replied, “Heavenly king, the dharma nature of the Thus-Comer has, since the time unknown, endured, directly or indirectly, in the aggregates, realms, and spheres of sentient beings. Its nature is pure and is not

contaminated by vexations. In it, the mind, the intention, and the consciousness do not originate dependently; the general investigation and specific analysis of the mind do not differentiate; incorrect mindfulness and reflection are not elicited; and ignorant mindfulness does not arise. Therefore, it is not caused by the twelve links of dependent origination. It is called formlessness. It is without making, arising, extinction, boundary, and exhaustion. Its characteristics always endure. You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they will know that the dharma nature is pure, uncontaminated, and without attachment and defilement. It transcends and is free from all vexations. This nature is the origin of Buddha dharma; all blessings, virtues, and wisdom come from it. Its original nature is inconceivably brilliant and pure. Heavenly king, I am going to tell you similes today. Please listen to me and reflect on them carefully.”

(The Buddha was going to teach about dharma nature for Supreme One, the heavenly king.)

The heavenly king replied, “Yes, World-Honored One, we look forward to your teaching!”

The Buddha said to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, a piece of invaluable pearl was well adorned; it looked transparent, bright, and lovable. Its body was round, pure, and without stains; it was not dirty and turbid at all. But it had been buried in mud for a long time. One day someone found it. This person was very happy and kept it carefully so it would not fall and break into pieces. So is the dharma nature. It stays with vexations but is not contaminated. As it reappears, it still looks brilliant. Heavenly king, the Buddhas know that the original natures of sentient beings are pure, but sentient beings cannot enter insightfully the truth because they are concealed by the dust of

vexations. Therefore, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas should think, ‘I must diligently teach about the fathomless prajna paramita for sentient beings so I can assist them to remove vexations and enter insightfully the truth. The original natures of all sentient beings are pure; I should esteem them but should not disdain them. I should make offerings to them as I do to grand master.’ Because of this thought, the bodhisattvas will initiate the prajna of great compassion. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita this way, the bodhisattvas can realize and enter the state of nonregression. They will further think, ‘All vexations are powerless, incapable, and illusory; they are contrary to pure dharmas. Why? The vexations are contrary to the perfect knowledge of everything but in compliance with birth and death. The pure dharma nature is the origin of all dharmas. The self-natures are originally nonexistent. The vexations are illusory; they are born from incorrect, upside-down mindfulness.’

(The Buddha said that the Buddhas know the original natures of sentient beings are pure, but sentient beings cannot know the truth because they are concealed by vexations. That is why great bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita to help sentient beings remove vexations.)

“You must know, heavenly king, the four elements are established on empty space, while empty space depends on nothing. So do vexations; they depend on dharma nature, while dharma nature depends on nothing. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas contemplate and get to know this truth as it really is and do nothing in conflict. Because they follow the truth, they will have no vexations. These bodhisattvas have contemplated and investigated vexations without being attached to them; they will think, ‘If I am attached to vexations, then how can I teach others to be rid of them?’ So

bodhisattvas cut off the thought of attachment and teach the truth to liberate sentient beings from vexations. These bodhisattvas will further think, ‘If there is a vexation in birth and death that can really benefit sentient beings, I am willing to take it. But nothing like this will happen. So, I must cut off all vexations.’ The bodhisattvas will also think, ‘As the Buddhas in the past had cut off all vexations when they practiced the fathomless prajna paramita, so I should do it too. Why? The Buddhas, the Thus-Comers, had achieved the bodhi through this way in the past when they were still in the stage of bodhisattva.’ Because of these two conditions, the bodhisattvas will contemplate expediently and skillfully to realize the dharma nature. The dharma nature is immeasurable and boundless; but because it is concealed by vexations, it follows the flow of birth and death of the sentient beings to reincarnate in the six destinies for a long time and is misunderstood as the nature the sentient beings.

(The Buddha explained why sentient beings lose pure nature and how bodhisattvas try to help them.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they become disgusted with the five desires and try to remove them. They eliminate differentiations and cultivate the unsurpassed path. Currently, this nature is called ‘getting away.’ It is also called ‘tranquility’ because it transcends all suffering. It is the ultimate way that all sentient beings of the world should and love to pursue. It is the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge that always dwells in subtlety and exquisiteness, so this dharma nature can attain ease and freedom and ascend the throne of the dharma king.

(The Buddha described the superior qualities of dharma nature as sentient beings’ differentiations and vexations are eliminated.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna

paramita, they contemplate and investigate the dharma natures in the initial stage, middle stage, and later stage and find that they are all equal and originally tranquil; they are not hindered by the dharmas, just like empty space is unhindered by matters. So when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas contemplate and know accurately, as taught by the Buddha, that all exquisite dharmas are cultivated as they should be; the merits and virtues of the dharma nature are so many that they cannot be spoken exhaustively; all its phenomena go in the spiritual level and are with only one equal form without general investigation and specific analysis. If bodhisattvas can practice the fathomless prajna paramita this way, they will be able to eliminate dualistic forms: the form of selfness and the form of the dharmas. All ordinary sentient beings cannot recognize, see, and attain the dharma nature because they are bound by attachment. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas can thoroughly understand that the dharma natures of all sentient beings are not dualistic or separate. Why? The realness of all dharmas has no different forms.

(The Buddha gave more teachings about the qualities of dharma nature.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they cultivate and learn virtuous roots based on this dharma nature so they can enter the three realms to bring benefits to sentient beings. The dharma nature will appear as if it is impermanent, but it is not in actuality. Why? When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas contemplate and accurately know the real dharma nature. So, they will be sufficiently and expediently equipped with the powers of aspiration based on great compassion and extremely reluctant to turn away from sentient beings. The ordinary sentient beings of the two vehicles have no such powers of aspiration based on great

compassion, so they are unable to see the perfect and pure dharma nature and thus cannot benefit sentient beings as they should.

(The Buddha taught the efforts bodhisattvas have put to guide sentient beings to understand dharma nature of sentient beings and dharmas; all dharma natures are not dualistic or different.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas can contemplate the real pure dharma nature this way. All holy ones will insightfully understand that the cultivator, the dharma cultivated, the practitioner, the dharma practiced, the mind, the associated images of the mind, the karma, the maturation occurring in different types and at different times, suffering, and pleasures are all nonexistent. Those who can contemplate this way are said to have attained equality. They are not different from those who get far away and stay in compliance with the broad and great one; they are without selfness, the associated images, and the differentiation between the higher and the lower ones. They are real and unexhausted and always dwell in brightness and purity. Why? All holy dharmas are fulfilled because of the real pure dharma nature. Holy ones are manifested because of the dharma nature. The boundless merits and virtues of the dharmas shared by all Buddhas, the Thus-Comers, but not shared by others, arise from this nature and come out of this nature. The precepts, concentrations, and wisdom of all holy ones arise from this nature; the fathomless prajna paramita of various Buddhas and bodhisattvas come out of this nature. This nature is tranquil and far beyond names and forms. This nature is real and far away from upside-down things. This nature is changeless, so it is called ‘realness.’ This nature belongs to the state of the perfect knowledge of the holy ones, so it is called ‘ultimate meaning.’ It is neither existent nor nonexistent; it is neither permanent nor impermanent; it

belongs neither to birth and death nor to nirvana; it is neither contaminated nor purified; and it is neither the same nor different. It is without forms and names. (These paragraphs are both important and profound. The Buddha delineated even more extraordinary traits of dharma nature, as well as the remarkable merits and benefits experienced by those who realize it.)

“You must know, heavenly king, these bodhisattvas will further think, ‘The dharma nature is far away from the forms. Various dharmas are also far away from the forms; they are neither dualistic nor different.’ Why? As various dharmas are apart from the forms, the dharma nature is apart from the forms; as the dharma nature is apart from the forms, the sentient beings are apart from the forms; as the sentient beings are apart from the forms, the dharma realm is apart from the forms; as the dharma realm is apart from the forms, various dharmas are apart from the forms. Such being apart from the forms is unattainable. The realness of dharma nature and the realness of sentient being are neither dualistic nor separate; the realness of sentient being and the realness of dharma nature are neither dualistic nor separate; the realness of dharma nature and the realness of various dharmas are neither dualistic nor separate; the realness of various dharmas and the realness of various Buddhas are neither dualistic nor separate. The realness of dharma nature and the realness of the three phases of time are not in conflict; the realness of the past and the realness of the future are not in conflict; the realness of the future and the realness of the present are neither dualistic nor separate; the realness of the present and the realness of the past are neither dualistic nor separate. The realness of the three phases of time is the realness of aggregate, realm, and sphere; the realness of aggregate, realm, and sphere is the realness of contamination and purification; the realness of contamination and purification is the realness of birth and death and nirvana; and

the realness of birth and death and nirvana is the realness of all dharmas.

(The fascicle 569, “Dharma Nature,” is both inspiring and profound, making it worth repeated recitation.)

“You must know, heavenly king, realness is named no difference, changelessness, no arising, no extinction, and the reality of self-nature; it is called realness because it does not invite controversial arguments. To know and see accurately that the dharmas do not arise, realness is unmovable although the dharmas arise, and realness does not arise although realness gives birth to all dharmas, is called dharma body. It is pure and changeless; like empty space, it is unequaled equal. Not a dharma in the three realms is comparable to it. Not a dharma in the body of sentient being is equivalent to it. It is clean and pure, free from defilements, and originally uncontaminated. The self-nature is bright and pure; it does not arise or initiate; it is in the mind consciousness but is not the mind consciousness. Nature is emptiness, formlessness, and no aspiration. It permeates and fills the entire realm of empty space and sentient beings, but all are equal, immeasurable, boundless, not different, and not separate. It is not matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness; it is not apart from matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. It is not the earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness, but it is not apart from the earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness. It has no arising, but it is not apart from arising. It goes against birth and death and does not comply with nirvana. It cannot be seen by eyes, heard by ears, smelled by nose, tasted by tongue, touched by body, and cognized by mind; it does not reside in mind consciousness, although it is not apart from mind consciousness.

(The Buddha explained the meanings of realness, dharma realm, and the self-nature of dharmas.)

“You must know, heavenly king, this is the dharma nature. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, because of the thorough understanding of this dharma nature, great bodhisattvas can cultivate purity and manifest their physical bodies in the cities or the villages of the continent of Jambudvipa in this large threefold thousand-world. The physical bodies that they manifest are neither the matter nor the forms, nor are they in the locus where the six sense roots act and react. Bodhisattvas work tirelessly to educate sentient beings, teaching them that human bodies are impermanent, selfless, painful, and impure. Knowing that sentient beings have tranquil body, bodhisattvas demonstrate expediently and skillfully innumerable bodies to sentient being so they can accept the teaching. Knowing that all bodies, like wood and rock, have neither the maker nor the receiver, the bodhisattvas teach sentient beings about pure actions. Because bodhisattvas can practice the fathomless prajna paramita this way, they will be able to thoroughly understand the dharma nature and attain freedom and ease. Then they can initiate knowing action without moving, manifest and play all kinds of supernatural powers, dwell peacefully in ease while appearing in various demeanors, approach the perfect knowledge of all phenomena with ease, and fully know the dharma nature.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas manifest human bodies as impermanent, while the nature of the body is formless, tranquil, and pure.)

“Heavenly king, the easiness of the fathomless prajna paramita appears in unexhausted forms and permeates and fills all places with the sights that truly are not sights. This enables bodhisattvas to easily and universally contemplate the minds of all sentient beings and see the natures of the minds as they really are. They thus can stay in correct mindfulness at ease for boundless and countless kalpas and make transformation freely as they wish. They dwell in the forms of

liberation freely and have all flaws terminated. But for the sake of sentient beings, they appear in the world without exhausting all flaws. They have reached the free and very profound state of perfect knowledge that is possessed by sages and holy ones, but cannot be measured by voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones. They are firmly at ease and cannot be harmed by demons. They have sat on the throne of the bodhi, achieved the Buddha dharma, and become the superior ones. They turn the wheel of the wonderful dharma freely in compliance with different sentient beings, receive the positions, and attain freedom and easiness in all dharmas.

“You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they can thoroughly understand the very profound dharma nature as it really is. After cultivating and attaining easiness, they equally attain all meditations, all liberations, and all kinds of samadhi and samapatti and are no longer bound in the three realms. Why? It is because they have stayed far away from all delusive differentiations, the bondage of vexations, and attachment to forms. If they would like to receive the birth, they will be free from all bondages and at ease in rebirth. If they would like to extinguish, they will extinguish at ease too. Wherever they are reborn, they will always absorb the great vehicle and reach a full growth in Buddha dharma. They have reasoned and sought Buddha dharma across ten directions, but they cannot attain the dharma. They thus realize that all dharmas share the same Buddha dharma, which is neither permanent nor impermanent. Why? They have sought reasonably and cannot attain it. This dharma is neither existent nor nonexistent; it cannot be expressed by name or form. Being without names and forms makes all dharmas equal. If all dharmas are equal, there will be no attachment. Being free from attachment is the reality of dharmas. Attachment to reality is delusion. Being

without attachment is not delusion. Being without attachment and hesitation will result in an unhindered mind. Being without hindrance is without obstacles.

Where there is no obstacle, there is no controversial argument. If the dharmas are free from controversial arguments, they will be like empty space that is not bound in the three realms. If the dharmas are bound nowhere, they will be without sights, forms, and shapes. If the dharmas have no sights, forms, and shapes, you must know that there will be no one who can know and no things that can be known. Why? In these dharmas, not a dharma can realize or can be awakened to. If bodhisattvas can achieve this realization when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, they must have attained a thorough understanding of equality.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas understand equality after realizing all dharmas are without sights, forms, names, and self-nature.)

“Heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they engage in contemplation and initiate great loving-kindness, great compassion, great joy, and great equanimity. They cannot see the ‘I,’ the sentient being, and so forth, and the knower and the viewer. They have practiced giving, while they do not renounce anything. They have observed the precept, while they stay away from the forms of the precept. They have cultivated forbearance, while their minds are not exhausted. They have cultivated diligence, while they stay are free from forms. They have cultivated meditation, while they dwell in tranquility. They have cultivated prajna, while they depend on nothing. They have cultivated mindfulness, while they do not grasp anything. They have cultivated correct termination of vexations, while their minds remain equal. They have cultivated four bases of power, while they stay away from nonsensical arguments. They have cultivated five roots and five powers, while they do not discriminate among

the roots of all sentient beings and criticize how they have stayed away from faults and wrongdoings. They have cultivated the factors for enlightenment, while they are distant from differentiations. They have cultivated the factors of the paths, while they do not put additional effort into cultivation. They have cultivated pure belief, while they have no attachment. They have used natural knowledge and wisdom to stay in the mindfulness of equality of all dharmas. They have cultivated the exquisite concentrative mind of no differentiation; contemplated the incessant mind of exquisite wisdom; cultivated the mind of samatha without seeing; cultivated the mind of vipasyana without mindfulness; cultivated the mindfulness in compliance with the Buddha to attain the mind of equal dharma realm; cultivated the mindfulness in compliance with the dharma and let the mind dwell in nowhere; cultivated the mindfulness in compliance with the sangha and stayed in pure original mind; educated sentient beings without discrimination; absorbed all dharmas with the mind of dharma realm; dignified and purified Buddha lands with empty-space like mind; attained dharma forbearance of nonarising with the mind of nonattainment; attained nonregression without thinking about progression or regression; stayed far away from the mind of the forms without seeing the forms; dignified and glorified the throne of the bodhi with an equal mind to the three realms; known all dharmas with an unawakening mind; turned the dharma wheel without seeing, hearing, and speaking; and manifested nirvana with the knowledge of the equal original natures of birth and death.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate various dharma gates and engage in various practices without attachment and attainment.)

“You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, contemplate the dharmas without seeing the ones

who can contemplate and the dharmas contemplated, they then attain the easiness of play immediately. Why? It is because their minds are pure and can see the purity of all sentient beings. You must know, heavenly king, like empty space that permeates and spreads to fill all, so are the minds of the bodhisattvas when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita.”

(The Buddha concluded that bodhisattvas practice prajna paramita with a mind like empty space.)

When the Buddha was teaching this dharma, eighty-four thousand heavenly beings in the assembly, initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment simultaneously. Thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas attained dharma forbearance of nonarising. Eighty-four thousand sentient beings stayed far away from defilements and attained pure dharma eye. Twelve thousand bhiksus had all flaws eliminated permanently.

At that time, the Buddha said to Supreme One, “Heavenly king, you must know, as ones practice prajna paramita, they will attain pure minds as fathomless as ocean, the blessings, knowledge, and wisdom thus derived will be immeasurable. Their pure minds can manifest the treasures of the merits and virtues beyond the world. These merits and virtues can be used by sentient beings and remain inexhaustible until they attain the bodhi. The bodhisattvas’ merits and virtues will not diminish either. Like big ocean which can store many treasures, so is great bodhisattvas’ wisdom which is very profound and difficult to understand. The ocean is too large to be grasped by small animals. So is bodhisattvas’ wisdom, which is too broad, boundless, and profound to be understood by voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones. Why? The wisdom owned by bodhisattvas is without attachment, dwelling, sights, and forms; it starts with the aspiration toward the bodhi, progresses step by step, and finally

ends with the attainment of the perfect knowledge of everything. The bodhisattvas naturally do not have vexations and evil friends. Once the wisdom of the world enters the big wisdom ocean of bodhisattvas, it will be merged into one form and one taste, the formlessness and the taste without differentiation, then they will approach the perfect knowledge of everything. The wisdom of the bodhisattvas will contemplate all dharmas and do not see they increase or decrease. Why? It is because it has fully realized the profound dharma nature of equality. The powers of great loving-kindness and great compassion possessed by bodhisattvas are not contrary to their original aspirations. These powers are exactly what all holy ones rely on. They can teach the dharma to all sentient beings for endless kalpas and their powers will not become exhausted. Heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas can fully understand the very profound dharma nature.

(The Buddha described the broad and profound wisdom of bodhisattvas, who can fully understand the profound dharma nature.)

“Heavenly king, bodhisattvas understand the dharmas in terms of the worldly way very well. They speak about various matters, while they realize that they truly are nonexistent. After reasonable reflection, they decide that matter should not be grasped; nor are feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. They speak about earth realm, while they realize that it is nonexistent. After reasonable reflection, they know that earth realm should not be attained; nor are the water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness realms. They speak about the eye sphere; they know that the eye sphere is nonexistent. After reasonable reflection, they decide that the eye sphere should not be grasped; so are the ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious spheres. They speak about the sight sphere and realize that it is nonexistent. After reasonable reflection, they understand that the sight sphere

should not be grasped; nor the sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image spheres. Similarly, they lecture on the 'I,' the sentient being, and so forth, and the knower and the viewer; they lecture on the world, the worldly dharmas, the Buddha dharma, and the bodhi, and reasonably understand that they are nonexistent and they should not attain or become attached to them.

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas lecture on various dharmas and, through reasonable reflection, recognize their nonexistence, thereby avoiding attachment to them.)

“Heavenly king, you must know that speech is considered true as it is understood and expressed from the perspective of the world. Although it is not real, the ultimate meaning of the truth cannot be existent without the worldly way of speech. The bodhisattvas well understand that the truth in terms of the worldly way of speech is not contrary to ultimate meaning. Because of this understanding, they realize that all dharmas are without arising and extinction, formation and decay, and the difference between this and that, they thus stay far away from nonsensical arguments of spoken and written languages.

(The Buddha stated how bodhisattvas stay far away from nonsensical arguments in languages.)

“You must know, heavenly king, the ultimate meaning is tranquil and is distant from languages; that is the level of the holy knowledge in which no dharmas are in decay. Whether the Buddha appears in the world or not, the forms of the nature are always as they have been. This is the ultimate meaning that bodhisattvas thoroughly understand.”

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “If all dharmas have no arising and extinction and their self-natures are empty and distant, why does the Buddha appear in the world and turn the dharma wheel? How do bodhisattvas

see the arising existent in the dharmas of nonarising?”

The Buddha said to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, the dharmas have no extinction, so they have no arising. Why? Their nature is changeless. It is in terms of the worldly perspective to say that bodhisattvas have seen the existence of arising and extinction. But they are not truly existent; their existence is an illusion. If bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and expediently and skillfully look at the law of dependent origination, they will know that the dharmas of the world are empty and nonexistent; they are not solid; they are nonexistent although they look as if they were existent. They are like illusions, dreams, echoes, images, shadows, illusory images of water under sunlight, transformed things, and mirages. They are caused by causes and conditions and are restless and changeable. The bodhisattvas have used exquisite prajna to contemplate all dharmas and realize that they are empty, and so forth, and arise due to causes and conditions. They will reflect: ‘All these dharmas can be seen to have arising, duration, and extinction. What causes and conditions make them arise? What causes and conditions make them extinguish?’ After having this reflection, they accurately understand that ignorance causes action, action causes consciousness, and so forth, and existence causes birth, birth causes old age, and old age causes death, worry, sorrow, misery, anxiety, and upset. The purpose of cultivation is to eliminate ignorance. Once ignorance is eliminated, the other eleven links of dependent origination extinguish. Like a person whose physical body is eliminated, this person’s life will extinguish too. (The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas attain insight into the ultimate nature of all dharmas by comprehending the law of dependent origination.)

“You must know, heavenly king! The other-paths practitioners embrace incorrect views and try to eliminate death instead of birth to acquire liberation.

They do not know that if the dharmas do not arise, there will be no extinction. Someone threw stones to attack the lion; when the lion chased the person, no more stones were thrown at the lion. So do the bodhisattvas. They will remove birth to prevent death. The dog will chase the stones instead of the person, and the stones will be continually thrown at the dog. So do the other-paths practitioners, who do not know that they should eliminate birth before eliminating death. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas know very well the cause and condition of the arising and the extinction of the dharmas.

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas would remove cause to prevent effect, while ordinary ones do the opposite.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas know that the dharmas are dependently originated and they are empty, so they are not arrogant. If they are born and raised in wealthy and noble families, they will not be conceited because of wealth and nobility. Those who are born and raised in poor and inferior families, realizing that their previous karmas are not pure, so they are receiving inferior effects, will decide to renounce all and leave the family. They think, ‘My current body is formed by a mixture of karmas. I should cultivate more pure karmas to purify myself and others, deliver myself and others, and liberate myself and others.’ Because of this cause and condition, they will initiate diligence and stay far away from laziness and tiredness, so that all evil dharmas hindering correct path will be removed and all virtuous dharmas fostering correct path will be nurtured. When cultivating diligently, they will also think, ‘My burden is very heavy; I must eliminate all my vexations before trying to relieve all sentient beings tirelessly.’

(Those who are wise understand that by controlling the causes, they can influence the resulting outcomes.

“Bodhisattvas will stay close to teachers and elders and treat all of them as do the Buddha, whether they are well learned or less learned, wise or not very wise, precept keepers or violators, they will remain respecting them and learning with them. They will think, ‘Now I am learning from my teachers. I should cultivate the virtuous dharmas that I have not cultivated perfectly and terminate all vexations that I have not fully terminated. I should maintain virtuous dharmas and discard unvirtuous ones. I should learn to possess the perfect knowledge of everything, have compassion for all sentient beings, plant the bliss field of great mercy, and tranquilize the restless mind. The teacher of the heavenly beings and human beings is my grand master, who is very capable of attaining superior benefits, so all heavenly beings and human beings have served and respected them as the lord of the dharma, the grand master.’ These bodhisattvas will also reflect, ‘I should not violate the pure precept taught by the Buddha even if I must risk my body or my life. As the World-Honored One says, to follow the Buddha’s teachings is to make offerings to the Buddhas, Brahmans, and so forth. All kinds of drinks, food, and belief, will be offered appropriately and received correctly so that offerings makers are able to attain the rewards. In that case, both receivers and givers will benefit. Bodhisattvas will regard Brahmans as sramanas and view them as the field of bliss.’ Bodhisattvas should cultivate correct dharma reasonably and appropriately and manifest the merits, virtues, and the field of bliss of the sramanas. Bodhisattvas must cultivate themselves and educate others tirelessly.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas stay with teachers appropriately.)

“When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, if bodhisattvas can

cultivate this way, they will be able to act in compliance with all sentient beings. They will initiate a mind of humility when seeing an angry person; initiate a thought of selflessness when seeing an arrogant person; initiate a thought of straightforwardness when seeing an evil, crooked person; initiate honest speech when seeing a liar; often speak kind and soft words when seeing a person speaking rude and evil words; show tenderness when seeing a stubborn person; initiate kindness and patience when seeing a cruel and poisonous person; initiate great loving-kindness when seeing a person who acts evilly; initiate great compassion when seeing a worried and anxious person; and practice giving when seeing a stingy and jealous person. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas should act in compliance with worldly knowledge and wisdom, so they will be reborn in the pure Buddha lands. Why? It is because they have perfectly observed the precept, stayed away from defilements, cultivated the mind of equality, possessed virtuous roots for sentient beings, been not attached to fame and wealth, had pure belief without asking for anything in return, worked diligently without tiredness and laziness, cultivated various meditations and stayed away from distractedness and restlessness, learned and heard a lot with exquisite and subtle wisdom, possessed perfect roots, been well equipped with sharp and powerful knowledge, and constantly cultivated great loving-kindness and stayed far away from hatred and annoyance. Because of these causes and conditions, they will be reborn in the pure Buddha lands.”

(The Buddha instructed how bodhisattvas always act in compliance with sentient beings in the world to be reborn in pure Buddha land.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “As the Buddha says, bodhisattvas will be reborn in pure Buddha lands if they can cultivate the precept, and so forth, as mentioned above. Should they cultivate all these

virtuous dharmas, or will they just cultivate anyone of them, to be reborn in pure Buddha lands?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, if bodhisattvas can cultivate purely one of the dharmas mentioned above, they will be equipped with all dharmas; therefore, one dharma practice will enable them to be reborn in pure lands. Why? In each of the dharmas all other dharmas are contained.

(The Buddha explained that the cultivation of any single virtuous dharma as mentioned above will be sufficient for rebirth in pure Buddha lands. This is because in one virtuous dharma, all other virtuous dharmas are contained.)

“These bodhisattvas will not be contaminated by the embryo during the process of their rebirth into the pure lands. Why? These bodhisattvas have made Buddha statues, built and managed monasteries, paved the front yard of the Buddha halls with fragrant mud, burnt incenses as offerings to the Buddhas, decorated the temples with wonderful flowers, bathed the statues with fragrant water, swept and watered the yard, and kindly served parents and monastic teachers. They have treated classmates, virtuous friends, and sramanas equally and made offerings respectfully to them and transferred all these virtuous roots along with sentient beings equally toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal Bodhi, so that the sentient beings will attain purity also. Because the bodhisattvas have done these, they are rid of the desires. Why? Their minds are without grasping and are not contaminated by cliques. They are away from all phenomena and do not desire pleasures. They have cultivated precept as taught by the Buddha, been easily satisfied with the four kinds of offerings, and received food and drinks just for the sake of supporting their physical bodies. They will do all these things with humility and caution. They are always fond of

tranquility and getting away.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas always enjoy tranquility and getting away.)

“If bodhisattvas are not attached to the worldly affairs, they will attain pure life and will not appear in fake demeanors or deceived speech, particularly in front of the almsgivers. They always move on slowly with the eyes looking straight with a six elbows distance ahead. They do not look around or move in bad demeanors. They do not lose self-restraint when the almsgivers are not present. They do not flatter donors to gain benefits or offerings, nor speak rudely and impolitely when donors are not present. They do not pretend they are satisfied easily but greedy in mind.

“These bodhisattvas will not show these forms of pursuing self-interest. Namely, they will not say to almsgivers, ‘My robes are broken. I lack living supplies. I need to see doctors and get some medicines.’ Nor will they say, ‘Someone has given me something. Someone praises me for observing precept, being well-learned, and having a pure and compassionate heart. Even though I am complimented, I know I am not as virtuous as described. I simply strive to do my best to repay the favor granted.’

“When speaking to laypersons, these bodhisattvas do not boast of their own strengths and slander others to solicit reputation and money. They will not be angry or jealous when they see alms are given to others. They do not flatter others to acquire money or deceive others and thus harm them by taking their property away. They do not play tricks to steal money. When almsgivers are ready to give offerings to dharma lecturer or the public that they admire, or when almsgivers have not decided whether to give or not, bodhisattvas will not get involved and try to influence their decisions. If they receive the contributions,

they will not be attached to them and think, ‘These are my things; they are mine.’ Rather, they will equally give them to other sramanas, Brahmans, monastic teachers, parents, or poor ones. If the supplies are used up, they will not be worried or annoyed.

“Whether bodhisattvas receive offerings or give them to others after receiving the offerings, they will do them in purity. As their minds are pure, they are not tired and fatigued. Why? To benefit sentient beings, the bodhisattvas have stayed in birth and death for a long time without disgust or sickness. As they are compelled by all kinds of suffering caused by demonic hindrances, their minds will not withdraw. If someone would like to practice the path of the two vehicles, they will teach them the correct dharma without caring about hardship and labor. These bodhisattvas have themselves cultivated the factors for the bodhi tirelessly.

“These bodhisattvas have been so diligent that they can always act in accord with the Buddha’s teachings. Why? They are not far away from self-restraint; they are always prudent in their minds. They take good care of bodily actions and do nothing evil. They take good care of speech and mind as well. They always look ahead so that all unvirtuous dharmas never arise now and in the future. They always speak reasonably, discard impure karma, and cultivate completely pure actions. They never slander the Buddhist teachings, stay far away from vexations and impurity, and embrace and protect the Thus-Come’s correct dharma. They terminate all evil and not virtuous dharmas.

“These bodhisattvas have acted in accord with the pure Buddhist teachings, so when meeting sentient beings, they smile, their faces relax, and brows are not knitted. Why? It is because they are far away from all filthy and turbid things; their various roots are clean and pure; and they are free from hatred and anger and have no bondage in their minds. Therefore, they are able to learn

and hear a lot and look at birth and death carefully, and can realize accurately the fiercely burning fires and the chaos of greed, anger, and ignorance as they really are. They can also be awakened to the impermanence of the conditioned phenomena, suffering of all actions, the selflessness of all dharmas, and the nonsensical arguments in which sentient beings of the world so indulge. They are awakened that nirvana is the most tranquil one of all dharmas. Once hearing the dharma, they will reflect on its meanings and intend to teach others. They will initiate great loving-kindness and compassion and intensify their mindfulness. If they do not hear the dharma, they cannot do all these things. Therefore, the wisdom caused by hearing is the origin of all kinds of knowledge and wisdom, just like letters are the origins of all words.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas take care of their actions, speeches, and minds. They understand that hearing the dharma is the origin of knowledge and wisdom.)

“The bodhisattvas will protect correct dharma after hearing. In the generations to come when correct dharma is going to extinguish, some sentient beings will be interested in learning and cultivating the fathomless dharma, at that time, the dharma torch and teachers may not be available. When this situation appears, the bodhisattvas will stand out and teach the fathomless prajna paramita, so sentient beings can cultivate precept, concentration, and wisdom. The bodhisattvas will admire the learners: ‘It is great that you good gentlepersons can aspire to and pursue the bodhi to attain the unsurpassed enlightenment in an age when correct dharma is going to extinguish. You do this with an attempt to bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings. Such profound sutras of prajna paramita are the correct dharma that the Buddhas in the past, future, and present practice. If you can cultivate it diligently, you will not be

far away from the great enlightenment. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita is not distant from the great bodhi. The seeds of crops are planted, and the seedlings are seen sprouting. It means that the farmer will have the harvest soon. So do the bodhisattvas. If they hear prajna paramita, it means that they are not far away from the Buddha effect. Good gentlepersons, it does not make sense to say that one can attain the Buddhahood if staying away from the fathomless prajna paramita and turning to other sutras. A prince cannot become a prince if he leaves his own father, the king, and turns to other kings. Bodhisattvas cannot attain the perfect knowledge of everything if they rely on the sutras other than prajna paramita. A calf cannot rely on the cow other than his own mother to get milk. Similarly, bodhisattvas cannot rely on the dharmas other than prajna paramita to realize the great bodhi.’

(The Buddha taught that when the correct dharma is going to distinguish, bodhisattvas will appear to teach prajna paramita to ensure the continuation of correct dharma because prajna paramita is not separate from the unsurpassed bodhi.)

“You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas stay closely with prajna paramita, serve it as a dharma prince does, dignify their own bodies with perfect features and roots, practice where the Buddhas practice, become awakened as the Buddhas are, rescue and protect all sentient beings who are in suffering and anxiety, fully understand the teachings given by the Buddha, constantly cultivate celibacy, stay far away from defilements, and keep and protect the Buddha’s city of the perfect knowledge of everything, then these bodhisattvas will be esteemed by all dharma princes, Buddhist believers, Brahmans, and world keepers. Why? It is because they have practiced bodhisattva path and attained nonregression, so they cannot be moved by all evil

demons. They have dwelled peacefully in Buddha dharma, thoroughly understood all meanings of emptiness and equality, and do not believe in the conditions other than those connected with the Buddha dharma. They have thus dwelled firmly in the wisdom of the Buddha dharma that is not shared by voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones. They have also transcended the world and attained the dharma-forbearance of nonarising.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas cultivate correct dharma diligently themselves to protect Buddha dharma.)

“These bodhisattvas know accurately all sentient beings, how they are greedy, angry, and ignorant in three different degrees. They also know accurately how they are different in their virtuous and solid minds. After fully knowing them, the bodhisattvas will teach them according to individual differences so the sentient beings can be well guided and converted. If the sentient beings will be delivered by seeing the Buddha’s body, the bodhisattvas will appear in Buddha’s body and teach the dharma to them. If the sentient beings will be delivered by seeing the bodhisattva’s body, the bodhisattvas will appear in bodhisattva’s body and teach the dharma to them. If the sentient beings will be delivered by seeing the self-enlightened one’s body, the bodhisattvas will appear in self-enlightened one’s body and teach the dharma to them. If the sentient beings will be delivered by seeing the voice-hearer’s body, the bodhisattvas will appear in voice-hearer’s body and teach the dharma to them. If the sentient beings will be delivered by seeing the body of the Buddhist monastic, Brahma, Brahman, Ksatriya, elder, or lay believer, the bodhisattvas will appear in each body and teach the dharma to them. The bodhisattvas will practice such expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita to guide, deliver, and liberate sentient beings.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas will teach and guide sentient beings

expediently and skillfully depending on individual differences.)

“The bodhisattvas’ minds are loving-kind, peaceful, straight, tender, and virtuous. Their minds are not mixed with flattery, crookedness, jealousy, and defilements; rather, they are always pure and apart from rude and evil speech. They practice patience and stay in affectionate connection with sentient beings. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita this way, the bodhisattvas are always in peace and happiness wherever they are. Why? It is because they are well equipped with correct and pure views and actions; their minds are thus correspondent with the virtuous instead of the evil region. In their minds, all filthy things are not allowed to exist.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas take care of their minds.)

“These bodhisattvas will be deeply joyful to see those who come to learn with them together. They share properties and the dharma with classmates. They are dedicated to nothing other than the Buddhist path. They have no other teacher except the Buddha. These bodhisattvas stay in peace and happiness and adopt efficient ways to absorb sentient beings. They absorb sentient beings by bringing benefits, peace, happiness, and unexhausted giving to them; speaking to them with beneficial words, meaningful words, words in accord with the law, and consistent words; and assisting them with the equality of the benefits in property, body, livelihood, and living supplies.

(The Buddha explained how bodhisattvas practice giving with classmates to guide and benefit sentient beings.)

“You must know, heavenly king! The so-called benefits giving is dharma giving; peace and happiness giving is property giving, while the inexhaustible giving is showing the correct path. The so-called beneficial words will bring about virtuous dharmas; the meaningful words will let others see the correct

meanings; the words in accord with the law will guide others to comply with the Buddhist teachings; and the consistent words will speak about the dharmas as they really are. The equality of benefits in property means that all will have drinks, food, and clothes. Equality of benefits in body means to protect one's own body and others' bodies equally. The equality of the benefits of livelihood means equally valuing all outer objects, such as treasures and rarities. The equality of the benefits of living supplies means equally valuing all pure properties, such as horses and elephants. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas will treat themselves and others equally.

(The Buddha explained how bodhisattvas practice various kinds of equality in giving to others.)

“These bodhisattvas are always born with perfect physical features. They cultivate and learn tranquility and good demeanors. They do not show up in fake appearance because their demeanors are always pure. All people will be delighted to see them because they are warm and virtuous inside and outside. Those who look at them will be joyful without disgust and tiredness. All sentient beings adore and esteem these bodhisattvas. Those who see them will also be inspired and have virtuous minds elicited. The angry ones will become peaceful and reconciled with others. These bodhisattvas are so straight and fair that others can rely on them. They will equally protect sentient beings and remove their vexations. They can guide sentient beings to get out of birth and death and rescue them when they are in boundless wilderness. They serve as family and friends for the homeless ones who are in difficulties and dangers; good doctors for the ill and upset ones; rescuers and refuges for those in need; and dharma torch for ignorant sentient beings.

(The Buddha described how bodhisattvas help sentient beings by serving various

roles when they are in need.)

“These bodhisattvas serve as refuges in which all sentient beings can stay. They cure all diseases as tree king of medicine does. A tree king named Well Appearing; its roots, stems, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits can cure diseases if they are seen, smelled, tasted, or touched by ill people. Similarly, bodhisattvas have, since the time of aspiring to and until attaining the bodhi, always cured sentient beings’ diseases of vexations. Because bodhisattvas have many merits, virtues, knowledge, and wisdom, the ill sentient beings will be cured if seen or heard by them.

(According to the Buddha, bodhisattvas have the ability to heal the ills of vexations of all sentient beings.)

“Bodhisattvas make offerings to the triple-gem as they can afford based on their merits and virtues. They will give medicines to the ill ones, food and drinks to the hungry and thirsty ones, and clothing to those who are cold. They will teach them the rules of behavior and wholeheartedly serve them. They will join their palms respectfully to dharma classmates and build houses and gardens for monastics. They will give them money and offer servants to serve them. They will also often visit with celibacy practitioners, Brahmans, sramanas, and the cultivators of correct dharma who have good reputations and virtues.

“These bodhisattvas can give birth to virtuous dharmas. They can skillfully and expediently deliver sentient beings. They will dwell in this Buddha land, and their bodies will remain unmovable when traveling to boundless worlds to learn correct dharma from the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. They make offerings to innumerable Thus-Comers, cultivating and learning the factors for the bodhi, or making offerings to those who have just become the Buddhas. They will also manifest the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment themselves, turn

the wonderful dharma wheel for sentient beings, enter nirvana and bring great benefits to sentient beings. They will also appear in transformed bodies in reaction to the ones delivered to bring benefits and happiness to those who would like see them. Although they can do so many Buddhist services, they do not deliberate to do so or do them with differentiations.”

(Bodhisattvas can serve Buddhas and assist sentient beings through different bodies and various ways.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, how do bodhisattvas undertake many things to convert sentient beings without differentiation?”

The Buddha replied, “Heavenly king, the sun and moon illuminate all without differentiation. Sentient beings can feel that the sun and moon illuminate day and night owing to their karmic powers. Similarly, bodhisattvas appear through various transformed bodies without differentiation. Why? Sentient beings have possessed their own virtuous karma from previous lives, while on the other hand, bodhisattvas once aspired to deliver sentient beings in past lives. Due to the powers of their aspirations, bodhisattvas can make transformed bodies according to sentient beings’ mindfulness without differentiation. Because of their expedient skillfulness, these bodhisattvas can undertake such services to convert sentient beings and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly. Why? It is because these bodhisattvas have fulfilled perfectly giving and observed perfectly precept without deficiencies and impurity. Their standard of observing precept has transcended voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, and so forth. In addition, they fully possess forbearance, diligence, meditation, prajna, skillful means, wonderful aspiration, abilities, perfect knowledge, and the merits and virtues of the Thus-Come unshared by

others. They have gone beyond the stage of voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones.

(The Buddha explained why and how bodhisattvas undertake many things to convert sentient beings without differentiation.)

“You must know, heavenly king! As bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and progress from the first stage through the tenth stage, they are entitled to realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.”

When the Buddha was teaching the dharma, twenty thousand heavenly sons had stayed far away from the dust and defilements and given birth to the pure dharma eye. Thirty thousand bodhisattvas had attained the forbearance of nonarising. Eighty-four thousand heavenly beings and human beings had initiated the aspiration toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment. Innumerable hundreds of thousands of gandharvas and kinnaras had circled around Mt. Vulture Peak, joyfully joined their palms together and acclaimed the Thus-Comer. Innumerable hundreds of thousands of yaksas had also circled around Mt. Vulture Peak, joyfully joined their palms together and spread wonderful flowers as offerings to the Buddha.

Numberless bodhisattvas from as many Buddha worlds in the ten directions as the sands of the Ganges had come, assembled, and acclaimed, “The Thus-Comer, the World-Honored One, is very capable of teaching the fathomless prajna paramita to bodhisattvas. Because of prajna paramita, the four aspirations and four effects for heavenly beings and human beings become possible. It is also because of prajna paramita that self-enlightenment path, the bodhi, the ten stages of bodhisattva, ten paramitas, Buddha’s ten abilities, four kinds of fearlessness, four unhindered understandings, great loving-kindness, great compassion, great joy, great equanimity, eighteen distinctive features of

Buddha's wisdom and power, the perfect knowledge of the forms of the paths, the perfect knowledge of everything, and other boundless Buddha dharmas can be accomplished. All things in the world rely on empty space, while empty space relies on nothing. So, the fathomless prajna paramita serves as the foundation of all dharmas but relies on nothing. We hope that in the lives to come, we will be able to lecture on prajna paramita for bodhisattvas as the World-Honored One is doing today." After speaking this, they all carried fragrant flowers and spread them around the Thus-Comer and all participants in the assembly.

(Bodhisattvas from all worlds in the ten directions acclaimed Thus-Comer's teaching prajna paramita for bodhisattvas. They admired the fathomless prajna paramita serves as the foundation of all dharmas but relies on nothing.)

In the meantime, the heavenly gods, and so forth, who had originally lived in Mount Vulture Peak, acclaimed, "It is very unusual, World-Honored One! We remember that numberless Buddhas had taught prajna paramita in this Vulture Peak before, just as the Buddha is doing today."

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, "Are these heavenly gods wise enough to know the Buddhas' spiritual level and assert that numberless Buddhas had taught prajna paramita here?"

The Buddha replied, "Heavenly king, these heavenly gods are the bodhisattvas who have dwelled peacefully in inconceivable liberation, so they are able to tell whether the spiritual levels of the Buddhas in the past and present are different or not. Heavenly king, when I was a bodhisattva in the past, I was once born as one of them. I saw numberless sentient beings attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and teach wonderful dharma, and so forth, as well as nirvana to the public. I often paid homage to them with my palms joined together and acclaimed them. Why? Those heavenly gods had very

long lifespan and could witness many things in a long period of time.”

(The Buddha explained that the heavenly gods living in Mount Vulture Peak were bodhisattvas, and that he himself was one of them.)

At that time, a heavenly son named Bright Virtuous One stood up from his seat with left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground. He joined his palms and said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas must live in pure lands. Why do you, the World-Honored One, appear in this filthy and evil Barely Tolerable World?”

The Buddha replied to Bright Virtuous One, “You must know, heavenly son, the places where the Buddhas, Thus-Comers, live are the pure lands.”
(The Buddha stated that where the Thus-Comers live are pure lands.)

By using his supernatural powers, the Thus-Comer showed this large threefold thousand as a land that is as flat as a palm and made of crystal. In this land there were no hills, mountains, heaps, thistles, and thorns; but there were treasures gathering, fragrant flowers, soft grasses, springs in ponds, waters of eight merits and virtues, seven-treasure ladders, fruits, and trees. All these beautiful things were announcing this same message, “The bodhisattvas with nonregressive dharma wheel are not different from ordinary sentient beings, voice-hearers, and self-enlightened ones. Although bodhisattvas come from ten directions, there are no different other voices but the teaching of the fathomless prajna paramita.”

Everywhere in this land, there were lotuses that were as big as car wheels. They were magnificently dignified and adorned with treasures in different colors: green, scarlet, red, and white. On flower lecterns there were bodhisattvas sitting and reflecting on the great vehicle. When witnessing the Thus-Comer teaching the fathomless prajna paramita to bodhisattvas in the great

assembly, numberless hundreds of thousands of Buddhist monastics, Brahmins, and world protectors made offerings to esteem and acclaim the Thus-Come and walked around him respectfully.

Meanwhile, after seeing what was happening, Bright Virtuous One rejoiced, danced, and jumped. He acclaimed the Buddha and said, “It is very unusual, World-Honored One! It is very rare, Well-Gone One! What the Thus-Come says is true: the places where the Buddhas, Thus-Come live are the pure lands, in which there are no filthy and impure things. The meanings that the Buddha teaches are consistent. The less blessed sentient beings will mistake the pure lands for filthy lands. World-Honored One, if good gentlemen and gentlewomen can hear the merits, virtues, and the name of prajna paramita, they are unusually privileged, not to mention if they can write, accept, embrace, read, recite, and lecture for others on it.”

The Buddha said to Bright Virtuous One, “You must know, heavenly son, suppose that some good gentlepersons have unrestrainedly given money and properties to sentient beings for innumerable great kalpas. On the other hand, some other good gentlepersons have written this sutra with pure belief and given it free to others so that they can accept, embrace, read, and recite it, then the merits and virtues thus gained will be more than the former ones. Why? Property giving can only gain the rewards of the world. The pleasant results gained in this human world and in heavens will finally disappear, while the nirvana gained by dharma giving is not really gained, so it will never lose.

“Suppose that one has taught sentient beings in the large threefold thousand-world and let them all dwell peacefully in the path of the ten virtuous karmas. On the other hand, some good gentlepersons have accepted, embraced, read, recited, and lectured for others on the fathomless prajna paramita with pure

belief. The merits and virtues thus gained will be superior to the former one by innumerable and boundless times. Why? All virtuous dharmas come out of prajna paramita. Suppose that one has taught all sentient beings in the large threefold thousand-world to realize the four aspirations, four effects, and self-enlightenment bodhi. On the other hand, some good gentlepersons have accepted, embraced, read, recited, and lectured for others on the fathomless prajna paramita with pure belief, the merits and virtues thus gained will be superior to the former one by innumerable and boundless times. Why? It is because voice-hearer effects and self-enlightenment bodhi come out of prajna paramita. All bodhisattva dharmas also come out of prajna paramita. Because of prajna paramita, the Buddhas can appear in the worlds. You must know, where there is prajna paramita, there is the throne of the wonderful bodhi, and that is the place where the Buddha turns the dharma wheel. Good gentlepersons should keep in mind that the Thus-Come, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One is often right here with them. Why? All Buddhas are born from prajna paramita. The merits and virtues caused by making offerings to the images of Thus-Come are less than making offerings to the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? The Buddhas in the three phases of time become existent because of prajna paramita.”

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Chapter 7

The Equality

(In the Sixth Assembly)

At that time, Supreme One stood up from his seat again. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms respectfully and said to the Buddha, “The World-Honored One says that the dharma natures are equal. What is equality? What are equal dharmas?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, equality means contemplating all dharmas equally and knowing that their self-natures are tranquil and without arising and extinction. Equality means that the self-natures of all vexations and delusive differentiations are tranquil and without arising and extinction. Equality means that the self-natures of different names and forms are tranquil and without arising and extinction. Equality means that all upside-down ideas are eliminated and do not expand to establish connections anymore. Equality means that as the causes initiated by the mind are eliminated, ignorance, existence, and craving will extinguish too; as ignorant craving extinguishes, there will be no more attachments to the ‘I’ and the associated images. Equality means that as name and form extinguish, extreme views will not arise. Equality means that as the extreme views of permanence and discontinuation extinguish, the attachment to the existence of body will become tranquil. You must know, heavenly king, all attachments produced in vexations and in the factors hindering the virtuous dharmas arise out of the incorrect views of the body. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas can expediently and skillfully eliminate incorrect views of the body, then all the hidden roots of vexations will become tranquil forever; their making and

aspiration will come to rest also. Like a big tree, as its roots are removed, all stems, branches, and leaves will dry out and die. A person without head means a dead person. As the hidden roots of the vexations are eliminated, the incorrect views of the body extinguish, and the rest of incorrect views cease forever. If one can contemplate and realize that all dharmas are without selfness, then the ones who are attached and the dharmas attached to will extinguish permanently.”

(The Buddha explained what equality means.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “How do incorrect views of selfness hinder one from knowing the truth?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “Heavenly king, as mistakenly viewing that the five aggregates are with selfness, one will initiate incorrect views of selfness. The truth of the dharmas is that their self-natures are equal, without ones who are attached or the dharmas attached. To conflict with this truth will hinder the truth. The views of the self are not inside, outside, or in between. As they dwell in nowhere, they are tranquil, and this is equality. Staying away from the incorrect views of self and fully realizing equality are called real emptiness. To contemplate the self-natures of emptiness, formlessness, and nonaspiration as they are tranquil, without arising and extinction, without grasping and attachment, and far away from incorrect views of selfness is called equality. You must know, heavenly king! The so-called self is without coming, going, reality, and delusive differentiations. That the dharmas arise from illusions is also illusory. When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas contemplate the dharmas as away from the illusions, then they are with tranquility and equality.

(The Buddha talked more about equality and ones who are with equality.)

“You must know, heavenly king, the ones who are attached and the dharmas attached are called fierce burning, while being apart from these attachments is called

tranquility. The hindrances caused by vexations are called fierce burning, while being apart from them is called tranquility. When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas can accurately realize the vexations caused by those who are attached and the dharmas attached as they really are and further eliminate the vexations; they then will not see any dharma that arises or extinguishes. These bodhisattvas are regarded as possessing the quality of equality. When cultivating all paramitas, bodhisattvas stay far away from all demonic hindrances and do not see the dharmas cultivated and the hindrances removed; they are with equality. If bodhisattvas always stay with the factors for the bodhi, do not initiate any intentions in accord with voice-hearers or self-enlightened ones, nor do they see that the factors for voice-hearer and self-enlightened one have different forms, they are with equality. Based on the perfect knowledge of everything, bodhisattvas consistently and tirelessly cultivate actions of emptiness and do not turn away from sentient beings because of great compassion; they are with equality.

(The Buddha stated about the bodhisattvas who own the quality of equality.)

“You must know, heavenly king. When great bodhisattvas practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they attain ease in all dharmas. They cultivate the bodhi based on formlessness without seeing the difference between formlessness and bodhi, so it is called equality. Their minds relate to nonaspiration, while they are reluctant to turn away from the three realms. They do not see the difference between nonaspiration and the three realms. So, it is called equality. Bodhisattvas contemplate their bodies as impure, while their minds dwell in purity. They contemplate all phenomena as impermanent, while their minds are related to birth and death and not disgusted with it. They contemplate the suffering of sentient beings, while their minds dwell in nirvana. They contemplate all dharmas as without self, while they are compassionate for sentient beings. They often teach about

the medicine for curing impurity, while they do not see the illness of greed. They often teach about great loving-kindness, while they do not see the illness of hatred. They often teach about dependent origination, while they do not see the illness of ignorance. They teach about the medicine of impermanence for the ill sentient beings mentioned above, while they do not see the differences between illness and impermanence. When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, these bodhisattvas keep their minds in ease as they are related to all dharmas. They stay away from greed to guide voice-hearers; they stay away from hatred to guide self-enlightened one; they stay away from ignorance to guide bodhisattvas. They stay with all sights to attain the pure and exquisite sights of the Thus-Come without attainment. They stay with all sounds to attain the subtle and wonderful voices of the Buddhas without attainment. They stay with all smells to attain the pure and clean precept-fragrance of the Buddhas without attainment. They stay with all tastes to attain the taste of the Thus-Come in the forms of the first gentle person without attainment. They stay with all contacts to attain the tender and soft palms of the Thus-Come without attainment. They stay with all mental-images to attain the tranquil mind of the Thus-Come without attainment. They stay with all kinds of giving to attain the perfect features of the Buddha. They stay with all pure precepts to perfectly dignify and purify Buddha lands. They stay with all kinds of forbearance to attain great pure voices and bright pure bodies of the Buddhas. They stay with all kinds of diligence to deliver sentient beings incessantly. They stay with all meditations to achieve expansive and great supernatural powers. They stay with all kinds of prajna to terminate all delusions and vexations. They stay with all kinds of equal and unhindered great loving-kindness to let all sentient beings attain peace and happiness. They stay with all kinds of great compassion to protect correct dharma and relieve sentient beings from great suffering of birth and death. They stay with all

kinds of great joy to attain unhindered free talent of teaching dharma to please all sentient beings. They stay with all kinds of great equanimity not to be attached to and see the vexations, bonds, bondages, and the hidden roots of afflictions.

(As feeling reluctant to turn away from sentient beings, bodhisattvas choose to stay connected with the world while remaining in tranquility and formlessness to achieve equality.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, bodhisattvas do not see the duality, so they are practicing equality. They adopt the four approaches for absorbing sentient beings to deliver them. They learn from the faults caused by stinginess and jealousy to renounce their properties and money to practice giving. They learn from precept-violation to dwell in pure precept. They learn from the faults caused by anger and hatred to attain forbearance. They learn from the faults caused by laziness to achieve the great powers of diligence of the Thus-Comer. They learn from restlessness to attain superior concentrations and tranquility of the Thus-Comer. The bodhisattvas learn the faults caused by wisdom abuse to achieve unhindered knowledge and wisdom of the Thus-Comer. They stay with two vehicles to achieve the unsurpassed large vehicle. They learn about negative destinies to rescue all sentient beings. They learn from positive destinies that human and heavenly effects will finally decay. They stay with sentient beings to let them know that all dharmas are illusory and not solid. They stay in the mindfulness of the Buddha to achieve superior concentrations supportive for fulfilling the path. They stay in the mindfulness of the dharma to thoroughly understand the secret treasury of dharmas. They stay in the mindfulness of the sangha to harmonize their minds so that they will not regress. They stay in the mindfulness of equanimity to get rid of craving and attachment. They stay in the mindfulness of precept to attain pure precept. They stay in the mindfulness of heavens to achieve the bodhi, and they

will be acclaimed by all heavenly beings. They take care of the forms of their own bodies to attain the Buddha body. They take care of the forms of their own speech to speak as the Buddha. They take care of the forms of their own minds to attain equal mind of the Buddha. They take care of the conditioned phenomena to accomplish the perfect knowledge of the Buddha. They take care of the unconditioned reality to attain tranquility.

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas learn from various flaws of sentient beings to achieve perfection in body, speech, mind. They practice ten kinds of mindfulness to fulfill virtuous dharmas.)

“You must know, heavenly king, when great bodhisattvas practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they never forget to transfer every action and thought toward the perfect knowledge of everything. Thus, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they will have universal connection with all dharmas, while they are not attached to them. This is called contemplating expediently and skillfully all dharmas to approach the great bodhi.

(The bodhi is not an abstract name or term; it is rather a simplified concept encompassing all aspects of sentient beings and the worlds in all directions, including both physical and mental realms.)

“All materials produced in the large threefold thousand-world are useful and can be used by sentient beings. The spiritual regions accessed by bodhisattvas when they practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita will also contribute to the effort oriented toward the bodhi. Why? All materials are caused by the four fundamental elements. The cultivation undertaken by the bodhisattvas will be fulfilled because of various conditions. For instance, bodhisattvas may achieve giving paramita because of stinginess and jealousy. They may achieve pure-precept paramita

because someone who repay favor with harm. They achieve forbearance paramita because of the evil ones. They achieve diligence paramita because of the lazy ones. They achieve meditation paramita because of the restless one. And they achieve prajna paramita because of the ignorant ones. If sentient beings have annoyed and damaged bodhisattvas, the bodhisattvas will try to overcome anger and hatred.

“When seeing someone is cultivating virtuous dharmas and moving toward the bodhi, the bodhisattvas will view this person as their own son. These bodhisattvas will not be excited when they are complimented, nor will they be angry when they are slandered. They will initiate the mind of great loving-kindness when they see sentient beings are not happy. They will initiate the mind of great compassion when they see sentient beings are painful. They will initiate the mind of great joy when they see sentient beings are pleasant. They will initiate the mind of great equanimity when they see sentient beings are rid of suffering. They will activate samatha for those who are difficult to convert. They will activate vipasyana for those who are easy to convert. They will initiate the perfect knowledge of repaying favor because of believers and practitioners. They will protect sentient beings when these sentient beings’ evil outer conditions, instead of virtuous outer conditions, dominate. They will expediently assist sentient beings to receive teachings when these sentient beings have powerful motivation for learning. They will teach profound essential meanings to sentient beings who have realized insightfully and seen the wisdom. They will teach various dharmas step by step and systematically for those who need elaboration and more explanations to understand. They will explain the meanings of sentences for those who are attached to written words. They will teach exquisite contemplation for those who have learned samatha. They will teach tranquil concentration to those who have learned contemplation. They will teach about hells for those who observe precepts with attachment, but they will not teach about hells for those who observe precepts

without attachment. They will teach about reflection and cultivation to those who are attached to the wisdom produced by hearing. They will teach about prajna to those who are attached to samadhi. They will teach about how one's mind gets away for those who are fond of living in aranya. They will teach about the unsurpassed holy knowledge for those who are fond of listening to merits and virtues of the Buddha. They will teach impurity to greedy ones. They will teach loving-kindness and compassion to those with hatred. They will teach dependent origination to ignorant ones. They will teach different dharmas, such as impurity, loving-kindness, compassion, and dependent origination, for those with widespread interests. For those who have been well tamed, they will teach about pure precepts, superior concentrations, and exquisite wisdom. For those who should be converted to the Buddhist vehicle, they will teach about various paramitas in sequence. For those who should be subdued, they will first challenge their statement and then teach them the dharma. For those who need more explanations, they will tell them all kinds of causes, conditions, similes, and analogies so that they can understand. For those who need the fathomless dharma, they will teach them about selflessness and nonexistence of the dharmas through expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita. For those who are attached to incorrect views, they will teach emptiness of dharmas. For those who like to do general investigation and specific analysis in contemplation, they will teach formlessness. For those who are attached to the conditioned phenomena, they will teach nonaspiration. For those who are attached to aggregates, they will teach that all dharmas are like illusions. For those who are attached to various realms, they will teach that all dharmas are without nature. For those who are attached to the realm of desire, they will teach that desires are like fiercely burning fire. For those who are attached to the realm of form, they will teach that all flawed actions are painful. For those who are attached to the realm of formlessness, they will teach that all

phenomena are impermanent. They will praise the holy seeds for the sentient beings hard to teach. They will teach meditation and immeasurable minds for the easily teachable sentient beings. They will teach the pleasures of heavens to those who will be reborn in heavens after hearing about them. They will teach holy truths to those who are interested in voice-hearers. They will teach dependent origination to those who are interested in self-enlightened ones. They will teach pure mind, great loving-kindness, and great compassion to those who are interested in bodhisattva path. They will teach bliss and wisdom for bodhisattva-path practitioners. They will teach pure lands for the nonregressive bodhisattvas. They will teach dignifying the throne of the bodhi for those who are in the last phase of cultivation before becoming a Buddha. For those who will be converted through the Buddha's teachings, they will teach them incessantly in sequence.

(The Buddha highlighted that bodhisattvas tailor their teaching contents to meet individual interests and orientations.)

“You must know, heavenly king, these bodhisattvas have cultivated the expedient skillfulness of the pure, fathomless prajna paramita and attained self-ease to teach the dharma to benefit sentient beings. Their actions are carried out with purpose and intention.

As the Buddha was teaching the dharma of self-ease for bodhisattva, thirty thousand heavenly beings initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and five thousand bodhisattvas attained the forbearance of nonarising.

At that time, the World-Honored One smiled. When the Buddha smiles, it is natural that the light of different colors: green, yellow, red, white, purple, and crystal, will emit from his face and shine universally over the boundless worlds in the ten directions. It is unique that the light will return to the Buddha's place, circle around him for three times, and then enter the head of the Buddha.

In the meantime, Sariputra saw the auspicious phenomenon. He was uncertain what was happening, so he stood up from his seat. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms together respectfully and said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, why is such auspicious phenomenon appearing?”

At that time, the Buddha replied to Sariputra, “This Supreme One had in the past cultivated all paramitas at the Buddhas’ places for innumerable and boundless great kalpas. He has protected prajna paramita for bodhisattvas. Because of this cause and condition, he meets me here and asks about prajna paramita. He will continue to cultivate and learn virtuous dharmas to nurture the pursuit of the unsurpassed bodhi for countless great kalpas. After that, he will realize insightfully and attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi with Dignified Magnificent Merits and Virtues as his name. He will have ten names that represent his perfect merits and virtues. His Buddha land will be called Most Dignified and Purified One, and the name of his kalpa is Purity.

(The Buddha conferred on Supreme One the prophecy of attaining Buddhahood in the kalpa of Purity.)

“His land will be very affluent, the population will be very large, and the people will be happy and prosperous. In that land, the ground will be made of seven treasures; the treasures are gorgeous, while the land is as flat as the palm, adorned with fragrant flowers and tender grasses. There will be no mountains, hills, heaps, thistles, and thorns, but there are pennants and flower canopies to beautify the land. The capital is named The Invincible; the city is covered by a net of seven treasures. The golden ropes weave and twist together; on each corner, golden bells are hung. During the six phases of time in the day and night, music will be played in the sky, and all kinds of exquisite, fragrant heavenly flowers will disperse. The people in that land enjoy entertainment and all kinds of pleasures even more than the Heaven of

Enjoying Other-Made Changes. Human beings and heavenly beings interact and communicate with each other without obstacles. In that land, there are no names of bad destinies and the two vehicles; there is only one objective that all sentient beings aim at, and that is the perfect knowledge of the Buddha. The Buddha in that land will constantly teach the essential meanings of the pure dharma to great bodhisattvas. Innumerable and boundless family members of the bodhisattvas in that land are free from incorrect views; they do not violate precepts or earn their living by evil jobs, nor are they blind, deaf, dumb, or have bent backs and deficiencies of physical roots; rather, they have twenty-eight perfect physical features. The lifespan of the Thus-Comer in that land is eight small kalpas. No human beings and heavenly beings are short-lived. The Buddha has extraordinary merits and virtues. Before teaching the dharma, the Buddha will emit bright light so that the bodhisattvas will go to listen to the dharma when they see the light. At that moment, the heavenly beings will set up the lion-seat for the Buddha. The seat will be as tall and wide as one hundred yojanas. Many magnificent decorations and numberless offerings are presented. As the World-Honored One ascends the seat and starts to teach the dharma, the bodhisattvas will understand insightfully the meanings immediately owing to their smart brains and sharp roots; they will be free from the 'I' and the associated images right away. All supplies, food, and drinks will be available upon their thinking."

(The Buddha described the pure land of Supreme One when he becomes a Buddha.)

As the Buddha talked about the prophecy conferred on Supreme One, fifty thousand heavenly beings were deeply joyful, and all initiated aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment. They all made a wish to be reborn in that Buddha land in their future lives.

At that moment, after hearing the Buddha's words, Supreme One was so delighted that he danced and leaped into the air, soaring as high as seven tala trees. In

the meantime, in this large threefold thousand-world, six different quakes shook. The heavenly musical instruments played on their own. Various heavenly flowers showered down as offerings to the Buddha, great bodhisattvas, and the heavenly king Supreme One. Then, the heavenly king descended from above, bowed deeply at the Buddha's feet and sat to one side.

Chapter 8

The Manifestation of the Forms

(In the Sixth Assembly)

In the meantime, Sariputra asked Supreme One, “At the moment when bodhisattvas cultivate prajna paramita and expediently and skillfully understand dharma nature, they should sit on the throne of the bodhi, realize insightfully and attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, and turn the wheel of the wonderful dharma to deliver sentient beings right away. Why should they practice ascetic actions for six more years and overcome heavenly demon, then attain the perfect enlightenment?”

Supreme One said, “Great virtuous one, bodhisattvas practicing profound prajna paramita and expediently and skillfully understanding dharma nature do not need ascetic actions. Such practices are used to demonstrate overcoming other-paths practitioners. The so-called heavenly demon, lord of the desire realm, possessed a pure and virtuous nature and was not evil; he only appeared subjugated to teach sentient beings.

“Other-paths practitioners claimed they cultivated ascetic actions better than all. The bodhisattva displayed acts that surpassed those of other-paths practitioners.

Sentient beings witnessed him standing on one bent knee with both arms raised high or gazing directly at the sun. He could endure heat from five directions, hung upside down, and lay on thistles, cow dung, rocks, wooden boards, pestles, or ashes. His attire included boards, grass, tree bark, cogon grass, or even nothing, and he moved in sync with the sun. Sentient beings also witnessed that the bodhisattva only ate barn grasses, wheat, grass roots, leaves, flowers, fruits, yams, taros, lotus roots, peas, cereals, hems, or rice; sometimes eating once every six days, drinking only water, taking just a drop of butter oil, honey, or milk daily, or abstaining from food entirely. At times, he slept constantly. These ascetic behaviors persisted for six years, yet he lost nothing in the process. In reality, he did not genuinely practice asceticism; rather he appeared to do so to guide sentient beings. During the demonstrations, sixty nayuta heavenly beings witnessed and dwelled peacefully in the three vehicles. Some heavenly beings, because of their previous virtuous roots, became very fond of the great vehicle after witnessing the bodhisattva sit on the seven-treasure lectern motionless in deep superior samadhi for six years, his face serene and smiling until he rose up from his seat. Some other heavenly beings liked the great vehicle very much after seeing the bodhisattva teach the dharma while seated for six years.

(Heavenly king Supreme One said to Sariputra that the bodhisattva demonstrated ascetic practice to guide sentient beings, helping them understand that expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita is superior to those found in other paths.)

“You must know, great virtuous one! This bodhisattva had practiced the fathomless prajna paramita expediently and skillfully; he was able to subjugate heavenly demons, overcome other-paths practitioners, and deliver all sentient beings with great compassion. After six years, he rose from concentration and, following the worldly way, went to an undefiled river to take a bath, then stood beside the river. At that moment, a shepherdess fed one cow with the milk from one hundred cows and

made congee with the milk from this cow as offering to the bodhisattva. Six hundred million heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, gandharvas, and so forth carried various delicious food and drinks as offerings to the bodhisattva, and said, ‘Great bodhisattva! Perfect bodhisattva! Please be compassionate to receive our offerings.’ The bodhisattva had mercy on them, so he received the offerings. The shepherdess, heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, gandharvas could not see each other. They made offerings to the bodhisattva separately. Meanwhile, innumerable heavenly beings and human beings realized insightfully the path witnessing the offerings each made to the bodhisattva. This is why the bodhisattva demonstrated this entire process. As a matter of fact, the bodhisattva neither bathed nor received the offerings.

“You must know, great virtuous one, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattva manifested ascending the throne of the bodhi. In the meantime, a heavenly being living in the realm of desire located on the ground was named Wonderful Earth. He worked with heavenly gods to sweep and clean the area around the throne by sprinkled fragrant water on the ground and dispersing exquisite flowers on it. In the meantime, each of the four heavenly kings in this large threefold thousand-world led heavenly followers to shower heavenly wonderful flowers as offerings to the bodhisattva. Heavenly Emperor Indra and the lord of the Heaven of Yama each led their heavenly followers playing heavenly music in the sky to acclaim the bodhisattva. The lord of the Heaven of Tusita led his followers to cover the whole world with seven treasure nets, while the golden bells were hung at the four corners of each net. They all showered various treasures as offerings to the bodhisattva. The heavenly king of the Heaven of Enjoying Self-Made Changes led his followers to cover the whole world with the purple golden nets, played heavenly music, and showered various flowers as offerings to the bodhisattva. The heavenly king of the Heaven of Enjoying Other-Made

Changes also led his followers, along with dragons, yaksas, gandharvas, and so forth, to present the most wonderful offerings to the bodhisattva.

(Supreme One further said that the bodhisattvas manifested the process of cultivating expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita to ascend the throne of the bodhi to inspire sentient beings helping to embrace the great vehicle.)

“The great Brahma heavenly king, the lord of the Barely Tolerable realm, had seen the bodhisattva ascending the throne of the bodhi, so he said to all Brahma followers, ‘You must know that today this bodhisattva is wearing the solid armor in dignity. He has fulfilled all bodhisattva actions and done all things tirelessly in accord with his original aspiration. He has thoroughly understood immeasurable dharmas and is able to teach and convert sentient beings. He has attained freedom and ease in each stage of bodhisattva and treated all sentient beings with pure mind. He knows well the differences of all sentient beings about their roots, natures, and personalities. He has attained access to the very profound secret storage of the Thus-Come and is superbly awakened to the demonic tricks and hindrances. He has accumulated the roots of all virtues and does not rely on outer conditions. He is protected and kept in the minds of all Thus-Come. He has opened the gate of liberation for all sentient beings. He can subjugate and destroy demons as a great general or mentor does and is particularly brave and vigorous in entire large thousand-world. He can prescribe dharma-medicine as a great medicine king does. He has been freed, had water poured over his head, and will soon take on the role of dharma king. He has emitted the light of wisdom to shine over all beings. He is like the lotus not polluted by the eight dharmas of the world. He has mastered all dharani gates; he understands them thoroughly and handles all of them skillfully. He is immeasurably profound and broad like large ocean, and solid and motionless like Mount Sumeru. His knowledge and wisdom are pure and without dirt and turbidity. He is brilliant and transparent inside and outside as crystal. He has

attained freedom and ease in all phenomena of the dharmas. His celibacy actions have achieved utmost purity. This bodhisattva has practiced the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and, to deliver the sentient beings, has ascended the throne of the bodhi, sat with his legs crossed, and subjugated the demons and enemies. He has practiced the fathomless prajna paramita to fulfill the ten abilities, four kinds of fearlessness, four unhindered understandings, eighteen distinctive features of Buddha's wisdom and power, and numberless and boundless merits and virtues of the Buddha dharma, so that he is able to turn the great dharma wheel, roar as a lion roars, and pass the dharma universally to all sentient beings to satisfy each of them according to individual differences. To assist sentient beings to attain pure dharma eye, he has overcome the other-paths practitioners. He is now trying to manifest the original aspirations and achievements of the Buddhas. He has attained freedom and ease in all dharmas. So now you may go to make offerings to him.'

"You must know, great virtuous one, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and manifesting his ascending the throne of the bodhi, innumerable subtle, exquisite, and brilliant rays emit from the thousand-spoke wheel-signed soles of the bodhisattva's feet. The light illuminates universally hells, the realm of animals, and the realm of ghosts. Those who meet the light will be liberated from suffering immediately and will acquire peace and happiness in body and mind. In the meantime, in the palace of dragons, the great dragon king named Kalika (King Black Dragon) rejoiced when meeting the light. He said to all dragons, 'This wonderful light comes to illuminate us and make us peaceful and happy in body and mind. I saw similar light in the past when the Thus-Come appeared in the world. Now such subtle and exquisite light has showed that the Buddha will appear in the world again. We should make various fragrant flowers, wonderful rarities, treasures, pennants, flower canopies, and different entertainments

and music as offerings to the Buddha.’ The dragon king thus ordered his family and associates to prepare the offerings. They then carried the offerings, rode the clouds, showered fragrant rains, and went to the bodhisattva’s place. They played music, presented the offerings to the bodhisattva, walked around him clockwise, and acclaimed: ‘The subtle and exquisite brightness has brought pleasure and joy to us. It is definite that the Buddha is about to appear. All wonderful and rare invaluable things have adorned and dignified this vast land. All grass and trees have become treasures. All rivers are so peaceful and quiet that there are no sounds of the wind and waves can be heard. All these signs show that the Buddha is going to appear in the world. The brightness of Indra, Brahma, sun, and moon has become dim, and the bad destinies are purified. It is doubtless that the Buddha is going to appear in the world. It is like someone who lost his parents when he was very young; then one day, his parents returned and this person was so joyful that he could not help dancing and jumping. So do all sentient beings in the world when they see the Buddha reappear. We had made offerings to the Buddhas in the past. Now we are so fortunate to encounter the dharma king, the lion of human beings, our present life will not pass in vain.’

“You must know, great virtuous one! This bodhisattva has practiced the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and paved a seat with grasses under the bodhi tree. He walked around the seat clockwise seven times and then sat in correct mindfulness with his body upright. The inferior sentient beings only saw such phenomena, while the great bodhisattvas would see eighty-four thousand heavenly sons were paving the great lion seats. All lion seats were formed by various treasures, covered with nets made of seven treasures. At each of the four corners, the golden bells were hung. The pennants and canopies were displayed everywhere. The bodhisattva was sitting on each of the eighty-four thousand seats. These heavenly

sons could not see each other, so each thought that the bodhisattva was sitting on the seat that he had paved. Because of this cause and condition, all heavenly sons were deeply delighted and attained nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed enlightenment.

“You must know, great virtuous one, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, great bright light emits from between the brows of the bodhisattva to universally illuminate the large threefold thousand-world. At that moment, all palaces of the demons lose authority and light and the demon kings think, ‘Why does this brilliant light overshadow the authority and brightness of our palaces? Is the bodhisattva going to ascend the throne of the bodhi and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi?’ After having this thought, they all contemplate and see that the bodhisattva is sitting on the diamond throne under the bodhi tree. They are extremely shocked, so they summon their entire armies and command them to display countless numbers of figures wielding various weapons, carrying a multitude of banners, and producing strange noises to frighten listeners so that they bleed from every opening and pore. At that time, the bodhisattva uses the powers caused by his great compassion to shut up all demon armies. This is how the bodhisattva practices the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita.

“You must know, great virtuous one! When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattva recalled that he had cultivated diligently in the past, for numberless hundreds of millions of kalpas, giving, pure-precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, prajna, loving-kindness, compassion, joy, equanimity, correct mindfulness, correct endeavors, bases of power, roots, powers, factors for enlightenment, factors of the path, tranquil concentration, exquisite contemplation, three kinds of supernatural powers, and eight liberations to

their perfection. After the reminiscence, he raised his golden-colored right arm to first rub his head and then his entire body and said, ‘I want to initiate great compassion in order to rescue sentient beings.’ In the meantime, all demon kings and their associates were scared to stumble and fall. With the powers of great compassion, the bodhisattva spoke in the air to the demons, ‘You all should take refuge in the great immortal one, who can always give others fearlessness, rescue all sentient beings, and protect the pure precept.’ After hearing the voices, the demons and their associates fell on the ground and replied, ‘We are begging the great immortal one to save our lives.’ At that moment, the bodhisattva emitted great brilliant light based on the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and liberated those who had met the light from fears. As the demons and their associates witnessed such transformation, they felt astonished and joyful.

(Supreme One stated how bodhisattvas astonish and overcome demons by skillfully using prajna paramita.)

“You must know, great virtuous one, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattva makes all sentient beings perceive things differently in various ways. Some observe that the bodhisattva is subjugating the demons, while some do not. Some sentient beings see him seated on a grass-paved platform, others see him on a lion’s throne, on the ground, or on a lion’s seat suspended in the air. Similarly, perceptions of the bodhi tree vary. Some view it as a pippala tree, while others imagine it as an arched and colorful tree, one composed of precious materials, or even a seven-tāla tree. Some view that the tree is eighty-four thousand yojanas tall, while the lion’s seat is forty-two thousand yojanas tall, and the bodhisattva is sitting on the seat under this tree. Some observe that the bodhisattva is playing in the air, and some see that he is sitting under the tree. This is how the bodhisattva practices the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and

manifested various supernatural transformations to deliver the sentient beings.

(Supreme One described how the bodhisattvas practices prajna paramita skillfully to manifest supernatural power of transformation to liberate sentient beings.)

“You must know, great virtuous one, as the bodhisattva is practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and sitting on the throne of the bodhi, innumerable and boundless bodhisattvas, who are as many as the sands of the Ganges in the ten directions, come to assemble there. They stay in the air and make various voices to encourage the bodhisattva, making him feel peaceful and joyful in body and mind. They said, ‘Excellent, great bodhisattva! You are very brave and diligent, so you will accomplish a broad, great, and propitious result quickly. Your mind is as solid as the diamond, so don’t’ you fear. You can play supernatural powers freely to bring benefits and happiness to sentient beings. You can realize insightfully the perfect knowledge of everything instantaneously.’ So, when sitting on the throne of the bodhi, the bodhisattva is not upset at all when he is disturbed by the demons. His mind is correspondent expediently and skillfully with the essential meanings of prajna paramita instantaneously and has achieved the utmost and ultimate level of knowledge and awakening.

(Many bodhisattvas came to encourage this bodhisattva to make him feel confident and free from demons’ disturbance.)

“You must know, great virtuous one! When the bodhisattva practiced the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and sat on the throne of the bodhi, as many Buddhas of the ten directions as the sands of the Ganges acclaimed him: ‘Excellent, excellent! Great bodhisattva! You can thoroughly understand the natural knowledge, unhindered knowledge, equal knowledge, and the knowledge without teacher; you are greatly compassionate and magnificent!’

(Many Buddhas also acclaimed this bodhisattva.)

“You must know, great virtuous one! The bodhisattva thus was able to practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and manifested through various ways. Some sentient beings could see the bodhisattva attain the bodhi in present life, others saw that he had become a Buddha long time ago, while some others viewed that the four heavenly kings had each presented a bowl to the bodhisattva in one world or in as many worlds of the ten directions as the sands of the Ganges. At that time, for the sake of sentient beings, the bodhisattva received the bowls and put them in his palm and merged all into one bowl. These heavenly kings could not see each other, and each thought that the bodhisattva had received only one bowl from him. At that moment, sixty thousand heavenly sons, owing to previous aspiration, first came to make offerings to the bodhisattva. They had in the past taken this vow: ‘When this bodhisattva becomes a Buddha, we wish he will receive the first offerings from us.’ When this dharma teaching was given at that time, thirty thousand bodhisattvas attained forbearance of nonarising. Thirty-six thousand bodhisattvas attained nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Eighty thousand heavenly beings and human beings became free from dusts and defilements and gained the pure dharma eye. Innumerable and boundless sentient beings initiated simultaneously the aspiration toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment.

“You must know, great virtuous one! At that time, based on the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattva was going to manifest turning the great dharma wheel. The lord of the Barely Tolerable Realm, great Brahma king, came along with six hundred and eighty thousand Brahma followers to the Buddha’s place. They bowed down to the ground before the Buddha’s feet, put their palms together respectfully, walked around the Buddha seven times, and begged the Buddha three times: ‘Please be greatly compassionate to all of us to turn the great

dharma wheel! Please be greatly compassionate to all of us to turn the great dharma wheel! Please be greatly compassionate to all of us to turn the great dharma wheel!’ After begging three times, they transformed a huge lion’s throne as tall and wide as forty-two thousand yojanas. They adorned it with various magnificent decorations and made sure that it was solid and stable. In the meantime, innumerable lords of the worlds, Heavenly Emperors Indra, in the ten directions spread the cushions on the throne for the Thus-Come, and all were magnificent and huge too.

(The bodhisattva demonstrated turning the great dharma wheel.)

“At that time, the bodhisattva showed his supernatural powers, enabling each heavenly being to see him sit on the throne and turn the dharma wheel. As the bodhisattva sat on the lion’s seat, he entered boundless samadhi gates and emitted great brilliant light to illumine as many worlds of the ten directions as the sands of the Ganges. He further made earthquakes in six different ways within this area. During that time, the sentient beings could take a break and have their minds and bodies rest temporarily in peace and happiness. They were also able to get far away from the unvirtuous dharmas, such as greed, anger, and ignorance, and treat each other as they do mother and sons.

“In the meantime, the entire large threefold thousand-world has no gap even as small as a pore of skin. The whole thousand-world is full of heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, human and nonhuman beings. The sentient beings suited to be converted through hearing about suffering will hear the Buddha’s teaching on suffering. Those suited to be converted through hearing about selflessness, tranquility, getting far away, impermanence, and the emptiness of the dharmas will hear the Buddha’s teaching on these subjects. Those suited to be converted through hearing the teaching that all dharmas are like illusions will hear about it; those suited to be converted through hearing the teaching that all

dharmas are like dreams, echoes, images, shadows, illusory water under sunlight, transformed things, and mirages will hear about them also. Those suited to be converted through hearing about the liberation gates of emptiness, formlessness, and non-aspiration will hear the Buddha's teaching about them. In the meantime, the sentient beings will hear the Thus-Come's teaching that says that all dharmas are dependently originated; or they will hear the Buddha's teaching about the aggregates, realms, spheres, suffering, the cause of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the path for cessation of suffering; or they will hear the Buddha's teaching about correct mindfulness, correct endeavors, bases of power, roots, powers, factors for enlightenment, and the factors for cultivating the path; or they will hear the Buddha's teaching about tranquil concentration and exquisite contemplation; or they will hear the Buddha's teaching about the paths of voice-hearer, self-enlightened one, or bodhisattva.

“This is how the bodhisattva practices the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and manifests various phenomena of turning the dharma wheel to bring benefits, happiness, and deep joy to the sentient beings according to individual differences.”

(All sentient beings in this large thousand-world are taught through appropriate various dharma gates suited to each of them. The profound prajna paramita enables the bodhisattva to turn the dharma wheel through expedient skillfulness this way.)

In the meantime, Sariputra said to Supreme One, “Heavenly king, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, all the bodhisattva's spiritual levels are very profound, difficult to reflect on, discuss, understand, and enter.”

Supreme One replied, “Great virtuous one, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattva has gained numberless

and boundless merits, virtues, and superior things. What I have spoken of today are just one hundredth, one thousandth, and so forth, as well as one upanisadam-api of them. Only the Thus-Come can speak all of them exhaustively. I have merely spoken very few of them today, but it is still with the support of the Thus-Come's authoritative supernatural powers. Why? The spiritual levels of the Buddhas are unbelievable; the bodhisattvas reaching the last phase before becoming the Buddha cannot tell all their merits and virtues exhaustively, not to mention the less developed bodhisattvas.

“You must know, great virtuous one! The spiritual levels of the Buddhas are tranquil and unspeakable, cannot be understood by the knowledge of differentiation and those derived from it. Great virtuous one, if the bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the spiritual levels of the Buddhas, they should learn the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita and master thoroughly the Samadhi of Steady Walk, Samadhi as Illusions, Diamond-Like Samadhi, Diamond-Wheel Samadhi, Unmovable Wisdom Samadhi, Universal Understanding Samadhi, Samadhi without Depending On Spiritual Levels, The Lion at Ease Samadhi, Samadhi of King Samadhi, Magnificent Merits and Virtues Samadhi, Tranquil Wisdom Samadhi, Universal Transcendental Samadhi, Samadhi without Contamination and Attachment, Samadhi of Dignified King of Wisdom, Samadhi of Unequaled Equality, Samadhi of Universal Enlightenment, Samadhi of Perfect Enlightenment, Satisfactory Samadhi, Joyful Samadhi, Pure Samadhi, Flame Samadhi, Bright Samadhi, Being Difficult to be Surpassed Samadhi, Constantly Present Samadhi, Uncombined Samadhi, Samadhi of Nonarising, Understanding Samadhi, Superior Samadhi, Surpassing Demonic Levels Samadhi, All Knowledge and Wisdom Samadhi, Streamer Form Samadhi, Samadhi of Great Compassion, Samadhi of Peace and Happiness, Loving Mindfulness Samadhi, Samadhi without Seeing Dharmas, and so forth.

(The spiritual levels of Thus-Come are inconceivable. Those who aspire to such levels should thoroughly understand and enter these samadhi.)

“You must know, great virtuous one! If great bodhisattvas learn the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita, they will be able to understand thoroughly and ultimately these innumerable and boundless samadhi gates that are as many as the sands of the Ganges, then they will also be able to realize insightfully the spiritual levels of the Buddhas. Their minds will stay in peace and stability and have no more fears, like the lions who are not afraid of wild beasts. Why? If the great bodhisattvas cultivate all these kinds of samadhi, they will be fearless whatever they do; they will not see any enemy present in front of them. Why? Sariputra, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, these great bodhisattvas will not rely on any conditions nor need dwelling. It is like someone who is reborn in the realm of formlessness, in which they stay with only one consciousness for as long as eighty thousand great kalpas without dwelling anywhere or relying on anything. So, the bodhisattvas who have practiced the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita will not rely on anything or dwell anywhere. Why? These bodhisattvas’ minds do not go to the place where there is no going, think about anything where there is no thinking, rely on anything where there is no condition, have attachment where there is no attachment, stay in restlessness where there is no restlessness, and have chaos where there is no chaos. Their minds do not differentiate between the higher and lower, and have no conflicts, worries, joys, and perception. Their minds are apart from perception, samatha, and vipasyana. Their minds do not follow the knowledge, neither dwell in themselves nor in others. Their minds do not dwell based on the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious or based on the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental image. Their minds are not inside, outside, or in between. Their minds neither depend on dharms nor on knowledge. They do not

dwell in or apart from the three phases of time.

(Supreme One described the remarkable merits and levels attainable by those who learn and develop the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita.)

“You must know, great virtuous one! When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas do not grasp any dharma because their knowledge and the views of the dharmas are unhindered and their minds and actions are pure. They view all dharmas as without filth. They do not grasp the forms that they see, nor do they see differentiation. They are apart from nonsensical arguments.

“You must know, great virtuous one! When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas are neither correspondent nor not correspondent with the physical eye, heavenly eye, wisdom eye, dharma eye, and Buddha eye. They are neither correspondent nor not correspondent with the knowledge and powers of heavenly ear, reading others’ minds, knowing previous lives, transformations, and flawlessness.

“You must know, great virtuous one! The expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita is neither correspondent nor separate with all dharmas. When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas will attain the knowledge of equality in all dharmas. They can contemplate the minds and actions of all sentient beings and know accurately that they are contaminated or purified as they really are. They will not lose the mindfulness of the Buddha’s ten abilities, four kinds of fearlessness, four unhindered understandings, the eighteen distinctive features of Buddha’s wisdom and power, and other innumerable and boundless merits and virtues of the Buddhas. When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas will not put additional effort to fulfill all dharmas. They are always in tranquil concentration

without consciousness; they do not need to rise from concentration to teach sentient beings. They have undertaken the Buddhist services without taking a break, but they are not attached to the Buddha dharma because they have attained unhindered knowledge and achieved uncontaminated mind. It is like the transformed Thus-Come, who has no mind, consciousness, body, body karma, speech, speech karma, mind, and mind karma, but he can undertake and accomplish all Buddhist services to benefit all sentient beings. Why? It is because of the supernatural powers of the Buddha. So is the transformed bodhisattva made by the bodhisattvas when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita. He will undertake all Buddhist services to benefit sentient beings, but he has no body, body karma, speech, speech karma, mind, mind karma, and deliberate additional effort. Why? Sariputra, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas have thoroughly understood that all dharmas are like dreams, echoes, and so forth without differentiations, while the sentient beings can always hear the Buddha's teaching of the dharma.

(In these paragraphs, Supreme One summarized the abilities and merits acquired by advanced bodhisattvas who have mastered expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita.)

“You must know, great virtuous one! These bodhisattvas' knowledge and wisdom do not dwell in the conditioned phenomena or in the unconditioned reality; do not dwell in various aggregates, realms, and spheres; do not dwell inside, outside, or in between; do not dwell in virtuous or unvirtuous realms; do not dwell in the world or beyond the world; do not dwell in contamination and purification, the flawed and flawless, or the conditioned and unconditioned; do not dwell in or apart from the three phases of time; do not dwell in emptiness, the extinction caused by wise decision, and the extinction caused by absence of conditions. When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the bodhisattvas' minds

dwell nowhere, but they can thoroughly understand the natures and the forms of all dharmas. They teach sentient beings with unhindered knowledge that all dharmas are always in tranquility. They teach without deliberate effort, but they teach tirelessly. It is because their aspiration inherited from previous lives is very powerful. Owing to the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they are always fearless. Why? They are always guarded by deva, the holder of vajra, whose pestle is as solid as diamond, whether they walk, stand, sit, or lie.

“You must know, great virtuous one! If the great bodhisattvas are not shocked, frightened, confused, and skeptical when they hear the fathomless prajna paramita, they must have been conferred the prophecy of attaining the bodhi. Why? Believing in and accepting the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita is close to the spiritual level of the Buddha; with such mind, they can understand thoroughly all Buddha dharma. Because of this reason, they will bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings; they will not see that the sentient beings are different from the Buddha dharma. Why? The sentient beings and the Buddha dharma are not separate in terms of ultimate meaning.”

Fascicle 571

Chapter 9

Nonattainment

(In the sixth assembly

At that time, in the assembly, great bodhisattva Well-Thinking One asked Supreme One, “Have you been conferred by the Buddha the prophecy of attaining the bodhi in the future?”

Supreme One replied, “I have been conferred the prophecy by the Buddha, but I still feel that it is in dreaming.”

At that time, Well-Thinking One asked Supreme One again, “What have you attained from the conferment?”

Supreme One replied, “I have attained nothing.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “What dharma have you not attained?”

Supreme One replied, “I have not attained the ‘I,’ the sentient being, and so forth, as well as the knower and the viewer. I have not attained various aggregates, realms, spheres, virtuous and unvirtuous ones, contaminated and purified ones, flawed and flawless ones, those in and beyond the world, conditioned and unconditioned ones, and birth and death and nirvana. These are all that I have not attained.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “If you have attained nothing, why is the conferment?”

Supreme One replied, “I am conferred because of nonattainment.”

Well-Thinking One said, “According to what you say, there are two kinds of knowledge: one is nonattainment, the other is the attainment of conferment.”

Supreme One replied, “If there are two kinds of knowledge, then there will be no conferment. Why? The knowledge of the Buddha is not dualistic; the Buddhas, the

World-Honored Ones, have conferred on the bodhisattvas the prophecy with nondualistic knowledge.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “If knowledge is not dualistic, then why are there the conferment granted and the one who is conferred?”

Supreme One replied, “But these two things have the same boundary.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “Why does the nondualistic boundary have the conferment?”

Supreme One replied, “Those who have achieved nondualistic boundary will be conferred.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “In which boundary have you, heavenly king, dwelled when you are conferred?”

Supreme One replied, “I have dwelled in the boundary of the ‘I,’ the boundary of the sentient being, and so forth, as well as the boundary of the knower and the boundary of the viewer when I am conferred.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “Where can the boundary of the ‘I,’ and so forth, be sought?”

Supreme One replied, “They should be sought in the boundary of liberation of the Buddhas.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “Where can the boundary of liberation be sought?”

Supreme One replied, “It can be sought in the boundary of ignorance, existence, and craving.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “Where can the boundary of ignorance, existence, and craving be sought?”

Supreme One replied, “It should be sought in the boundary of nonarising in the final analysis.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “Where can this boundary of nonarising in the final analysis be sought?”

Supreme One replied, “It can be sought in the boundary of no knowledge.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “The boundary of no knowledge means no knowledge, then how can this boundary be sought in the boundary of no knowledge?”

Supreme One replied, “Those who seek knowledge will not attain anything, so this boundary should be sought in the boundary of no knowledge.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “But this boundary is apart from the language, so how can it be sought in that boundary?”

Supreme One replied, “It can be sought there only because the language is nonexistent.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “Why is the language nonexistent?”

Supreme One replied, “It is because all dharmas rely on meanings instead of language.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “How do all dharmas rely on meanings?”

Supreme One replied, “They do not see the forms of meanings.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “How do they not see the forms of meanings?”

Supreme One replied, “They do not differentiate and insist that these are the meanings that I rely on and this is the I who can rely on meanings. Because these two things do not exist, it is called no seeing.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “If they do not see the meanings, how do they seek?”

Supreme One replied, “They do not see and grasp, so it is called seeking.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “Does seeking mean that there are the dharmas to be sought?”

Supreme One replied, “No, it is not what it means. Those who do not seek the dharmas only because nothing can be sought. Why? The dharmas that can be sought are not the dharmas.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “Then what are the dharmas?”

Supreme One replied, “The dharmas have no written language; they are also apart from spoken language.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “As the dharmas are apart from the written and spoken languages, are there still the dharmas?”

Supreme One replied, “Where the natures are apart from written and spoken languages, and where the mental images extinguish, there are the dharmas. All dharma natures are unspeakable. Once they are expressed in languages, they will turn out illusory. In illusions, there are no real dharmas.”

(Supreme One explained the meaning of dharmas for Well-Thinking One.)

Well-Thinking One asked again, “Do the Buddhas and bodhisattvas often speak with illusions?”

Supreme One replied, “The Buddhas and bodhisattvas have never said a word, so how do they speak with illusions?”

(Supreme One clarified that Buddhas and bodhisattvas do not say a word when they do not speak with illusions.)

Well-Thinking One asked again, “If one speaks, what faults will that cause?”

Supreme One replied, “There will be the faults of language.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “What faults do the languages have?”

Supreme One replied, “One fault is caused by conceiving.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “What dharmas have no faults?”

Supreme One replied, “Being free from faults means recognizing no dualistic forms whether one is speaking or not speaking.”

(Supreme One clarified the faults of language and taught how to speak without faults.)

Well-Thinking One asked again, “What is the origin of the faults?”

Supreme One replied, “Attachment is the origin of the faults.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “What is the origin of attachment?”

Supreme One replied, “The origin of attachment is the mind constrained by bondage.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “What is the origin of the mind constrained by bondage?”

Supreme One replied, “The origin of the mind constrained by bondage is delusive differentiations.”

(Supreme One stated that the faults of language come from attachment, while attachment arises from a mind constrained by bondage, a condition caused by differentiation.)

Well-Thinking One asked again, “What is the origin of delusive differentiations?”

Supreme One replied, “The origin of delusive differentiations is clinging.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “What will they cling to?”

Supreme One replied, “They will cling to sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental image.”

Well-Thinking One asked again, “How do they get rid of the clinging?”

Supreme One replied, “If they stay away from craving and grasping, they will get rid of the clinging. Given this meaning, the Thus-Come often teaches that all dharmas are equal and thus should not be clung to.”

(Supreme One taught how to get rid of differentiation and attachment to avoid the faults of language.)

When this dharma was taught, five thousand bhiksus stayed far away from

defilements and attained pure dharma eye. Twelve thousand bodhisattvas attained forbearance of nonarising. Innumerable and boundless sentient beings initiated the aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment simultaneously.

At that time, Supreme One stood up from his seat; with left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms together respectfully and said to the Buddha, “How do good gentlepersons initiate aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita and achieve nonregression, always advancing without regression?”

The Buddha replied, “Heavenly king, please be very attentive and listen to me carefully! I am going to tell you.”

Supreme One said, “Excellent, great holy one! Yes, we look forward to your teaching.”

The Buddha said to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king! If good gentlepersons hear the fathomless prajna paramita, initiate aspiration to the bodhi with pure intention, stay in correct belief, stay close to sages and holy ones, love to hear correct dharma, stay far away from jealousy and stinginess, constantly cultivate tranquility, love to practice generous giving, stay away from filths with unhindered mind, correctly believe in karmic effects without hesitation, know accurately the negative and positive karmic effects as they really are, and do nothing evil for the rest of their lives, then they will become distant from the path of the ten evil karmas. They will always be mindful of the path of the ten virtuous karmas. When good gentlepersons practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, if they have seen that some sramanas and Brahmans can practice correctly diligence, observe pure precept, love to hear much and understand their meanings, stay in correct mindfulness, have tender and amiable minds and natures, stay in tranquility without restlessness, always speak loving-kind words, cultivate diligently the virtuous

dharmas, stay far away from unvirtuous ones, do not boast about themselves, do not look down on others in contempt, stay away from rude evil words and nonsensical words, do not discard correct mindfulness, have straight and harmonious minds, can stop the raging currents and pull out the poison tipped arrows, can discard all heavy burdens, transcend disadvantageous situations and go beyond birth and death, then they should stay with these bodhisattvas and rely on them as virtuous friends.

“In the meantime, these bodhisattvas will teach the dharma expediently and skillfully according to individual differences. They say, ‘Those who practice giving will gain wealth and happiness. Those who observe pure precept will be reborn in heaven with great dignity. Those who hear correct dharma will attain great knowledge and wisdom.’ They further say, ‘This is giving, and these are the effects caused by practicing giving. This is stinginess, and these are the effects caused by stinginess. This is pure-precept, and these are the effects caused by observing pure-precept. This is violation of precept, and these are the effects caused by violating precept. This is forbearance, and these are the effects caused by forbearance. This is anger, and these are the effects caused by anger. This is diligence, and these are the effects caused by diligence. This is laziness, and these are the effects caused by laziness. This is meditation, and these are the effects caused by meditation. This is restlessness, and these are the effects caused by restlessness. This is exquisite wisdom, and these are the effects caused by exquisite wisdom. This is ignorance, and these are the effects caused by ignorance. These are virtuous body karmas, and these are the effects of virtuous body karmas. These are unvirtuous body karmas, and these are the effects of unvirtuous body karmas. These are virtuous speech karmas, and these are the effects of virtuous speech karmas. These are unvirtuous speech karmas, and these are the effects of unvirtuous speech karmas. These are virtuous mind karmas, and these are the effects of virtuous mind karmas. These are unvirtuous mind karmas, and these are

the effects of unvirtuous mind karmas. These dharmas should be done, and these dharmas should be avoided. If you cultivate these, you will enjoy happiness for a long time; you do not cultivate these, you will suffer for a long time.’ If good gentlepersons practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and stay closely with these virtuous friends, they will hear the dharma teaching like these in sequence, step by step.

(The Buddha taught Supreme One how good gentlepersons initiate aspiration to the unsurpassed bodhi, achieve nonregression, and always advance without regression.)

“If bodhisattvas recognize that these good gentlepersons are promising dharma ware, they will teach them the fathomless prajna paramita, such as emptiness, formlessness, nonaspiration, nonmaking, nonarising, nonextinction, selflessness, and so forth, as well as nonknower and nonviewer. They will further teach the very profound dependent origination, consisting of such dharma gates: because this dharma is existent, that dharma arises; because this dharma extinguishes, that dharma extinguishes. Ignorance causes action, action causes consciousness, consciousness causes name and form, name and form cause six spheres, six spheres cause contact, contact causes reception, reception causes craving, craving causes grasping, grasping causes existence, existence causes birth, and birth causes old age, death, worry, sorrow, misery, anxiety, and upset. If ignorance extinguishes, action, and so forth, as well as birth, old age, death, worry, sorrow, misery, anxiety, and upset will extinguish.

“The bodhisattvas further say, ‘In truth, there is not a dharma that can arise and extinguish. Why? All dharmas of the world arise because of cause and condition; they are without the ‘I,’ the sentient being, maker, and receiver. When causes and conditions combine, the dharmas arise; when causes and conditions separate, the dharmas extinguish. A genuine dharma is not characterized by arising and cessation. In the three realms, delusive differentiations are merely provisional names. They

depend on karma and vexations to receive effects, which mature at different times and in different types. If you contemplate and investigate them with prajna paramita, trying to find out what they really are, then you will see that all dharmas are without arising, extinction, making, and reception. Those who know that dharmas neither make nor act will not be attached to them. Namely, they will not be attached to matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness, nor to the eye sphere, ear sphere, and so forth, and conscious sphere; the sight sphere, sound sphere, and so forth, and mental-image sphere; the eye realm, ear realm, and so forth, and conscious realm; the sight realm, sound realm, and so forth, and mental-image realm; and the eye consciousness realm, ear consciousness realm, and so forth, and conscious consciousness realm. (The bodhisattvas will teach good gentlepersons the real nature of all dharmas.)

“The bodhisattvas will further say, ‘The self-natures of all dharmas are empty in the final analysis. They are tranquil, getting far away, without grasping, and without attachment.’

“Because of these teachings, the good gentlepersons keep moving forward without regression.

“Heavenly king, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas love to see the Buddhas and hear correct dharma. They will not fall into inferior stage. Wherever they are born, they always have access to see the Buddha and listen to dharma teaching. They make offerings to monastics, encounter the Buddhas frequently, and remain dedicated to the pursuit of correct dharma with diligence and bravery, while they are not attached to conditioned phenomena. They do not cling to wife, servants, or living supplies. They are not contaminated by greedy desires. They always cultivate the mindfulness in compliance with the Buddha based on the correct teaching they receive. They leave their families, cultivate by following Buddha’s teaching, and teach others. They teach without asking

for any benefits in return. They always show great loving-kindness to listeners. They consistently show deep compassion toward all sentient beings. They learn and hear extensively and are not reluctant to give their bodies and lives. They love to get far away and are easily satisfied. They can grasp the meanings without sticking to words. They teach and cultivate the dharma not for their own sake, but to bring unsurpassed happiness to all sentient beings, namely, bringing the great nirvana based on the bodhi of the Buddha to them.

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas thus cultivate to stay far away from recklessness and laziness, work diligently to protect various roots. As they see the sights, they will not be attached to their phenomena; rather, they will contemplate and investigate their faults as they really are. They do the same when they hear, smell, taste, touch, and think of the dharmas. To let the roots go unrestricted is called recklessness, while absorbing and protecting the roots well is called self-restraint. When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas will not only tame their own minds, but also accommodate and protect others, thus they are away from recklessness and unrestraint. They will stay far away from greedy craving and stay in compliance with virtuous dharmas. Other negative dharmas, such as contemplation and investigation without concentration, hatred, ignorance, roots of unvirtuous dharmas, evil karmas of body and speech, two improper ways of livelihood, and all unvirtuous dharmas will be driven away. This is called self-restraint. When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas always stay in correct mindfulness; this is called self-restraint. These great bodhisattvas well understand that among all dharmas, belief is the utmost one. Those with correct beliefs avoid bad destinies, resist evil, and gain respect from sages and holy ones.

“You must know, heavenly king! When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas cultivate as they should do. Wherever they are reborn, they will always encounter the Buddha, stay far away from the two vehicles, dwell peacefully in correct dharma, attain great self-ease, and accomplish the great thing, namely, the liberation of the Thus-Comers based on correct knowledge. When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they constantly and diligently learn to maintain in compliance with the path of the perfect knowledge of everything to attain peace and happiness.

“You must know, heavenly king! This crowd today has heard such fathomless prajna paramita. They must have in the past made offerings to the Buddhas for innumerable great kalpas and accumulated virtuous roots. They should continue to work diligently so that they will not regress. If the heavenly beings and human beings restrict their sense roots and are not attached to the five desires, get away from the world and consistently cultivate beyond the world, and keep three karmas clean and pure to foster the path, then they are not reckless and unrestrained. If great bodhisattvas practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita with sufficient right belief, do not let their minds unrestricted, and diligently cultivate and attain the superior dharmas, then they can remain self-restrained. If the great bodhisattvas would like to possess right belief, stay away from unrestraint, and stay in correct mindfulness constantly, they should learn prajna paramita. Correct mindfulness of perfect knowledge enables one to realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi pursued quickly.

(The Buddha urged all participants of the assembly to keep right belief and avoid unrestraint.)

“When great bodhisattvas practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they have possessed sufficient right belief and avoid recklessness and

unrestraint. If they continue to cultivate diligently, they will attain correct mindfulness. They can use this knowledge of correct mindfulness to recognize existence and nonexistence. What are existence and nonexistence? Saying right actions lead to true liberation affirms existence, while claiming wrong actions yield real liberation suggests nonexistence. The six sense roots and the six objects perceived are existent in terms of the worldly perspective, while they are nonexistent in terms of the ultimate meaning. Saying diligent bodhisattvas can attain the bodhi affirms existence, while asserting lazy bodhisattvas can attain the bodhi denotes nonexistence. Saying the five aggregates are caused by delusive differentiations affirms existence, while asserting worldly dharmas do not arise because of causes and conditions denotes nonexistence. Stating that matter is impermanent, painful, and in decay affirms existence, while saying permanence and happiness are not in decay denotes nonexistence. So are the cases with feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. Saying ignorance causes action is existence, while saying action arises not out of ignorance is nonexistence. So are the cases with birth, old age, death, worry, sorrow, misery, anxiety, and upset. Saying that practicing giving enables one to gain great wealth is existence, while insisting that practicing giving makes one poor is nonexistence. Saying that observing pure precepts enables one to be reborn in good destinies is existence, while saying that observing pure precept makes one reborn in bad destinies is nonexistence. Saying that cultivating wisdom enables one to attain the holy effect is existence, while asserting that cultivating wisdom makes one foolish is nonexistence. Saying that cultivating hearing much enables one to attain great knowledge is existence, while insisting that cultivating hearing much makes one foolish is nonexistence. Saying that cultivating correct mindfulness enables one liberated is existence, while saying that cultivating correct mindfulness cannot make one liberated is nonexistence. Saying that practicing incorrect mindfulness cannot

make one liberated is existence, while saying that practicing incorrect mindfulness can make one liberated is nonexistence. Saying that being apart from the 'I' and the associated images can make one liberated indicates existence, while saying that being attached to the 'I' and the associated images can make one liberated indicates nonexistence. Saying that empty space permeates all places indicates existence, while saying that there is real selfness in the five aggregates indicates nonexistence. Saying that cultivating the perfect knowledge as one should do makes one liberated is existence, while saying that being attached to incorrect knowledge makes one liberated is nonexistence. Saying that being apart from incorrect views of self, and so forth, enables one to attain the perfect knowledge of emptiness is existence, while saying that being attached to the incorrect views of self, and so forth, allows one to attain the perfect knowledge of emptiness is nonexistence.

(The Buddha taught using correct mindfulness to discern the things existent from nonexistent.)

“You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, well know about the existence and nonexistence of the world, then they will be able to cultivate equality and get to realize that all dharmas arise because of causes and conditions. It is in terms of the worldly way of speech to say that they are existent. Because of this reason, they will not have the incorrect view of permanence. Knowing that the original nature of the law of causes and conditions is empty, they will not have the incorrect view of discontinuation either. They thus will understand thoroughly the Buddha's teachings.

(Knowing existence and nonexistence leads to understanding the law of dependent origination.)

“Heavenly king, the Buddha taught briefly bodhisattvas about the four

dharms. Sramanas, Brahmans, and heavenly beings of the Heaven of Longevity hold incorrect view of permanence. To correct their views, we should teach them impermanence. Many heavenly beings are indulged in pleasures, so we should teach them suffering. The other-paths practitioners are attached to the existence of self of the body, so we should teach them selflessness. Arrogant ones slander genuine nirvana, so we should teach them tranquil nirvana. The teaching of impermanence will inspire them to pursue ultimate way; the teaching of suffering will discourage them from pursuing birth and death; the teaching of selflessness will manifest emptiness gate to guide them to thorough understanding; and the teaching of nirvana will enable them to detach from the forms.

“When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas should cultivate and learn this way so that they will not regress in the pursuit of the virtuous dharms and will attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment bodhi.”

(The Buddha taught four dharms: impermanence, suffering, selflessness, and formlessness, to those holding incorrect views.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, what actions should great bodhisattvas cultivate in order to protect correct dharma?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “Heavenly king, great bodhisattvas, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, should act consistently with what they say, esteem teachers and elders, follow correct dharma, stay in harmonious and tender mental activities, keep their intentions and nature in purity, keep various roots tranquil, stay far away from all unvirtuous dharms, and cultivate the superior virtuous dharms, then they do protect the correct dharma. You must know, heavenly king, if great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, cultivate loving-

kindness and compassion in body, speech, and mind, do not chase or cling to benefits and reputations, observe pure precept, and stay far away from incorrect views, then they are do protect the correct dharma. If they practice the fathomless prajna paramita and act without in accord with craving, hatred, ignorance, and fear, then they do protect the correct dharma. If they teach and cultivate as they are taught by the Buddha, they are called protecting the correct dharma.

(The Buddha taught how great bodhisattvas protect correct dharma through their learning and actions.)

“Heavenly King, to protect the correct dharma, the Buddhas of the past, present, and future teach this dharani gate to exhort heavenly kings and human rulers to preserve the correct dharma in the world, prevent its decline, and bring great benefit to sentient beings. The dharani is as follows:

tadyatha: ahulo, kulovati, hulaṇasa, guḍhacacā, cacace, niaben, rakṣata, ṣata, ṣayanta, ṣayasaha, samoṇi, kara, uru, uruva, tikara, vartika, avisadini, saraṇi, jhashejha, shematiavasini, vasi, vatavata nusariṇi, bhutonusimīṛiti, devatonusi, meṛiti, svaha!

“You must know, heavenly king, this great magic spell will bring peace and happiness to all heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, gandharvas, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, and nonhumans. This great magic spell is taught expediently by the Buddhas in the past, future, and present to protect correct dharma, and protect heavenly kings and human kings as well to bring them peace and happiness. Therefore, heavenly kings and human kings should recite this spell dedicatedly, diligently, and most sincerely, so that the correct dharma will endure, they themselves and their families will be in peace and happiness, and their country lands will be free from all disasters. If they can do this, all enemies, disasters, demonic affairs, and dharma obstacles will disappear, the correct dharma will endure in the world, and all

sentient beings will greatly benefit.”

As the Buddha was teaching the prajna paramita great magic spell, all heavenly palaces, mountains, oceans, and the earth quaked. Eighty thousand sentient beings initiated aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment simultaneously.

In the meantime, Supreme One rejoiced and danced and jumped. He covered the Buddha with a seven-treasure net, joined his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha again, “What dharms should great bodhisattvas cultivate when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita, so that they can stay in the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi motionlessly?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “If great bodhisattvas, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, can cultivate and learn diligently unhindered great loving-kindness, disgust-free great compassion, samadhi of emptiness, and the expedient skillfulness of equal knowledge, so that they can thoroughly understand the pure great knowledge, realize the exquisite meanings of equal three phases of time without hindrance, and tread on the correct path of the Buddhas in the three phases of time, then they will be able to stay in the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi motionlessly.”

(The Buddha taught Supreme One how the bodhisattvas stay in the unsurpassed bodhi motionlessly.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “What dharms should the great bodhisattvas cultivate when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, so that they are not shocked, frightened, worried, and upset when hearing the inconceivable things of the Thus-Comers?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, if the great bodhisattvas cultivate sufficiently exquisite wisdom and exquisite knowledge,

stay in close connection with virtuous friends, love to hear the profound dharma, realize that all dharmas are like illusions, awake to the truth that the world is impermanent and the dharmas that arise will finally extinguish, and dwell as in empty space, then they will not be shocked, frightened, worried, and upset when hearing the inconceivable things of the Thus-Comers.”

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “What dharmas should great bodhisattvas cultivate when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita so that they will attain freedom and ease wherever they are?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “If great bodhisattvas, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, cultivate the five supernatural powers and achieve simultaneously various unhindered liberation gates, meditations, and immeasurable skillful means of prajna paramita, then they will become free and at ease wherever they are.”

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “What gates will the great bodhisattvas acquire when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “If great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and acquire the gate of the exquisite knowledge, then they will be able to know insightfully the sharp and the dull roots of all sentient beings. Once acquiring the gate of such exquisite wisdom, they will be able to recognize the meanings of the sentences of all dharmas. Upon acquiring the gate of general retention, they will be able to know thoroughly the pronunciations and voices of all languages. After acquiring the unhindered gate, they will be able to lecture on all dharmas endlessly. You must know, heavenly king, these are the gates that great bodhisattvas will acquire when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita.”

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “What abilities will great bodhisattvas acquire when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, they will attain the ability of tranquility because they have achieved great compassion. They will attain the ability of diligence because they have achieved nonregression. They will attain the ability to hear much because they have achieved great knowledge. They will attain the ability of belief and joy because they have achieved liberation. They will attain the ability of cultivation because they have gotten away. They will attain the ability of forbearance because they have loved and protected sentient beings. They will attain the ability to aspire to the bodhi because they have terminated the incorrect view of the self. They will attain the ability of great compassion because they have guided and converted sentient beings. They will attain the ability of the forbearance of nonarising because they have achieved the ten abilities. You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas can attain such superior abilities.”

When the Buddha was teaching this dharma, five hundred bodhisattvas attained the forbearance of nonarising. Eight thousand heavenly sons attained nonregression. Twelve thousand heavenly sons stayed far away from defilements and attained the pure dharma eye. Forty thousand heavenly beings initiated the aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment simultaneously.

Chapter 10

Realization and Encouragement

(In the sixth assembly)

The Buddha said to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king!

Inconceivable countless great kalpas ago, there was a Buddha whose name was Merits and Virtues Treasure King; he had also the perfect ten names. His land was called Dignified Treasures, while the kalpa was called Good Contemplation. His land was prosperous; people there were happy and free from illness and vexations. In that land, human beings and heavenly beings got along very well; they could interact without obstacles. The ground was as flat as one's palm; no hills, mountains, heaps, rubbles, thistles, and poisonous thorns, but there were thin and soft grasses everywhere and all were tender and purple and green like peacock feathers. The grass was four-finger thick. These grasses would flatten underfoot but returned to their original form upon removal of pressure. campaka flowers, mandara blossoms, and other delicate grasses were abundant, spreading everywhere, all looked pretty. The climate was temperate, with all four seasons coexisting in harmony. The ground consisted of crystal-like materials. Inhabitants maintained balanced minds and emotions, having surmounted the vexations caused by the three poisons. This Buddha land was home to twelve thousand nayuta voice-hearer disciples and six billion bodhisattva disciples. Human life spans reached three billion six hundred million nayuta years; none of them would die young.

“A city named Undefined Dignity was 128 yojanas from north to south and 80 yojanas from west to east, with walls 16 nayutas thick. The battlement and watching towers were made of seven treasures. The city was adorned with ten thousand gardens and surrounded by ten thousand small cities. Among them, four gardens were particularly beautified with exquisite flowers, in which, peacocks walked and played, with delightful ease, merits, and virtues in four seasons. There were four big square lakes, each was one half yojana wide. The banks were also made of seven treasures, while the sidewalks and the stairs were made of solid purple gold. Wonderful golden sands were paved on the bottoms of the lakes. The waters in the lakes all possessed

eight merits and virtues. The fragrances emitted from the treasure flowers permeated. The wild ducks and mandarin ducks gathered and played. Rows of white candana, red candana, and sirisa trees stood lined the banks. Parrots and sarus soared above them, playing and enjoying each other's company.

“A wheel-turning king named Ruling World One owned seven treasures and ruled four continents. He had made offerings to numberless Buddhas and planted deeply virtuous roots at the Buddhas' places. He had aspired to bodhi and attained nonregression. Within the inner palace, there were seventy thousand members of his family, all possessing dignified features. The noble women attending to the king had also initiated the aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment. The wheel-turning king had one thousand sons, who were with great strength and could destroy enemies. All possessed twenty-eight perfect features and had also initiated the aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment.

“At that time, Merits and Virtues Treasure Thus-Comer was entering Undefined Dignity City along with voice-hearers, bodhisattvas, and innumerable heavenly sons, dragons, yaksas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, mahoragas, humans, and nonhumans. All they surrounded the Thus-Comer when they walked. In the meantime, the wheel-turning king appeared outside the gate of the city to greet the Thus-Comer. The king was guided by the seven treasures and followed by his ten thousand sons as well as the family members from the inner palace. He made various subtle and exquisite offerings to the Thus-Comer and his followers. After receiving the offerings, the Thus-Comer and his followers left the city and returned to their own place, while the wheel-turning king and his associates and family saw the Thus-Comer and his followers off and then also returned to his palace.

“In the meantime, the wheel-turning king sighed and said, ‘The human body is impermanent, and the wealthy and noble life is just like dreams. It is difficult to own

perfect sense roots and develop correct belief. It is even harder to encounter the Thus-Comer and hear the wonderful dharma! It is so unusual and brief as udumbara flower.'

"Meanwhile, these one thousand sons knew that their father was fond of the Thus-Comer and looking forward to hearing correct dharma. So, they built a huge, exquisite platform made of invaluable red candana wood, decorated with seven treasures, expanding thirteen yojanas in length from north to south and ten yojanas in width from east to west. The large poles at the four corners were decorated with various treasures, with thousand-treasure wheels under the platform. After finishing the construction, these sons offered the platform to their father.

"The king accepted the offering and acclaimed, 'Excellent, excellent! You knew that I would like to visit the Buddha and hear the correct dharma.'

"The thousand sons further made a lion's seat on the platform for their father and ordered all people in the palace to stand around their father. Surrounding the platform, wonderful gold bells, silks, and canopies were hung. It was covered with seven treasure nets. All kinds of rare fragrant flowers were dispersed, invaluable incenses were burnt, and fragrant muds were paved. At that time, each son held a wheel and flew in the sky as a goose king, then landed on the ground quietly to bow down before the Buddha's feet, walked around him clockwise seven times, and stood to one side. In the meantime, the king took off his crown and came down from the platform. Along with all his associates from the inner palace who now had taken off their treasure shoes, the king went to see the Buddha. He bowed down on the ground before the Buddha's feet, walked around the Buddha clockwise seven times, and sat to one side.

"At that time, Merits and Virtues Treasure King Thus-Comer asked Ruling World One, 'Great king! Are you coming to hear the correct dharma?'

“The wheel-turning king rose from his seat, adjusted his clothes, and asked, ‘World-Honored One, what is the correct dharma to be heard?’

“The Buddha admired the king, ‘Excellent, excellent! Now you come to hear the correct dharma to bring benefits and happiness to both heavenly beings and human beings. Please listen to me carefully and reflect well on it! I am going to explain it respectively for you.’

“Ruling World One replied to the Buddha, ‘Yes, I am looking forward to your teaching!’

At that time, the World-Honored One said to the king, “Great king, when great bodhisattva practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the equal dharma nature that the great bodhisattvas understand are named correct dharma, which contains the four bases of mindfulness, four correct endeavors, four bases of power, five roots, five powers, seven factors for enlightenment, noble eightfold path, emptiness, formlessness, nonaspiration, and so forth, all the equal dharma natures that bodhisattvas get to understand thoroughly, are all called the correct dharma.”

(The Buddha explained the meaning of correct dharma.)

At that time, Ruling World One asked the Buddha again, “World-Honored One, how will great bodhisattvas always make superior progress without regress in the pursuit of the great vehicle when they practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita?”

“The Buddha replied to Ruling World One, ‘You must know, great king, because of the powers caused by correct belief that the great bodhisattvas can always keep in superior progress when they practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita. What is the correct belief? It means bodhisattvas understand that all dharmas are without arising and extinction, the original nature of all dharmas is tranquil. Bodhisattvas can stay in close connection with other correct

action practitioners. They do not do that should not be done. Their minds stay away from restlessness; they can hear and accept correct dharma; they do not see the lecturer and the listeners; they cultivate correct actions diligently and attain supernatural powers quickly. They teach the teachable sentient beings, but do not see that they have supernatural powers, or they can convert sentient beings, or sentient beings are taught and converted. Why? When they practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they do not see themselves or sentient beings. If they treat these two things equally, they will attain superior progress and will not regress.

(The Buddha responded to Ruling World One stating how great bodhisattvas always make superior progress without regress in the pursuit of the great vehicle. He also defined correct belief.)

“You must know, great king, when great bodhisattvas practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they absorb and protect their various roots without grasping them. They initiate this thought: all living supplies are impermanent. They realize that all dharmas are tranquil and the lives of sentient beings are provisional.

“You must know, great king, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, they stay in great vehicle without letting their minds escape unrestrictedly.

“You must know, great king, when great bodhisattvas practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they do not lose their aspiration to the bodhi even in dreams. They remain guiding sentient beings to cultivate the Buddha path, embracing virtuous roots to practice giving to sentient beings, and transferring all the merits and virtues thus derived toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. They do rejoice and acclaim the Buddha’s supernatural powers when they

witness their manifestation.

“You must know, heavenly king, if they practice the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they will achieve the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly. Therefore, great king, one should work diligently when occupying a very high position. He must be careful to avoid being unrestrained. Those who would like to pursue the dharma should not be indulged in the five desires. Why? All ordinary sentient beings crave desires tirelessly, but those who have attained holy knowledge can renounce them. The human body is impermanent, and one’s lifespan is very short. Great king, now this reality should be well known. It is time to pursue the path beyond the world. Great king, you should transfer the virtuous roots caused by making offerings to the Thus-Come toward four things, ensuring freedom and ease will endure endlessly, correct dharma will last endlessly, exquisite knowledge will not diminish, and the talent of debate will not extinguish. These four kinds of transference and the fathomless prajna paramita are also endless.

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas ensure the four superior abilities and features do not disappear.)

““You must know, great king, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas should cultivate purely and observe the precepts of the body, speech, and mind. Why? They do this to elicit and activate hearing, reflection, and cultivation. They educate and convert sentient beings with the powers of skillful means, subjugate demons with the powers of prajna, fulfill the powers of aspiration, and act in accord with the speech.’

“In the meantime, the wheel turning king, after hearing what the Buddha said about the fathomless prajna paramita, rejoiced and danced and jumped as he had never experienced before. He knelt on the ground, took off the treasure crown, unfastened the jewelry necklace, and made them along with the four continents as

offerings to the Buddha. He was determined to, for the sake of sentient beings, cultivate celibacy, learn the fathomless prajna paramita, and aspire to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi with the blessings produced by making the offerings. All ladies from the inner palace, upon hearing the Buddha's dharma teaching, were very joyful and decided to aspire to the bodhi. So, they each took off their upper coats, unfastened jewelry necklaces, and made them as offering to Merits and Virtues Treasure Thus-Comer. The king again made the treasure platform and the lion's seat as offerings to the Buddha and beg to leave his family.

"In the meantime, the Thus-Comer admired Ruling World One, 'It is excellent that the king can do this! Now what you are doing is not contrary to your aspiration. You should cultivate and learn diligently giving, pure-precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna. The Buddhas in past had cultivated these and attained the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. So will the Buddhas in the future.'

"At that time, Ruling World One asked the Buddha again, 'Do great bodhisattvas cultivate giving in a way distinctive from the fathomless prajna paramita?'

"The Buddha replied to Ruling World One, 'Practicing giving without prajna paramita cannot reach the other shore. Giving can be called reaching the other shore because of prajna paramita. Similar are pure-precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna. Why? It is because the nature of the fathomless prajna paramita is equal.'

"As the Buddha was teaching this profound dharma, the king realized and attained the dharma-forbearance of nonarising."

The Buddha said to Supreme One, "You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas should pursue the correct dharma diligently as a wheel-turning king does. This wheel-turning king later

became Burning Lamp Buddha later, and his one thousand sons became the thousand Buddhas in the kalpa of Sages.”

(The Buddha shared the story of Burning Lamp Thus-Come to inspire Supreme One.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “World-Honored One, how will great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and achieve the great bodhi path quickly?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas should cultivate loving-kind mind, and so forth, and do not harm sentient beings. They should practice diligently all paramitas, the four approaches for absorbing sentient beings, four immeasurable minds, the factors for the bodhi, supernatural powers, and expedient skillfulness. They should cultivate and fulfill all virtuous dharmas. If bodhisattvas can cultivate this way, they will achieve the great bodhi path quickly. The bodhi path means right belief and pure mind, including staying away from flatter and crooked mind, practicing equal mind, bringing others fearlessness. The bodhi path also refers to the virtuous dharmas, such as getting along with others harmoniously, diligently practicing giving leading to endless rewards, observing pure precept without hindrance, cultivating forbearance, staying away from hatred and anger, working diligently to fulfill cultivation easily and perfectly, staying in superior meditations without restlessness, thoroughly understanding prajna, and benefiting sentient beings based on great loving-kindness. The bodhi path also contains such actions, do not regress because of great compassion, possess great joy to please others, possess great equanimity without differentiation, stay away from the thistles and thrones caused by three poisons, do not become attached to sight, sound, smell, and taste spheres to eliminate all nonsensical arguments, stay away from

vexations and enemies, discard two vehicles to broaden mind, and possess the perfect knowledge of everything to allow various treasures to emerge. You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas can cultivate this way and thus achieve the great bodhi path quickly.”

(The Buddha explained the bodhi path by listing its contents.)

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha again, “When practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, what appearances will great bodhisattvas manifest in order to guide and teach sentient beings?”

The Buddha replied to Supreme One, “You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas do not take on fixed forms. Why? Bodhisattvas will appear in the forms depending on how sentient beings prefer. They will appear in different colors, gold, silver, crystal, glassy gem, gem-blue, iron-blue, pearl, green, yellow, red, and white or appear in the colors of the sun, moon, and flame; or appear in the forms of Heavenly Emperor Indra, Brahma king, frost, snow, orpiment, vermillion, flowers in the rain, or the flowers of campaka, sumanas, utpala, padma, kumuda, and pundarika. They will also appear in the shapes of the heaven lady Merits and Virtues, goose, peacock, coral, cintamani, or the realm of empty space, all depending on human and heavenly beings’ preferences.

“You must know, heavenly king, these great bodhisattvas can manifest in various different images of sentient beings in as many worlds of the ten directions as the sands of the Ganges. Why? When practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, they can absorb universally all sentient beings and, on the other hand, are very reluctant to turn away from and thus disappoint sentient beings. Why? All sentient beings have different individual mental activities and forms, so the

bodhisattvas will manifest in such different mental activities and forms. Why? These great bodhisattvas had in past lives made great vows to manifest in different bodies according to individual preferences of sentient beings. Like a clear mirror, in which there are no images existent until objects, beautiful or ugly, appear before the mirror. But the mirror does not differentiate and say, ‘My body is pure and clear so it can reflect all different objects.’ So the bodhisattvas manifest their bodies effortlessly without differentiation and thinking of what they are doing.

“You must know, heavenly king, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, the great bodhisattvas will appear in the bodies that the audience likes to see when hearing the dharma teaching. So the audience will see that the dharma is taught by the Buddha, bodhisattva, self-enlightened one, voice-hearer, brahma king, Heavenly Emperor Indra, Maheśvara, Visnu, four heavenly kings the world-protectors, wheel-turning king, sramana, other-paths practitioner, Brahman, Ksatriya, Vaiśya, sudra, elder, or lay believer. They will see that the dharma teacher is sitting on the treasure platform, lotus, or on the ground or flying in the sky. They will see the teacher is either teaching or meditating in tranquility.

(Great bodhisattvas may appear as different beings to meet audience’s expectation when teaching the dharma.)

“Heavenly king, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas can appear as different beings or demeanors to deliver sentient beings. The fathomless prajna paramita, like empty space, is without shapes and forms. It permeates all areas in ten directions. Like empty space, the fathomless prajna paramita goes beyond language and is distant from nonsensical arguments. Like empty space that is useful for all sentient beings of the world, so the fathomless prajna paramita is useful for both holy and ordinary ones. Like empty space that is apart from differentiation, so the fathomless prajna paramita is without

differentiation. Like empty space that receives different matters, so the fathomless prajna paramita can receive all Buddha dharmas. Like empty space that can foster the growth of all grass, wood, herbs, flowers, and fruits, so the fathomless prajna paramita can foster the growth of all virtuous roots. Like empty space that is impermanent, not discontinued, and is apart from speech, so the fathomless prajna paramita is impermanent, not discontinued, and apart from speech. All sramans, Brahmans, and so forth, as well as heavenly emperor and brahma cannot imagine the fathomless prajna paramita.

(The Buddha described the superior qualities of prajna paramita.)

“You must know, heavenly king, not a dharma resembles the fathomless prajna paramita. If good gentlepersons believe in and accept prajna paramita, the merits and virtues thus gained will be inconceivable. If the merits and virtues had physical entities, then the empty space would not be able to contain them all. Why? It is because all virtuous dharmas, of and beyond the world, including those of the heavenly beings and human beings, heavenly kings and human kings, as well as the four aspirations, four effects, self-enlightened ones, ten stages of bodhisattvas, the paramitas of bodhisattvas, the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of the Buddhas, all kinds of perfect knowledge, abilities, fearlessness, the eighteen distinctive features of the Buddha’s wisdom and power, and so forth, can achieve or can be fulfilled because of the fathomless prajna paramita.”

(The Buddha taught that all sentient beings of various levels and stages can realize their aspirations, or various superior dharmas can be fulfilled because of prajna paramita.)

When the Buddha was teaching the dharma, fifty thousand bodhisattvas attained nonregression. Fifteen thousand heavenly sons attained the dharma forbearance of nonarising. Twelve thousand heavenly beings and human beings stayed

far away from defilements and attained the pure dharma eye. As many sentient beings as the sands of the Ganges had initiated an aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment. At that moment, various heavenly beings played music in the sky and further spread different kinds of exquisite heavenly flowers as offerings to the Thus-Come and the profound prajna. Innumerable heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, mahoragas, humans, and nonhumans spread different kinds of flowers and treasures as offerings to the Thus-Come and the profound prajna.

At that moment, the heavenly beings, dragons, and so forth all acclaimed the Buddha with their palms joined together in reverence, “Excellent, excellent! Please teach us the fathomless prajna paramita soon.”

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Chapter 11

The Manifestation of the Virtues

(In the sixth assembly)

At that time, Great Bodhisattva Manjusri rose from his seat, bowed down to the ground before the Buddha's feet. With his left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, how many kalpas should great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and how many Buddhas should they make offerings to before they are able to disseminate the fathomless prajna paramita as Supreme One heavenly king does?"

The Buddha replied to Great Bodhisattva Manjusri, "Good gentleman, such thing is inconceivable. The bodhisattvas cannot hear the merits, virtues, and the name of the fathomless prajna paramita unless they have cultivated and accumulated various virtuous roots for innumerable hundreds of thousands of great kalpas. Good gentleman, as many worlds of the ten directions as the sands of the Ganges are countable, but the kalpas during which the great bodhisattvas have practiced the fathomless prajna paramita and the Buddhas to whom the great bodhisattvas have made offerings are uncountable and unknowledgeable.

"Good gentleman, innumerable, boundless, and inconceivable kalpas ago, there was a Buddha whose name was Hearing Much, and who had ten names. He lived in a kalpa named Addition, and his country was called Sunlight. Hearing Much Thus-Come taught great bodhisattvas about the pure dharma gate. He said, 'Good gentlepersons, you should cultivate diligently and attentively the virtuous dharmas without caring about your own body and life.'

“In the meantime, a bodhisattva in the assembly, with Diligence Power as his name, stood up from his seat, bowed down to the ground before the Buddha’s feet. With his left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, ‘The World-Honored One says that we should cultivate diligently and attentively the virtuous dharmas without caring about our bodies and lives. If my understanding of the Buddha’s words is correct, great bodhisattvas should stay in laziness and do not cultivate the virtuous dharmas to realize the unsurpassed bodhi quickly. Why? If bodhisattvas cultivate diligently the virtuous dharmas, they will not be able to dwell long in birth and death to bring benefits and happiness to sentient beings. Bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita, eliminate vexations, and dwell long in birth and death not for the sake of entering nirvana quickly, but for the sake of brings benefits and happiness to all sentient beings. The bodhisattvas will view staying in birth and death instead of dwelling in nirvana as pleasure. Why? They view educating and converting sentient beings as pleasure; they follow such expedient skillfulness to teach the dharma gate to bring peace and happiness to sentient beings. If they cultivate diligently the virtuous dharmas, they will achieve flawlessness quickly, then they will not be able to bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings. Therefore, great bodhisattvas will initiate great compassion and be reluctant to turn away from sentient beings through contemplating and investigating birth and death, and the vexations thus caused, to fulfill their original aspirations.

““World-Honored One, great bodhisattvas possess the ability of expedient skillfulness and can dwell long in birth and death, so they are able to see innumerable and boundless Thus-Comers, listen to innumerable and boundless correct dharma, and educate and guide innumerable and boundless sentient beings. They are able to do such things and are not disgusted with birth and death or fond of nirvana. World-

Honored One, if great bodhisattvas contemplate birth and death and thus become disgusted with and afraid of birth and death but fond of nirvana, then they will fall into the wrong paths, cannot bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings and get an access to the spiritual level of the Thus-Come. What are the wrong paths? They are the stage of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one, in which, they will lack great compassion to all sentient beings. Why? The paths on which the voice-hearers and the self-enlightened ones walk, are not the path of great bodhisattva. Why? Voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones love nirvana but loathe birth and death. They are not well equipped with blessing, virtues, knowledge, and wisdom, so they do not walk on the bodhisattva path.'

"In the meantime, Hearing Much Buddha admired Diligence Power and said, 'Excellent, excellent! It is as you say. Great bodhisattvas should cultivate their own path; they should not walk on the wrong paths.'

"In the meantime, Diligence Power asked the Buddha, 'What is the bodhisattva's own path?'

"Hearing Much Buddha replied, 'As bodhisattvas have achieved all blessings and wisdom, they are reluctant to turn away from sentient beings because of the power of great compassion. They are distant from the stage of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one. They have attained the forbearance of nonarising and are reluctant to renounce the three realms. They foster the growth of virtuous roots without aspiration. They cultivate expediently and skillfully all paramitas. They foster the growth of virtuous roots with the powers of knowledge and wisdom and the mind of nondifferentiation. They achieve innumerable merits of the perfect knowledge of extinction. They expediently give birth to the dharmas presently although they know that not a dharma can arise. They educate and convert sentient beings expediently although they know that not a sentient being is real. They understand that all dharmas

are without self-natures. They can expediently and skillfully dignify and purify Buddha lands although they know that all Buddha lands are like empty space. They expediently manifest the perfect and magnificent features although they know that the dharma-body of the Buddha is without images. They can teach expediently the sentient beings according to their individual differences. They teach about various dharmas to guide sentient beings always remaining body and mind in tranquility. They also skillfully stay far away from noise and mess and cultivate various tranquil concentrations to understand the emptiness of self-nature. They thoroughly understand the fathomless knowledge and wisdom, teaching the dharma to others in an expedient way. They diligently pursue the liberation that the Thus-Comers realize and do not grasp the effects of voice-hearer and self-enlightened vehicles. They will not discard all actions of the bodhisattva path. Good gentleman, this is the bodhisattva path.'

(The Hearing Much Buddha affirmed Diligence Power's statement and elaborated the virtues of bodhisattva path.)

"Manjusri, at that time, Diligence Power heard the spiritual level of the bodhisattva path taught by the Thus-Comer and felt that he encountered an experience that he had never had. So, he replied to Hearing Much Buddha, 'It is very rare, World-Honored One! If my understanding of the Buddha's teaching is correct, the bodhisattvas are sufficiently equipped with expedient skillfulness and contemplate all dharmas to realize that none of them does not belong to the path. Like empty space that can contain all matters, so the bodhisattvas possess great expedience to contain all dharmas in their path. The path they practice absorbs all dharmas. It is due to empty space that all grasses, woods, flowers, fruits, and fragrant trees grow, but all these plants will not contaminate empty space with hatred and joy, so bodhisattvas possess the great skillful means of the fathomless prajna paramita and contemplate that all

dharma belong to the path, including the dharmas of ordinary sentient being, voice-hearer, self-enlightened one, bodhisattva, and Thus-Come. Why? It is because the bodhisattvas have understood thoroughly all these dharmas.

“Like big fire that will burn grasses and woods without hesitation. In that case, all grasses and woods will follow the fire to emit brilliant lights, so the dharmas will follow the bodhisattva path; that is why it is called the bodhisattva path. Like the diamond that has very solid body to resist knife, fire, water, and poison, so the expedient wisdom of bodhisattva cannot be damaged by voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, and the vexations of other-paths practitioners. Like water purifier ball that can purify turbid water, so the fathomless prajna paramita of bodhisattva can purify all vexations of sentient beings. Like excellent medicine or the wonderful treasure ball that can remove all poisons, so bodhisattvas, when practicing the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita, will eliminate all vexations. Because of this cause and condition, all dharmas belong to great bodhisattva path.’ (Diligence Power explained why all dharmas belong to bodhisattva path.)

“Manjusri, when Diligence Power was teaching the dharma, eight thousand bodhisattvas initiated the aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and two hundred bodhisattvas attained forbearance of nonarising. Manjusri, Diligence Power at that time is Supreme One heavenly king today.”

At that time, Bodhisattva Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “World-Honored One, how will great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and attain solid power to protect the correct dharma?”

The Buddha replied to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “Good gentleman, if great bodhisattvas insist not to discard the correct dharma even at risk of losing their bodies or lives; if they are humble and are not conceited, refrain from striking back against disdain and insult, give food and drinks to hungry and thirsty sentient beings, give

fearlessness to those in danger and difficulties, cure ill ones properly and correctly, bring wealth to those in poverty, build and adorn the temples for Buddhas and other spirits, prevent bad things from spreading but praise publicly virtuous things, and bring peace and happiness to the worried and painful sentient beings, then these great bodhisattvas will be able to attain the solid powers and protect the correct dharma when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita.”

(The Buddha explained to Manjusri how great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and attain solid power to protect the correct dharma.)

Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “World-Honored One, how do great bodhisattvas adjust and tame their minds when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “Good gentleman, if great bodhisattvas, while practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, reflect on their objectives without being distracted by unrelated matters before acting, maintain upright intentions and keep going straight forward apart from flattery and duplicity, refrain from self-conceit but remain in kindness, then they can regulate their minds well.”

Manjusri asked again, “As great bodhisattvas have regulated their minds well, in which destination will they be reborn?”

The Buddha replied, “Good gentleman, if great bodhisattvas can do this well, they will be reborn in heaven or human world. If they are reborn in heaven, they will be Heavenly Emperor or brahma king as the lord of the Barely Tolerable World. If they are reborn in human world, they will be wheel-turning kings, other kings, elders, or lay Buddhists. Whether in heaven or human world, they will frequently encounter Buddha.”

Manjusri asked again, “World-Honored One, what will be caused by right

belief?”

The Buddha replied, “Right belief will cause genuine virtuous friends.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by hearing much?”

The Buddha said, “Hearing much will cause exquisite wisdom.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by generous giving?”

The Buddha said, “Generous giving will cause great fortune.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by pure precept?”

The Buddha said, “Pure precept will bring rebirth in good destinations.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by forbearance?”

The Buddha said, “Forbearance will cause acceptance of all sentient beings.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by diligence?”

The Buddha said, “Diligence will cause the fulfillment of all Buddha dharmas.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by meditation?”

The Buddha said, “Meditation will bring about a distance from all kinds of distraction and unsteadiness.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by prajna?”

The Buddha said, “Prajna will remove all vexations.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by hearing the dharma?”

The Buddha said, “Hearing dharma will relieve one from the nets of all puzzles.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by right inquiry?”

The Buddha said, “Right inquiry will bring one wonderful knowledge.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by tranquil dwelling?”

The Buddha said, “Tranquil dwelling will cause superior concentration and various supernatural powers.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by right cultivation?”

The Buddha said, “Right cultivation will cause one disgusted with the path.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by the voices of impermanence?”

The Buddha said, “The voices of impermanence will cause the situations without protection and assistance.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by the voices of suffering?”

The Buddha said, “The voices of suffering will cause nonarising.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by the voices of selflessness?”

The Buddha said, “The voices of selflessness will cause detachment from self and associated images.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by the voices of emptiness?”

The Buddha said, “The voices of emptiness will cause tranquility.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by right mindfulness?”

The Buddha said, “Right mindfulness will bring about holy views.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by getting away in mind and body?”

The Buddha said, “Getting away in mind and body will bring about all exquisite concentrations and supernatural powers.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by holy path?”

The Buddha said, “Holy paths will cause holy effects.”

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by definitive understanding?”

The Buddha said, “Definitive understanding will fulfill all kinds of liberation.)

“World-Honored One, what will be caused by the birth of Buddha?”

The Buddha said, “The birth of Buddha makes all factors for enlightenment possible.”

At that time, Supreme One asked the Buddha, “How is the Buddha born?”

The Buddha said, “The Buddha is born due to the initiation of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment.”

“World-Honored One, how is the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment initiated?”

The Buddha said, “Heavenly king, it is caused by great compassion.”

“World-Honored One, how is great compassion caused?”

The Buddha said, “It is due to the reluctance of turning away from sentient beings.”

“World-Honored One, why reluctant to turn away from sentient beings?”

The Buddha said, “Because reluctant to abandon three gems.”

“World-Honored One, why reluctant to abandon three gems?”

The Buddha said, “To remove all vexations.”

At that moment, Supreme One said to the Buddha, “It is unusual, World-Honored One! It is rare, Well-Gone One! Various Buddhas’ secret is fathomless and subtle! They teach about emptiness of dharmas, no arising, no extinction, and original tranquility, but they do not destroy the law of causes and effects; they are distant from permanence and discontinuation. World-Honored One, are some sentient beings, when hearing this dharma, do not respect and believe it, and even slander it?”

The Buddha said, “Yes.”

“World-Honored One, these sentient beings were born as human beings in previous life due to the cultivation of virtuous karma; they neither respect nor believe the dharma and even slander it because they stay with evil friends. As a result, they lose the virtuous karma accumulated previously. The Buddhas’ favor is profound and cannot be repaid, even with one’s own blood and flesh. Thanks to the Buddhas, we strengthen our virtue, experience dharma joy, enjoy self-ease, and earn respect from both humans and deities. World-Honored One, as great bodhisattvas practice the

fathomless prajna paramita, they should acknowledge the kindness of Buddhas, stay close to virtuous friends, cultivate Buddha actions, and realize Buddha bodhi.”

When the Buddha was teaching this dharma, twenty-five thousand bodhisattvas attained forbearance of nonarising. Forty-five thousand human and heavenly beings initiated an aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Twelve thousand heavenly sons stayed far away defilements and achieve pure dharma eye.

Chapter 12

Present Transformation

(In the sixth assembly)

At that time, Bodhisattva Well-Thinking One asked heavenly king Supreme One, “Can transformed Buddha transform another Buddha?”

Supreme One replied, “Following the World-Honored One’s example, a transformed Buddha can create numberless other Buddhas, as many as the sands of the Ganges. They all possess various features and supernatural powers and can teach dharma to benefit sentient beings. Why? It is due to the Buddha’s power of pure aspiration initiated and developed previously.”

Bodhisattva Well-Thinking One said, “Heavenly kind can lecture on the profound dharma very well by saying that it is because of the Buddha’s power of pure aspiration initiated and developed in previous lives. I hope the heavenly king will ask the Buddha to ensure that the profound prajna paramita remains existent permanently in the world and will not disappear or extinguish.”

Supreme One responded, “You must know, Well-Thinking One, the profound

prajna paramita has always been protected by all Thus-Comers. Why? The profound prajna paramita is taught through language, while language is without arising, extinction, appearance, or disappearance. Its meaning expressed by language is also without arising, extinction, appearance, or disappearance. So is the profound prajna paramita of various Buddhas. Why? The dharma is without arising. As it does not arise, it does not extinguish. This is the secret meaning of the Buddha dharma. This exquisite dharma always remains as it has been whether the Thus-Comer appears in the world or not. Its name is realness. Other names are dharma realm and reality. The correct dharma is correspondent with causes and conditions; they are not in conflict. Its nature always exists and never disappears or extinguishes.”

(Supreme One explained the nature and forms of prajna paramita and various dharmas.)

Well-Thinking One asked heavenly king, “Who can protect correct dharma?”

Supreme One responded, “Those who do not oppose any dharmas can protect correct dharma. Why? Because they do not contract the truth and can refrain from disputes.”

Well-Thinking One asked, “Why those who do not contradict the truth and can refrain from disputes are protecting correct dharma?”

Supreme One replied, “If the language is reasonable and without contradicting the truth, and avoids disputes, the correct dharma can be protected. Why? The ignorant ones are attached to incorrect views of existent dharmas, while the truth tellers always talk about emptiness. The worldly people like to assert about permanence, pleasure, self, and purity, while truth tellers prefer impermanence, pain, selflessness, and impurity. The ignorant ones follow the worldly perspective, but the truth tellers argue against the worldly views. The disputes thus arise. To refrain from disputes is called protecting correct dharma.”

Well-Thinking One asked Supreme One, “Which do you prefer?”

Supreme One said, “I neither prefer selfness nor dharma.”

Well-Thinking One asked, “Why not?”

Supreme One said, “The selfness is without self-nature; sentient beings and dharmas are also without self-nature. They thus are all unattainable. The past is without self-nature; the future and present are also without self-nature. They thus are all unattainable. The Buddhas are neither with nor without self-nature; various Buddha lands are neither with nor without self-nature; various dharmas are neither with nor without self-nature. You must know, Well-Thinking One, these are called correspondent with truth. They are free from attachment and grasping. Nonattachment and non-grasping can protect the correct dharma.”

At that time, Bodhisattva Well-Thinking One said to Supreme One heavenly king with acclamation, “Excellent! Excellent! Great Gentleperson! Perfect Gentleperson! You can speak such profound prajna paramita, which is without grasping, attachment, sentences, and words; distant from various nonsensical arguments and separate from the one who differentiates and those differentiated.”

Meanwhile, a heavenly son named Virtuous One rose from his seat at the back. He bowed down to the Buddha’s feet, with left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he put his palms together respectfully and said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, heavenly king Supreme One just talked about the dharma without differentiation. What does it mean?”

The Buddha replied to Virtuous One, “You must know, heavenly son, the dharma without differentiation is the dharma of tranquility. Why? The ones who grasp and those grasped are unattainable. They are without arising, extinction, self and associated images. This is called the dharma without differentiation. The great bodhisattvas can contemplate this way can protect the correct dharma, but they will

not see the protectors and the dharma protected.”

(The Buddha explained the meaning of the dharma without differentiation.)

When this dharma was spoken, ten thousand bhikṣus attained liberation in their minds, and one thousand heavenly sons, far removed from dust and defilement, gave rise to the pure dharma eye.

At that time, Bodhisattva Well-Thinking One asked heavenly king Supreme One, “What kind of talent of debate is able to expound such a profound dharma?”

Supreme One replied, “The talent of debate obtained by one who has no vexations or enduring disposition can expound such a profound dharma. The supreme wisdom of ultimate truth that goes beyond the path of language is inconceivable — such talent of debate can expound such a profound dharma.”

Bodhisattva Well-Thinking One asked heavenly son Virtuous One, “How can one use talent of debate to speak within the dharma of nonarising?”

Heavenly son Virtuous One answered Well-Thinking One, “If a great bodhisattva does not abide in the dharma of nonarising and nonextinction, then there is no talent of debate to expound the profound dharma. Why? Those who are distant from nonsensical arguments, do not see the object perceived, do not see the perceiver, and with the mind dwelling nowhere, are able to expound. Those who do not abide in self or dharma, abide in this dharma or other dharma, but abide only in ultimate meaning, are able to expound.”

Bodhisattva Well-Thinking One then addressed the Buddha, “How rare, World-Honored One! Heavenly son Virtuous One is truly uncommon! He is able to comprehend the profound dharma, and his talent of debate is inexhaustible.”

The Buddha told Well-Thinking One, “Heavenly son Virtuous One has come

here to this Barely Tolerable World from the Unmovable Buddha's place in the realm of Wonderful Joy to hear the profound prajna paramita. You must know that for immeasurable hundreds of thousands of millions of kalpas, he has cultivated rare dharani gate. Though having expounded the dharma for kalpas, he has never been exhausted."

Well-Thinking One asked the Buddha, "What is dharani gate?"

The Buddha said, "Well-Thinking One, this rare one is called the dharani gate into which no dharma enters. This dharani gate goes beyond all words. Language cannot enter it; the mind cannot measure it. Within internal and external dharmas it cannot be obtained.

(The Buddha explained the meaning of the dharani gate into which no dharma enters.)

"You should know, Well-Thinking One, there is not even a small dharma that can enter it. Therefore, it is called the Dharani Gate into Which All Dharmas Do Not Enter. Why? This dharma is equal, without high or low, without entering or leaving. Not one word enters from outside; not one word goes out from within. Neither one word abides in this dharma nor is any mutual perception among words. There is no differentiation between dharma or nondharma, sameness or difference. When spoken, there is no decrease; when unspoken, there is no increase. From the beginning unknown, until now, there has been no arising and no extinction. As it is with words, so it is with mind. As it is with mind, so it is with all dharmas. Why? Because dharmas are apart from language and apart from thought. From the beginning unknown, they are without arising or extinction, therefore without entering or leaving. For this reason, it is called the Dharani Gate into Which All Dharmas Do Not Enter. If one can comprehend this dharma gate, his talent of debate is inexhaustible. Why?

Because he comprehends the unbroken and inexhaustible dharma. Those who can enter empty space can enter this dharani gate.

(The Buddha elaborated the features of this dharani into which no dharma can enter.)

“You must know, Well-Thinking One, if great bodhisattvas can comprehend this dharani gate, their minds become pure, and their bodies and speeches are likewise. Their actions accord with truth; their prajna is firm. All evil demons cannot disturb them; all other-paths lecturers dare not oppose them. Afflictions and karmic forces cannot destroy them. They have firm physical strengths and fearless minds. Whatever they expound, their eloquence is inexhaustible. They can proclaim the profound and subtle gates of the noble truths, with wisdom and learning like great ocean. They abide in tranquility like Mount Sumeru. Like the lion king among beasts, they are fearless. Worldly dharmas do not stain them, like the pure lotus. They benefit sentient beings like the great earth. They wash away defilements like great water. They mature into the world like great fire. They increase correct dharmas like great wind. They cool and delight like the bright moon. They destroy all darkness like the blazing sun. They crush the enemies of vexations like a mighty warrior. Their minds are well tamed like the king of elephants. They thunder the dharma like a great dragon. They universally rain dharmas like a great cloud. Like a skilled physician they cure the illness of afflictions. Like a great king they govern the world well. Like the Four Heavenly Kings they protect sentient beings and the correct dharma. Like Heavenly Emperor Indra, they are supreme in wealth and freedom among humans and heavenly beings. Like the lord Brahma of the Barely Tolerable World, they rule with freedom and unobstructed authority. Like garuḍa they demonstrate for sentient beings. Like a father in the world, they bring forth the treasure of dharma. Like Vaiśravaṇa, they bring forth various treasures beyond the world. Adorned with merit and wisdom,

all sentient beings who see them will benefit. They are praised by all Buddhas, and protected by deities, dragons, and others.

(The Buddha described the superior qualities and remarkable merits and virtues owned by the great bodhisattvas who enter this rare dharani gate.)

“You should know, Well-Thinking One, if great bodhisattvas obtain this dharani gate, they can freely benefit sentient beings, skillfully expound dharma without exhaustion, without fatigue of mind and without seeking fame or profit. Their giving of dharma is equal, without stinginess or jealousy. They uphold pure precept, and their three karmas are without fault. Their patience is pure, free from anger. Their diligence is pure, and what they undertake is accomplished. Their meditation is pure, and their minds are well subdued. Their prajna is always pure without doubt. They possess the four immeasurable minds like great Brahma. They skillfully cultivate and enter and emerge from samadhi and samapatti freely beyond the world. They cultivate the causes of great enlightenment, complete in merit and wisdom, and receive the anointing position, attaining great freedom.”

When the Buddha was teaching this dharani gate, sixty-four thousand bodhisattvas attained nonregression, thirty thousand bodhisattvas attained the forbearance of nonarising, twenty thousand heavenly beings stayed far from dust and defilements and achieved pure dharma eye. Additionally, immeasurable and boundless human and heavenly beings all attained the mind of unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment.

Chapter 13
The Dharani
(In the sixth assembly)

At that time, Great Bodhisattva Manjusri rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, with his left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms respectfully, and addressed the Buddha, "It is unusual, World-Honored One! As the Thus-Comer has said, if great bodhisattvas obtain this dharani gate into which all dharmas do not enter, they can accomplish immeasurable and boundless merits and virtues."

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Manjusri, "Good gentleman, even if the Thus-Comer speaks of these merits and virtues for hundreds of thousands of years, they cannot be fully described."

At that moment, among the assembly there was a bodhisattva named Tranquil Wisdom. He said to Great Bodhisattva Manjusri, "If great bodhisattvas realize this dharani gate, they will be praised by the Buddha, the World-Honored One. They truly will gain great benefits for themselves or others; nothing will be in vain."

Meanwhile, Bodhisattva Manjusri replied to Bodhisattva Tranquil Wisdom, "Good gentleman, in the ultimate truth, no dharma can be praised. As the dharma has neither form nor appearance, how can it be praised? As nothing can be praised, what could one rejoice?"

Tranquil Wisdom said, "I have heard in the Thus-Comer's sutras that all dharmas in their self-nature are without self and without what belongs to self. There is nothing that can cause joy and nothing that can cause anger. This dharma is equal, and

great bodhisattvas should learn it. For example, the great earth rests upon the wheel of water. If one digs a well or a pond, one obtains water and can use it. If one does not dig, there is no way to obtain it. In the same way, the holy dharma of noble wisdom pervades all dharmas equally. If cultivating prajna diligently and skillfully, one can immediately realize it, otherwise, how can one obtain it? Therefore, great bodhisattvas who seek the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment should not be lazy. If they are diligent and vigorous, this realm of equal dharma will appear before them.

“As a person born blind cannot see forms, so sentient beings blinded by vexations cannot see the equal dharma. As a person with eyes but without external light cannot see forms, so practitioners though having wisdom cannot see dharma without virtuous friends. As one who has the heavenly eye can see forms without depending on external light, so great bodhisattvas who have entered the stream of dharma naturally advance to higher stages. As one dwelling in the womb gradually grows yet does not see himself growing, so a great bodhisattva who diligently practices and gradually increases in virtuous actions cannot see them but can accomplish all Buddha dharmas. As in the Snow Mountains there is a wonderful medicinal tree whose branches and trunk neither wither nor break, so a great bodhisattva who diligently cultivates superior actions does not regress or lose.

“As a wheel-turning king who appears in the world and is endowed with seven treasures, so a great bodhisattva who gives rise to the bodhi mind is endowed with seven dharma treasures: giving, pure precepts, patience, diligence, meditation, prajna, and expedient skillfulness. Like a wheel-turning king who travels throughout the four continents with equal mind toward all beings, so a great bodhisattva who benefits sentient beings by means of four approaches of absorption with equal mind. Wherever the wheel-turning king dwells, there is no dispute, so when a great bodhisattva

expounds dharma truthfully, there is no contention. When the large threefold thousand-world first comes into being, there are Mount Sumeru and the great ocean, so when a great bodhisattva first initiates aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, there are prajna and great compassion. As the sun rises the highest mountains are first illuminated, so when a great bodhisattva obtains the torch of prajna, those bodhisattvas with superior and mature virtuous roots are first illuminated. As the great earth equally supports all grasses, trees, flowers, fruits, and medicinal plants, so when a great bodhisattva realizes this dharani gate, his mind toward all sentient beings is equal.”

At that time, the Buddha praised Tranquil Wisdom, saying, “Excellent, excellent! Just as you have said. If great bodhisattvas obtain this dharani gate, whatever they speak, even one sentence or one word, is none other than the Buddha dharma. Such speech is apart from form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharmas. Why? Because what is spoken is not worldly, rather, it is inexhaustible and boundless, which can lead all sentient beings to brightness and ease in body and mind. Even in front of hundreds of thousands of Buddhas, they are fearless. Why? Because great bodhisattvas are supported and protected by Buddhas. Their minds are not attached to self, sentient beings, or dharmas. Thus, they realize pure realness, pure dharma realm, and pure reality. They obtain inexhaustible dharma, inexhaustible words, and inexhaustible talent of debate. At that moment, they give rise to supreme joy because they have attained wonderful wisdom, wonderful insight, and become free from the net of puzzles.”

(The Buddha affirmed and praised Tranquil Wisdom’s statement about the dharani gate.)

When the Buddha was teaching this dharani gate, eight thousand great bodhisattvas obtained this dharani gate, into which all dharmas do not enter. Twelve thousand great bodhisattvas attained nonregression. Five thousand great bodhisattvas attained forbearance of nonarising. Sixteen thousand heavenly sons stayed far from dust and defilements and achieve pure dharma eye. Immeasurable and boundless sentient beings all initiated aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment.

At that time, the Buddha told Tranquil Wisdom, “This dharani can subjugate demons, overcome various other paths, eliminate those who are jealousy of correct dharma, and ignite the fire of prajna but extinguishing vexations. Those who protect dharma teachers can reach nirvana. This dharani can adjust and tame one’s heart and skillfully guide sentient beings. It helps one dignify their demeanors and delights viewers. It teaches dharma equally to those who practice virtuous actions. It observes and recognizes sentient beings to understand their traits and roots. It teaches at right time neither too early nor too late.”

(The Buddha described the superior characters and powers of the dharani.)

As the Buddha was teaching about various merits and virtues, in this large threefold thousand-world, all big oceans, Wonderful High Mountain King, vast land, and other mountains quaked. At that moment, the exquisite sound flowers, great exquisite sound flowers, exquisite spiritual auspicious flowers, great exquisite spiritual auspicious flowers, Utpala, Kumuda, Padma, Pundarika, and Amalaka were playing music above in the sky.

The Buddha further said to Tranquil Wisdom, “Good gentleman, in the past, numberless inconceivable kalpas ago, a Buddha appeared in the world, his name was Treasure Moon, along with other names fully embodying his merits and virtues. His country was called Indestructible One, in the kalpa of Joyful Acclaim. There were

3,200 million monastic disciples. The bodhisattva disciples were numberless. The Thus-Comer realized the bodhi without experiencing ascetic actions and subjugating demonic hindrances. At that time, there was a bodhisattva called Treasure Merits and Virtues, who had wonderful talent of debate and often lectured on dharma to sentient beings. Meanwhile, the public begged Thus-Comer to stay in the world without entering nirvana.

“In the meantime, Treasure Merits and Virtues told the public, “Various Buddhas the World-Honored Ones are free from birth and death. You do not need to beg him not to enter nirvana. If empty space enters nirvana, then the Thus-Comers enter. Why? The dharma of Thus-Comer neither arises nor extinguishes. If realness, dharma realm, reality, and the realm of the inconceivable enter nirvana, then Thus-Comer enters nirvana. Why? The dharma of Thus-Comer is without formation or disintegration, without contamination or purification; it is neither in the world nor beyond the world, neither conditioned nor unconditioned, and neither permanent nor discontinued. If one tongue gives rise to ten tongues, and each further gives rise to one hundred tongues or one thousand tongues, still cannot assert that the dharma has permanence and discontinuation. So how can you beg Thus-Comer not to enter nirvana?”

“When Treasure Merits and Virtues taught this dharma, eighty-six thousand bodhisattvas attained nonregression. Seven thousand great bodhisattvas achieved the dharani gate of boundless merits and virtues, the joyful dharani gate, the unhindered dharani gate, the delighted dharani gate, the great compassion dharani gate, the moon love dharani gate, the moon light dharani gate, the sunlight dharani gate, the wonderful high mountain king dharani gate, the profound and broad dharani gate, and merits and virtues treasure dharani gate. Thirty-six thousand human being and heavenly beings stayed far away from defilements and attained pure dharma eye.”

The Buddha told Tranquil Wisdom, “The Treasure Merits and Virtues in the past is you today. Because of this cause and condition, you can lecture on various merits and virtues of the dharani gate.”

At that time, Great Bodhisattva Manjusri spoke this verse:

Much like exquisite medicine, general retention
can heal puzzles of sentient beings.
like sweet nectar in the heave, those who drink
can bring peace and pleasure to all.

In the meantime, Flower King of Merits and Virtues spoke in verse:

“General retentions do not have words,
Although words manifest general retentions.
Owing to great compassion of prajna,
The teaching is given apart from words.”

At that time, the heavenly king of the Heaven of Tusita rose from his seat, bowed down before the Buddha’s feet. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he put his palms together respectfully and said to the Buddha, “Various Buddhas’ merits and virtues are inconceivable! Various Buddhas’ teachings are inconceivable! Various great bodhisattvas’ superior actions and exquisite dharma teachings are inconceivable! Various heavenly beings have accumulated deep and dense virtuous roots in previous lives, so they are fortunate and privileged to hear the fathomless wonderful dharma.” Then he dispersed innumerable heavenly exquisite flowers as offerings to the Thus-Come.

At that time, the Buddha said to heavenly king, “You must know, heavenly king, those who would like to make offerings to the Buddha, the World-Honored Ones,

should cultivate three dharmas: initiating the bodhi mind, protecting correct dharma, and engaging in cultivation and practice by following Buddha's teaching. Those who can cultivate and learn these three dharmas are called genuinely making offerings to the Buddha. The merits and virtues thus derived are too many to be described exhaustively by Thus-Come even if he remains in the world for one kalpa. Therefore, accomplishing these three dharmas is truly making offerings to the Buddha, the World-Honored One. If you can advocate and protect a four-sentence verse of the Buddha, you indeed advocate and protect the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi realized and attained by the Buddhas in the past, future, and present. Why? The unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi realized and attained by the Buddhas comes from the dharma. Dharma offering is called genuine offering, which is the supreme one among all kinds of offerings. It is superior to property offering. You must know, heavenly king, in the past when I experienced numberless and inconceivable diligent cultivation and learning of bodhisattva path, I heard this verse from above:

The great treasures remain secure by keeping distant from both kings and robbers.

While encountering the correct dharma which is difficult to hear, you should embrace and practice.

Those who cultivate great bodhi-mind can attain tranquility since it can protect correct dharma.

The genuine offerings to the Buddha are made through an intention benefiting oneself and others equally.

“You must know, heavenly king, when I heard this verse in the past, I immediately taught it to others. Therefore, heavenly king, among all kinds of offerings, dharma giving is the supreme one. Why? The unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi arises from the dharma.”

Chapter 14

Persuasion and Cautions

Section 1

(In the sixth assembly)

At that time, Bodhisattva Manjusri again rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet. With his left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms respectfully, and said to the Buddha, "Will there be sentient beings able to believe and accept the profound prajna paramita that Thus-Come teaches in the future when the correct dharma is about to perish? If good gentlepersons hear this sutra, believe and accept it without slander, what merits and virtues will be gained?"

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Manjusri, "Good gentleman, in the future age when the correct dharma is about to perish, there are good gentlepersons who will cultivate pure precept, meditation, and prajna as numberless Buddhas' places. They are truly the Buddhist sons. They believe in this sutra and attain so many merits and merits beyond measurement. All superior virtuous dharmas arise from prajna. If someone can believe and accept without slander, I will now briefly explain with simile.

"Manjusri, this continent of Jambudvipa measures seven thousand yojanas around, broad in the north and narrow in the south, shaped like a cart. The faces of the people there are likewise shaped. Suppose Jambudvipa were filled completely with stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, and self-enlightened ones, as densely as sesame, rice, hemp, bamboo, reeds, and sugarcane forests without a single gap. If good gentlepersons, throughout the lifespans of those holy ones, offered them

the finest food, clothing, bedding, and medicines with sincere and pure hearts; and after they entered nirvana, collected their relics and built stupas adorned for offerings; or filled Jambudvipa with the seven treasures piled up to the Brahma heaven and gave such treasures separately to each of those holy ones; continuing throughout their entire lifetime, day and night, in thirty muhurtas without interruption, Manjusri, what do you think? Would those good gentlepersons obtain great merit and virtues because of this?”

Manjusri said to the Buddha, “Very great, World-Honored One! Very great, Well-Gone One!”

The Buddha told Bodhisattva Manjusri, “If good gentlepersons can believe and accept this sutra without slander, the merit and virtues they obtain surpasses the former ones by a hundred times, a thousand times, and even up to upanisadam times.”

“Manjusri, the eastern continent of Purvavideha measures eight thousand yojanas around, shaped like a half-moon, and the faces of its people are likewise. Suppose it were filled completely with stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, and self-enlightened ones, as densely as forests of grain and reeds without a gap. If good gentlepersons offered them the finest necessities throughout their lifetimes, built stupas after entering nirvana, or filled that continent with the seven treasures piled to the Brahma heaven and offered them separately to each holy one, continuing day and night without interruption, Manjusri, would their merit and virtues be great?”

Manjusri replied, “Very great, World-Honored One! Very great, Well-Gone One!”

The Buddha said, “If good gentlepersons can believe and accept this sutra without slander, the merit and virtues thus derived will surpass the former ones by a hundred times, a thousand times, even up to upanisadam times.”

“Manjusri, the western continent of Aparagodaniya measures nine thousand yojanas around, shaped like a full moon, and the faces of its people are likewise. Suppose it were filled completely with stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, and self-enlightened ones without a single gap. If good gentlepersons made offerings to them throughout their lifetimes, built stupas, and filled the continent with the seven treasures piled to the Brahma heaven, giving them separately without interruption, would their merit and virtues be great?”

Manjusri replied, “Very great, World-Honored One! Very great, Well-Gone One!”

The Buddha said, “If good gentlepersons can believe and accept this sutra without slander, the merit and virtues thus derived will surpass the former ones by a hundred times, a thousand times, even up to upanisadam times.”

“Manjusri, the northern continent of Uttarakuru measures ten thousand yojanas around, square in shape, and the faces of its people are likewise. Suppose it were filled completely with stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, and self-enlightened ones without a gap. If good gentlepersons made offerings throughout their lifetimes, built stupas after entering nirvana, and filled that continent with the seven treasures piled to the Brahma heaven, offering them separately day and night without interruption, Manjusri, would their merit and virtues be great?”

Manjusri replied, “Very great, World-Honored One! Very great, Well-Gone One!”

The Buddha said, “If good gentlepersons can believe and accept this sutra without slander, the merit and virtues thus derived will surpass the former ones by a hundred times, a thousand times, even up to upanisadam times.”

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Chapter 14

Persuasion and Cautions

Section 2

(In the sixth assembly)

The Buddha asked Bodhisattva Manjusri, “Manjusri, suppose this large threefold thousand Barely Tolerable World is broken into extremely small pieces and each small piece represents a holy one. Some good gentlepersons make the best drinks, food, clothing, beds, bedding, and medicines as offerings to these holy ones as long as they survive with sincere and pure minds. After entering nirvana, they will collect these holy ones’ relics and store them in the pagodas that they build and magnificently adorn; or they will make as many seven treasures filling entire large threefold thousand-world and piling high up to the Heaven of Ultimate Form as offerings to the holy ones day and night for thirty kalas incessantly as long as they live. Manjusri, what do you think about this? Will these good gentlepersons be much blessed?”

Manjusri replied to the Buddha, “Very much, World-Honored One; very much, Well-Gone One! Their giving practice itself is inconceivable, not to mention the blessings thus derived.”

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “If the good gentlepersons accept, embrace, disseminate, and lecture on this sutra, the blessings gained by them will be superior to the former ones by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and upanisadam times.

“Manjusri, if these merits and virtues are not transferred to the pursuit of the Buddha bodhi, then they will become the heavenly king of the Heaven of Enjoying

Other-Made Changes after as many kalpas as the extremely small particles. They will further become the heavenly king of Heaven of Enjoying Self-Made Changes after as many kalpas as the extremely small particles. Then they will become the heavenly king of the Heaven of Tusita, Heaven of Yama, and Heavenly Emperor Indra after as many kalpas as the extremely small particles. They will hold these positions in turn repeatedly. It will not be surprising if they become the wheel-turning king. If they can transfer the merits and virtues thus derived toward the pursuit of the perfect knowledge of everything, they will be able to accomplish the expedient skillfulness of the fathomless prajna paramita and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.

“Manjusri, imagine this continent of Jambudvipa were full of as many stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, and self-enlightened ones, like millet, rice, hemp, bamboo, reeds, and sugarcane without a gap. As an extremely violent evil person appeared to kill all these holy ones in burning anger. Manjusri, what do you think about this? Would this person be deeply sinful?”

Manjusri replied to the Buddha, “Yes, World-Honored One. Yes, Well-Gone One! One who kills a single holy one will fall into the uninterrupted hells and suffer for a kalpa, not to mention killing all these holy ones! The sin cannot be measured.”

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “Imagine someone slandered this sutra, the sin would be more than the former one by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and upanisadam times.

“Manjusri, suppose the eastern continent of Purvavideha were full of as many stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, and self-enlightened ones, like millet, rice, hemp, bamboo, reeds, and sugarcane without a gap. An extremely violate evil person killed all these holy ones in burning anger. Manjusri, what do you think about this? Is this person deeply sinful?”

Manjusri replied to the Buddha, “Yes, World-Honored One. Yes, Well-Gone One! Killing a single holy one will fall into the uninterrupted hells and suffer for a kalpa, not to mention killing all these holy ones! The sin cannot be measured.”

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “If someone slandered this sutra, the sin would be more than the former one by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and upanisadam times.

“Manjusri, imagine the western continent of Aparagodaniya were full of as many stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, and self-enlightened ones, like millet, rice, hemp, bamboo, reeds, and sugarcane without a gap. An extremely violate evil person killed all these holy ones in burning anger. Manjusri, what do you think about this? Is this person deeply sinful?”

Manjusri replied to the Buddha, “Yes, World-Honored One. Yes, Well-Gone One! Killing a single holy one will fall into the uninterrupted hells and suffer for a kalpa, not to mention if killing all these holy ones! The sin cannot be measured.”

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “If someone slandered this sutra, the sin would be more than the former one by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and upanisadam times.

“Manjusri, suppose the northern continent of Uttarakuru were full of as many stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, and self-enlightened ones, like millet, rice, hemp, bamboo, reeds, and sugarcane without a gap. An extremely violate evil person killed all these holy ones in burning anger. Manjusri, what do you think about this? Is this person deeply sinful?”

Manjusri replied to the Buddha, “Yes, World-Honored One. Yes, Well-Gone One! Killing a single holy one will fall into the uninterrupted hells and suffer for a kalpa, not to mention if killing all these holy ones! The sin cannot be measured.”

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “If someone slandered this sutra,

the sin would be more than the former one by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and upanisadam times.

“Manjusri, suppose these four continents were broken into extremely small particles and each particle represented a Buddha. A sentient being with extremely evil views initiated an evil intention to kill all Buddhas with poisons, steal all dharma property and wealth, and destroy the dharma kings and dharma medicines in the world. Manjusri, what do you think about this? Is this sentient being deeply sinful?”

Manjusri replied to the Buddha, “Yes, World-Honored One. Yes, Well-Gone One! This sentient being is inconceivably, boundlessly, and inestimably sinful. I cannot bear to hear how sinful he is, let alone to speak it out! Killing one Buddha would fall into the uninterrupted great hells and suffer for many kalpas, let alone killing many Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones. This sentient being would suffer in the uninterrupted hells endlessly.”

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “If someone slandered this sutra and hindered the practitioners from lecturing on, disseminating, and making offerings to this sutra, the sin would be more than the former one by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and one upanisadam times.

“Manjusri, suppose all sentient beings in this large threefold thousand-world have cultivated all bodhisattva actions for innumerable hundreds of thousands of great kalpas and have realized insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, the evil sentient being mentioned above still cannot get out of the suffering in the great hells because of the severely heavy sinful karmas. Manjusri, this evil sentient being must go through all uninterrupted hells in ten directions, the rest of hells, the realm of animals, and the realm of hungry ghosts and experience various kinds of suffering. Why? It is because this ignorant one has destroyed the dharma-body, the mother of the Buddhas, in the past, future, and the present, in the ten directions.

Suppose after enduring heavy suffering in as many kalpas as the extremely small particles of the world, getting out of the three bad destinies, and was reborn in human world, he would be very ill and could not be cured by all possible medical treatments. After as many kalpas as the extremely small particles of the world, if this sentient being was reborn, the physical body would be without a tongue or hand, and this deficiency would persist for as many kalpas as the extremely small particles in the world. Manjusri, if I stay in the world for one kalpa or longer and dedicate all my life to speaking the sinful karmic retributions of this sutra slanderer, I still cannot make it exhausted. Manjusri, the wise ones who would like to attain peace and happiness presently and in future, should not slander this sutra or do anything to hinder it.” (The Buddha cautioned that slandering the sutra of prajna paramita would face long-lasting and painful consequences.)

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Chapter 15

Two Responsibilities

(In the Sixth Assembly)

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “Good gentleman, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas should complete both the initial and subsequent stages of prajna paramitas. Why? The great bodhisattvas should carry out two responsibilities: mastering prajna themselves and teaching and guiding sentient beings.”

At that time, Bodhisattva Manjusri asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, how do great bodhisattvas master prajna and teach and guide sentient beings?”

The Buddha replied to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “Good gentleman, in initial and subsequent stages of practicing prajna, great bodhisattvas should incessantly teach the dharma without extra deliberate effort, helping sentient beings avoid bad destinies and attain good ones, or realize insightfully the holy effects of the three vehicles.

Manjusri, this is how great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and guide sentient beings. Manjusri, when great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita and achieve unconditioned prajna, they are truly practicing prajna, as it fulfills all virtues.”

(The Buddha taught that bodhisattvas should carry out two responsibilities and achieve unconditioned prajna.)

Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “What dharmas will great bodhisattvas cultivate to remain correspondent with the perfect knowledge of everything when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “Good gentleman, when great bodhisattvas practice the profound prajna paramita, they should cultivate the true understanding of all dharmas, stay far away from conceptualization or the incomprehensible, always dwell in nice and cool tranquility, avoid distinction and grasping, follow the correct truth without attachment, and achieve utmost tranquility and unsurpassed equality in all dharmas. By doing so, the great bodhisattvas will become correspondent with the perfect knowledge of everything.”

(The Buddha taught a way to stay correspondent with the perfect knowledge of everything.)

Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “In which spiritual level do the great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “Good gentleman, great bodhisattvas should practice the fathomless prajna paramita in a very profound, broad,

and great spiritual level of merits and virtues. Manjusri, this very profound spiritual level refers to an unconditioned sphere, neither attached to, nor separate from, the two extreme views. Its self-nature is pure and free from all obstacles, inconceivable and inestimable, and not shared by voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones. Manjusri, the broad and great spiritual level is that of all merits and virtues of the Buddhas, the Thus-Comers, adopting great compassion and prajna as nature. It is distant from the forms of differentiation and deliberate effort. It is devoted to bringing benefits and happiness to all sentient beings uninterruptedly, and the dharma teachings satisfy all sentient beings. Manjusri, the spiritual level of the merits and virtues means all merits and virtues correspondent with the great bodhisattvas when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita, such as the thirty-two perfect major marks and the eighty distinguishing minor features. The Buddha's authority and supernatural powers can manifest different forms and shapes according to individual roots, motivation, natures, and actions. They manifest the bodhisattva who ascended to the Heaven of Tusita, then was reborn in Jambudvipa, through the whole process from embryo, new born baby, child, playing, leaving home, practicing ascetic actions, sitting under the bodhi tree, realizing the unsurpassed bodhi, turning the dharma wheel, until entering nirvana. All these manifestations are made with an attempt to relieve sentient beings from birth and death. Manjusri, this is the spiritual level of the great bodhisattvas when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita."

(The Buddha's supernatural powers can manifest the process of rebirth to relieve sentient beings from recycling in birth and death.)

Manjusri said to the Buddha, "It is unusual, World-Honored One! Such spiritual level of the bodhisattvas when they practice the fathomless prajna paramita is an inconceivable spiritual level of the Buddha."

The Buddha responded to Bodhisattva Manjusri, "Yes, it is as you say. The

fathomless prajna paramita is a dharma not shared by other sentient beings; all ordinary sentient beings, voice-hearers, and self-enlightened ones are unable to understand it thoroughly because it is not their spiritual level. No one can attain it except the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones. Why? The meaning of the realness of all dharmas is very profound; it is at ease and unmovable, absorbed by the flawless realm, but it can bring perfect benefits and happiness to sentient beings. Therefore, it is called the spiritual level of the Buddha, which goes beyond languages, absorbed by ultimate meanings. It is far away from contemplation, investigation, perception, and conception. It is not analogous to the dharmas of the world, the utmost among all dharmas. It does not stay in birth and death, nor dwell in nirvana.

(The Buddha explained the meaning of the Buddha's spiritual level.)

“Manjusri, when practicing the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas have five inconceivable things: self-nature, directions of places, various dwellings, sameness and difference, and benefit and happiness.

“Manjusri, why is self-nature inconceivable? The realness of matter cannot be sought and attained, while the realness apart from matter cannot be sought and attained either. This same principle also applies to feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. The realness of the eye sphere cannot be sought and attained, and the realness apart from the eye sphere cannot be sought and attained either. The same principle also applies to ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious spheres. The realness of the sight sphere cannot be sought and attained, and the realness apart from the sight sphere cannot be sought and attained either. This same principle also applies to the sound, smell, taste, touch, and the mental-image spheres. The realness of the eye consciousness realm cannot be sought and attained, and the realness apart from the eye consciousness realm cannot be sought and attained either. This same principle also applies to the ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body

consciousness, and conscious consciousness realms. The realness of the earth realm cannot be sought and attained, and the realness apart from the earth realm cannot be sought and attained either. This same principle also applies to the water, fire, wind, space, and the consciousness realms. The realness of the dharma cannot be sought and attained, and the realness without dharma cannot be sought and attained either.

Therefore, self-nature is inconceivable.

(The Buddha expounded five inconceivable things for great bodhisattvas when they practice prajna paramita. The first inconceivable thing is self-nature.)

“Manjusri, why are directions of places inconceivable? The realness in the realm of desire is inconceivable, and the realness apart from the realm of desire is inconceivable also. This same principle also applies to are the realm of form and the realm of formlessness. The realness in the east is inconceivable, and the realness apart from the east is inconceivable too. This same principle also applies to the south, west, north, northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest, above, and below. Therefore, directions of places are inconceivable.

(The Buddha explained the second inconceivable thing.)

“Manjusri, why are various dwellings inconceivable? Dwelling in peace and happiness is inconceivable, dwelling in tranquility is inconceivable, dwelling with mind is inconceivable, and dwelling without mind is inconceivable. Therefore, various dwellings are inconceivable.

(The Buddha explained the third inconceivable thing.)

“Manjusri, why are sameness and difference inconceivable? The Thus-Comers in the past, future, and present are in the same place. Their self-natures are pure and absorbed by the flawless realm, in which both sameness and difference are inconceivable. Therefore, sameness and difference are inconceivable.

(The Buddha explained the fourth inconceivable thing.)

“Manjusri, why are benefit and happiness inconceivable? Knowledge, wisdom, and supernatural powers are in the same dharma realm; the forms of prajna and skillful means are equal. They can bring innumerable benefits and happiness to all sentient beings although they are unspeakable. They transcend the level of languages and are able to manifest and lecture on the thirty-two perfect major marks, eighty distinguishing minor features, and so forth, according to individual roots and natures of sentient beings.”

(The Buddha explained the fifth inconceivable thing.)

Manjusri asked, “World-Honored One, what are thirty-two perfect major marks and eight distinguishing minor features?”

The Buddha replied to Bodhisattva Manjusri, “Good gentleman, the perfect features of the Thus-Comers are numberless and boundless. I cannot speak of them exhaustively if I give all details. Now I am going to tell you briefly in accord with what sentient beings of the world like to hear.

“Manjusri, what are the thirty-two perfect major marks?

1. The Buddha’s feet have flat and full soles, which are exquisite and are as firm and stable as the bottom of a solid makeup case; wherever he walks, his soles touch the ground evenly and completely.
2. There are perfect thousand-spoke wheel signs on his soles.
3. His hands and feet are flexible and soft.
4. His fingers and toes are webbed, resembling those of the wild goose king.
5. He has slender and round fingers and toes.
6. He has wide, long, and perfect heels, matching the insteps very well.
7. He has slender, high, and full insteps, matching the heels very well.

8. He has slender and round shins in good proportion, like that of the deer king.
9. His slender and long arms extend past the knees like the trunk of the elephant king.
10. His male sex organ is concealed, resembling that of a dragon, a horse, or the elephant king.
11. There is one hair in each of his pores.
12. All his hair stands straight up in a right-handed rotation.
13. His skin is delicate and moisturized.
14. All his skin is golden and is clean and bright.
15. His legs, palms, shoulders, and neck are delicate and full, and the muscles are soft.
16. He has perfect and wonderful shoulders and neck.
17. His shoulder blades and armpits are full and round.
18. His face and manner are perfect, proper, and upright.
19. The shape of his body is slender, wide, solemn, and upright.
20. The span of his arms equals the height of his body; the profile of his body is as perfect as a nyagrodha tree.
21. His upper body, chin, and chest are big and wide, resembling that of the lion king.
22. Bright light always radiates from his face.

23. He has forty neat and white teeth.
24. He has four white canine teeth.
25. He has flavored saliva, swallows smoothly, and always has the most delicious taste when eating.
26. His tongue is long, slender, pure, and broad and can reach the edge of his hair.
27. His voice is as loud and powerful as the heavenly drum. When he recites, his voice is so graceful and far-reaching that all listeners can hear him clearly and evenly. When he speaks, his voice vibrates with resonance.
28. His eyelashes are deep blue and neat, like that of a bull king.
29. His eyes are deep blue and bright.
30. His face is like a full moon, and his eyebrows are like the bows used by the heavenly gods.
31. There are white hairs between his eyebrows.
32. He has a bump on the top of the head.

These are the thirty-two perfect major marks of Thus-Comer.

(The Buddha listed the Thus-Comer's thirty-two perfect major marks.)

“Manjusri, what are the eighty distinguishing minor features?

1. Thus-Comer's fingernails are long, narrow, smooth, bright, fresh, pure, and clean and are of copper color.
2. His fingers are round, fine, and long, and the joints are concealed.
3. All his limbs are of the same length; no space is left between the fingers.

4. His limbs are round, dexterous, free, soft, and clean; they look bright and colorful as a lotus.
5. The sinews, arteries, and veins are well connected, but concealed.
6. Both his ankles are concealed.
7. When moving straight forward, his gait resembles a dragon king or an elephant king.
8. His gait is neat and solemn, which resembles a lion king.
9. His peaceful and moderate gait is like an ox king.
10. His graceful gait is like a swan king.
11. He looks back by turning his body around, resembling what a dragon king or elephant king does.
12. His limbs and their parts are well proportioned.
13. His joints fit together nicely, like a dragon coiling itself up.
14. His knees are firm and round and well proportioned.
15. His sex organs are pure and complete.
16. His body and limbs are moist, soft, and shining without dust.
17. His gaze is solemn and fearless, showing no sign of timidity.
18. His body and limbs are thick, with strength, and well proportioned.
19. His body and limbs are steady, heavy, and complete, and never become loose.
20. His appearance is like a king of celestial beings, surrounded by solemn and pure light.
21. His body is surrounded by a light circle that always shines.
22. His abdomen is square, upright, soft, complete, and hidden.
23. His navel looks like a clockwise spiral, which is deep, round, pretty, pure, and brilliant.

24. He has a thick navel, neither bulging nor hollow, with a pretty periphery.
25. His skin is free from scabs, freckles, and black spots.
26. His palms are full and soft; his soles are flat.
27. His hands are long, straight, moist, and bright.
28. His lips are as bright and red as a Binba fruit; his upper and lower lips are well proportioned.
29. His face is neither too long nor too short, neither too big nor too small, but is just the right size.
30. His tongue is soft, broad, thin, and long, and it is copper in color.
31. His voice is clear and bright and can spread far away like a roaring elephant king.
32. His wonderful voice has a rhythm that sounds like an echo in a deep valley.
33. His nose is tall, prominent, and thin; his nostrils are concealed.
34. His teeth are square, even, and fresh white.
35. His teeth are round, white, and sharp.
36. His eyes are clear and bright.
37. His eyes are long and broad, resembling the petals of a green lotus.
38. His eyelashes are trim and thick and are not white in color.
39. His eyebrows are slender, thin, and soft, but not white.
40. His eyebrows are beautiful, smooth, and neat, and are dark red glazed in color.
41. His eyebrows are high, prominent, bright, and moist, shining like a new moon.
42. He has large, slender, and thick ears with perfect lobes.
43. His ears are beautiful, neat, and without any defect.

44. His appearance and demeanor will never disappoint or defile any viewer; they are pure, perfect, and attractive, and always invite respect and admiration.
45. His forehead is broad, full, even, and neat, and the shape is uniquely wonderful.
46. His upper body is perfectly composed; it is incomparably perfect, resembling a lion king.
47. His hair is slender and thick, dark purple in color, but not white.
48. His hair is fragrant, clean, soft, thin, pliable, and coiled.
49. His hair is even and neat, not twisted or messy.
50. His hair is strong, not broken or falling.
51. His hair is bright and smooth, with no dust on it.
52. His body is sturdy and full, even stronger than Narayana, the powerful god.
53. His body is tall and upright.
54. All his organs are pure and perfect.
55. His body and limbs are incomparably superior and powerful.
56. His body and appearance always attract people; they always want to look at him.
57. His face has a perfectly proportioned length and width; it looks as bright, clear, and pure as a full moon.
58. He has a bright, easy, and peaceful face; he always smiles before he speaks; and he looks at people when he speaks.
59. His face is bright, easy, and pleasant; he never knits his brows, and no colors such as green indicating illness or red ever appear on his face.
60. His body and skin are pure and clean, having no bad smell or filthy things.

61. In all his pores there is always a kind of sweet and gratifying fragrance.
62. His face smells of the most pleasant fragrance.
63. His head is rounded and in perfect shape, like a canopy or a madana fruit.
64. His hair is purple, bright, and pure, resembling the beautiful iridescent hair on a peacock's neck.
65. His voice reaches the listeners just loud enough to make each one satisfied.
66. The top of his head has never been overlooked.
67. His finger and toe webs are clear, solemn, and good looking; they are in beautiful copper-red color.
68. He walks with his feet off the ground, and a four-finger wide imprint is left on the ground when he passes.
69. He walks steadily, not staggering, and no guard is needed.
70. His powers and virtues are far-reaching but always keep people from fear and worry and make them happy and carefree.
71. His voice pitch always pleases sentient beings when talking with them.
72. His lectures can always gratify the sentient beings' needs and favors.
73. Although he speaks in one voice, listeners can each gain the understanding they need.
74. His lectures are given in a reasonable order, and whatever he says is always good and based on causes and conditions.
75. He treats all sentient beings equally, admires good conduct and blames bad conduct, but has no love or hatred.
76. He watches and makes a perfect plan before taking actions. His own actions are a good model and purify the sentient beings' minds.
77. Sentient beings do not tire of looking at his good appearance.
78. His skull is solid and complete.

79. His appearance always looks young; he likes to visit the places where previously live.

80. His palms, soles, and chest are marked with auspicious and pleasant symbols in a red color.

These are Thus-Comer's eighty distinguishing minor features."

(The Buddha briefly listed the Thus-Comer's eighty distinguishing minor features.)

Chapter 16

Admiration and Acclamation

(In the Sixth Assembly)

At that time, Bodhisattva Manjusri stood up from his seat. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he bowed down to the ground before the Buddha's feet, joined his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, "The merits and virtues of the Thus-Comer are rare, unequaled, and inconceivable; so are the Buddhas in the past, future, and present. It is very difficult for sentient beings to conceive when seeing the Thus-Comers or hearing about their merits and virtues. Now, witnessing the Buddha turning the great dharma-wheel, they rejoice, dance, and jump, as they have never experienced before."

After giving this teaching, Manjusri ascended into the sky as high as seven times the height of the tala tree. He joined his palms together and acclaimed in verse:

Among all sentient beings, the Buddha is the most honorable one,

No one is equivalent to him, let alone superior to him.

The exquisite meaning that self and dharms are empty is unequaled equal.

Only my Buddha, the World-Honored One, is also unequaled equal.

Both his vexations and dispositions are eliminated permanently without remainder.

He understands all dharmas, clearly knows everything.

Both his knowledge and teaching dharma are incomparable.

The Buddha is the most venerable one in this large threefold thousand-world.

He has ten abilities, fearlessness, and so forth, and all are real and not illusory.

He possesses the abilities not shared by Heavenly Emperor and Brahma king.

His great favors and virtues have universally influenced all sentient beings.

This is an inconceivable thing that nothing else equals.

With subtle exquisite wisdom and expedient skillfulness,

He guides and brings benefits and happiness to all sentient beings.

At that time, in the assembly, a heavenly son called Wonderful Sight stood up from his seat and bowed down to the ground before the Buddha's feet. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms together respectfully and acclaimed the Buddha in verse:

Saying that sentient beings are equal to the Buddha,

They are not telling the truth.

Claiming that dharma king is noblest, they do not lie.

Humans and heavenly beings are challenging each other,

Only our grandmaster is invincible.

Well-Gone One has subjugated demons and other-paths practitioners,

Guiding the world toward liberation.

He has clarified the four dialectic arguments with inexhaustible speech,

Bring excellent medicines of sweet nectar to sentient beings.

He has contemplated all dharmas with unhindered freedom,

Attaining perfect knowledge that never diminishes.

Viewing and treating all sentient beings with equal great compassion,
 His mind is so pure and uncontaminated by the world.
 He knows roots, motives, and nature of sentient beings so well,
 And giving them teaching suited to each of them.
 There are many kinds of vexations in the world,
 The ways of healing them thus are numberless.
 Only Buddha can teach skillfully about causes and conditions,
 Merely for the sake of benefiting all sentient beings.
 Although encountering the Buddha and hearing his teaching,
 Sentient beings are difficult to guide and make them holy.
 To the great name of the Thus-Come we must look up,
 Those who see him will benefit limitlessly.
 Buddha's knowledge can purify human mind,
 Hearing correct dharma enables one getting rid of birth and death.
 Hearing Buddha's ten names will gain great auspiciousness.
 While the mindfulness of World-Honored One gives us joy and pleasure.
 Aspiring to visit Buddha brings about insightful understanding,
 Cultivating diligently as the Buddha teaches produces perfect knowledge.
 Observing pure precept makes us unpolluted,
 While practicing meditation keeps mind bright and clear.
 Supreme knowledge and wisdom are unmovable,
 The sea of dharma is as pure as sweet nectar.
 As sentient beings live in unrestraint,
 The Buddha stays away from the world.
 The Buddha treats all sentient beings equally as only son,
 The favor and virtues are too enormous to be returned.

They teach first the ways of breaking bondages,
 Then destroy the transformed armies of heavenly demons.
 The World-Honored One has taught how the three realms are faulty,
 He has also shown the unlimited virtues of nirvana.
 Encountering the dharma is a rare occurrence in countless great kalpas,
 I thus pay homage to and acclaim the Buddha most sincerely today.

At that time, in the assembly, a heavenly son named Virtuous Name stood up from his seat. He bowed down to the ground before the Buddha's feet. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he put his palms together respectfully and acclaimed the Buddha in verse:

The Thus-Come practices great loving-kindness equally,
 Teaching the knowledge of reaching the other shore.
 Although the talented ones will arrive first,
 The rest of sentient beings are not excluded.
 I vowed to cultivate the great actions,
 To repay the Buddha's great favor letting no time pass in vain.
 Those extinguishing flaws by themselves,
 Will not repay Buddha's kindness.
 Those cultivating the Buddha's profound teachings
 Are named the real Buddha's children.
 The Buddha has worked hard for sentient beings very long,
 His generosity is too great to be completely repaid.
 His great loving-kindness has shown in the real exquisite dharma,
 That he let all cultivate and further teach to others.
 If the Buddha does not appear in the world,
 All sentient beings will continue to suffer,

There will be no heaven and human world,
 But inferior destinies exist where painful voices are heard.
 Suffering in these destinies are unavoidable,
 Because sentient beings are bound by vexations.
 To relieve their poisonous bonds,
 The Buddha is willing to teach compassionately.
 Thus-Comer is the bliss field of the world,
 Correct cultivation of his teaching leads to liberation.
 Those who do not practice this way
 Are unable to be reborn in heaven or human world.
 It is pity that some sentient beings are disgusted with
 Hearing the profound dharma at Buddha's place,
 Staying in darkness as long as they wish.
 The knowledge of Buddha, the World-Honored One,
 Can be realized only by those like Thus-Comer,
 The knowledge of the Buddha is inestimable by us.
 We should pay homage to the Buddhas in ten directions,
 Fearlessness and abilities not shared by others,
 Are fulfilled only by Buddha, World-Honored One.
 He has perfect features and exquisite fragrances,
 Transcending ordinary sights while the viewers feel joyful.
 He guides sentient beings through three vehicles incessantly,
 Making these pure flowers as offerings I should pay homage.
 Only Buddha knows well the unsurpassed enlightenment,
 That can get rid of all dangers and difficulties.
 The Buddha is the best and the uppermost one,

I should take refuge in the noblest one among all humans.

The Buddha has used the water of correct dharma

To clean universally our dirt with merits and virtues.

The World-Honored One is originally pure inside and outside,

I am now bowing down to pay homage to the genuine pure body.

At that time, the great Brahma king, the lord of this barely tolerable world,
stood up from his seat. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground,
he bowed down to the ground before the Buddha's feet and acclaimed the Buddha in
verse:

The Thus-Comer possesses superior blessings and wisdom,

Bringing benefits and happiness to sentient beings incessantly.

He always showers sweet nectar to rescue those who are thirsty and hungry,

I am now bowing down to him and will benefit others too.

Even the superior and honorable ones in the world

Also come to make offerings to the Buddha.

All evils are removed and virtues are embraced,

I bow to the incomparable venerable one.

To universally rescue all sentient beings,

He has cultivated all learnings with nothing neglected,

Relieving all sentient beings from birth and death,

And bring them peace and happiness,

I am now bowing to the teacher, the savior of the world.

I bow to the exquisite golden body,

I bow to the nectar-like dharma that he teaches,

I bow to the pure undefiled knowledge,

I bow to the woods of all merits and virtues.

At that time, the Buddha said to the great Brahma king, “Excellent, excellent! It is as you say. Your verse about the Thus-Comers is very true. Why? The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, have cultivated and accumulated various blessings, virtues, knowledge, and wisdom for numberless kalpas. Because of this reason, their effects and positions are all perfect. Why? The Thus-Comers are fully equipped with giving, pure-precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas; all their bodies, speeches, and minds are pure. Therefore, they can thoroughly understand realness and reality, and dwell in it. Whatever they say are always true.”

In the meantime, the great Brahma king bowed down to the ground before the Buddha’s feet, joined his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, “I only wish that the World-Honored One will let this prajna paramita endure in the world long with your supernatural powers, so that it can bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings.”

At that time, the Buddha replied to the great brahma king, “All Thus-Comers of the three phases of time in the ten directions have protected and kept the fathomless prajna paramita in mind and let it endure in the world long, so that it can bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings, and all heavenly demons, celibacy practitioners, and sramanas will not destroy and hinder it. Why? I remembered that there was a Buddha whose name was Treasure Moon Thus-Comer, with all the ten names. His country was called No Destruction and his kalpa was Joyful Acclamation. Two of his monastic disciples were Knowledge Prosperity and Truth Bestowal; both were talented in teaching the profound dharma and served as grand dharma teachers. They often followed the Buddha to turn the correct dharma-wheel and lectured on the fathomless prajna paramita for one kalpa. Ten billion demons in the large threefold thousand-world were inspired and turned to aspire toward the bodhi. So, all heavenly demons, and so forth could not destroy or hinder the fathomless prajna paramita.”

At that time, Great Bodhisattva Tranquil Wisdom stood up from his seat and bowed down to the ground before the Buddha's feet. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms together respectfully and said to the Buddha, "Where did Treasure Moon Thus-Come live? Is he still in the world? Has he entered nirvana?"

At that time, the Buddha replied to Tranquil Wisdom, "Good gentleman, one thousand billion Buddha worlds away from here in the east, there was a world named No Destruction. The Thus-Come's lifespan was ten thousand kalpas. In that Buddha world, the fathomless prajna paramita was frequently taught. The heavenly demons and other-paths practitioners in that land did not hinder this sutra; rather, they all had initiated the aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment. The monastic Knowledge Prosperity at that time is now Manjusri, and the monastic Truth Bestowal at that time is now Supreme One heavenly king. These two bodhisattvas have used their expedient skillfulness to protect the fathomless prajna paramita and ensure its long endurance in the world. These bodhisattvas went to hear the teaching of the fathomless prajna paramita wherever in the ten directions when the teaching of the sutra was given. It is like what I am doing today: when I am giving the teaching of this dharma, I will emit great lights to attract the listeners from all directions so they can trace the lights and come to hear the sutra."

Chapter 17

Entrustment

(In the Sixth Assembly)

At that time, the Buddha asked Ananda, “You may accept and embrace the fathomless prajna paramita, but do not forget or lose it!”

In the meantime, Ananda stood up from his seat and bowed down to the ground before the Buddha’s feet. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms together respectfully and said to the Buddha, “How should I accept and embrace this sutra?”

The Buddha replied to Ananda, “There are ten ways to accept and embrace this sutra: writing it, making offerings to it, sharing it with others, listening to it, reading it, accepting and practicing it, lecturing on it extensively, reciting it, reflecting on it, and cultivating and learning it. These are the ten ways of accepting and embracing this sutra. Like all grasses, trees, flowers, fruits, and herbal medicines that grow based on the vast earth, so all superior virtuous dharmas grow based on prajna paramita. Like the seven treasures that will often appear if the wheel-turning king appears in the world, so the triple-gem will survive if the fathomless prajna paramita endures in the world.”

(The Buddha taught ten ways to accept and embrace the sutra of prajna paramita.)

At that time, the public looked up at the Buddha’s face and sighed in sadness, “After the Thus-Come passes away, who will be able to carry such heavy burden of the great dharma of World-Honored One—the unsurpassed bodhi attained after the cultivation and accumulation in numberless and boundless kalpas?”

At that time, to protect this dharma, twelve thousand bodhisattvas in the assembly stood up from their seats and bowed down to the Buddha’s feet; with left shoulders covered and right knees touching the ground, they joined the palms together respectfully and said in verse:

We are willing to renounce our lives,

Not for the sake of pursuing our own bliss in the future,

But for the sake of protecting the Buddha's teaching,
The essential meanings of this profound dharma.

At that time, in the assembly, five hundred heavenly sons, led by the sage kings, stood up from their seats and bowed down to the Buddha's feet. With left shoulders covered and right knees touching the ground, they joined their palms together respectfully and said in verse:

We will fulfill the powers of great compassion,
To deliver the sentient beings.
We will protect and keep the Buddha's teachings,
The essential meanings of profound dharma.

In the meantime, Heavenly Emperor Indra, Coil-Hair Brahma king, and Vaiśravaṇa king stood up from their seats and bowed down to the Buddha's feet. With left shoulders covered and right knees touching the ground, they joined their palms together respectfully and said in verse:

The dharma taught by the World-Honored One today can heal all diseases.
We embrace and bow to the exquisite medicine of prajna.

Vajradhāra, the god of holding diamond pestle, also stood up from his seat and bowed down to the Buddha's feet. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms together respectfully and said in verse:

The dharmas are originally without names,
The Buddha speaks of them with names.
Really teaching us with great compassion,
I bow to him respectfully.

At that time, the Buddha said to the Coil-Hair Brahma king, "You must know, Brahma heavenly king, the Buddha will admire and acclaim three things as the unsurpassed good things. What are the three? The initiation of the aspiration toward

the bodhi, the protection of the correct dharma, and the cultivation in accord with the Buddha's teaching. These are the three unsurpassed ways. Those who can cultivate so are really making offerings to the Buddha. I cannot speak the merits and virtues caused by these three ways inexhaustibly if I stay in this world for one or more than one kalpa. Protecting the Thus-Comer's four-sentence verse will cause unexhausted merits and virtues, not to mention if one can protect the mother of the Buddhas in the past, future, and the present, the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? The Buddhas of the three phases of time are born because of prajna paramita. Making dharma as offering to the Buddha is the real offering. Making property as offering to the Buddha is not the real offering. Protecting the Buddha's correct dharma will bring sentient beings peace and happiness in the past, future, and the present. Therefore, Brahma heavenly king, one should always protect the fathomless prajna paramita. Because of protecting the dharma, you have seen and will see the one thousand Buddhas in this Kalpa of Sages. You must know, Brahma heavenly king, protecting correct dharma in this filthy land even for a very brief instant will bring about more merits and virtues than protecting correct dharma in a pure land for one kalpa or even longer, one should protect diligently the correct dharma."

(The Buddha taught Brahma king about the three unsurpassed things he particularly admired, and the importance of protecting the correct dharma for its endurance in the world.)

The World-Honored One said to Heavenly Emperor Indra, "Kausika, where there is the fathomless prajna paramita, there is the Thus-Comer, who is reborn, attaining the bodhi, turning the dharma-wheel, and entering nirvana. Why? Kausika, all bodhisattvas, all virtuous dharmas, and all Thus-Comers are born because of the fathomless prajna paramita. The places where the dharma teachers lecture on the fathomless prajna paramita equal the places where the Buddha teaches. All sentient

beings should view the dharma teachers as virtuous friends and treat them as they do the Buddha. They should pay homage to them, like them, make offerings to and acclaim them. I cannot exhaustively speak about the merits and virtues of the dharma teachers who have disseminated this sutra even if I stay in this world and speak for one or more than one kalpa. Kausika, if good gentlemen and so forth pierce their own bodies to bleed and make the blood dispersing on the floor as offerings to the dharma teachers, they still have not done enough. Why? The unsurpassed dharma-wheel is very difficult to accept and embrace.”

(The Buddha taught Kausika how important dharma teachers are.)

In the meantime, Heavenly Emperor Indra said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, me and my family will protect the dharma teachers and the places where they lecture on this sutra in the future. Wherever we see the sutra, we will initiate the four kinds of minds mentioned above.”

At that time, the World-Honored One admired Heavenly Emperor Indra, “It is excellent that you can do so! I am entrusting you with this sutra; you will protect and disseminate this sutra in the generations to come.”

Meanwhile, Heavenly Emperor Indra said to the Buddha, “We are reborn in such virtuous destiny totally because of prajna paramita. It is also due to prajna paramita that I can initiate the aspiration to the bodhi. Therefore, I should protect and support the World-Honored One and the fathomless dharma without caring about my own body and life.”

In the meantime, the Buddha admired Heavenly Emperor Indra again, “Excellent, excellent! You can do as you say.”

As the Bhagavat was teaching this sutra, Supreme One and great bodhisattvas, voice-hearers, heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, gandarvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, mahoragas, humans, and nonhumans in the ten directions rejoiced upon

hearing the Buddha's teaching. They believed in, accepted, and practiced the Buddha's teaching.

(This completes the sixth assembly.)

Fascicle 574

Manjusri (1)

(In the Seventh Assembly)

This is what I heard.

There was a time, Bhagavat lived in Anāthapindika garden of Jeta grove, Sravasti, along with hundreds of thousands of senior bhiksus, all were arhats except Ananda who still stayed in the stage of needing more learning. Among all monastics, Sariputra was the leader. There were also tens of thousands of great bodhisattvas present; they were all dignified with nonregressive armor of merits and virtues. Among all great bodhisattvas, Bodhisattva Maitreya, Bodhisattva Wonderful Auspiciousness (Bodhisattva Manjusri), Bodhisattva Unhindered Debate, and Bodhisattva Virtuous Yoke were the leaders.

Bodhisattva Manjusri came to the Thus-Come's place and stood outside. In the meantime, the long-lived sage Sariputra, Mahakatyayana, Mahakasyapa, Mahamaudgalyayana, Fully Loving-Kind One (Purna), Bodhisattva Holding Great Canons, and the rest of senior monastic voice-hearers also came from their residences; they all stood outside the Buddha's place.

The World-Honored One knew that all had assembled. He went out from his residence, arranged the seat as he usually did, and sat on it with legs crossed. He then said to Sariputra, "Why do you stand outside the door?"

In the meantime, Sariputra replied, "World-Honored One, Bodhisattva Manjusri first came here and stood. We came later."

At that time, the World-Honored One knew but deliberately asked Manjusri, "Good gentleman, do you first come and stand here to take a look at, pay homage to, and stay with the Buddha?"

Manjusri stepped forward and said to the Buddha, “Yes, World-Honored One. Yes, Well-Gone One! Why? I have never been tired of looking at, paying homage to, and staying closely with the Thus-Comer. I have come here to bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings. World-Honored One, I have come here to look at, pay homage to, and stay closely with the Thus-Comer for the sake of bringing benefits and happiness to all sentient beings. I do so not for the sake of realizing insightfully the Buddha bodhi, or only because I am fond of looking at the Buddha body, or for disturbing the real dharma realm, differentiating among various dharma natures, or for anything else. As I look at Thus-Comer, I see the form of the realness that is without movement and actions, without differentiations, and not different from differentiations. It is not the directions and places, while it is not apart from the directions and places. It is neither existent nor nonexistent. It is neither permanent nor impermanent. It is neither with the three phases of time nor apart from the three phases of time. It is without arising and extinction, going and coming, contamination and noncontamination, duality and nonduality. It is far away from thinking and speech. To contemplate the Thus-Comer as the form of the realness is really seeing the Buddha; it is also named paying homage to and staying closely with the Thus-Comer. It will bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “When contemplating in this way, what do you see?”

Manjusri replied, “World-Honored One, when contemplating in this way, I have seen nothing, nor do I grasp the forms of the dharmas.”

(Bodhisattva Manjusri described the form of realness, through which he said he saw the Thus-Comer. Nevertheless, he saw nothing when undertaking the contemplation.)

The Buddha said, “Excellent, excellent, kid, because you can contemplate Thus-Comer in this way, you will neither grasp nor not grasp the dharmas; you will

not assemble them or disperse them.”

(The Buddha approved of Manjusri’s way of contemplation.)

In the meantime, Sariputra said to Manjusri, “It is very unusual that you, the benevolent one, can stay closely with and pay homage to the Thus-Come. You have always had loving-kindness and pity on all sentient beings, but you attain nothing from them. You have educated and guided them so that they can approach nirvana, but you are not attached to that. You have put on great armor to bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings, but you do not assemble, disperse, and destroy skillful means.”

Meanwhile, Manjusri said to Sariputra, “Yes, it is as the venerable one says. I have put on great armor to bring benefits and happiness to sentient beings so that they are able to approach nirvana, but I have not attained or grasped the sentient beings and the nirvana that I have tried to guide them to realize insightfully. Furthermore, Sariputra, I do not truly put on great armor and bring benefits and happiness to sentient beings. Why? It is because the realm of sentient beings does not increase or decrease. Suppose in this Buddha land, there are as many Buddhas as the sands of the Ganges. Each Buddha has lived for as many kalpas and lectured on as many dharmas to deliver as many sentient beings as the sands of the Ganges to allow them entering nirvana without remainder. Such Buddhist services have happened not only in this Buddha land, but also in as many Buddha lands in the ten directions as the sands of the Ganges, in which, as many Buddhas have taught the dharmas for as many kalpas and delivered as many sentient beings to enter nirvana without remainder. Even so, the realm of the sentient beings does not increase or decrease. Why? It is because the self-natures of the sentient beings are distant and boundless, neither increase nor decrease.”

Sariputra asked, “Manjusri, if the self-natures of the sentient beings are distant

and boundless and do not increase or decrease, then why do bodhisattvas pursue the great bodhi to lecture on the exquisite dharma for sentient beings?”

(This question was often asked by the challengers as representatives of sentient beings in general.)

Manjusri replied, “Sariputra, nothing like this really exists—the bodhisattvas pursue the great bodhi to lecture on exquisite dharma for sentient beings. Why? Sariputra, all dharmas are unattainable in the final analysis.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “If the sentient beings are unattainable, then why is the realm of sentient beings established?”

Manjusri replied, “World-Honored One, the realm of the sentient beings is established provisionally.”

“Manjusri, if some asks you how many sentient beings there are, what would you say?”

“World-Honored One, I will say they are as many as the number of Buddha dharma. So are other realms.”

“Manjusri, suppose someone asks you how spacious the realm of the sentient beings is, what will you say?”

“World-Honored One, I will say it is as spacious as the Buddha realm.”

“Manjusri, if someone asks which realm sentient beings belong to, how will you respond?”

“World-Honored One, I answer that it belongs to the Buddha's unfathomable realm.”

“Manjusri, if someone asks where does the realm of sentient being dwell? How will you reply?”

“World-Honored One, I will say that it dwells in where the uncontaminated dharmas do.”

“Manjusri, where do you dwell when you cultivate prajna paramita?”

“World-Honored One, I dwell nowhere when cultivating the fathomless prajna paramita.”

“Manjusri, how does one practice the profound prajna paramita without dwelling in any place?”

“World-Honored One, I can cultivate prajna paramita because I dwell nowhere.”

(One can practice prajna paramita because they do not dwell.)

“Manjusri, when you cultivate prajna paramita, do you increase the virtuous dharmas and decrease the unvirtuous dharmas?”

“World-Honored One, I have neither increased the virtuous dharmas nor decreased the unvirtuous dharmas when I cultivate the fathomless prajna paramita. World-Honored One, I have neither increased nor decreased any dharma when cultivating the fathomless prajna paramita. World-Honored One, prajna paramita appears in the world not for the sake of increasing or decreasing the dharmas. World-Honored One, cultivating the fathomless prajna paramita is not for the sake of discarding the dharmas of the ordinary sentient beings, and so forth, or absorbing all Buddha dharmas.

(Prajna paramita does not increase or decrease dharmas.)

“Why? The fathomless prajna paramita arises not for the sake of discarding or attaining dharmas. World-Honored One, cultivating the fathomless prajna paramita is not intended to become disgusted with and thus stay away from the faults of the birth and death, or become fond of the merits and virtues of nirvana. Why? The cultivators of this dharma do not see the birth and death, let alone become disgusted with it. They do not see nirvana, let alone become fond of it. World-Honored One, the cultivators of the fathomless prajna paramita do not see the inferiority and superiority of the

dharmas, the loss and attainment of the dharmas, or that the dharmas can be renounced or grasped. World-Honored One, the cultivators of the fathomless prajna paramita do not increase or decrease the dharmas. Why? In the real dharma realm, there is no increase or decrease. World-Honored One, those who can cultivate this way are the real cultivators of the fathomless prajna paramita.

(Manjusri stated that prajna paramita neither increases nor decreases dharmas. The cultivators of prajna paramita do not increase or decrease dharmas either.

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, those who cultivate prajna paramita without increasing or decreasing the dharmas are the real cultivators of the fathomless prajna paramita. Those who cultivate prajna paramita without making all dharmas arise or extinguish are the real cultivators of the fathomless prajna paramita. Those who cultivate prajna paramita without seeing the increase or decrease of all dharmas are the real cultivators of the fathomless prajna paramita. Those who cultivate prajna paramita without seeing the arising and extinction of all dharmas are the real cultivators of the fathomless prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, those who cultivate prajna paramita without reflecting on or aspiring to the dharmas and without grasping the aspirants and the aspired dharmas are the real cultivators of the fathomless prajna paramita. Those who cultivate prajna paramita without seeing the dharmas as if they are good or ugly, high or low, are the real cultivators of the fathomless prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, if good gentlepersons cultivate prajna paramita and do not attain superiority or inferiority in all dharmas, they really cultivate prajna paramita. Why? The realness, dharma realm, dharma nature, and the reality are without superiority and inferiority. To cultivate this way is really cultivating the fathomless prajna paramita.”

(Manjusri distinguished the real cultivators of prajna paramita.)

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Are the Buddha’s exquisite dharmas not superior?”

Manjusri said, “World-Honored One, because the Buddha’s exquisite dharmas are ungraspable, they cannot be said as superior or inferior. Don’t Thus-Comers realize insightfully that all dharmas are empty?”

The World-Honored One replied, “They do realize so, kid!”

Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “In the emptiness of the dharmas, which dharmas are superior and which are inferior?”

The World-Honored One admired, “Excellent, excellent! It is as you say. Manjusri, is the Buddha dharma not unsurpassed?”

“Yes, World-Honored One! The Buddha dharma is truly unsurpassed, but within it no dharma is attainable, so we cannot say the Buddha dharma is unsurpassed.

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, if good gentlepersons cultivate prajna paramita, they will not embrace the Buddha dharma or subjugate and tame the dharmas of ordinary sentient beings and so forth. It is because the fathomless prajna paramita does not increase, decrease, or tame the dharmas of ordinary sentient beings and so forth, nor does it differentiate among all dharmas. To cultivate this way is called the real cultivation of the fathomless prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, if good gentlepersons cultivate prajna paramita, they do not perceive the dharmas as they can be conceptualized or differentiated.”

“Manjusri, have you thought about the Buddha dharma?”

“No, World-Honored One, if I really see the Buddha dharma, I may think about it, but I have not seen it.

“World-Honored One, prajna paramita does not arise to differentiate among the dharmas; namely, it does not distinguish that this is the dharma of ordinary

sentient being, the dharma of voice-hearer, the dharma of self-enlightened one, the dharma of bodhisattva, or the dharma of Thus-Comer. If good gentlepersons cultivate and learn diligently and attentively the fathomless prajna paramita, they will not attain any dharma or speak about any dharma; they will not say that the dharma nature of ordinary sentient being is existent, the dharma nature of the voice-hearer or Thus-Comers is existent. Why? The dharma nature is empty in the final analysis and cannot be seen. To cultivate this way is really cultivating and learning the fathomless prajna paramita.

(Manjusri stated the way of truly cultivating the fathomless prajna paramita.)

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, when cultivating prajna paramita diligently, the good gentlepersons do not think, ‘This is the realm of desire; this is the realm of form; this is the realm of formlessness; and this is the realm of extinction.’ Why? The fathomless prajna paramita does not see that the dharmas can be extinguished. To cultivate this way is really cultivating and learning the fathomless prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, when cultivating prajna paramita, one will not do the dharmas a favor or blame the dharmas for wrongdoing. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita neither embrace the Buddha dharma nor discard the dharmas of ordinary sentient being, and so forth. Why? When cultivating prajna paramita diligently, the good gentlepersons will not intend to realize insightfully, attain, or destroy the dharmas of ordinary sentient being and so forth because they have understood that all dharma natures are equal. Cultivating in this way is really cultivating the fathomless prajna paramita.”

At that time, the World-Honored One admired, “Manjusri, excellent, excellent! Today you can speak of the very profound dharma and give the real dharma seal for great bodhisattvas. You have also served as the great dharma seal for the arrogant

voice-hearers and the self-enlightened ones, so they can realize that what they knew previously is not the ultimate meaning. Manjusri, if good gentlepersons are not sinking, drowned, shocked, and frightened when hearing such profound dharma, they must have planted the virtuous roots at numberless and boundless Buddhas' places not only few places."

At that time, Manjusri the child joined his palms together respectfully and said to the Buddha again, "Now I would like to speak more about the fathomless prajna paramita. I beg your kind permission!"

The Buddha said to Manjusri the child, "Yes, you may speak as you wish."

So, Manjusri continued saying to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, if one cultivates the fathomless prajna paramita and realizes that one can neither dwell nor not dwell in the dharmas, then such fathomless prajna paramita does not dwell depending on the dharmas. Why? All dharmas cannot be depended on. World-Honored One, to cultivate this way is really cultivating and learning the fathomless prajna paramita because they do not grasp the forms of all dharmas.

"Furthermore, World-Honored One, when contemplating the fathomless prajna paramita, one should not contemplate the nature and the forms of dharmas insightfully; namely, the Buddha dharma cannot be contemplated insightfully, not to mention the dharma of bodhisattvas. The dharma of bodhisattvas cannot be contemplated insightfully, not to mention the dharma of self-enlightened ones. The dharma of self-enlightened ones cannot be contemplated insightfully, not to mention the dharma of voice-hearers. The dharma of voice-hearers cannot be contemplated insightfully, not to mention the dharma of ordinary sentient beings. Why? It is because all dharmas are distant from nature and forms.

"Furthermore, World-Honored One, if great bodhisattvas, when cultivating the fathomless prajna paramita, do not differentiate whether the dharma natures are

conceivable or inconceivable, then they will not differentiate among all dharmas when cultivating prajna paramita.

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, when cultivating the fathomless prajna paramita, great bodhisattvas do not see, within all dharmas, that this is the Buddha dharma and that is not the Buddha dharma, or this is conceivable and that is inconceivable. Only because all dharmas have no different natures. If sentient beings can cultivate the fathomless prajna paramita this way, they will contemplate all dharmas as they are Buddha dharma because they are in accord with the bodhi. They will contemplate all dharmas as they are inconceivable because they are empty in the final analysis. These sentient beings must have stayed closely with and made offerings respectfully to hundreds of thousands of Buddhas and planted various virtuous roots so that they can cultivate prajna paramita in this way.

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, if good gentlepersons are not sinking, drowned, shocked, and frightened when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita, they must have stayed closely and made offerings respectfully to hundreds of thousands of Buddhas and planted various virtuous roots, so that they can do in this way.

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, ones should cultivate diligently to contemplate the fathomless prajna paramita so that they will see neither contamination nor purification in all dharmas. Although they do not see these, they still can always cultivate the fathomless prajna paramita diligently and tirelessly.

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, if people cultivate the fathomless prajna paramita without holding different thoughts about the dharmas of ordinary sentient being, voice-hearer, self-enlightened one, bodhisattva, and Buddhas, they will realize that all dharmas are empty in the final analysis. This is the real cultivation and learning of the fathomless prajna paramita.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “How many Buddhas have you stayed

close and made offerings to?”

Manjusri replied, “World-Honored One, I have stayed close and made offerings to as many Buddhas as the images of a magician’s mind. It is because all dharmas are like illusions.”

“Manjusri, haven’t you pursued the Buddha dharma?”

“World-Honored One, I have not seen any dharma that is not Buddha dharma; so, what will I pursue?”

“Manjusri, have you now achieved the Buddha dharma?”

“World-Honored One, I have not seen any dharma that can be named Buddha dharma, so what have I achieved?”

“Manjusri, haven’t you attained the unattached nature?”

“World-Honored One, I am already the unattached nature; will the unattached nature attain nonattachment?”

“Manjusri, should you not sit on the throne of the bodhi?”

“World-Honored One, for the Buddhas, the meanings of the throne of the bodhi are nonexistent, how can I sit on it? Why? All dharmas should be measured by reality; in reality, both the throne and the one who sits are unattainable.”

“Manjusri, what does the designated name of reality mean?”

“World-Honored One, reality means the fake body.”

“Manjusri, why is the fake body named reality?”

“World-Honored One, reality is without going and coming, neither real nor fake, and the forms of its body and nonbody are unattainable, so is the fake body. Therefore, the fake body is reality.”

In the meantime, Sariputra said to the Buddha, “If bodhisattvas are not sinking, drowned, shocked, and frightened when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita, they certainly will aspire to and approach the bodhi without regression.”

Bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Buddha, “If bodhisattvas are not sinking, drowned, shocked, and frightened when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita, they must be very close to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Why? These bodhisattvas have been awakened insightfully to the dharma nature and are distant from all differentiations, like the great bodhi.”

Manjusri also said to the Buddha, “If bodhisattvas are not sinking, drowned, shocked, and frightened when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita, they are, like the Buddha, worthy of the offerings made respectfully by sentient beings of the world. Why? They have been awakened to the real nature of all dharmas.”

In the meantime, a lady named No Worry joined her palms together respectfully and said, “World-Honored One, if sentient beings are not sinking, drowned, shocked, and frightened when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita, they will not worry about the dharmas of ordinary sentient being, voice-hearer, self-enlightened one, bodhisattva, and Thus-Comer. Why? They have thoroughly understood that all dharmas are nonexistent; ones who worry and the dharmas worried about are all unattainable.”

At that time, the Buddha said to Sariputra and so forth, “Yes, it is as you say. If good gentlepersons are not sinking, drowned, shocked, and frightened when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita, they must have dwelled in the state of nonregression; they will approach the bodhi without regression. If sentient beings are not sinking, drowned, shocked, and frightened when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita; rather, they rejoice and are happy to believe in, accept, listen to, accept, and embrace it and further lecture on it for others tirelessly, these sentient beings will serve as the real, superior, and great almsgivers. They can give unsurpassed treasures and properties and are well equipped with giving paramita. They have fulfilled pure precept, possessed real and superior pure precept, and achieved perfect merits and

virtues of pure precept, so they are well equipped with pure-precept paramita. These sentient beings have fulfilled forbearance, possessed real and superior forbearance, and achieved the perfect merits and virtues of forbearance; so they are well equipped with forbearance paramita. These sentient beings have fulfilled diligence, possessed real and superior diligence, and achieved the perfect merits and virtues of diligence; they are well equipped with diligence paramita. These sentient beings have fulfilled meditation, possessed real and superior meditation, and achieved the perfect merits and virtues of meditation; they are well equipped with meditation paramita. These sentient beings have fulfilled prajna, possessed real and superior prajna, and achieved the perfect merits and virtues of prajna; they are well equipped with prajna paramita. These sentient beings have achieved the real and superior loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. They are able to lecture on and explicate for others the fathomless prajna paramita.”

(The Buddha described how the good gentlepersons who are not overwhelmed and shocked upon hearing the fathomless prajna paramita have achieved in the six paramitas.)

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Based on what meanings do you realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi?”

Manjusri replied, “World-Honored One, I do not intend to dwell in the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, let alone realize it. I do not intend to aspire to the bodhi. Why? The bodhi is me, and I am the bodhi; so how can I aspire to and pursue it?”

The Buddha said, “Excellent, excellent! Kid! You can speak skillfully of the very profound meanings. You have planted many virtuous roots at the Buddhas’ places in the past. You have aspired to the bodhi for a long time, and you can cultivate various pure celibacy actions based on nonattainment.”

Manjusri asked the Buddha, “Those who have attained in the dharmas can cultivate pure celibacy actions based on nonattainment. But I have not seen any dharma that can be either attained or not attained, how can I cultivate pure celibacy actions based on nonattainment?”

The Buddha replied to Manjusri the child, “Have you seen the virtues of my voice-hearers?”

“Yes, World-Honored One, I have.”

The Buddha asked, “Then what have you seen, kid?”

“World-Honored One, I have seen that these voice-hearers are neither the ordinary sentient beings nor the holy ones; they neither need more learning nor not need more learning; they are neither visible nor invisible; they are neither the seers nor the not seers; they are neither many nor few; they are neither small nor large; they are neither tamed nor not tamed. I have seen these, but I have not a thought of seeing.”

In the meantime, Sariputra asked Manjusri, “You have seen these in the vehicle of voice-hearers. What will you see in the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment?”

“Great virtuous one, now I have not seen bodhisattvas or the dharma of bodhisattvas. I have not seen the bodhi and the actions leading to the bodhi. I have not seen the way of realizing the bodhi or anyone who can realize insightfully the bodhi. As I try to see the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, I have seen nothing in it.”

In the meantime, Sariputra asked Manjusri, “What will you see in the Thus-Comer?”

“Great virtuous one, halt! Do not criticize the Thus-Comer, the great dragon and elephant king.”

“Manjusri, what does the designated name of the Buddha mean?”

“Let me ask you, great virtuous one, what does the designated name of the ‘I’ mean?”

Sariputra replied, “The ‘I’ is a provisionally established name. It means emptiness.”

“Great virtuous one, the designated name of the Buddha is the designated name of the ‘I’. Both the ‘I’ and the Buddha are empty in the final analysis. It is in terms of the worldly way of speech to provisionally establish this name. The name of the bodhi is also provisionally established. I cannot find the real bodhi in it; the empty forms of the bodhi cannot be expressed by languages. Why? Both the name and the bodhi are empty. As the name is empty, so is the speech; we cannot express emptiness with an empty dharma. As the bodhi is empty, so is the Buddha. The designated name of emptiness is Buddha.

(Manjusri explained the relationship between designated names and the dharmas represented by the names to show the empty nature of all dharmas.)

“Furthermore, great virtuous one, the Buddha is without coming and going, without arising and extinction, without realization and attainment, without achievement, without name and forms, without words and speeches, and without expressed. One can only realize the Buddha from inside with the subtle and exquisite knowledge. It means Thus-Comers have been awakened that all dharmas are empty and tranquil in the final analysis and thus realize the great bodhi; they then establish provisionally the names to comply with sentient beings of the world. Therefore, the Buddha is not real; he is either existent or nonexistent; he is unattainable.

(Manjusri described the nature and traits of Thus-Comer.)

“Furthermore, great virtuous one, the subtle and exquisite knowledge and wisdom that the Thus-Comers realize is called bodhi. To fulfill the bodhi is called the

Buddha. Because the bodhi is empty, so is the Buddha; therefore, Buddha is the designated name of emptiness.”

(Manjusri also explained what the bodhi and the Buddha mean.)

In the meantime, Sariputra said to the Buddha, “The profound dharma that Manjusri spoke of cannot be understood by the beginners.”

At that time, Manjusri the child said to the long-lived sage Sariputra, “Not only the beginners, but also the arhats who have accomplished what should be done, cannot understand what I say. Nobody can really understand what I say. Why? The forms of the bodhi cannot be perceived by consciousness; they cannot be seen or heard; they are without attainment and mindfulness; they are without arising and extinction; they cannot be spoken or manifested, nor can they be heard and accepted. The nature and the forms of the bodhi are empty and tranquil; the great bodhisattvas cannot know them, not to mention the two-vehicle practitioners. As the nature and the forms of the bodhi are unattainable, let alone there are the ones who can realize the bodhi.”

(Manjusri further explained the nature and forms of bodhi.)

Sariputra asked, “Manjusri, does the Buddha not realize insightfully dharma realm?”

“No, great virtuous one! The Buddha is dharma realm, while dharma realm is the Buddha; dharma realm should not realize dharma realm.

(The Buddha is dharma realm.)

“Furthermore, Sariputra, the emptiness of all dharmas is called dharma realm, while dharma realm is called the bodhi. Both dharma realm and bodhi are distant from nature and forms, therefore, it is said that all dharmas are empty. The emptiness of all dharmas, the bodhi, and the dharma realm belong to the spiritual level of the Buddha; they are not dualistic or separate. Because they are not dualistic and separate, they

cannot be known; because they cannot be known, they are without speech. Because they are without speech, they cannot be established as they are conditioned or unconditioned, existent or nonexistent.

(Manjusri further explained the emptiness of all dharmas, the bodhi, and dharma realm belong to Buddha's spiritual level.)

“Furthermore, Sariputra, all dharma natures are not dualistic or separate either. Because they are neither dualistic nor separate, they cannot be known. Because they cannot be known, they are without speech. Because they are without speech, they cannot be established. Why? The original nature of all dharmas is nonexistent, so cannot be established as here or there, this or that.

“Furthermore, Sariputra, creating uninterrupted sins equals to creating the inconceivable or reality. Why? Both the inconceivable and the five uninterrupted hell are reality; they are not different. As reality cannot be made, so are the inconceivable and the uninterrupted hells. Based on this meaning, those who create the uninterrupted sins do not fall into the hells, while those who create the inconceivable are not reborn in heaven. The uninterrupted sins makers will not fall into the birth and death for a long time, while the inconceivable ones will not realize nirvana ultimately. Why? Sariputra, both the inconceivable ones and the five interrupted sins dwell in reality; their natures are not different; they are without arising and extinction, going and coming, and causes and effects; they are neither virtuous nor unvirtuous. They will neither cause bad destinies nor correspond with human world or heaven. They will not realize nirvana or be drown in birth and death. Why? It is because the real dharma realm is neither virtuous nor unvirtuous, neither high nor low, and neither in the front nor in the rear.

“Furthermore, Sariputra, the heavily sinful bhiksus will unnecessarily fall into hells, while pure-precept observers will unnecessarily be reborn in heaven. The

heavily sinful bhiksus will unnecessarily be drown in birth and death, while the pure-precept observers will unnecessarily realize nirvana. The heavily sinful bhiksus will unnecessarily be scolded, while the pure-precept observers will unnecessarily be praised. The heavily sinful bhiksus will unnecessarily be looked down with contempt, while the pure-precept observers will unnecessarily be paid homage. The heavily sinful bhiksus will unnecessarily cause controversy, while the pure-precept observers will unnecessarily foster harmony. The heavily sinful bhiksus will unnecessarily be kept far away, while the pure-precept observers will unnecessarily remain intimate. The heavily sinful bhiksus will unnecessarily diminish, while the pure-precept observers will unnecessarily increase. The heavily sinful bhiksus are unnecessarily not worthy of offerings, while the pure-precept observers are unnecessarily worthy of offerings. The heavily sinful bhiksus will unnecessarily have their flaws increased, while the pure-precept observers will unnecessarily have their flaws decreased. The heavily sinful bhiksus are unnecessarily impure, while the pure-precept observers are unnecessarily pure. The heavily sinful bhiksus unnecessarily have no pure belief, while the pure-precept observers unnecessarily have pure belief. The heavily sinful bhiksus are unnecessarily not worthy of laypersons' almsgiving, while the pure-precept observers are unnecessarily worthy of the laypersons' almsgiving. Why? Sariputra, in the real dharma realm, the nature of observing and the nature of violating the precepts are equal; they are not different.

“Furthermore, Sariputra, the ordinary sentient beings are named the harmonious ones, while the flawless bhiksus are named the unharmonious ones.”

“Manjusri, why do you say so?”

“Great virtuous one, the ordinary sentient beings are in accord with the causes of the arising, so they are named the harmonious ones; the arhats have no such meaning, so they are named the unharmonious ones. It is based on this meaning that I

say so.

“Furthermore, Sariputra, the ordinary sentient beings are named overcoming fears, while the flawless bhiksus are named not overcoming the fears.”

“Manjusri, why do you say so?”

“Great virtuous one, the ordinary sentient beings do not fear the horrible dharmas, so they are called overcoming fears. The arhats know that the horrible dharmas are nonexistent and thus there are no fears to be overcome. I say so because of this meaning.

“Furthermore, Sariputra, the ordinary sentient beings attain the forbearance of nonextinction, while the bodhisattvas attain the forbearance of nonarising.”

“Manjusri, based on what meaning do you say so?”

“Great virtuous one, the ordinary sentient beings are not fond of tranquil extinction, so they are named attaining the forbearance of nonextinction. The bodhisattvas do not see the arising of the dharmas, so they are named attaining the forbearance of nonarising. It is based on this meaning that I say so.

“Furthermore, Sariputra, the ordinary sentient beings are named the tamed ones, while the flawless bhiksus are named the untamed ones.”

“Manjusri, based on what meaning do you say so?”

“Great virtuous one, the ordinary sentient beings are not tamed yet, but they are tamable, so they are named the tamed ones. The arhats have eliminated all bonds and do not need taming, so they are named the untamed ones. It is based on this meaning that I say so.”

“Furthermore, Sariputra, the ordinary sentient beings are named the transcendental practitioners with intensified minds, while the flawless bhiksus are named non-transcendental practitioners with inferior minds.”

“Manjusri, based on what meaning do you say so?”

“Great virtuous one, the ordinary sentient beings practice in conflict with the dharma realm with rising minds, so they are named the transcendental practitioners with intensified minds. The arhats act in accord with the dharma realm with humble minds, so they are named the non-transcendental practitioners with inferior minds. It is based on this meaning that I say so.”

In the meantime, Sariputra admired Manjusri, “Excellent, excellent! You do very well to explicate the meanings of the secret words for me.”

Manjusri replied, “Yes, great virtuous one! I not only explicate the meanings of the secret words, but also a real flawless arhat. Why? I will never initiate an aspiration toward the voice-hearer and the self-enlightened one, so I am named the real flawless arhat.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Is there the cause and condition suggesting that the bodhisattvas can sit on the bodhi throne without realizing the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi?”

Manjusri replied, “World-Honored One, there is the cause and condition to suggest that the bodhisattvas can sit on the bodhi throne without realizing insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. In bodhi there is not a little dharma that can be named the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Real bodhi nature has no differentiation. Sitting does not mean attainment, and non-sitting does not mean renunciation. Because of this cause and condition, it is reasonable to say that the bodhisattvas sit on the bodhi throne without realizing insightfully the bodhi. The formless bodhi cannot be realized.”

Manjusri said to the Buddha again, “The unsurpassed bodhi is the five uninterrupted sins, while the five uninterrupted sins are the bodhi. Why? Bodhi and the five uninterrupted sins are provisionally established. Not a bodhi nature can be realized, cultivated, learned, and seen intuitively. So are the five uninterrupted sins.

Furthermore, the original nature of all dharmas cannot be seen intuitively in the final analysis. In this nature, no awakening, no one is awake, no seeing, no one can see, no knowledge, no one can know, no differentiation, and no one can differentiate. The equality apart from forms is bodhi, so are the five uninterrupted sins. Therefore, the bodhi can be realized. Saying that one can realize, attain, cultivate, learn, and see intuitively the great bodhi is sort of extraordinary arrogance.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Now will you say that I am a Thus-Comer?”

“No, World-Honored One. No, Well-Gone One! I will not say that the Buddha is the real Thus-Comer. Why? The Thus-Comer is the one who realizes realness with exquisite knowledge, but both exquisite knowledge and realness are without forms. Realness without forms is not realness, while exquisite knowledge without forms is not exquisite knowledge either. As exquisite knowledge and realness are nonexistent, the Thus-Comer is not real either. Why? Realness and exquisite knowledge are provisionally established, so is Thus-Comer. They are not dualistic or separate. Exquisite knowledge, realness, and Thus-Comer are all provisionally established and unreal. Therefore, we will not say that the Buddha is the real Thus-Comer.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Don’t you have puzzlement about the Thus-Comer?”

“No, World-Honored One. No, Well-Gone One! Why? I have contemplated and found that the Thus-Comer is truly unattainable and without arising and extinction, so I have no puzzlement about it.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Does the Thus-Comer not appear in the world?”

“No, World-Honored One. No, Well-Gone One! If the real dharma realm has appeared in the world, we may say that the Thus-Comer also appears in the world.

Because the real dharma realm does not appear in the world, the Thus-Comer does not appear in the world either.”

“Manjusri, do you think that as many Buddhas as the sands of the Ganges have entered nirvana?”

“World-Honored One, do the Buddhas and Thus-Comers share the same inconceivable spiritual phenomena?”

“Yes, Manjusri, it is as you say. The Buddhas and Thus-Comers share the same inconceivable spiritual phenomena.”

Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “Is the Buddha, the World-Honored One, dwelling in the world now?”

The Buddha replied, “Yes.”

Manjusri said to the Buddha, “If the Buddha, the World-Honored One, is dwelling in the world now, then as many Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, as the sands of the Ganges should also dwell in the world. Why? All Thus-Comers share the same inconceivable spiritual phenomena. As the inconceivable phenomena are without arising and extinction, how can the Buddhas enter nirvana? Therefore, World-Honored One, when the Buddha in the future appears in the world, all Thus-Comers should also appear in the world; when the Buddha in the past entered nirvana, all Thus-Comers should also extinguish. When the present Buddha is realizing the bodhi, all Thus-Comers should realize the bodhi presently. Why? In the conceivable realm, all Buddhas in the three phases of time are not different. But the sentient beings in the world are confused and wrongly attached to various nonsensical arguments, saying that the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, have arising and extinction and can realize insightfully the bodhi.”

The Buddha said to Manjusri the child, “Only the Thus-Comers, the great bodhisattvas of nonregression, and the great arhats can understand the dharma that

you speak of. Why? Only the Thus-Comers, and so forth, can understand this profound dharma as it really is without praising or slandering it because they realize that the mind and the non-mind are unattainable. Why? All dharma natures are equal, and the mind and non-mind are unattainable; so, both praising and slandering the dharma are nonexistent.”

Manjusri asked the Buddha, “But who will praise and slander this profound dharma?”

The Buddha replied, “Kid, the ignorant ordinary sentient beings’ minds are unreal and the same as the inconceivable minds and natures of the Buddhas.”

Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “Are the ignorant ordinary sentient beings’ minds unreal like the inconceivable minds and natures of the Buddhas?”

The Buddha replied to Manjusri the child, “Yes, it is as you say. Why? The Buddhas’ minds, the sentient beings’ minds, and all dharmas are equal and inconceivable.”

Manjusri said to the Buddha again, “Some are skeptical that if the Buddhas’ minds, the sentient beings’ minds, and all dharmas are equal and inconceivable, the pursuit of nirvana undertaken diligently by the sage holy ones will turn out in vain. Why? If the inconceivable nature and the nature of nirvana are not different, what will the pursuit be for? If the dharmas of the ordinary sentient beings are different from the holy ones, these sentient beings must have not stayed close to genuine virtuous friends and thus become attached to dualistic dharmas, they are drown in birth and death and cannot attain nirvana.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Do you wish the Thus-Comers are the supreme ones among all sentient beings?”

“World-Honored One, if there are real sentient beings, I wish the Thus-Comers are the supreme ones among them. But sentient beings truly are unattainable.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Do you wish that the Buddha achieves the inconceivable dharma?”

“World-Honored One, if there is really the inconceivable dharma, I wish the Thus-Comer can achieve it. But there is no such thing.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Do you wish the Thus-Comer to teach the dharma to guide his disciples?”

“World-Honored One, if there are the realness and dharma realm of teaching the dharma to guide the disciples, I wish the Thus-Comer can do this. But as the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, appear in the world, they do not grant a favor or virtues to sentient beings. Why? All sentient beings are dwelling in the pure realness and dharma realm; within this realm, ordinary sentient beings, holy ones, those who can teach, the dharma taught, and those receive the teaching are all unattainable.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Do you wish the Thus-Comer is the unsurpassed real field of bliss for the world?”

Manjusri replied, “World-Honored One, if the field of bliss is truly existent, I wish the Buddha serves as the unsurpassed one. But the field of bliss is truly unattainable. Therefore, the Buddhas are neither the field of bliss nor not the field of bliss. It is because the natures of bliss, non-bliss, and all dharmas are equal. Because the Buddhas have realized the unexhausted field of bliss, the sentient beings of the world agreeably acclaim that the Buddhas’ field is the unsurpassed one. The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, have realized the changeless bliss, so all sentient beings agreeably acclaim that the Buddhas’ field is the unsurpassed ones. The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, have realized the unimaginable bliss, so all sentient beings agreeably acclaim that the Buddhas’ field as the unsurpassed one. Although the Buddhas’ field of bliss is unsurpassed, the bliss planters do not decrease or increase.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Based on what meaning do you say

so?”

Manjusri replied, “World-Honored One, the phenomena of the Buddhas’ field of bliss is inconceivable. Those who plant bliss in it can realize that the dharma natures are equal and all dharmas are without increase and decrease. Therefore, the Buddhas’ field of bliss is the unsurpassed one.”

At that time, the earthquake occurred for six times owing to the Buddha’s supernatural powers and dharma powers. One billion and six hundred million great bhiksus in the assembly attained flawlessness and permanent liberation. Seven hundred bhiksunis, three thousand upāsaka (laymen), forty thousand upāsikā (laywomen), and sixty koti nayuta heavenly beings from the heavens of desire stayed far away from defilements and attained the pure dharma eye.

In the meantime, Ananda stood up from his seat and bowed down before the Buddha’s feet. With left shoulder covered and right knee touching the ground, he joined his palms together respectfully and said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, what is the cause of these six occurrences of earthquake?”

At that time, the Buddha said to Ananda, “I have manifested such phenomena because I approve of Manjusri’s statement about the phenomena of the field of bliss. The Buddhas in the past had also taught about the phenomena of the field of bliss here and manifested the similar earthquake. This is why the same thing happened here today.”

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Manjusri (2)

(In the Seventh Assembly)

At that time, Sariputra said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, Manjusri is inconceivable. Why? The dharma form that Manjusri spoke of is inconceivable.”

The Buddha said to Manjusri the child, “What you say is really inconceivable, much like the long-lived sage Sariputra says.”

Manjusri said to the Buddha, “The dharma I speak of is inconceivable, but it is also not inconceivable. Why? Both inconceivability and conceivability are nonexistent; they are merely sounds. Sounds cannot be inconceivable or conceivable only because the self-natures of all dharmas are distant. Those who speak so are named speaking the inconceivable.”

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Are you now entering inconceivable samadhi?”

Manjusri replied, “World-Honored One, I am not. Why? I have not seen this samadhi nature is different from mine. I have not seen any mind can reflect on me and this concentration. As the mind and nonmind cannot enter this inconceivable samadhi, how can I enter this concentration?

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, I once strived to deliberately enter this samadhi intuitively, I would not do it again. A novice archer learns to aim at a big target. After practicing long enough, this archer can hit a target as small as a hair’s tip with ease and accuracy. When I started learning concentration, I needed to remain attentive to the unimaginable before entering this state. With enough practice, I could access and maintain this concentration effortlessly, free from distractions. This is because I became skilled in different types of concentration and can now enter or exit

them without conscious effort.”

In the meantime, Sariputra said to the Buddha, “Thinking of what Manjusri, the child, has said, we should not completely believe him. Why? It seems that in this concentration one cannot dwell permanently, and no other concentrations are as subtle and tranquil as this one.”

Manjusri asked the long-lived sage Sariputra, “Great virtuous one, how do you know that there are no other subtle and tranquil concentrations like this one?”

Sariputra replied by asking, “Are there other concentrations as tranquil as this one?”

Manjusri replied, “Great virtuous one, if this concentration is attainable, it ensures other concentrations are also as tranquil as this one. But in fact, none of them are attainable.”

Sariputra asked, “Manjusri, do you mean that this concentration is also unattainable?”

“Great virtuous one, this concentration is truly unattainable. Why? All conceivable concentrations with forms are attainable, while the inconceivable ones without forms are unattainable. As these concentrations are called inconceivable, they certainly are unattainable. Furthermore, Sariputra, the inconceivable concentrations are those that all sentient beings can attain. Why? All mind natures are separate from mind natures, and those without mind natures are called inconceivable, so none of sentient beings does not attain it.”

The Buddha admired Manjusri the child, “Excellent, excellent! Manjusri. You have planted the virtuous roots and initiated aspiration toward the bodhi long enough at numberless Buddhas’ places. You have cultivated celibacy actions based on nonattainment and what you say are always in accord with the fathomless meanings. Manjusri, haven’t you dwelled in the fathomless prajna paramita so you can always

lecture on the fathomless meanings?”

Manjusri said to the Buddha, “If I can speak so because of dwelling in the fathomless prajna paramita, then I must dwell in the thought of the ‘I’ and the thought of existence. If I dwell in the thought of the ‘I’ and the thought of existence, then the fathomless prajna paramita will also dwell somewhere. If the fathomless prajna paramita dwells somewhere, it must be in the thought of the ‘I’ and the thought of existence. But the fathomless prajna paramita stays far away from dualistic thinking and dwells nowhere. Like the Buddhas who dwell in subtle and exquisite tranquility, nonarising, nonaction, nonmovement, and nonturning, so the fathomless prajna paramita dwells neither in existent dharma nor in nonexistent dharma; it dwells in the inconceivable. The fathomless prajna paramita does not arise presently in all dharmas. The fathomless prajna paramita is exactly the realm of the inconceivable. The realm of the inconceivable is the realm of the dharma, while the dharma realm is the realm without present arising; the realm without present arising is the realm of the inconceivable, while the realm of the inconceivable is the fathomless prajna paramita. The fathomless prajna paramita, the realm of the ‘I,’ and the dharma realm are not dualistic or separate. Nonduality and nonseparation are the dharma realm; the dharma realm is the realm without present arising; the realm without present arising is the fathomless prajna paramita; the fathomless prajna paramita is the realm of the inconceivable; the realm of the inconceivable is the realm without present arising; the realm without present arising is the realm of nonexistence; the realm of nonexistence is the realm without arising and extinction; and the realm without arising and extinction is the realm of the inconceivable. The realm of the inconceivable is not separate or different from the realm of Thus-Come, the realm of the ‘I,’ and the dharma realm.

“Therefore, the World-Honored One, if one can cultivate prajna paramita in

this way, they will not need to pursue and realize the great bodhi. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita is the bodhi. World-Honored One, knowing the realm of the 'I' as it really is equals knowing nonattachment; knowing nonattachment is knowing the nonexistence of the dharma. knowing the nonexistence of the dharma is attaining the Buddha knowledge. The Buddha knowledge is the inconceivable knowledge. No dharma can know the Buddha knowledge, so it is named the unknown dharma. Why? This knowledge has no self-nature, so how can the dharmas that are nonexistent turn within the real dharma realm? As the self-nature of the knowledge is nonexistent, it is without attachment; if it is without attachment, that entity will not be knowledge. If that entity is not knowledge, then it will have no spiritual level. If it has no spiritual level, it will not rely on anything. If it does not rely on anything, it will not dwell anywhere. If it dwells nowhere, it will be without arising and extinction. If it is without arising and extinction, it will be unattainable. If it is unattainable, it will not approach anything. If it does not approach anything, it will not be able to make merits and virtues or nonmerits and nonvirtues. Why? It does not reflect whether I make merits and virtues or make nonmerits and nonvirtues. The knowledge without reflection is inconceivable. The inconceivable is the Buddha knowledge. Therefore, this knowledge neither grasps nor not grasps all dharmas; it is not past, future, or present; it neither arises previously nor not arises previously; it neither appears nor disappear; and it is without permanence or discontinuation. There is no other knowledge like this. This knowledge is as inconceivable as empty space that is incomparable; it is without this or that, it is neither beautiful nor ugly. As this knowledge is incomparable, so it is unequaled and not equivalent to anything. Therefore, it is also named unequaled equal knowledge. Because no knowledge can attain this knowledge, it is unsubstantial and not based on any substance. Therefore, it is also named unsubstantial substance knowledge.”

(Manjusri clarified the reality of Thus-Come, all dharmas, as well as knowledge via reasoning to demonstrate the reality of all existents.)

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Is this exquisite knowledge movable?”

Manjusri replied, “World-Honored One, the nature of such exquisite knowledge is unmovable. As the goldsmith refines the gold to its perfection, its weight and shape will remain unmovable, so is the knowledge as it is cultivated perfectly. It will become one without making and realization, arising and extinction, and appearance and disappearance. It will become firm, stable, and unmovable.”

(Manjusri further explained the quality of the fulfilled knowledge.)

The Buddha asked Manjusri the child, “Who can believe in and understand such exquisite knowledge?”

Manjusri replied, “World-Honored One, if people do not practice the dharma of entering nirvana and the dharma of staying in birth and death; if they practice in order to extinguish the ‘I’ and the associated images and practice nirvana actions unmovably; and if they neither terminate nor not terminate greed, anger, and ignorance, then they will deeply believe in and understand this knowledge. Why? They thus have stayed far away from the self-natures of the three poisons, which are neither exhaustive nor unexhaustive. They have neither initiated nor fallen into the dharma of the birth and death. They have neither stayed away from nor cultivated various holy paths.”

(Manjusri identified those capable of believing and understanding this knowledge.)

The Buddha admired Manjusri the child, “Excellent, excellent! You can speak of this very well.”

At that time, the long-lived sage Mahakasyapa asked the Buddha, “In the generations to come, who will be able to believe in, understand, cultivate, and learn the profound meanings of this vinaya dharma?”

The Buddha replied to the long-lived sage Mahakasyapa, “In the generations to come, all the bhiksus and the rest of participants in this assembly will be able to believe in, understand, hear, accept, cultivate, and learn the profound meanings of this vinaya dharma spoken today. They will also lecture on it for others and disseminate it extensively. Like a great elder who lost an invaluable pearl and was upset and unhappy. Then he found it, and so rejoiced that he danced and jumped. So do all bhiksus and so forth present today in this assembly. They heard the fathomless prajna paramita, and believed in, understood, cultivated, and learned it. One day, they were unable to hear it and became so vexed, worried, and unhappy, kept asking, ‘When can we hear this fathomless dharma again?’ Later they were privileged to hear this dharma gate again and became so happy, and thought, ‘Now I can hear this sutra. I have a feeling that I have seen the Buddha and made offerings to him.’ As the pārijāta tree begins to form the buds, the heavenly beings in the Heaven of Thirty-Three Smaller Heavens are delighted; they dance and jump, and say, ‘This tree will blossom soon and fragrance will start to brew and permeate, so we will be able to assemble and play there.’ So do the bhiksus and so forth. When they hear the fathomless prajna paramita and believe in, accept, cultivate, and learn it, they are joyful, because they know that the Buddha dharma will blossom soon.

“You must know, Drinking Lights One (Mahakasyapa), if the bhiksus and so forth in the generations to come, hear this fathomless prajna paramita and believe in, understand, and cultivate it without being sinking and drowned, then they must have in this assembly heard this dharma, and joyfully accepted, embraced, lectured on, and disseminated extensively it. Because of this reason, they will unfold all Buddha dharma soon. After the Thus-Come passes away, if some ones can accept, embrace, lecture on, and disseminate this sutra, they must have been supported and protected by the supernatural powers and authority of the Buddha so they can accomplish these

things.

“You must know, Drinking Lights One, if some ones hear this fathomless prajna paramita and joyfully accept and embrace it, they must have planted many virtuous roots at numberless Buddhas’ places and heard it previously; it must not be the first time they hear it. A person stringing beads came upon one of exceptional value and was thrilled. It was likely not the first time the person had seen such a bead; rather, having encountered similar beads before, the same joy arose again.

Likewise, if bhiksus and others now deeply enjoy hearing the correct dharma, then when they later happen to hear prajna paramita, they will be eager to listen to, accept, embrace, cultivate, and learn it. They must have heard this sutra at numberless Buddhas’ places previously, so this is not their first time hearing it.

“You must know, Drinking Lights One, if good gentlepersons hear the prajna paramita spoken by Exquisite Auspicious One and are so delighted that dance and jump, and they are so fond of hearing it tirelessly that they will sincerely ask the lecturer to speak it again and again, then these good gentlepersons must have in the past heard Manjusri’s teaching of prajna paramita and joyfully accepted, embraced, believed in, understood, cultivated, and learned it; they must have also made offerings respectfully to Manjusri, so they can do so presently. Someone happened to enter a city and saw all gardens, woods, ponds, swamps, people, and things in that city. Then this person went to another city and heard somebody tell many good things about that city. This traveler was deeply joyful and asked this person to tell it again. This traveler was even more joyful when hearing the story once more only because he once visited and saw the city before. So do the good gentlepersons. When hearing the dharma of prajna paramita once taught by Exquisite Auspicious One previously, these good gentlepersons are eager to hear it and sincerely ask the lecturer to repeat its profound meanings. After hearing the teaching once more, they become doubly joyful. You

must know that these good gentlepersons had in the past stayed close to Manjusri, made offerings respectfully to him, and heard his teaching of this dharma, so they can do the same superior thing in present life.”

At that time, the long-lived sage Mahakasyapa asked the Buddha, “The Thus-Comer has taught very well the actions, shapes, and the forms of the good gentlepersons in the present and in the future when they hear, believe in, understand, and cultivate the fathomless prajna paramita.”

The Buddha replied, “Yes, it is as you say. I have taught the actions, shapes, and the forms of these good gentlepersons.”

Manjusri said to the Buddha, “The actions, shapes, and the forms of the good gentlepersons in the present and future when they hear the fathomless dharma are not actions, shapes, and forms. The dharma heard by them is very subtle, exquisite, and tranquil, while the actions, shapes, and forms are unattainable. But why does the Thus-Comer say that you have spoken their actions, shapes, and forms?”

The Buddha said to Manjusri the child, “Yes, it is as you say. When the good gentlepersons hear the fathomless dharma, their actions, shapes, and forms are not really the actions, shapes, and forms, because the dharma heard by them is very subtle, exquisite, and tranquil, and all actions, shapes, and forms are unattainable. But when hearing the profound dharma, they joyfully accept, embrace, believe in, understand, cultivate, and learn it; they must have in the past heard this dharma and joyfully accepted and practiced, so they can do so in present life. It is in terms of the worldly way of speech to speak of these actions, shapes, and forms; in ultimate meanings, there are such things. You must know, Manjusri, manifesting the fathomless prajna paramita is to reveal all Buddha dharma, and thoroughly understand the inconceivable thing. Manjusri, when I cultivated and learned the bodhisattva actions, I could accumulate the virtuous roots perfectly because I had cultivated and

learned the fathomless prajna paramita. To stay in the bodhisattva stage of nonregression and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, one should cultivate and learn the fathomless prajna paramita.

(The Buddha differentiated between the dharma present in terms of ultimate meaning and that explained from worldly perspective.)

“Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to accumulate the virtuous roots as the bodhisattvas do, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita.

Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to dwell in the bodhisattva stage of nonregression, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to thoroughly understand all equal forms of dharma realm, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to well know the equality of all sentient beings’ minds and actions, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to realize insightfully all Buddha dharma, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita.

(The Buddha advised good gentlepersons to learn the fathomless prajna paramita if they would like to engage in the tasks of bodhisattvas.)

“Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to know the Buddha’s teaching of the secret profound meanings when he states that the Thus-Come is unable to presently awake to all dharmas, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? The dharmas understood and the ones who can awake are unattainable. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to know the Buddha’s teaching of the secret profound meanings when he states that the Thus-Come cannot realize insightfully the Buddha dharma, they should learn the fathomless prajna

paramita. Why? The Buddha dharma realized and the ones who can realize the Buddha dharma are unattainable. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to know the Buddha's teaching of the secret essential meanings when he states that the Thus-Comers cannot realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and do not possess the perfect features and demeanors, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? The unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and the perfect features and demeanors to be realized and the ones who can realize are unattainable. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to know the Buddha's teaching of the secret essential meanings when he states that the Thus-Comer cannot accomplish all merits and virtues and cannot guide and convert all sentient beings, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? All merits and virtues, the sentient beings to be converted, and the Thus-Comers are unattainable. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to attain the unhindered understanding of various dharmas, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita does not see any dharma that is purified or contaminated, arising or extinguishing. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to know that the dharmas are without past, future, and present and they adopt nonaction as their forms, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? It is because the real dharma realm is without past, future, and present and it adopts nonaction as its form. It is also because all dharmas are included in the real dharma realm.

(The Buddha further advised that good gentlepersons should learn the fathomless prajna paramita if they would like to understand the implied meanings of his secret dharma teachings.)

“Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to attain non-puzzlement and non-skepticism, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to turn the dharma wheel of the four noble truths in

three steps without attachment, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to develop universal loving-kind concern over all without having a thought of sentient being, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to enter dharma nature along with sentient beings without arguments, and realize that sentient beings and arguments are unattainable, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to know thoroughly the right and the wrong without hindrance and worry, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to attain the boundless Buddha dharma, such as the Thus-Come's abilities, fearlessness, and so forth, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita."

(The Buddha also advised that good gentlepersons should learn the fathomless prajna paramita if they would like to undertake more superior tasks of bodhisattva.)

At that time, Manjusri the child asked the Buddha, "I have contemplated the fathomless prajna paramita and find that it is without forms, doing, merits and virtues, arising, extinction, powers, capabilities, going, coming, entry, getting out, diminution, addition, knowledge, views, entity, and application; it is not the maker; it cannot make all dharmas arise or extinguish; it does not make all dharmas become one or different; it is without formation and decay; it is not wisdom or spiritual level; it is not the dharmas of the ordinary sentient being, voice-hearer, self-enlightened one, bodhisattva, or the Thus-Come; it is not the realization, nor does it realize; it is not the attainment, nor does it attain; it is not the exhaustion, nor is it exhausted; it does not enter into or get out of birth and death; it does not enter or get out of nirvana; it does not fulfill or damage the Buddha dharma; it neither makes nor not makes all dharmas; it is neither inconceivable nor conceivable; and it is apart from all kinds of differences and nonsensical arguments. Such prajna paramita does not have any merit

and virtue, why does the Thus-Come encourage all sentient beings to diligently and attentively cultivate and learn it?”

The Buddha replied to Manjusri the child, “What you say are just the real merits and virtues of prajna paramita. If the good gentlepersons realize this, they really cultivate and learn the fathomless prajna paramita.

(Manjusri listed the real merits and virtues of prajna paramita, but he did not realize this fact until the Buddha told him.)

“Furthermore, Manjusri the child, if the great bodhisattvas would like to learn the superior bodhisattva samadhi, achieve the superior bodhisattva samadhi, dwell in such samadhi, see all Buddhas, know the names of the Buddhas, see the worlds of these Buddhas, and realize insightfully and are able to lecture on the real forms of all dharmas without hindrance, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita diligently, assiduously, and tirelessly day and night.”

(The Buddha described more advantages that arise from learning prajna paramita.)

Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “Why is it named the fathomless prajna paramita?”

The Buddha replied to Manjusri the child, “The fathomless prajna paramita is without forms, names, borders, edges, and the places of refuge. It is not an imaginable state. It is not guilt, bliss, darkness, or brightness. It is the real dharma realm just like the pure empty space of which no boundary and quantity are attainable. Because of these causes and conditions, it is named the fathomless prajna paramita.

(The Buddha explained why the fathomless prajna paramita is so named.)

“Furthermore, Manjusri the child, the fathomless prajna paramita is where the bodhisattvas practice the profound actions. If the bodhisattvas can practice in that place, they will be able to understand thoroughly all spiritual states. This is not the place where all vehicles practice. Why? This place has no name, form, and

differentiation, so it is named the place where no actions can be practiced.”

(The Buddha further explained why prajna paramita is named the place where no actions can be practiced.)

Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “What dharma do great bodhisattvas cultivate in order to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly?”

The Buddha replied to Manjusri the child, “If great bodhisattvas practice the fathomless prajna paramita without laziness and tiredness, they will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.

“Furthermore, Manjusri the child, if great bodhisattvas can cultivate correctly Magnificent One-Form Samadhi, they will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “What is Magnificent One-Form Samadhi? How should bodhisattvas cultivate it?”

The Buddha replied to Manjusri the child, “This Samadhi is dignified by the form of dharma realm, so it is called Magnificent One-Form Samadhi. If great bodhisattvas would like to enter this superior samadhi, they should hear, inquire about, cultivate, and learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Manjusri, if great bodhisattvas, without moving dharma realm, understand that the real dharma realm does not waver and change, is unimaginable and without nonsensical arguments, they can enter Magnificent One-Form Samadhi. Manjusri, if good gentlepersons would like to enter this samadhi, they should stay with ease and freedom and remain distant from all kinds of trivial affairs. They should sit with legs crossed without thinking of other forms but staying attentively in the mindfulness of one Thus-Come to bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings. They will deeply reflect on his name and imagine his appearance and demeanor. Wherever they are, they should sit upright and

keep staying in the mindfulness of this Thus-Comee incessantly. If they do this, they equally contemplate universally the Buddhas in the past, future, and the present.

Why? Manjusri, the numberless and boundless merits, virtues, talent of debate, and so forth of one Buddha are equivalent to all Buddhas. All the Buddhas of the three phases of time realize insightfully the great bodhi by riding the same realness, so they are not different.

(The Buddha explained what Magnificent One-Form Samadhi is and taught how bodhisattvas cultivate it.)

“Manjusri, if good gentlepersons have diligently and attentively cultivated and entered this Magnificent One-Form Samadhi, then they will be able to fully realize the undifferentiated forms of as many dharma realms of the Buddhas as the sand of the Ganges. They also can attain the general retention of the unsurpassed dharma wheel that has been and will be turned by as many Buddhas and bodhisattvas as the sands of the Ganges. Ananda has heard extensively, acquired correct knowledge and wisdom, and attained general retention and mindfulness of the Buddha’s teachings—he is the supreme one among all voice-hearers in this respect. But his retention of the Buddha’s teachings is not unlimited. If good gentlepersons can attain Magnificent One-Form Samadhi, their knowledge, wisdom, and the powers of general retention and mindfulness will be inconceivable. They will be able to accept and embrace the unsurpassed dharma wheel turned by as many Buddhas and bodhisattvas as the numberless sands of the Ganges. They will also fully understand the profound essential meanings of all dharma gates and lecture on, explain, and defend them endlessly. They will be superior to Ananda by hundreds of thousands of times.”

(The Buddha further taught the significant merits and benefits gained by those who enter and achieve Magnificent One-Form Samadhi.)

Manjusri asked the Buddha, “How do good gentlepersons of bodhisattva

vehicle gain boundless merits, virtues, and superior benefits from attaining this samadhi?”

The Buddha replied, “Kid, the good gentlepersons of bodhisattva vehicle have cultivated and learned diligently and attentively Magnificent One-Form Samadhi, they always think, ‘How can I universally and thoroughly understand the dharma realm of various Buddhas, accept and embrace all unsurpassed dharma wheels, and bring benefits and happiness to sentient beings?’ Because of this reason, when they attain this samadhi, they will also gain boundless merits, virtues, and superior benefits. Manjusri, as good gentlepersons of bodhisattva vehicle hear the Magnificent One-Form Samadhi and stay in attentive mindfulness and diligent reflection of it, they will keep reflecting on the merits and virtues of this concentration, then the forms of its merits and virtues appear. When they see the forms are consistent with what they heard before, they are excited and thus become more diligent to cultivate and learn it. Gradually and step by step, they enter this samadhi and gain unimaginable merits, virtues, and superior benefits. If sentient beings slander the correct dharma, do not believe in the law of causes and effects, they will be hindered by very heavy negative karmas, they will not be able to realize this concentration.

“Manjusri, someone obtained a pearl and brought it to a gem smith, saying, ‘This pearl is priceless, but its color is not very bright. Could you please polish it carefully, so it is not damaged?’ This gem smith did as he was told to make it brilliant and transparent, and in the end, the pearl became highly valuable in the marketplace. Manjusri, so do good gentlepersons of bodhisattva vehicle. They cultivate this samadhi step by step, and when they attain the samadhi they also gain boundless merits, virtues, and superior benefits. Manjusri, the sun emits lights to benefit the world universally, so those who attain the Magnificent One-Form Samadhi will illumine universally the dharma realm, understand thoroughly all dharma gates, and

bring great benefits to sentient beings. Their merits, virtues, and superior benefits are inconceivable.

“Manjusri, as what I say, various dharma gates share same tastes: faraway taste, liberation taste, tranquility taste. All are not in conflict. When good gentlepersons of bodhisattva vehicle attain this samadhi, they also share same taste in specific dharma gate: faraway taste, liberation taste, tranquil extinction taste, and none in conflict. When the good gentlepersons of bodhisattva vehicle attain this samadhi, they will defend and lecture on their own dharma gate inexhaustibly and thus fulfill the factors for the bodhi quickly. Therefore, Manjusri the child, if the great bodhisattvas can correctly cultivate Magnificent One-Form Samadhi, they will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.

“Furthermore, Manjusri the child, if great bodhisattvas do not see various differences in dharma realm and all forms, they will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly. If good gentlepersons of bodhisattva vehicle refrain from cultivating bodhisattva dharma and pursuing the great bodhi, they will also refrain from realizing quickly the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi because they have thoroughly understood that the original natures of all dharmas are empty. If the good gentlepersons of bodhisattva vehicle believe that all dharmas are Buddha dharma and are not frightened when hearing that all dharmas are empty, they will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly. If the good gentlepersons of bodhisattva vehicle do not get lost nor are they suffocated, puzzled, and skeptical when hearing that all dharmas are empty, they will not stay away from the Buddha dharma and will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

At that time, after hearing what the Buddha said, Manjusri the child asked, “Is the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of the Buddhas definitely realized due to

causes and conditions?”

The Buddha replied, “No!”

Manjusri asked the Buddha again, “Is the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of the Buddhas realized not because of causes and conditions?”

The Buddha replied, “No. Why? The inconceivable realm is realized not because of causes and conditions, nor apart from causes and conditions. Therefore, the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of the Buddhas is an inconceivable realm.

“Manjusri, if good gentlepersons are not shocked and frightened when hearing this statement, they must have initiated great aspiration and planted many virtuous roots at numberless Buddhas’ places. If the monks and nuns are not shocked, frightened, confused, and suffocated when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita, they really follow the Buddha and renounce their families. If the laymen and laywomen are not shocked, frightened, confused, and suffocated when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita, they really take refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha. If the good gentlepersons of bodhisattva vehicle do not learn the fathomless prajna paramita, they are not the real bodhisattva vehicle cultivators. Manjusri, all flowers, trees, jungles, herbs, and seeds of the world grow relying on vast earth, so all bodhisattvas’ virtuous roots and their other superior things of and beyond the world grow relying on the fathomless prajna paramita. You must know, the fathomless prajna paramita will absorb all dharmas congruently in its realization of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.”

At that time, after hearing what the Buddha said, Manjusri the child asked the Buddha again, “In the generation to come in this Continent of Jambudvipa, in which cities or villages will the people believe in and accept the fathomless prajna paramita when hearing teaching and explanation?”

The Buddha replied to Manjusri the child, “The good gentlepersons in the assembly today will believe in, accept, and joyfully initiate aspiration when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita. They vow, ‘I wish to hear prajna paramita continuously wherever I am reborn in the future.’ Because of their aspirations, there will be many lectures on and explanations of the fathomless prajna paramita, so people can believe in and accept it. Manjusri, when hearing prajna paramita, the good gentlepersons so rejoice that they dance and jump. They must have planted virtuous roots for a long time and have also ridden the powers of their previous aspirations. Manjusri, if some would like to hear the fathomless prajna paramita, you will tell them, ‘Good gentleperson! You should hear and accept it and not be shocked, frightened, puzzled, and suffocated. You should not disbelieve and slander it.’ In these profound sutras of prajna paramita, no formation and decay of the dharmas of ordinary sentient being, voice-hearer, self-enlightened one, bodhisattva, and Thus-Comer are attainable.”

Manjusri said to the Buddha, “If monks and nuns come to my place and ask me this question: ‘Why does the Thus-Comer publicly teach the fathomless prajna paramita?’ I will answer them, ‘The Buddha teaches various dharmas without conflicts and arguments. Why? No dharma contradicts other dharmas; no sentient beings believe in and understand the Buddha’s teaching. Why? All sentient beings are unattainable.’

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, I will tell them: ‘The Thus-Comer has often taught about the reality of various dharmas. Why? All dharmas are equal; none of them is excluded from reality. It does not say that arhat, and so forth, are superior to other dharmas. Why? The dharmas attained by arhat, and so forth, are not different from the dharma of ordinary sentient being in their forms.’

“Furthermore, World-Honored One, I will tell them: ‘The dharma taught by

the Buddha does not let sentient beings enter nirvana. Why? The sentient beings are empty in the final analysis.'

"Furthermore, World-Honored One, the good gentlepersons came to my place and asked me: 'You and the Thus-Comer once dialogued about the fathomless prajna paramita. Please teach me about that! I look forward to hearing it.' Then I will tell them: 'If you would like to hear it, you should not have a thought of hearing or stay in a mindfulness of it; rather, you should think that all are like illusions and transformed things. Otherwise, you will not be able to understand what I say. If you would like to hear my dharma, you should view the dharma as the trails of birds in the sky, or the son of a barren woman. Then you can hear what I say. If you would like to hear my dharma, you should not have dualistic thought. Why? The dharma that I speak of is far away from dualistic thought. You should not try to extinguish the 'I' or initiate incorrect views; you should not crave anything in the Buddha dharma or try to change the dharma of ordinary sentient being. Why? The forms of dualistic dharmas are empty and you cannot grasp or renounce them.'

"World-Honored One, I will give such cautions to those who want me to lecture on the fathomless prajna paramita for them. I will adopt formless seal to seal various dharmas so the listeners will stay away from grasping and attachment, then I will teach them the dharmas correspondent with the fathomless prajna paramita."

The Buddha praised Manjusri the child, "Excellent, excellent! You can lecture on the dharma that I teach and the expedient skillfulness very well.

"Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons would like to see, stay close to, and make offerings respectfully to the Thus-Comers, the Buddhas, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. If the sentient beings would like to take the Buddhas as their grand masters, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. If the sentient beings would or would not like to realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal

bodhi, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. If the sentient beings would like to attain expedient skillfulness in all concentrations, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. If the sentient beings would like to initiate freedom and ease in all concentrations, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? Various kinds of samadhi can be initiated freely and at ease only when knowing that all dharmas are without arising and extinction, making and doing. Why? It is because they have thoroughly understood the emptiness of all dharmas without hindrance. If the sentient beings would like to understand that all dharmas have getting out and getting away, with no exception, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. If the sentient beings would like to fully understand that all dharmas are merely provisionally established and unreal, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. If the sentient beings would like to realize this fact—although they have aspired to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, but the sentient beings who can approach or regress from the bodhi are truly nonexistent—they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? They fully understand that all dharmas are the bodhi. In order to fully understand that there are neither the practitioners nor the withdrawing ones, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita. Why? The bodhi is the real nature of the dharmas. All sentient beings have practiced dharmas, and none has renounced the dharmas. Because all actions are empty, there is neither withdrawal nor extinction. In order to fully understand that all dharma natures are the bodhi, the bodhi is the dharma realm or reality, the reality is emptiness, and the mind has no regression, they should learn the fathomless prajna paramita.

(The Buddha provided several reasons why good gentlepersons should learn prajna paramita.)

“Manjusri, the fathomless prajna paramita manifests the Buddhas’ inconceivable actions to benefit sentient beings; it is also the locus where the Thus-

Comers play. Why? The fathomless prajna paramita cannot be manifested and spoken; it is a dharma that does not fall. Only the Thus-Comers can awake to and realize it as it really is and teach it to sentient beings in an expedient and skillful way.

“Manjusri, if the monks and nuns accept and embrace even only a four-sentence verse of the fathomless prajna paramita and lecture for others on it, they certainly will approach and dwell in the Buddha’s spiritual level, let alone if they can cultivate it as they are taught. You must know, these people will not fall into bad destinies; rather, they will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.

“Manjusri, if the sentient beings are not sinking, drowned, shocked, and frightened when hearing the fathomless prajna paramita; rather, they joyfully accept and believe in it, you must know that these sentient beings will realize and attain the Buddha dharma. All Thus-Comers will approve of them and accept them as their disciples.

“Manjusri, if the good gentlepersons believe in and accept the Thus-Comer’s unsurpassed dharma seal, namely, the fathomless prajna paramita, they will gain numberless blessings. This dharma seal has been kept in the mind of all Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones and guarded by arhats, bodhisattvas, wise ones, and heavenly deities. If the good gentlepersons of the bodhisattva vehicle hold this seal and transcend the bad destinies, voice-hearers, and self-enlightened ones, they certainly will realize insightfully and attain the unsurpassed bodhi.”

Meanwhile, Heavenly Emperor Indra and numberless heavenly sons of the Heaven of Thirty-Three Smaller Heavens each carried various fragrant heavenly flowers, utpala flowers, kumuda flowers, padma flowers, pundarika flowers, exquisite sound flowers, exquisite lucky spiritual flowers, and powdered sandals as offerings to

the Thus-Comer, Manjusri, all bodhisattvas, voice-hearers, and so forth. They further played heavenly music and sang odes to the wonderful dharma as offerings. They made wish, “We hope we can hear the fathomless prajna paramita, the unsurpassed dharma seal, at all times!”

(Prajna paramita is the unsurpassed dharma seal, according to the Buddha.)

In the meantime, Heavenly Emperor Indra made a wish, “I hope the sentient beings of the continent of Jambudvipa can often hear prajna paramita, joyfully accept and embrace it, and accomplish the Buddha dharma. We all heavenly beings will always protect and guard the prajna paramita practitioners so that they will not be hindered. The sentient beings will be able to hear, accept, embrace, read, and recite prajna paramita less difficultly under the support of the heavenly powers and authority.”

At that time, the Buddha admired Heavenly Emperor Indra, “The lord of the heaven, it is wonderful that you can make such a wish! Those who hear this and joyfully accept and embrace prajna paramita will certainly accomplish the Buddha dharma and approach the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

(The Buddha approved of Heavenly Emperor Indra’s vow to protect practitioners of prajna paramita.)

Manjusri said to the Buddha, “Hope the Thus-Comer will protect and support prajna paramita with supernatural powers, so it will endure long in the world to benefit all.”

The Buddha manifested great supernatural powers to make the mountains and vast earth of this large threefold thousand-world quake in six ways. Then he smiled and emitted brilliant lights to illuminate the large threefold thousand-world.

Manjusri said to the Buddha, “This is the sign that the Thus-Comer has manifested supernatural powers to protect and support prajna paramita so it will

endure long to benefit the world.”

The Buddha said, “Yes, it is as you say. I use supernatural powers to protect and support prajna paramita, the unsurpassed dharma seal, so it will endure long in the world to benefit sentient beings. After teaching the superior dharma, the Buddhas, World-Honored Ones, will naturally initiate great supernatural powers to protect and support this dharma so it will endure long in the world. Heavenly demons cannot take advantage of it, evil beings cannot slander it, and all other-paths practitioners will be deeply terrified. All diligent learners of this dharma will be free from all kinds of obstacles and difficulties.”

(The Buddha promised to protect prajna paramita with supernatural powers.)

After the Bhagavat finished the teaching of this sutra, all great bodhisattvas led by Manjusri, bhiksus, bhiksunis, laymen, laywomen, heavenly beings, dragons, yaksas, asuras, and so forth, in the assembly rejoiced. They believed in, accepted, and began to practice the teaching.

(This completes the seventh assembly.)

Fascicle 576

Nagasri

(In the Eighth Assembly)

This is what I heard.

There was a time when the Bhagavat was teaching the correct dharma for the public at Jeta Anathapindika Garden in Sravasti.

At that time, early in the day, Great Bodhisattva Exquisite Auspicious One put on his clothes and carried the bowl, walking to city Sravasti.

In the meantime, a bodhisattva named Auspicious Dragon saw him and asked, “The venerable one, where are you going?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “I am going into the city Sravasti to take a tour and beg for food in order to bring benefits and happiness to sentient beings, pity sentient beings of the world, and bring benefits, peace, and happiness to heavenly beings and human beings.”

Auspicious dragon asked, “Yes, venerable one. But have you not yet ceased the thinking of eating?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “I have not even seen the existence of eating and thinking, not to mention ceasing them. Why? The original nature of all dharmas is empty and tranquil. They are like empty space, which neither decays nor discontinues. So, how can I cease them? Even the heavenly beings, demons, brahmas, sramanas, and Brahmins of the world cannot cease them. Moreover, all dharmas are like vast empty space that cannot be absorbed by heavenly beings, demons, brahmas, sramanas, and so forth. Why? All dharma natures are far away and cannot be absorbed.”

Auspicious Dragon asked, “If this is the case, then why do bodhisattvas fight

with demons?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Bodhisattvas have never fought with demonic armies who beat great drums, nor do they, at that time, see any real dharma on which they can rely to enter concentration. Why? The bodhisattvas are not frightened when seeing demons beat drums. Like a magician who transformed enemies and let them appear to cause disturbance and annoyance, but no one was scared. So do the bodhisattvas who understand that the dharma natures are empty and like illusions, thus they are not afraid. If the bodhisattvas are scared, they are not worthy of the offerings made by heavenly and human beings. Because the bodhisattvas understand emptiness and are fearless, they can serve as the real field of bliss for all sentient beings.”

Auspicious Dragon asked, “Do some realize insightfully the bodhi?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Some can realize insightfully the bodhi.”

Auspicious Dragon asked, “Who can do so?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Those without names, establishment, and languages can do so.”

Auspicious Dragon, “If it is the case, then how can they realize?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Their minds have no arising; they are not mindful of the bodhi and the throne of the bodhi; and they have no thought of the pity on all sentient beings. Because they do not have the thoughts of expression and seeing, they can realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.”
(Those who are free from thoughts can realize the bodhi.)

Auspicious Dragon asked, “If this is the case, with what mind will venerable one attain the Bodhi?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “I have aspired to nothing, nor can I aspire to anything. I have learned nothing, nor will I come to visit the bodhi tree and sit on

the diamond throne in order to realize the great bodhi, turn the wonderful dharma wheel, and relieve sentient beings from birth and death. Why? All dharmas are without movement, cannot be destroyed, cannot be absorbed, and are empty and tranquil in the final analysis. It is owing to this unaspiring mind that I will attain the bodhi.”

(Exquisite Auspicious One attained the bodhi due to his unaspiring mind.)

Auspicious Dragon said, “The venerable one has spoken in terms of ultimate meaning to let sentient beings believe in and understand this dharma, so to get rid of vexations. If sentient beings can get rid of vexations, they will be able to break through the net of demons finally.”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “The net of demons cannot be broken. Why? The demon is not different from the designated name of the bodhi. Why? The natures of demons and demonic armies are nonexistent and unattainable, therefore, I say that the demon is not different from the designated name of the bodhi.”

Auspicious Dragon asked, “What is bodhi?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “The bodhi is in all dharmas, at all times and in all places; like empty space, which is everywhere, always, and without hindrance, so the bodhi is without hindrance, always in all dharmas and in all places. Such bodhi is the unsurpassed one. What bodhi do you want to realize now?”

Auspicious Dragon replied, “I would like to realize the unsurpassed one.”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “But you should not do that. The unsurpassed bodhi is not the dharma that can be realized. Realizing the bodhi is a nonsensical argument. Why? The unsurpassed bodhi is without forms; it is with tranquility and extinction. If you, benevolent one, would like to grasp it, you will fall into the nonsensical argument. Someone said, ‘I want to let the transformed person sit on the bodhi throne and realize the illusory unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.’ This

speech is extremely nonsensical. As the transformed person is unattainable, how can he realize the illusory great bodhi? Between transformed dharmas, there is no combination or separation, grasping or renunciation. It is because their self-natures are empty. The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, say that all dharmas cannot be differentiated; they are all like illusions. If you would like to realize the unsurpassed bodhi, won't you differentiate among illusory dharmas? But all dharmas cannot be grasped or renounced; they are without formation and decay; they cannot create or destroy each other; and they cannot combine or separate. Why? The self-natures of all dharmas are empty, they are without the self and the associated images, equivalent to empty space, without speech and manifestation, without admiration and slander, without superiority and inferiority, without diminution and addition, unimaginable, without nonsensical argument, empty and tranquil in their original natures, empty in the final analysis, like illusions and dreams, and incomparable. So how can we initiate a mind of differentiation about it?"

(Exquisite Auspicious One described the nature and traits of bodhi, which are like illusions, and so are all dharmas.)

Auspicious Dragon said, "Excellent, the venerable one! Today, I am sure that I will attain the bodhi because of what you say. Why? It is because the venerable one has taught me the profound dharma."

Exquisite Auspicious One said, "But I have not said anything evident or hidden, profound or shallow to you. So how can I assist you to attain the bodhi? Why? The self-natures of all dharmas are unspeakable. As you say I have spoken of the fathomless dharma, you just express nonsensical argument. I am not a capable dharma teacher, while the self-natures of all dharmas are unspeakable. If someone says, 'I can discern the phenomena of a transformed person's consciousness through describing the features of his consciousness,' then this person has said something to harm

himself. Why? As the transformed one has no consciousness, how can we say that we can discern the forms of his consciousness? It is similar when you say you will realize the unsurpassed bodhi because of my teaching of the profound dharma. All dharmas are like illusions; their natures are empty and unknown, let alone lecturing on them.”

At that time, Great Bodhisattva Superior One came to where Exquisite Auspicious One was and admired, “Excellent, excellent! Perfect bodhisattva, great bodhisattva! You can speak and defend the very profound dharma gate.”

Meanwhile, Exquisite Auspicious One questioned Superior One directly, “What does the perfect, great bodhisattva speak of? A bodhisattva will not think, ‘I am a perfect bodhisattva! I am a great bodhisattva! I can speak of the profound dharma for sentient beings.’ To speak so is meaningless. Furthermore, Superior One, do echoes have real self-natures and can speak so sentient beings can hear and understand?”

In the meantime, Superior One replied, “No.”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “Therefore, all dharmas are unreal; they are like echoes that are without names, forms, grasping, and attachment. To be attached to that will fall into nonsensical arguments. To fall into nonsensical arguments will make one drift in birth and death. They do not know the echo-like dharmas as they really are and thus invite controversial arguments. Because of these arguments, their minds will be moved. When their minds move, they get lost and make mistakes and will reincarnate in various destinies. Therefore, the World-Honored One gives cautions day and night to the bhiksus: ‘You bhiksus should not practice nonsensical arguments. You should always reflect on and contemplate carefully the tranquil dharma of extinction that I teach, cultivate and learn it diligently and attentively, so you can attain the dharma forbearance of nonattainment.’ The loving-kind and tranquil grand dharma king has said that the original natures of the dharmas are tranquil and quiet;

they are without contamination, attainment, and the abode to rely on. To know the dharmas as they really are, will liberate sentient beings from birth and death and allow them to realize insightfully and attain the nirvana of bodhi.”

(Exquisite Auspicious One cited Buddha’s words to caution learners to avoid nonsensical arguments. He asserted that knowing the dharmas as they really are will liberate sentient beings and enable them to achieve nirvana.)

Meanwhile, Auspicious Dragon asked Exquisite Auspicious One after hearing what he said, “From where have you attained the liberation from birth and death?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Do you ask from where have the Thus-Comers attained the liberation from birth and death? But the World-Honored One with the ten abilities often teaches that the past, future, and the present are the dharmas of the birth and death.”

Auspicious Dragon said, “Does the World-Honored One not say that all dharmas are like illusions and transformed things? Given this truth, sentient beings should have already realized the unsurpassed bodhi, so how come there is the birth and death? Why? You also say that all dharmas are unreal and like transformed things.”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “I have never lectured on the dharma natures and dharma forms, nor have I differentiated among them or grasped, created them.

“If all sentient beings can understand fully and accurately that all dharmas are like illusions or transformed things, they must have realized insightfully the unsurpassed bodhi. But because they cannot fully understand all dharmas as they really are, they reincarnate in birth and death through various destinies. A master magician can use any matters at disposal to make transformed things and figures, such as heavenly beings, demons, Brahmas, sramanas, celibacy practitioners, dragons,

yaksas, asuras, humans, and nonhumans of the world. The ignorant ordinary sentient beings will mistake them for real, while the wise ones know that they have no real nature but illusory phenomena. All these dharmas are like transformed things and illusions, but the ignorant sentient beings do not know that; they mistake nonexistence for existence, impermanence for permanence, and differentiate among all dharmas. They will differentiate among matters or minds, insisting that they are conditioned or unconditioned, flawed or flawless. Because of ignorance, they reincarnate in birth and death. If sentient beings know accurately that all dharmas are like transformed things, they will understand that the Buddha dharma does not increase because sentient beings have inherently possessed it. The exquisite Buddha dharma is already there and will never diminish.

(Exquisite Auspicious One stated that ignorant ones reincarnate in birth and death because they do not understand all dharmas as they really are.)

“All sentient beings can establish themselves motionlessly in exquisite dharma and enlightenment wisdom of the Buddha to understand that dharma natures are empty and without names and forms, abode and reliance, grasping and attachment, and hindrances. They also understand that dharma natures, like empty space, are without alaya (consciousness) and niyanti (fixed destiny); they are tranquil in the utmost stage; they are extremely tranquil; they are without arising and extinction, contamination and purification, formation and decay, and existence and nonexistence. Because of this knowledge, they accomplish the very profound forbearance and will never stay far away from the exquisite dharma of the Buddha. Why? The exquisite dharma of the Buddha is apart from nature and forms, and cannot be established, spoken, and expressed. They permeate all sentient beings just like empty space.”

(Exquisite Auspicious One explained the meaning and qualities of the exquisite dharma of the Buddha.)

Meanwhile, Auspicious Dragon so rejoiced that he danced and jumped after hearing the very profound dharma. He admired Exquisite Auspicious One, “Excellent, excellent! You the venerable one say that all sentient beings are not far away from the exquisite dharma of the Buddhas. What you say is so subtle, fathomless, and inconceivable. But who can believe in and understand it?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “The real Buddhas’ sons will be able to believe in and understand it. Namely, those who practice by following the belief, those who practice by following the dharma, stream-entry aspirants, stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners, arhats, self-enlightened ones, and the bodhisattvas of nonregression will be able to believe in and understand it. If the bodhisattvas have attained nonregression, not moved and turned by virtuous dharmas, and have dwelled peacefully in emptiness in the final analysis and nonattainment, they will be able to believe in and understand it. Why? The wonderful bodhi throne has appeared in front of the bodhisattva, who can speak to heavenly beings, demons, Brahmas, Indra, sramanas, celibacy practitioners, asuras, humans, and nonhumans as a roaring lion, ‘I will sit on this throne with legs crossed and not stand up until attaining the unsurpassed bodhi.’ Why? It is because the bodhisattva has dwelled peacefully in emptiness in the final analysis and nonattainment, they become unmovable. As the wooden stake is fixed firmly, no ox king can move it. So, as the bodhisattvas dwell firmly in emptiness in the final analysis and nonattainment, all sentient beings cannot move them from where they have been awakened and from the bodhi throne.”

Auspicious Dragon asked, “What is the place where awakening happens and bodhi throne locates?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied by asking, “What changes occur in the Thus-Comer? Where do they happen, what are they based on, and how does the Thus-Comer use these changes to teach, demonstrate for, and guide sentient beings?”

Auspicious Dragon said, “I even have not seen the real existence of the Thus-Comer, let alone the changes of the Thus-Comer, the place where the changes happen, the dharmas that the changes base on, and the changes and the realization of the dharma. This is exactly how the Thus-Comer changes for: teaching, demonstrating for, and guiding sentient beings.”

Exquisite Auspicious One acclaimed, “Excellent, excellent! What you say is quite reasonable. You have initiated to realize the forbearance of nonattainment in all dharmas, so you can say so. You have also initiated to awaken to what you should know.”

Auspicious Dragon said, “The forbearance of nonattainment in all dharmas does not have initiation or decay. Why? It is because all dharmas are empty and have no self-nature. So are their characteristics. Thus, all dharmas are formless, immaterial, unsubstantial, and invisible; they are equal to empty space. How can one initiate the forbearance of nonattainment in all dharmas? If the forbearance of nonattainment in all dharmas can be initiated, then the other forms of forbearance, such as those like echoes, shadows, foam, floating bubbles, illusory water images under sunlight, plantain, illusions, dreams, transformed things, images in mirror, mirages, and empty space, will also be initiated. But it does not make sense to say that the forbearances, such as empty space and so forth can be initiated. If great bodhisattvas, upon hearing this truth, are not shocked, frightened, puzzled, skeptical, sinking, and drowned, they have attained the unsurpassed dharma forbearance of bodhisattva.”

Exquisite Auspicious One asked, “Are the bodhisattvas who do not attain dharma forbearance of nonattainment different?”

Auspicious Dragons replied, “Some bodhisattvas are attached to few dharmas, and thus are named practicing based on attainment. If bodhisattvas think, ‘I can understand the fathomless prajna paramita,’ then they do practice based on attainment.

If they think, ‘I have accomplished the very profound forbearance,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can believe in and accept the very profound dharma,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can fully understand the profound meanings,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can be awakened to all dharmas,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can fully understand the original nature of all dharmas,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can cultivate various bodhisattva paths,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can dignify and purify Buddha lands,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can assist sentient beings to mature,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I definitely will realize insightfully the bodhi,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I definitely will turn the dharma wheel,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can rescue sentient beings,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I have practiced and realized,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can cultivate giving, pure-precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can cultivate the thirty-seven factors for enlightenment, including the four bases of mindfulness, and so forth,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can cultivate the gates of meditations, immeasurable minds, samadhi, samapatti, and dharani,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If they think, ‘I can cultivate and approach the Thus-Comer’s ten abilities, four kinds of fearlessness, four unhindered understandings, great loving-kindness, great compassion, great joy, great equanimity, and eighteen distinctive features of Buddha’s wisdom and power,’ then they do practice based on attainment. If great bodhisattvas do not practice based on attainment, their dharma-forbearances will not be different.”

(Auspicious Dragon provided the examples of bodhisattvas who practice based on attainment,)

Exquisite Auspicious One asked, “Then how should bodhisattvas cultivate and learn to approach bodhi actions?”

Auspicious Dragon replied, “If bodhisattvas have no grasping and attachment in all dharmas, they do cultivate and learn to approach bodhi actions. If bodhisattvas do not rely on dharmas, they do cultivate and learn to approach bodhi actions. If bodhisattvas contemplate dharmas and see that they are dependent on causes and conditions, empty, without self-nature, and apart from selfness and the associated images, then they do cultivate and learn to approach bodhi actions. If bodhisattvas practice without thinking of the practice, they do cultivate and learn to approach bodhi actions.”

(Auspicious Dragon said that if bodhisattvas practice without attainment and thinking, they do practice to approach to bodhi actions.)

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “Yes, it is truly as you say. As one dreams to travel in different directions, there are no genuine going, coming, walking, staying, sitting, and lying, or genuine places where they go to. So do bodhisattvas. Although they are awake, they cultivate without thinking that they are cultivating. They have contemplated all practices and see that their self-natures are empty, then they do not have grasping or attachment in all dharmas. They have realized that all dharmas are without shapes, forms, alaya, and niyanti; they are equivalent to empty space, and their self-natures are empty and tranquil. If bodhisattvas can practice without attachment and grasping, and stay away from all nonsensical arguments, then they will serve as the genuine field of bliss for heavenly beings and human beings and thus are worthy of the offerings made by sentient beings of the world.”

(Exquisite Auspicious One approved of those who can practice virtuous dharmas apart

from attachment and grasping.)

At that time, Great Bodhisattva Auspicious Dragon so rejoiced after hearing these words that he danced and jumped. He said, “Yes, the venerable one! Now I also would like to go to Sravasti and beg for food for the sake of sentient beings.”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “You may go now as you wish. But when you walk, do not lift up or lower your feet; do not bend or stretch your body; do not initiate thoughts in your mind; do not give rise to nonsensical arguments; do not think about the roads, cities, and villages or think about the small and big, male and female, the streets, lanes, gardens, houses, doors, and windows. Why? The bodhisattvas should stay far away from all thoughts, including those of the high and the low, the bending and the unfolding. Their minds should not waver, and speeches should not be nonsensical. They will not think about number or quantity. Then they approach the bodhi of the bodhisattva. If the benevolent one can practice this way, you may go to beg for food freely as you wish.”

In the meantime, Auspicious Dragon accepted the teaching and cautions, entering the ocean-like concentration because of their powers and authority. Like the big sea with its wide spreading and fathomless waters, which is full of plenty of rarities and treasures and can nurture and rear aquaria lives, so this concentration has wide spreading and fathomless powers and authority; with its inconceivable supernatural operations and the treasures of merits and virtues, this concentration can nurture sentient beings and bring peace and tranquility to their three karmas.

In the meantime, a bodhisattva named Good Reflection moved his body with additional effort and strength to get out of the concentration quickly. His movement made the mountains and vast earth in the large threefold thousand-world quake in six different ways. Meanwhile, Auspicious Dragon remained motionless as Mount Sumeru; his body and mind stayed in peace and tranquility. Why? It is because of the

concentration that his body, speech, and mind remain in a peaceful dwelling without movement. As he rose from concentration, fragrant flowers were raining from above. He bowed to Sravasti with his palms joined together, and said respectfully, “I take refuge in the Thus-Come, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One! The dharma realized and taught by the Thus-Come is always fathomless. He teaches that the self-natures of all dharmas are empty and without contamination and attainment. Those who hear his teaching will gain this superior concentration.”

Bodhisattva Good Reflection asked, “Have you the benevolent one felt the earthquake in concentration?”

Exquisite Dragon replied, “You must know, Good Reflection, if one’s body and mind have movement and turning, they will see the vast earth waver and shake. The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, the bodhisattvas of nonregression, the great self-enlightened ones, and the great arhats all have their bodies and minds remained in peace and quietness and apart from movement and shaking. They do not see or feel any turning, wavering, and shaking. Why? Constantly dwelling in peace, motionless, turning, and wavering is in a state of emptiness, formlessness, nonaspiration, and tranquility; it is a realization of the original emptiness of phenomena, and the nature of getting away. Dwelling in this dharma will make one’s body and mind motionless.”

In the meantime, Exquisite Auspicious One admired and acclaimed Auspicious Dragon after hearing what he said, “Excellent, excellent! You have achieved this superior thing. Now you may enter the city and beg for food freely as you wish.”

Auspicious Dragon said, “I have already realized insightfully the sea-like unsurpassed superior dharma food, so I do not need physical food anymore. Now I only pursue the paramitas of giving, pure-precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, prajna, expedient skillfulness, wonderful aspiration, abilities, and knowledge, as well

as the rest of boundless bodhisattva actions, so that I can realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly to turn the wonderful dharma wheel and relieve sentient beings from the severe suffering of birth and death, letting them dwell in the ultimate pure nirvana. Now I am joyfully willing to renounce all actions for nurturing this defiled body and mind. Today, because of the pity and compassion granted on me by you, the venerable, genuine, pure, and virtuous friend, I have realized and acquired superior concentration. I am bowing to you, Exquisite Auspicious One, the boundless auspicious one, brave auspicious one, great and expansive auspicious one, auspicious and exquisite dharma, superior wisdom and auspiciousness, inconceivable auspiciousness, the great immortal virtuous friend, and the real pure and virtuous friend!”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “Excellent, the benevolent one! You have attained the ocean-like superior concentration and understood thoroughly that all dharmas are like echoes, images, dreams, illusions, illusory images of water under sunlight, shadows, transformed things, and mirages. Now you should pursue the numberless and boundless superior dharma food, such as the Thus-Comer’s ten abilities, four kinds of fearlessness, four unhindered understandings, great loving-kindness, great compassion, great joy, great equanimity, and eighteen distinctive features of Buddha’s wisdom and power to nurture your liberated dharma body. All Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones can dwell for as numberless and boundless inconceivable great kalpas as the sands of the Ganges because of this dharma food. Why? Such food is flawless and without bondages; it can liberate permanently the dharmas and let them get away from attachment to world. It can also eliminate permanently all arrogances. It is without alaya and niyanti. It is empty and tranquil and without the self-nature of various nonsensical arguments. All great bodhisattvas pursue this food. You should also

pursue it instead of other inferior dharma food of the world.”

Auspicious Dragon said, “It is sufficient for me to merely hear the venerable one’s acclamation of such unsurpassed dharma food, let alone I can eat it myself. If I can attain such food in the generation to come, I will adopt noneating as skillful means to not only feed myself but also feed all sentient beings.”

Exquisite Auspicious One asked, “Can you feed empty space to replenish it?”

“No!”

Exquisite Auspicious One asked, “Can you also replenish echoes, images, dreams, illusory images of water under sunlight, shadows, transformed things, and mirages?”

“No!”

Exquisite Auspicious One asked, “Can you replenish the big sea with various flows?”

“No!”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “So you cannot replenish the dharmas either. If you want to make all dharmas full, it equals to make the vast empty space, echoes, images, dreams, and so forth, and big sea full. It also equals to replenish emptiness, formlessness, nonaspiration, nonmaking, nonaction, nonarising, and nonextinction of all dharmas or to replenish getting away, tranquility, freedom from contamination, nirvana, ultimate state, and liberation. It also equals to replenish the ungraspable realness and dharma realm that are immaterial, invisible, unsubstantial, with only one form, and equivalent to empty space.”

Auspicious Dragon said, “As you the venerable one say, eating and eater are nothing other than emptiness, so all sentient beings should not have food to eat.”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Yes, all sentient beings should not have food to eat. If the Buddha has transformed as many sentient beings as the sands of the

Ganges to eat food, then who will make the food for them?”

Auspicious Dragon replied, “The transformed beings do not need to eat, so why are the food made?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “The dharmas and sentient beings are transformed beings, so they do not need to eat food. If sentient beings do not fully know that all dharmas are like transformed things, they will reincarnate in birth and death through various destinies and wrongly think that all should be supported by the supplies. But in actuality all supplies and support are unattainable. To contemplate and investigate dharmas and sentient beings as they really are will disclose the fact that all are empty and unreal and thus need not be supported by any living supplies.”

Auspicious Dragon said, “Now I want to cease hunger and thirst.”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “Both hunger and thirst are nonexistent, how should they be ceased. It is like a transformed person who wants to cease hunger and thirst by drinking the illusory water under the sunlight. So do you. Why? It is because all dharmas are like the illusory images of water in the sunlight, and all sentient beings are like the transformed beings. So why should they cease hunger and thirst? In delusively differentiated dharmas, both cessation itself and the dharmas ceased are unattainable. As hunger and thirst are nonexistent, what should be ceased? All dharmas are originally sufficient in their self-natures, so they are without hunger and thirst. Then what will be ceased? Ignorant sentient beings do not know this, so they say, ‘I am hungry and thirsty; I want to cease them.’ Only wise ones know that hunger and thirst are originally nonexistent, so they will not try to cease them. Having understood thoroughly that the natures of all dharmas are empty, they do not reincarnate in birth and death across all destinies. They are far away from nonsensical arguments and dwell in nonabode, nonreliance, noncontamination, nonentry, nongoing out of all dharmas. They are permanently liberated and will never have any

differentiation.”

(Exquisite Auspicious One described the wise and the ignorant ones, regarding realizing or not realizing the empty nature of all dharmas.)

Auspicious Dragon said, “As you the venerable one speak of the essential meanings of the dharmas, the dharma realm unfolds gradually before us.”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “The real dharma realm does not have appearance, disappearance, bending, and stretching. Why? The real dharma realm means formlessness; it is tranquil and without appearance or disappearance. It is without differentiation and nonsensical arguments. It does not rely on, dwell in, grasp, renounce, move, or turn anything. It is without contamination and purification. Like empty space, it does move or turn; it is without grasping and renunciation; it does not rely on or dwell in any dharma; it is without nonsensical argument and differentiation; and it is without appearance and disappearance. So are the dharmas; their characteristics are originally empty, their natures are nonexistent, and their forms are unattainable. If the dharma forms were attainable, then the Buddhas who had entered nirvana would also be attainable.

(Exquisite Auspicious One described the traits of real dharma realm.)

“All dharmas are without alaya and niyanti; they are immaterial, invisible, unsubstantial, and formless. They are originally in tranquility and extinction. Although the Buddhas, as many as the sands of the Ganges, have entered nirvana, not a dharma extinguishes. The aggregates of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness do not extinguish. The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious spheres do not extinguish. The sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image spheres do not extinguish. The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious realms do not extinguish. The sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image realms do not extinguish. The eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue

consciousness, body consciousness, and conscious consciousness realms do not extinguish. The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts do not extinguish. The feelings produced by eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body contacts do not extinguish. The earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness realms do not extinguish either. Therefore, although the Buddhas have entered nirvana, there is not a dharma entering nirvana. Those who try to make a dharma extinguish when entering nirvana equal trying to make empty space extinguish. Why? The nature of all dharmas is originally in tranquility and extinction; their self-nature is tranquil and extremely tranquil and need not to extinguish.

(Exquisite Auspicious One explained the nature of all dharmas.)

“The ignorant ordinary sentient beings lack the knowledge of the reality of all dharmas; when entering nirvana, they start to think, ‘I and the associated images are extinguishing today.’ They are attached to the self, sentient being, and so forth, and the knower and viewer; they are also attached to the existence and nonexistence of the self-nature of all dharmas. Because of this reason, when they enter nirvana, they think that all will disappear forever. I must say that these sentient beings cannot be liberated from birth, old, age, death, worry, sorrow, misery, anxiety, and upset. Why? Their ignorance hinders them from knowing and awakening to the self-nature of dharmas. This is why they are different from the Buddhas and senior disciples, and the bodhisattvas of nonregression, who have deep belief in and understanding of the very profound dharma, always enjoy practicing the actions of nonattainment, plant virtuous roots at many Buddhas’ places, and possess great supernatural powers and authority. The ignorant sentient beings thus are also different from the genuine merchant leaders and the unsurpassed heavenly immortals. Because of this difference, the ignorant ones will fall into the filthy realm and stay there for a long time, while all sage holy ones stay far away from them, and the wise ones will scold them and become disgusted

with birth and death. As the soils of excrement are piled up near a village where people and animals pass day and night, the whole village will be polluted, and the situation will become worse continuously. Similarly, as the ignorant ones cannot awaken to the self-nature of dharmas, their impure, smelly, corrupted, and evil birth and death will increase; the sage holy ones will scold them, and the wise ones will stay far away from them. I must say that these sentient beings will not be able to get rid of birth, old age, illness, and other faults.”

(Exquisite Auspicious One explained why ignorant sentient beings could not get rid of birth and death.)

In the meantime, Auspicious Dragon asked, “The venerable one, how can one learn to accurately understand the dharmas as they really are?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Those who can follow, aspire to, and approach ‘getting away’ with a mind of nondifferentiation will be able to understand the dharmas as they really are.”

Auspicious Dragon asked again, “Who can get far away from illusions?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Those mentioned above will be able to get away from illusions.”

(Exquisite Auspicious One stated how one learns to accurately understand the dharmas as they really are and get away from illusions.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One came to their place and asked, “What are you two great bodhisattvas talking about?”

In the meantime, Exquisite Auspicious One asked him, “Great virtuous one! We are talking ‘what dharmas are called great bodhisattva?’ We have not seen any dharma that can be called great bodhisattva, so we have talked about that. The great holy dharma king has never taught that there is any dharma that can be called great bodhisattva. All dharmas are like echoes that are not real; how can echoes talk?”

After hearing these words, the long-lived sage Well-Appearing One entered samadhi gate of nonattainment. Instantaneously, he returned from concentration. He joined his palms respectfully and paid homage to Jetavana Grove, saying, “Let me now summarize that, the dharma realized and taught by the Buddha is very profound, subtle, exquisite, and tranquil; it is difficult to see and awaken to; it is unimaginable, beyond the level of reflection, permanently free from attachment and grasping, and rid of all complexes and bonds. This exquisite dharma is so inconceivable that all sentient beings who hear it will gain benefits and happiness. If the bodhisattvas of nonregression gather under the leadership of Manjusri, or even if the novice bodhisattvas are also present, they will talk about this fathomless prajna paramita deeply through repetitive, close, and intimate discussion.”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “Great virtuous one, in this event, there isn't anything like closeness or distance, confusion or clarity, or even gathering and discussion. Why is that? No dharma can truly connect with or oppose another; all dharmas are fundamentally without existence.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked again, “I saw you both great bodhisattvas discuss the fathomless dharma. Why do you say that there is nothing like discussion?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Great virtuous one, have you heard transformed people, dreams, echoes, images, illusory images of water under sunlight, shadows, transformed things, and mirages stay together to discuss the fathomless essential dharma meanings?”

“No!”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “As the dharmas are like illusions, dreams, echoes, and so forth, how can we say that they stay together to talk and discuss? How can a transformed person hear the Buddha’s teaching of the fathomless essential

meanings and believe in, understand, accept, and embrace them, and further reflect on their names and forms?”

(Exquisite Auspicious One had conversation with Well-Appearing One about the nature of dharmas.)

At that time, after hearing these words, Well-Appearing One entered the concentration of extinction right at the site.

In the meantime, Sariputra came to ask Exquisite Auspicious One, “Great bodhisattva, do you know what concentration has Well-Appearing One entered?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Well, Sariputra, the great virtuous Well-Appearing One has never stayed in conflict with any dharma, so he often enters the concentration with no conflict with the dharmas, the concentration with no dwelling, the concentration with no abode, the concentration with no alaya, and the concentration without damaging alaya. He does not dwell in them with speech, coming, going, staying, and lying. Why? The great virtuous Well-Appearing One knows that the self-natures of all dharmas are empty and unattainable.”

In the meantime, Sariputra asked again, “What is adopted by the dharmas as their natures?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “The dharmas have adopted nonnature as their natures. But even this nonnature is unattainable.”

(Sariputra had dialogues with Exquisite Auspicious One about the nature of dharmas.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One rose from his concentration.

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “The time for eating is near. We’d better rush into the city to beg for food.”

Well-Appearing One said, “Great bodhisattva, I have no more entered city to beg for food. Why? I have stayed far away from the thought of cities and villages. I have also stayed far away from the thought of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and

mental images.”

Exquisite Auspicious One asked, “Great virtuous Well-Appearing One, if you have stayed far away from all thoughts, why do you still travel to and from?”

Well-Appearing One asked, “If the Thus-Comer has can transform, why does he manifest in forms of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness? Why does he appear to travel back and forth, bend and stretch his body, and gaze around?”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “Excellent, excellent! Great virtuous Well-Appearing One, you are really the son of the Buddha. That is why the Thus-Comer often says that Well-Appearing One is the best one among those who have attained the non-controversial dwelling.”

He continued to say, “Great virtuous One, let us put this matter aside now. I would like to enter the city and walk around to beg for food. After eating the food, I will go to the Thus-Comer’s place. Then I will prepare very rare food to serve you all great virtuous ones.”

Sariputra asked, “Great bodhisattva, what food will you serve us?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “Great virtuous one, the food that I will prepare for all of you cannot be eaten piece by piece or separately; cannot be gulped and swallowed; it is without smell, taste, and touch; it is not absorbed or tied in the three realms. Great virtuous One, this wonderful food is nothing other than the food for the Thus-Comers.”

Sariputra said, “We are full when hearing the names of the food that the great bodhisattva mentioned, let alone when we can eat them.”

Exquisite Auspicious One said, “This food cannot be seen by the physical, heavenly, or wisdom eye.”

At that time, after hearing these words, both Well-Appearing One and Sariputra entered the concentration of extinction.

In the meantime, Bodhisattva Good Reflection asked Exquisite Auspicious One, “Now what food these two superior persons have eaten and what concentration have they entered?”

Exquisite Auspicious One replied, “These two venerable ones have eaten flawless food and entered the concentration without reliance and contamination. Those who have eaten this food and entered this concentration will not eat the food of the three realms anymore.”

(Exquisite Auspicious One explained the food Well-Appearing One and Sariputra ate was the food for Thus-Comers; the concentration they entered was one without reliance and contamination.)

At that time, Well-Appearing One and Sariputra rose from concentration and celebrated and soothed each other with Exquisite Auspicious One, other bodhisattvas, and the voice-hearers. They then each walked into the city and beg for food.

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One then entered a family and stayed in a quiet corner. A laywoman in the house saw him and asked, “Great virtuous one, what can I do for you?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Sister, I came in order to beg for food.”

The laywoman asked, “The holy Well-Appearing One, have you not known universally about the thoughts of the food?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “I had known universally about the thoughts of the food in the past. Why? All thoughts of the food in the three phases of time are naturally empty.”

The laywoman said, “Well, the holy one, if you hold out your hand, I will give you some food.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One stretched out his hand.

The laywoman asked, “The holy Well-Appearing One, is this the hand of an

arhat?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “The arhat’s hand cannot see, nor can it stretch out. A transformed person asks another transformed person, ‘What is a transformed person’s hand, can you show me by stretching it out?’ You must know, sister, can the transformed person’s hand be seen or can it stretch out?”

The laywoman replied, “No, great virtuous one.”

Well-Appearing One replied, “You are right, sister! The Buddha says that all are illusory and empty, so we cannot say that the arhat’s hand can be seen or it can stretch out

In the meantime, when hearing what Well-Appearing One said, the laywoman could not see his hand and thus could not give the food to him. As she tried to put the food into the bowl, the bowl disappeared abruptly. Then the laywoman walked near Well-Appearing One. She not only could not see his hand but could not see his body. The laywoman acclaimed Well-Appearing One respectfully, “Excellent, excellent! The holy one, the holy one! It is very rare that the body does not stay and the forms do not appear. It is not surprising that the Thus-Come has often said, ‘Well-Appearing One is the best among all who have dwelled in uncontroversial arguments.’”

Meanwhile, the laywoman right at that spot permanently terminated the incorrect view of selfness and attained stream-entry effect.

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One had his body reappeared and acclaimed, “Very good, very good, sister, you can accomplish such gentleperson’s karma.”

At that time, the lady so rejoiced that she danced and jumped. She then made the food as offerings to Well-Appearing One. Well-Appearing One accepted the food, walked back to his place, and ate it.

In the meantime, Exquisite Auspicious One, the bodhisattvas, and the voice-

hearers had all eaten the food. They all arrived at the Buddha's place, bowed down before the Buddha's feet, walked around him three times, and then sat to one side. They told the World-Honored One all about what happened earlier.

At that time, after hearing their stories, the Thus-Comer acclaimed, "Excellent, excellent! You all can accomplish such superior things. You must know that it is because of the supernatural powers of the Buddha."

The long-lives sage Well-Appearing One also told the Buddha how he begged for food in the city and how the laywoman attained stream-entry effect. At that time, the World-Honored One also acclaimed Well-Appearing One for his skillful means.

In the meantime, Exquisite Auspicious One said to Well-Appearing One, "The incorrect view of selfness that the laywoman has eliminated is not the incorrect view of selfness, so the Thus-Comer says that it is named the incorrect view of selfness. Therefore, great virtuous one, all those who aspire to the bodhisattva vehicle should know, see, and deeply believe in and understand all dharmas. How should they believe in and understand them? They should let the dharmas go as they are without thinking of them. Why? Great virtuous Well-Appearing One, thinking of the dharmas is not thinking of the dharmas, so the Thus-Comer says that it is the thinking of the dharmas. You must know, great virtuous one, suppose great bodhisattvas have practiced giving by filling innumerable worlds with seven treasures, and on the other hand, some good gentlepersons have accepted and embraced one four-sentence verse of prajna paramita and explained it for others without thinking of the explanation, then the blessings gained by these good gentlepersons are much better than the former ones."

At that time, the World-Honored One spoke in verse:

When contemplating all conditioned dharmas,

We should view them as if they were stars, opacity, lamps, and illusions,

Or view them as if they were dew, foam, dreams, lightning, and clouds.

In the meantime, after hearing the Bhagavat's teaching of this sutra, all bodhisattvas, bhiksus, and heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth of the world in the assembly greatly rejoiced; they believed in, accepted, and practiced what they were taught.

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The Diamond That Overcomes All

(In the Ninth Assembly)

This is what I heard.

There was a time, the Bhagavat lived in Jeta Anathapindika Garden located in Sravasti along with 1,250 senior bhiksus. At that time, early in the morning, the World-Honored One adjusted his dress and held a piece of clothes and bowl going into the big city Sravasti to beg for food. After walking in the city and begging for the food, the Bhagavat returned to his place, ate the food, put the bowl and the clothes back to their places, washed his feet, and then sat with legs crossed. As he used to do, he sat upright in correct aspiration and inner mindful concentration.

Meanwhile, the bhiksus came to the Buddha's place. When they arrived, they bowed down before the World-Honored One's feet, walked around him clockwise three times, and sat to one side. The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One was among them.

At that time, the long-lived sage Well-Appearing One stood up from his seat. With one shoulder uncovered, right knee touching the ground, he joined respectfully his palms together and said to the Buddha, "Very rare, World-Honored One! The Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One can absorb great bodhisattvas with supreme absorption and entrust them with the highest responsibility. World-Honored One, where should those dedicated to the bodhisattva vehicle reside? How should they cultivate? How should they absorb and refine their minds?"

The World-Honored One replied to Well-Appearing One, "Excellent, excellent! Well-Appearing One, it is as you say. The Thus-Comer, One Worthy of

Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One has absorbed great bodhisattvas with supreme absorption and entrusted them with the highest responsibility.

Therefore, Well-Appearing One, you should listen to me carefully and extremely attentively. I am going to explain for you how bodhisattva vehicle aspirants and practitioners should reside, cultivate, and refine their minds.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “Yes, World-Honored One, we are looking forward to your teaching.”

The Buddha said, “Well-Appearing One, all bodhisattva vehicle aspirants and practitioners should make this vow: ‘I swear to help all sentient beings—those who absorb and those to be absorbed, whether born from eggs, wombs, moisture, or transformation, whether physical or nonphysical, whether they have thoughts, lack thoughts, or are neither thinking nor not thinking, and so on, as well as those who establish and those who are established—enter the profound nirvana without remainder. Though I may deliver countless sentient beings into nirvana, ultimately, none are truly delivered.’ Why? Well-Appearing One, if great bodhisattvas keep thinking of sentient beings, they cannot truly be called great bodhisattva. Why? Well-Appearing One, great bodhisattvas should not keep thinking of sentient being, nor thinking of the living one, gentleperson, individual in reincarnation, mentally born one, learned child, the maker, and the receiver. Why? Well-Appearing One, there is not a single dharma that can be called bodhisattva vehicle aspirant and practitioner.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, great bodhisattvas should not dwell in material things or in sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental images when practicing giving. Well-Appearing One, when great bodhisattvas practice giving, they should not cling to thinking of any forms. Why? If they dwell nowhere when practicing giving, the blessings and virtues thus gained will be inconceivable and measureless.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Can empty space in the east be measured?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One.”

“Well-Appearing One, can empty space in the south, west, north, northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest, above, and below be measured?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, Well-Appearing One.”

The Buddha said, “You are correct, Well-Appearing One. If great bodhisattvas do not dwell when practicing giving, the blessings and virtues thus gained will be also immeasurable. Well-Appearing One, bodhisattvas should not cling to thinking of any forms when practicing giving.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Can we contemplate the perfect marks of Thus-Comer?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One. We should not contemplate the perfect marks of Thus-Comer. Why? The Thus-Comer says that the perfect marks are not perfect marks.”

The Buddha told Well-Appearing One, “All dharmas, even those with perfect marks, are illusory, while those without perfect marks are not. Thus, we should contemplate the Thus-Comer as viewing forms as formless.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, in the future generations during the final five hundred years when the true dharma starts to fade, will there still be sentient beings who thoughtfully consider the passages of the sutras upon hearing them?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “Do not ask that in the generations to come during the last five hundred years when the correct dharma starts to fade, whether there will be people who seriously think about the passages of the sutras upon hearing them. However, Well-Appearing One, there will be great

bodhisattvas who still observe precept, maintain virtues, and possess wisdom in the generations to come during the last five hundred years when the correct dharma begins to extinguish.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, these great bodhisattvas hear the passages of the sutras and can develop a pure mind not only because they have served and made offerings to one Buddha, one hundred or one thousand Buddhas, but because they have also planted the virtuous roots at various Buddhas’ places. Well-Appearing One, the Thus-Comer understand these great bodhisattvas very well with his knowledge through Buddha eye. Well-Appearing One, the Thus-Comer has known well that these sentient beings will bring about and absorb numberless and countless blessings. Why? Well-Appearing One, these great bodhisattvas have no thought of self, sentient being, living one, gentleperson, individual in reincarnation, mentally born one, learned child, maker, and receiver. Well-Appearing One, they do not have the thought of the dharma and non-dharma, nor do they have the thought of thinking and non-thinking. Why? If great bodhisattvas have the thought of the dharma, they will be attached to self, sentient being, living one, and the individual in reincarnation. If they have the thought of non-dharma, they will also be attached to self, sentient being, living one, and the individual in reincarnation. Why? One should not grasp dharma or non-dharma. Therefore, the Thus-Comer teaches secret meanings by using raft-simile. The wise ones should terminate the dharma, let alone the non-dharma.”

The Buddha asked the long-lived sage Well-Appearing One, “Well-Appearing One, what do you think about this? Does the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One realize insightfully a little bit of anuttara-samyak-sambodhi? Does the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One teach a little bit of dharma?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “World-Honored One, if my understanding of

the meaning taught by the Buddha is correct, the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One has not realized insightfully a little bit of anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, nor has he taught a little bit of dharma. Why? World-Honored One, the dharma that the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One has realized insightfully, taught, and reflected on is ungraspable and unspeakable; it is neither the dharma nor not the dharma. Why? It is because various sage holy ones are the manifestation of the unconditioned reality.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? If the good gentlepersons have given as many seven treasures as filling the entire large threefold thousand-world to others, will they be much blessed because of this cause and condition?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “They will be much blessed, World-Honored One. They will be much blessed, Well-Gone One! These good gentlepersons will gain many blessings because of this cause and condition. Why? World-Honored One, the Thus-Comer says that the gathered blessings are not the gathered blessings, so the Thus-Comer says that they are the gathered blessings.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One again, “Well-Appearing One, suppose the good gentlepersons have given as many seven treasures as filling the entire large threefold thousand-world to others. On the other hand, some other good gentlepersons have accepted and embraced a four-sentence verse of this dharma gate, and further read, recite, understand thoroughly, lecture extensively for others on, explain, and reflect reasonably on it, the blessings thus gained will be more than the former ones by numberless times. Why? The anuttara-samyak-sambodhi realized by all Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones comes from this sutra; the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, are born from

this sutra too. Why? Well-Appearing One, the Thus-Comer says that the Buddha dharma is not the Buddha dharma, so the Thus-Comer says that it is named the Buddha dharma.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Should stream-enterers think that they can realize insightfully the stream-entry effect?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One. The stream-enterers should not think that they can realize insightfully the stream-entry effect. Why? World-Honored One, the stream-enterers do not have any streams to enter, so they are named stream-enterers. They do not enter the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and the mental-image spheres, so they are named stream-enterers. World-Honored One, if the stream-enterers think that they can realize insightfully the stream-entry effect, they are attached to self, sentient being, living one, gentleperson, individual in reincarnation, and so forth.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Should the once-returners think that they can realize insightfully the once-return effect?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One. The once-returners should not think that they can realize insightfully the once-return effect. Why? World-Honored One, not a dharma can realize insightfully and attain the nature of once-return, so it is named once-return.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Should the nonreturners think that they can realize insightfully and attain the nonreturn effect?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One, the nonreturners should not think that they can realize insightfully and attain the nonreturn effect.

Why? World-Honored One, not a dharma can realize insightfully the nature of nonreturn, so it is named nonreturn.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Should the arhats think that they can realize insightfully and attain the arhat effect?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One, the arhats should not think that they can realize insightfully and attain the arhat effect. Why? World-Honored One, not a dharma is named arhat, so it is named arhat. World-Honored One, if the arhats think that they can realize insightfully and attain the nature of arhat, they are attached to self, sentient being, living one, gentleperson, the individual reincarnation, and so forth. Why? World-Honored One, the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One says that I am the best dweller in noncontroversial arguments. World-Honored One, although I am an arhat and have eliminated greedy desires forever, I have never thought that I am an arhat or thought that I have eliminated greedy desires forever. World-Honored One, if I have this thought, the Thus-Comer will not confer on me the statement: ‘Well-Appearing One the good gentleman is the best one among those who engage in noncontroversial arguments.’ Because of no dwelling, the Thus-Comer says that it is the dwelling in noncontroversial arguments.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Had Thus-Comer grasped any dharma in the past at the place of Burning Lamp Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One, the Thus-Comer had not grasped any dharma in the past at the place of Burning Lamp Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “If the bodhisattvas say, ‘I will accomplish the merits, virtues, and dignity of the Buddha lands,’ then they do not tell

the truth. Why? Well-Appearing One, the Thus-Comer says that the merits, virtues, and dignity of the Buddha lands are not the merits, virtues, and dignity of the Buddha lands, so they are named the merits, virtues, and dignity of the Buddha lands.

Therefore, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas should not initiate any mind in order to dwell in somewhere; they should not initiate a mind to dwell in the sight or non-sight, nor initiate a mind to dwell in the sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image spheres or non-sound, non-smell, non-taste, non-touch, and non-mental-image spheres. They should not initiate a mind to dwell in somewhere.”

The Buddha further asked Well-Appearing One, “If a gentleperson possesses a body as high as Sumeru Mount King, what do you think, Well-Appearing One? Is his body wide and huge?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Yes, his body is very wide and huge, World-Honored One. His body is very wide and huge, Well-Gone One. Why? World-Honored One, the Thus-Comer says that his body is not the body, so it is named the body. It is named a body because it is not the body.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One again, “What do you think about this? If the number of the Ganges is as many as the sands of the Ganges, are the sands many?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “They are many, World-Honored One. They are many, Well-Gone One. The number of the Ganges will be countless, let alone their sands.”

The Buddha said, “Well-Appearing One, now let me tell and enlighten you with this: if the good gentlepersons have made as many seven treasures as filling all the worlds that are numberless as the sands of the Ganges as offerings to the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One, what do you think about this, Well-Appearing One? Will these good gentlepersons be much

blessed because of this cause and condition?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “They will be much blessed, World-Honored One. They will be much blessed, Well-Gone One! These good gentlepersons will be very much blessed because of this cause and condition.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “If some good gentlepersons have accepted, embraced, read, recited, understood thoroughly, lectured extensively for others, explained, and reflected reasonably on a four-sentence verse of this dharma gate, the blessings thus gained by them will be much more than the former ones by numberless times.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if the sentient beings living in a certain area can lecture on and explain the four-sentence verse of this dharma gate for others, then the heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth will make offerings to this area as they do to the Buddha’s miraculous, efficacious temple, let alone if they can thoroughly study, write, accept, practice, read, recite, understand thoroughly, lecture extensively for others, explain, and reflect reasonably on it. These sentient beings will achieve superior and rarest merits and virtues. This is a place where grand master lives or an esteemed place where the wise and celibacy practitioners live.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “World-Honored One, what is this dharma gate called? How should we practice it?”

The Buddha replied to Well-Appearing One, “The long-lived one, this dharma gate is called the prajna paramita that can terminate all like diamond. This is the name that you should embrace and practice. Why? Well-Appearing One, the Thus-Come says that this prajna paramita is not prajna paramita, so it is called prajna paramita.” (The Buddha taught that the dharma gate called “being capable of terminating all evils” is prajna paramita.)

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Is

there any dharma that the Thus-Comer can teach?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One, there is not a dharma that the Thus-Comer can teach.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “Are the small grains of dusts in the vast earth of the large threefold thousand-world many?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Yes, World-Honored One. Yes, Well-Gone One!”

The Buddha said, “Well-Appearing One, the Thus-Comer says that the small dusts of the vast earth are not small dusts, so the Thus-Comer says that they are the small dusts of the vast earth. The Thus-Comer says that the worlds are not the worlds, so the Thus-Comer says that they are the worlds.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Should we contemplate the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One based on his thirty-two perfect major marks?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One, we should not contemplate the Thus-Comer, One Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened One based on his thirty-two perfect major marks. Why? World-Honored One, the Thus-Comer says that the thirty-two perfect major marks are not the perfect major marks, so they are called thirty-two perfect major marks.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Imagine some good gentlepersons have given their own bodies as offerings to the Ganges River day and night for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges. Suppose some other good gentlepersons have accepted, embraced, read, recited, thoroughly understood, and extensively lectured on, reflected reasonably on, and explained this dharma gate for others. Owing to such cause and condition, the blessings thus produced will be much more than the former ones by numberless and countless times.”

At that time, the long-lived sage Well-Appearing One wept sadly. After wiping his tears, he looked up, said to the Buddha, “It is unusual, World-Honored One. It is unique, Well-Gone One! The dharma gate that the Thus-Comer teaches today will universally bring justice and benefits to supreme vehicle practitioners. World-Honored One, I have never heard this dharma gate since I first learned. Those who listen to this dharma gate and reflect on reality will achieve supreme and rare knowledge. Why? The Thus-Comer says the people who engage in reflection do not truly reflect, therefore, they do reflect on reality. World-Honored One, today I attained the understanding and belief that I have never experienced before. If various sentient beings, in the generation to come during the last five hundred years when the correct dharma is going to fade, can realize insightfully, believe, accept, embrace, read, recite, thoroughly understand, extensively lecture for others on, explain, and reflect reasonably on such profound dharma gate, they will achieve the supreme rare dharma. Why? World-Honored One, these sentient beings will be free from the thought of the ‘I,’ the sentient being, the living one, the gentleperson, the individuals in reincarnation, the mentally born one, the young leaned one, the maker, or the receiver. Why? Having the genuine thoughts of the ‘I,’ the sentient being, and so forth, and the receiver is equally being free from such thoughts. Why? Various Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, are distant from all kinds of thought.”

At that time, World-Honored One said to long-lived sage Well-Appearing One, “Yes, it is as you say, Well-Appearing One. If various sentient beings hear such profound sutra and are not shocked, scared, or frightened, they must have achieved the supreme rare dharma. Why? Well-Appearing One, Thus-Comer says that the supreme dharma is prajna paramita. This paramita has been taught by all Buddhas; thus, it is called the supreme one. Thus-Comer says that the supreme paramita is not paramita, therefore, the Thus-Comer says that it is called the supreme paramita.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, Thus-Comer says that forbearance paramita is not paramita, therefore, the Thus-Comer says that it is called forbearance paramita. Why? Well-Appearing One, I had in the past cut off my hands and feet for King Kali. At that moment, I did not have the thought of the ‘I,’ the sentient being, the living one, the gentleperson, the individual in reincarnation, the mentally born one, the young learned one, the maker, or the receiver. If I had these thoughts, I would have anger and hatred. Why? I remembered during a period of five hundred lives, I called myself a patient immortal because I did not have the thought of the ‘I,’ the sentient beings, and so forth. In those moments, there was neither thought nor absence of thought. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, the great bodhisattvas should stay away from all kinds of thought to initiate aspiration to anuttara-samyak-sambodhi; they should not allow their minds to dwell in sight or non-sight sphere, sound or non-sound sphere, smell or non-smell sphere, taste or non-taste sphere, touch or non-touch sphere, and mental-image or non-mental image sphere. They should dwell in non-mind. Why? Well-Appearing One, all dwellings are not dwellings. Therefore, Thus-Comer teaches that bodhisattvas should practice giving without dwelling in sight, sound, smell, taste, contact, and mental-image spheres.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, to bring justice and benefits to sentient beings, great bodhisattvas should practice giving with genuine renunciation. Why? Well-Appearing One, having the thought of all sentient beings is no thought. Thus-Comer says all sentient beings are not sentient beings. Well-Appearing One, Thus-Comer always speaks honestly, tells the truth, tells what they think and do, and speaks consistently.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the dharmas that all Thus-Comer have realized, spoken, and thought of are neither true nor false. Well-Appearing One, like people who enter a dark room cannot see anything, the bodhisattvas who practice

giving with attachment gain no effect.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if the good gentlepersons can accept, embrace, read, recite, investigate thoroughly, extensively lecture for others on, explain, and reflect reasonably on this dharma gate, the Thus-Comer will fully know these people with his Buddha knowledge and watch these people with his Buddha eye. Then Thus-Comer will enlighten them. These sentient beings thus will gain numberless merits.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, suppose some good gentlepersons offer as many bodies as the sands of the Ganges in the morning, then do the same at noon and in the afternoon, remaining offering bodies to others for hundreds of thousands of kalpas. On the other hand, some people hear the dharma gate of prajna paramita without slandering it, the merits and virtues thus derived will be more than the former ones by numberless times, let alone if they can write, accept, embrace, read, recite, investigate thoroughly, and extensively lecture for others on, explain, and reflect reasonably on this dharma gate.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, such dharma gate is inconceivable and immeasurable; we should aspire to it but should not conceive its effects. Well-Appearing One, Thus-Comer teaches this dharma gate to benefit those superior sentient beings pursuing the supreme vehicle. Well-Appearing One, if good gentlepersons accept, embrace, read, reciter, investigate thoroughly, and extensively lecture on this dharma gate to others, and explain and reflect reasonably on its sutras, the Thus-Comer will fully understand them with Buddha knowledge, watch them carefully with Buddha eye, and enlighten them. These sentient beings then will achieve numberless inconceivable and immeasurable merits. Well-Appearing One, these sentient beings will assume the responsibility for upholding the unsurpassed bodhi of Thus-Comer. Why? Well-Appearing One, those with inferior belief and

understanding are not privileged to hear this dharma gate, nor are those who hold incorrect views about the ‘I,’ the sentient being, the living one, the gentleperson, the individuals in reincarnation, the mentally born one, the young learned one, the maker, or the receiver. It is unreasonable to say that those with incorrect views can hear, accept, embrace, read, recite, investigate thoroughly, and extensively this dharma gate, and explain and reflect reasonably on its sutras for others.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if the prajna paramita sutras are placed in a particular location, then various heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and others will make offerings and pay homage to these sutras and walk around them to show respect as they do for the efficacious Buddhist temple.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if good gentlepersons accept, embrace, read, recite, investigate thoroughly, extensively lecture on, explain, and reflect reasonably on such sutras for others, but they are criticized or even harshly rebuked. Why? Well-Appearing One, they must have made various impure actions previously and thus are affected. In present lifetime as they receive slight slander, their previous impure karma will be eliminated so that they will attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Why? Well-Appearing One, I encountered hundreds of thousands of Buddhas in the past eighty-four koti nayuta kalpas, and later I met Burning Lamp Buddha. I had offered various services sincerely to the Thus-Comers without faults. If various sentient beings, in the generations to come during the last five hundred years when the correct dharma starts to fade, can accept, embrace, read, recite, investigate thoroughly, and extensively lecture on these sutras to others, and explain and reflect reasonably on them for others, the merits and virtues thus derived will be more than those I had accumulated in the past by hundreds, thousands, and even upanisadam times. Describing the blessings they receive will overwhelm or deeply shock some listeners. Therefore, Well-Appearing One, the dharma gate taught by the Thus-Comer

is too inconceivable to be measured. We should aspire to it but should not conceive its effects.

At that time, the long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha again, “World-Honored One, where should the bodhisattva-vehicle practitioner dwell? How should they dwell? How should they cultivate? How should they absorb and refine their minds?”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Various bodhisattva-vehicle practitioners should initiate such aspiration, ‘I swear to help all sentient beings enter nirvana without remainder. Although all sentient beings enter nirvana, truly no sentient beings enter nirvana.’ Why? Well-Appearing One, those who grasp the thought of sentient beings are not genuine bodhisattvas. Why? They should avoid the thought of sentient beings; they should also avoid the thoughts of the living one, gentleperson, individuals in reincarnation, and so forth. Why? Well-Appearing One, there is not a little bit of dharma that is named bodhisattva-vehicle practitioner.

“What do you think about this? Did the Thus-Comer truly realize a little bit of dharma at Burning Lamp Buddha’s place to attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi?”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One replied to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, as my understanding, the Thus-Comer did not realize a little bit of dharma to attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi at Burning Lamp Buddha’s place in the past.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “It is as you say. Why? If Thus-Comer could realize a little bit of dharma to attain the unsurpassed bodhi in the past at Burning Lamp Buddha’s place, he would not confer me this prophecy: ‘You will become a Buddha in the future, named Sakyamuni Thus-Comer, the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightened one.’ Because I did not realize a little bit of dharmas to attain the unsurpassed bodhi, Thus-Comer Burning Lamp conferred on me

this prophecy. Why? Thus-Comer is the designated statement of genuine realness, dharma nature without arising, the path of permanent termination, and nonarising in the final analysis. Why? Well-Appearing One, being truly without arising is the supreme meaning.

(The Buddha defined the meaning of Thus-Comer.)

“Well-Appearing One, asserting that Thus-Comer can realize anuttara-samyak-sambodhi is not telling the truth. Why? Well-Appearing One, such assertion contradicts my statement and will criticize me for telling the lie. Why? There is not a little bit of dharma that Thus-Comer can realize to attain the unsurpassed bodhi. Well-Appearing One, the dharmas realized, taught, or thought by Thus-Comer are neither true nor false. Therefore, the Thus-Comer says that all dharmas are Buddha dharmas. Well-Appearing One, he further says that all dharmas are not all dharmas, so they are all dharmas.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “Suppose the gentleperson has a great body.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, Thus-Comer says the great is not the great body, therefore, it is called great body.”

The Buddha said, “Yes, it is as you say. If bodhisattvas say, ‘I will help sentient beings enter nirvana,’ then they should not be called bodhisattva. Why? Well-Appearing One, is there dharma, even as a little bit one, called bodhisattva?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No. World-Honored One, not a little bit of dharma is called bodhisattva.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “The Thus-Comer says that sentient beings are not sentient beings, so they are called sentient being. Thus-Comer says that the dharmas, such as sentient being, living one, gentleperson, individual in

reincarnation, and so forth are not existent. Similarly, if great bodhisattvas say, ‘I will accomplish the task of dignifying the Buddha lands,’ then Thus-Comer will say dignifying the Buddha lands is not dignifying the Buddha lands, so it is called dignifying the Buddha lands. If bodhisattvas deeply believe in and understand the dharma of selflessness, Thus-Comers recognize them as real great bodhisattvas.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Do Thus-Comers manifest the physical eye?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Yes, World-Honored One, Thus-Comers manifest the physical eye.”

“Well-Appearing One, do Thus-Comers manifest the heavenly eye?”

“Yes, they do, World-Honored One.”

“Well-Appearing One, do Thus-Comers manifest the wisdom eye?”

“Yes, they do, World-Honored One.”

“Well-Appearing One, do Thus-Comers manifest the dharma eye?”

“Yes, they do, World-Honored One.”

“Well-Appearing One, do Thus-Comers manifest the Buddha eye?”

“Yes, they do, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Are the sands of the Ganges many?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Yes, they are many, World-Honored One. They are many, Well-Gone One.”

The Buddha asked, “Well-Appearing One, what do you think about this? If the Ganges Rivers are as many as the sands of the Ganges, and there are the worlds that are as many as the sands of all these Ganges Rivers, are the worlds many?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Yes, they are many, World-Honored One. They are many, Well-Gone One.”

The Buddha said, “Well-Appearing One, all sentient beings in all these worlds, all their different minds and movements, I can thoroughly understand. Thus-Comer says that mind movements are not mind movements, so they are called mind movements. Why? Well-Appearing One, the mind in the past is unattainable; the mind in the future is unattainable; the mind in the present is unattainable.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Suppose the good gentlepersons have filled this whole large threefold thousand-world with seven treasures, making them offerings to the Thus-Comer. Would they gain many blessings because of this cause and condition?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “Yes, World-Honored One. Yes, Well-Gone One.”

The Buddha said, “Well-Appearing One, it is as you say. These good gentlepersons will thus gain many blessings. Why? The Thus-Comer says that blessings are not called blessings.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Could we contemplate Thus-Comer as perfect major marks?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One, we should not contemplate Thus-Comer as perfect major marks. Why? World-Honored One, the Thus-Comer says, the perfect major marks are not the perfect major marks, therefore, they are the perfect major marks.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Could we contemplate Thus-Comer as having all distinguishing features?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why? The Thus-Comer says that all distinguishing features are not all distinguishing features, therefore, they are called all distinguishing features.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this?”

Does Thus-Comer maintain in mindfulness that he should teach dharma? Well-Apparent One, you should not undertake such contemplation. Why? Well-Apparent One, if you say Thus-Comer has taught dharma, you are slandering him, so you are not right. Why? Well-Apparent One, no dharma is attainable is called teaching dharma.”

At that time, the long-lived sage Well-Apparent One said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, in the generation to come, during the last five hundred years when the correct dharma is going to disappear, will some sentient beings deeply believe in this dharma upon hearing it?”

The Buddha said, “Well-Apparent One, these sentient beings are not sentient beings. Why? Thus-Comer says that all sentient beings are not sentient beings, therefore, they are sentient beings.”

The Buddha said to Well-Apparent One, “What do you think about this? Are there few dharmas that Thus-Comer realizes to attain the unsurpassed bodhi?”

The long-lived sage Well-Apparent One replied to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, my understanding is within the unsurpassed bodhi, no dharmas that Thus-Comer can realize to attain the unsurpassed bodhi.”

The Buddha said, “Yes, Well-Apparent One, you are right. Within the unsurpassed bodhi, all dharmas are nonexistent and unattainable, therefore, it is called the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.”

“Furthermore, Well-Apparent One, this dharma is an equal dharma, within it, all dharmas are equal. Because it is without self, without the nature of sentient being, without the nature of gentleperson, without the nature of individuals in reincarnation, and all natures are equal, therefore, it is called unsurpassed, perfect, and universally equal bodhi. All virtuous dharmas can be realized insightfully and immediately; not a single virtuous dharma that we cannot become awakened to. Well-Apparent One, the

Thus-Comer says that virtuous dharmas are not virtuous dharmas, therefore, they are called virtuous dharmas.”

(The Buddha concluded that within the unsurpassed bodhi, no dharmas are existent and attainable. Within it, all dharmas are equal.)

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, suppose some good gentlepersons have made as many seven treasures to fill Exquisite High Mount as offerings to all sentient beings. If some other good gentlepersons have adopted a four-sentence verse from great prajna paramita sutras, and accept, embrace, read, recite, investigate thoroughly, lecture extensively on, explain, and reflect reasonably for others on it, then the blessings thus gained will be more than the former ones by hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands, koti nayutas, even upanisadam times; they will be too many to be imagined, counted, or analogized.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Does the Thus-Comer maintain this thought in the mindfulness: ‘I should deliver sentient beings?’ Well-Appearing One, you should not contemplate in this way. Why? Well-Appearing One, no sentient beings can be delivered. Well-Appearing One, if sentient beings could be delivered, the Thus-Comer would be attached to sentient being, living one, gentleperson, individual in reincarnation, and so forth. Thus-Comer says that all these attachments are not attachments, therefore, they are called attachments. Various ignorant sentient beings are particularly attached. Well-Appearing One, Thus-Comer says that ignorant sentient beings are not ignorant sentient beings, therefore, they are called ignorant sentient beings.”

The Buddha asked Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Could Thus-Comer be contemplated as possessing all distinguishing features?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “According to my understanding of Thus-Comer’s teaching, we should not contemplate Thus-Comer as possessing all

distinguishing features.”

The Buddha said, “Well-Appearing One, excellent! It is as you say. We should not contemplate Thus-Comer as possessing all distinguishing features. Well-Appearing One, if we contemplate Thus-Comer as possessing all distinguishing features, then wheel-turning king should be Thus-Comer. Therefore, we should not contemplate Thus-Comer in this way. We should contemplate Thus-Comer’s all features as without features.”

At that time, World-Honored One reiterated the same meaning in verse:

“If you contemplate me by seeing my sight,
Look for me by hearing my voice,
You would not see me
Even exhausting all your labor.
You should realize that the nature of Buddha dharma,
Is exactly the dharma body of our mentor.
Without knowing the dharma nature,
One cannot really understand the truth.

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “What do you think about this? Does Thus-Comer realize intuitively the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi based on his distinguishing features? Do not think so. Why? Thus-Comer does not realize the unsurpassed bodhi based on his perfect features.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, do bodhisattva-vehicle practitioners establish dharmas as destructible or terminable? Well-Appearing One, you must not contemplate in this way. The bodhisattva-vehicle practitioners will not establish dharmas as destructible or terminable.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, suppose good gentlepersons offer as many seven treasure as the sands of the Ganges to Thus-Comer, One Worthy of

Offerings, Unsurpassed, Perfect, and Universally Enlightened One. On the other hand, some bodhisattvas attain forbearance through the dharma of selflessness and nonarising, the blessings thus derived are much more than the former ones.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, the bodhisattvas should not receive the accumulation of blessings.”

The long-lived sage Well-Appearing One asked the Buddha, “Why should bodhisattvas not receive the accumulation of blessings?”

The Buddha said, “Well-Appearing One, what one should receive should not receive, therefore, it is called should receive.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, those who say that Thus-Comer goes, comes, stays, sits, and lies, do not understand the meanings of my words. Why? Well-Appearing One, Thus-Comer is the designated name of truth or realness, signifying a state of neither going nor coming, therefore, that is called Thus-Comer.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, if the good gentlepersons, and so forth, and the large threefold thousand-world contain numberless tiny dust particles. What do you think about this? Are the tiny dust particles many?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “The tiny dust particles are extremely many. If the tiny particles are solid, the Buddha would not say they are tiny particles. Why? The Thus-Comer says that the tiny particles and not the tiny particles, therefore, they are the tiny particles. Thus-Comer says that the large threefold thousand-world is not the world, therefore, it is called the large threefold thousand-world. Why? If the world is a solid existence, it should be one entity. Thus-Comer says that one entity is not one unity, therefore, it is one entity.”

The Buddha said, “Well-Appearing One, this one entity is unspeakable, without nonsensical arguments, but ignorant ones are attached to it. Why? Well-Appearing One, if someone says Thus-Comer teaches the views of self, sentient

being, living one, gentleperson, individual in reincarnation, mentally born one, young learned one, maker, and receiver, what do you think? Are they correct?”

Well-Appearing One replied, “No, World-Honored One. No, Well-Gone One. What they say is not correct. Why? The views of self, sentient beings, and so forth taught by the Thus-Comer are not the views, therefore, they are called the views of self, sentient being, and so forth.”

The Buddha said to Well-Appearing One, “All bodhisattva-vehicle practitioners should know, view, believe, and understand all dharmas without dwelling in the thoughts of dharmas. Why? Well-Appearing One, Thus-Comer says the thoughts of the dharmas are not the thoughts, therefore, they are called the thoughts of dharmas.

“Furthermore, Well-Appearing One, suppose great bodhisattvas offer as many treasures as filling numberless worlds to Thus-Comers. On the other hand, some good gentlepersons adopt a four-sentence verse from the sutras of prajna paramita, accept, embrace, recite, investigate thoroughly, reflect reasonably on, lecture extensively on, and explain the verse for others, the blessings thus derived will be much more than the former ones by numberless times. Why? Explaining for others is not explaining for others, therefore, it is called explaining for others.”

At that time, the World-Honored One stated in verse:

Dharmas arise through combination,
 Resembling stars, shadows, flashes, and illusions.
 Much like dew, bubbles, dreams, lightning, and clouds,
 All should be viewed in this way.

When the Bhagavat finished the teaching of this sutra, the venerable Well-Appearing One, various monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen, heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, gandharvas, and so forth rejoiced, believed, and practiced the dharma.

Fascicle 578

The Essential Meanings of Prajna

(In the Tenth Assembly)

This is what I heard.

At that time, the Bhagavat had exquisitely and virtuously achieved all superior merits and virtues of the perfect knowledge, and dwelled in equal diamond nature of all Thus-Comers. He well acquired all Thus-Comers' treasure crown of pouring water over head and transcended the three realms, well attained all Thus-Comers' universal diamond knowledge of contemplation in freedom and ease, perfectly fulfilled all Thus-Comers' definitive great exquisite knowledge seal of all dharmas, perfectly realized all Thus-Comers' ultimate tranquil and equal nature seal, and expediently and skillfully accomplished all services that he could do and should be done. He could satisfy all sentient beings' wishes owing to their guiltlessness. He dwelled well and peacefully in equality of three phases of time incessantly. Like all Thus-Comers, he was motionless and did not decay as a diamond and illuminated universally the nature of body, speech, and mind of all sentient beings.

The Bhagavat lived at the top of the realm of desire in the palace of Heaven of Enjoying Other-Made Changes, in which all Thus-Comers often came and played and admired the great treasury palace. The palace was made of invaluable gems and adorned with varied rarities. Different colors emitted and reflected and added beauty to each other, all appearing so brilliant. The treasure big bells and golden bells were hung everywhere, making harmonious and graceful sounds when breeze blew. It was decorated with gorgeous canopies, silk streamers, floral banners, colorful fly whisks, treasure beads, jewelry necklaces, the half-moon shaped adornments, and so forth. All these were enjoyed and loved by the sage holy ones and heavenly immortals. Eight

billion great bodhisattvas stayed with the Bhagavat. They all possessed unhindered exquisite talent of debate of dharani gate and samadhi gate. Their merits and virtues were too many to be admired and acclaimed exhaustively for many kalpas. The leading great bodhisattvas were Great Bodhisattva Diamond Hand, Great Bodhisattva Contemplating in Freedom and Ease, Great Bodhisattva Empty Storage, Great Bodhisattva Diamond Fist, Great Bodhisattva Exquisite Auspicious One, Great Bodhisattva Empty Storage, Great Bodhisattvas Aspiring to Turn Dharma Wheel, and Great Bodhisattva Subjugating All Demons and Enemies. Around these leading bodhisattvas, there were eight million great bodhisattvas. They lectured on correct dharma throughout morning, afternoon, and evening, using wonderful and skillful languages and meanings, and practiced pure celibacy.

Meanwhile, the World-Honored One taught the pure dharma gate of the fathomless meanings of prajna paramita within all dharmas particularly for bodhisattvas.

The Buddha said, “What is the meaning of bodhisattva? It refers to the meanings of extreme exquisiteness, subtlety, joy, and purity; the permanent tranquility and purity of views; the exquisite comfort and purity; the purity of permanent cessation of craving; the transcendence and purity of embryo storage; the dignity and purity of virtues; the ease and purity of intentions, great brightness and purity; the peaceful, joyful, and pure body; the peaceful, joyful, and pure speech; the peaceful, joyful, and pure mind; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of matter; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the eye sphere; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious spheres; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the sight sphere; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image spheres; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the eye

realm; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the ear, nose, tongue, body, and
 conscious realms; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the sight realm; the
 emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image
 realms; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the eye consciousness realm; the
 emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue
 consciousness, body consciousness, and conscious consciousness realms; the
 emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the eye contact; the emptiness, tranquility, and
 purity of the ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts; the emptiness,
 tranquility, and purity of the feelings produced by eye contact; the emptiness,
 tranquility, and purity of the feelings produced by ear, nose, tongue, body, and
 conscious contacts; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the earth realm; the
 emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness
 realms; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the noble truth of suffering; the
 emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the noble truths of the cause of suffering,
 cessation of suffering, and the path for cessation of suffering; the emptiness,
 tranquility, and purity of cause and condition; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of
 consecutive sequence of thoughts, conditions that stimulate causes, and the conditions
 that reinforce main causes; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of ignorance; the
 emptiness, tranquility, and purity of action, consciousness, name and form, six sense
 spheres, contact, reception, craving, grasping, existence, birth, old age, and death; the
 emptiness, tranquility, and purity of giving paramita; the emptiness, tranquility, and
 purity of pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas; the
 emptiness, tranquility, and purity of realness; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of
 dharma realm, dharma nature, the nature of nonillusion, nature of changelessness,
 nature of equality, nature of nonarising, dharma concentration, dharma dwelling,
 reality, the realm of empty space, and the realm of the inconceivable; the emptiness,

tranquility, and purity of the four meditations; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the four immeasurable minds and four formless concentrations; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the four bases of mindfulness; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the four correct endeavors, four bases of power, five roots, five powers, seven factors for enlightenment, and noble eightfold path; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the liberation gate of emptiness; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the liberation gates of formlessness and nonaspiration; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the eight liberations; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the eight vexation-overcoming meditations, nine concentrations in sequence, and ten universal contemplation; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the stage of ecstasy; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the stages of freedom from defilements, emitting light, flaming wisdom, being extremely difficult to surpass, realness manifestation, going far away, the unmovable, expedient wisdom, and dharma cloud; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the stage of pure contemplation; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the stages of embryo Buddha nature, eight-forbearance, insight, slight vexations, freedom from desires, arhat, self-enlightened one, bodhisattva, and Thus-Comer; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of all dharani gates; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of all samadhi gates; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the five eyes; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the six supernatural powers; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the Buddha's ten abilities; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the four kinds of fearlessness, four unhindered understandings, great loving-kindness, great compassion, great joy, great equanimity, and eighteen distinctive features of Buddha's wisdom and power; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the thirty-two major marks; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the eighty distinguishing minor features; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of staying in correct mindfulness; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of

dwelling in equanimity at all times; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the perfect knowledge of everything; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the perfect knowledge of the forms of the paths and the perfect knowledge of all phenomena; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of all great bodhisattva actions; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi of the Buddha; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the dharmas of ordinary sentient beings; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of stream-enterer, once-returner, nonreturner, arhat, bodhisattva, and Thus-Come; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of all virtuous and unvirtuous dharmas; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of all morally related and unrelated dharmas; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of flawed and flawless dharmas; the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the conditioned and unconditioned dharmas; and the emptiness, tranquility, and purity of the dharmas in and beyond the world.

(The Buddha explained in detail the meaning of bodhisattva.)

“Why? Because the self-nature of all dharmas is empty; it is far away. As self-nature is far away, it is tranquil. Because self-nature is tranquil, it is pure. Because self-nature is pure, the fathomless prajna paramita is supreme pure. Therefore, prajna paramita is the meaning of bodhisattva. All bodhisattvas should cultivate and learn prajna paramita.”

After teaching the essential meanings of the bodhisattva based on pure prajna, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, “If the learners hear this pure dharma gate of exquisite essential meanings of prajna, and can deeply believe in and accept it, and sit on the throne of the wonderful bodhi, they will not be contaminated by covers and hindrances, including hindrances caused by vexations, karmas, and dharmas. The hindrances may accumulate but will not hinder them; karma may be very heavy but can be easily removed. They thus will not fall into bad destinies. If they can read and

recite prajna every day incessantly and diligently, reflect reasonably on it, they certainly can attain the equality of all dharmas and the diamond samadhi in this lifetime. They will attain freedom and ease in all dharmas, always enjoying various kinds of wonderful happiness and pleasure. They will go through sixteen rebirths always appearing as great bodhisattva, attain the Thus-Comer's nature of holding diamond, and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly."

(The Buddha taught how bodhisattvas learn to attain the equality of all dharmas and the diamond samadhi.)

At that time, the World-Honored One further taught prajna paramita to bodhisattvas by following the way of Thus-Comer Universal Illumination. He taught about the fathomless essential meanings of all Thus-Comers' tranquil dharma nature in the gate of manifesting perfect enlightenment. The Buddha said, "The gate of manifesting the diamond equal nature of the perfect enlightenment is so called because the great bodhi is as solid as the unbreakable diamond. The gate of manifesting the justice equal nature of the perfect enlightenment is so called because the great bodhi has consistent meanings. The gate of manifesting the dharma equal nature of the perfect enlightenment is so called because the self-nature of the great bodhi is pure. The gate of manifesting the equal natures of all dharmas in the perfect enlightenment is so called because the great bodhi does not differentiate among all dharmas."

*The Buddha taught about the dharma gate of manifesting perfect enlightenment.)

After teaching the essential meanings of the tranquil dharma nature of prajna in manifesting perfect enlightenment, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, and so forth, "If those who have heard the essential prajna meanings of these four gates of manifesting perfect enlightenment can believe in, understand, accept,

embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn them and sit on the throne of the wonderful bodhi, they will be able to transcend all bad destinies caused by very heavy evil karmas made previously, and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

At that time, based on the Thus-Come Sakyamuni’s way of subjugating all evil dharmas, the World-Honored One further taught bodhisattvas the essential meanings of the universal superior dharma gate, explaining how prajna paramita could absorb the equal natures of all dharmas. The Buddha said, “As the nature of greedy craving has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of hatred. As the nature of hatred has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of ignorance. As the nature of ignorance has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of hesitation. As the nature of hesitation has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of various incorrect views. As the nature of various incorrect views has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of arrogance. As the nature of arrogance has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of bondages. As the nature of bondages has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of defiled vexations. As the nature of defiled vexations has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of various evil karmas. As the nature of various evil karmas has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of retributive effects. As the nature of retributive effects has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of contamination. As the nature of contamination has no nonsensical arguments, so does the nature of purity. As the nature of purity has no nonsensical argument, so do all dharma natures. As all dharma natures have no nonsensical arguments, so does prajna paramita.”

After teaching the essential meanings of the universal superior prajna dharma gate of subjugating all evils, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva and so forth, “If the practitioners hear the profound essential meanings of prajna paramita

and can believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn them, then they will not fall into hells, the realm of animals, or the realm of ghosts even if they killed sentient beings in the three realms. It is because they can tame and overcome all vexations and negative results. They will always be reborn in good destinies, enjoy superior wonderful pleasures, cultivate all great bodhisattva actions, and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.” (The Buddha taught about the dharma gate of prajna paramita for subjugating all evils.)

At that time, based on the Thus-Come’s pure natures, the World-Honored One taught bodhisattvas about the very profound essential meanings of the pure dharma gate of prajna paramita in contemplating the exquisite knowledge of self-ease and freedom in equal natures of all dharmas. The Buddha said, “Because the original nature of all greedy cravings is pure and extremely brilliant, the hatred of the world will become pure. Because the original nature of all hatreds is pure and extremely brilliant, the ignorance of the world will become pure. Because the original nature of ignorance is pure and extremely brilliant, the skepticism of the world will become pure. Because the original nature of skepticism is pure and extremely brilliant, the incorrect views of the world will become pure. Because the original nature of the incorrect views is pure and extremely brilliant, the arrogance of the world will become pure. Because the original nature of arrogance is pure and extremely brilliant, the bonds and bondages of the world will become pure. Because the original nature of the bonds and bondages is pure and extremely brilliant, all defilements of the world will become pure. Because the original nature of all defilements is pure and extremely brilliant, the evil dharmas of the world will become pure. Because the original nature of all evil dharmas is pure and extremely brilliant, the birth and death of the world will become pure. Because the original nature of the birth and death is pure and

extremely brilliant, the perfect knowledge of everything of the world will become pure. Because the original nature of the perfect knowledge of everything is pure and extremely brilliant, the fathomless prajna paramita of the world will become superior and pure.”

(More dharma gates based on prajna paramita were taught by the Buddha for bodhisattvas.)

After teaching the essential meanings of the equal and pure prajna, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, and so forth, “If the practitioners hear the pure essential meanings of prajna paramita and can believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn them, then, like lotus, they will not be contaminated by the dusts, filths, and faults even if they dwell in greed, anger, and ignorance and are surrounded by all vexations and defilements. They will be able to cultivate and learn superior actions of bodhisattva and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

At that time, based on the forms of the Thus-Comer the superior lord of the three realms, the World-Honored One taught bodhisattvas about the essential fathomless meanings of prajna paramita, the dharma gate of the knowledge storage through pouring water over the head, that all Thus-Comers have worked together to undertake. The Buddha said, “Through practicing giving by pouring water over the head, one will attain the effect of becoming the dharma king of the three realms. Through practicing the giving of the unsurpassed justice beyond the world, one will be able to fulfill their wishes satisfactorily. Through practicing the unsurpassed dharma giving, one will attain self-ease and freedom in all dharmas. Through practicing property and food giving, one will attain happiness in body, speech, and mind. Through practicing property and dharma giving, one will fulfill giving paramita quickly. Through observing pure precept, one will fulfill pure-precept paramita

quickly. Through cultivating and learning patience in all affairs, one will fulfill forbearance paramita quickly. Through cultivating and learning diligence always, one will fulfill diligence paramita quickly. Through cultivating meditation in all situations, one will fulfill meditation paramita quickly. Through always cultivating exquisite wisdom in all dharmas, one will fulfill prajna paramita quickly.”

After teaching the essential prajna meanings of the dharma gate of the knowledge storage through pouring water over the head, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, “Those who hear the essential profound meanings of the dharma gate of knowledge storage through pouring water over the head and can believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn them, will be able to fulfill all bodhisattva actions and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

At that time, based on the Thus-Comer’s forms of embracing all secrets of Buddha’s knowledge dharma gate, the World-Honored One further taught bodhisattvas about the essential meanings of embracing all Thus-Comers’ diamond knowledge dharma gate. The Buddha said, “Through absorbing all Thus-Comers’ diamond body seal, one will realize insightfully all Thus-Comers’ dharma body. Through absorbing all Thus-Comers’ speech seal, one will attain self-freedom and ease in all dharmas. Through absorbing all Thus-Comers’ mind seal, one will attain self-freedom and ease in all concentrations. Through absorbing all Thus-Comers’ diamond knowledge seal, one will attain the utmost wonderful body, speech, and mind, stay motionless without decay, much like the diamond.”

(The Buddha taught more about the profound dharma gates of prajna paramita for great bodhisattvas.)

After teaching the essential prajna diamond dharma of the Thus-Comer’s knowledge seal, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, “Those who hear this

essential diamond dharma gate of the knowledge seal and can believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn it, will achieve significant accomplishments. They always stay in accord with all superior things. They fulfill superior knowledge and bliss-inviting karma quickly. They acquire superior and the purest body, speech, and mind, stay motionless without decay like the diamond. They will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

At that time, based on the Thus-Come’s forms apart from nonsensical arguments, the World-Honored One further taught bodhisattvas about the essential fathomless prajna paramita meanings of the wheel-words dharma gate. The Buddha said, “All dharmas are empty because their self-nature is nonexistent. All dharmas are formless because they are apart from the forms. All dharmas are without aspirations because they do not aspire to anything. All dharmas are far away because they have no attachment. All dharmas are tranquil because they are always in tranquility and extinction. All dharmas are impermanent because their nature is nonexistent. All dharmas are unpleasant because they do not have the quality of pleasure. All dharmas are selfless because they are not at ease. All dharmas are impure because they are apart from the forms of purity. All dharmas are unattainable because we cannot trace and attain their nature. All dharmas are inconceivable because their nature cannot be conceived. All dharmas are nonexistent because they are provisionally established based on dependent origination. All dharmas are without nonsensical arguments because their original nature is empty and tranquil, apart from speeches. The original nature of all dharmas is pure because the original nature of the fathomless prajna paramita is pure.”

After teaching the essential prajna meanings of wheel words that are apart from nonsensical arguments, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, “If some ones hear this prajna wheel words dharma gate that is without nonsensical

arguments and can believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn them, then they will attain the unhindered knowledge in all dharmas and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

At that time, based on the Thus-Comer’s features of Thus-Comers’ wheels, the Buddha taught bodhisattvas about the essential fathomless meanings of the equal nature gate of prajna paramita for entering the broad and great wheel. The Buddha said, “One can enter diamond equal nature because they enter all Thus-Comers’ nature wheel. One can enter justice equal nature because they enter all bodhisattvas’ nature wheel. One can enter dharma equal nature because they enter all dharmas’ nature wheel. One can enter aggregate equal nature because they enter all aggregates’ nature wheel. One can enter sphere equal nature because they enter all spheres’ nature wheel. One can enter realm equal nature because they enter all realms’ nature wheel. One can enter truth equal nature because they enter all truths’ nature wheel. One can enter dependent origination equal nature because they enter all kinds of dependent origination nature wheel. One can enter treasure equal nature because they enter all treasures’ nature wheel. One can enter food equal nature because they enter all food’s nature wheel. One can enter virtuous dharma equal nature because they enter all virtuous dharmas’ nature wheel. One can enter unvirtuous dharma equal nature because they enter all unvirtuous dharmas’ nature wheel. One can enter morally related dharma equal nature because they enter all morally related dharmas’ nature wheel. One can enter morally unrelated dharma equal nature because they enter all morally unrelated dharmas’ nature wheel. One can enter flawed dharma equal nature because they enter all flawed dharmas’ nature wheel. One can enter flawless dharma equal nature because they enter all flawless dharmas’ nature wheel. One can enter conditioned dharma equal nature because they enter all conditioned dharmas’ nature wheel. One can enter unconditioned dharma equal nature because they enter all

unconditioned dharmas' nature wheel. One can enter in-the-world dharma equal nature because they enter all in-the-world dharmas' nature wheel. One can enter beyond-the-world dharma equal nature because they enter all beyond-the-world dharmas' nature wheel. One can enter ordinary-sentient-being dharma's equal nature because they enter all ordinary-sentient-being dharmas' nature wheel. One can enter voice-hearer dharma's equal nature because they enter all voice-hearer dharmas' nature wheel. One can enter self-enlightened-one dharma's equal nature because they enter all self-enlightened-one dharmas' nature wheel. One can enter bodhisattva dharma's equal nature because they enter all bodhisattva dharmas' nature wheel. One can enter the Thus-Comer dharma's equal nature because they enter all Thus-Comer dharmas' nature wheel. One can enter sentient-being dharma's equal nature because they enter all sentient-being dharmas' nature wheel. One can enter all equal natures because they enter all nature wheels."

(The Buddha taught bodhisattvas the essential fathomless meanings of the equal nature gate of prajna paramita for entering the broad and great wheels.)

After teaching the essential meanings of the equal nature of the broad and great prajna wheel, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, and so forth, "If ones hear the essential meanings of this equal nature gate and can believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn them, they will be able to enter insightfully the equal natures and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal Bodhi quickly."

At that time, based on the Thus-Comer's features of real and pure field to extensively receive offerings, the World-Honored One further taught bodhisattvas about the profound meanings of the unsurpassed dharma gate of prajna paramita offerings. The Buddha said, "The bodhisattvas should initiate an aspiration toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment and make this as offering to Thus-

Comers. They should absorb and protect correct dharma and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should cultivate all factors for enlightenment and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should cultivate all paramitas and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should cultivate all kinds of dharani and samadhi and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should cultivate all five eyes and six supernatural powers and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should cultivate various meditations and liberations and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should cultivate loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should cultivate distinctive features of Buddha's wisdom and power and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should contemplate all dharmas as neither permanent nor impermanent and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should contemplate all dharmas as neither pleasant nor painful and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should contemplate all dharmas as neither selfless nor not selfless and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should contemplate all dharmas as neither pure nor impure and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should contemplate all dharmas as neither empty nor not empty and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should contemplate all dharmas as neither with forms nor without forms and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should contemplate all dharmas as neither with aspiration nor without aspiration and make this as offering to the Thus-Comers. They should contemplate all dharmas as neither faraway nor not faraway and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should contemplate all dharmas as neither tranquil nor not tranquil and make this as offering to Thus-Comers. They should write, listen, accept, embrace, read, recite, reflect on, cultivate, learn, lecture extensively for others on, and disseminate the fathomless prajna paramita; they will not only do these for themselves, but also share with others and make offerings extensively to the Thus-

Comers.”

After teaching the very profound meanings of the unsurpassed gate of the real, pure offering making, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, and so forth, “Those who hear the profound meanings of this unsurpassed dharma gate of the real and pure offering making and can believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn them, will be able to fulfill all bodhisattva actions and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

(The Buddha taught bodhisattvas the unsurpassed dharma gate of genuine offerings to Thus-Comers through cultivating various superior virtuous dharmas.)

At that time, based on the Thus-Comer’s features of efficient and skillful way of taming and subjugation, the World-Honored One taught bodhisattvas the dharma gate of the profound knowledge storage meanings of prajna paramita serving to absorb secret knowledge and tame sentient beings. He said, “The equal nature of all sentient beings is the equal nature of anger. The equal taming nature of all sentient beings is the equal nature of anger taming. The real dharma nature of all sentient beings is the real dharma nature of anger. The realness of all sentient beings is the realness of anger. The equal dharma realm nature of all sentient beings is the dharma realm nature of anger. The nonarising nature of all sentient beings is the nonarising nature of anger. The reality of all sentient beings is the reality of anger. The original empty nature is the original empty nature of anger. The formless nature of all sentient beings is the formless nature of anger. The nonaspiration nature of all sentient beings is the nonaspiration of anger. The faraway nature of all sentient beings is the faraway nature of anger. The tranquil nature of all sentient beings is the tranquil nature of anger. The nonattainment nature of all sentient beings is the nonattainment nature of anger. The nonexistence nature of all sentient beings is the nonexistence nature of anger. The inconceivability nature of all sentient beings is the inconceivability of

anger. The freedom from nonsensical argument nature of all sentient beings is the freedom from nonsensical argument nature of anger. And the diamond-like nature of all sentient beings is the diamond-like nature of anger. But why? The real taming nature of all sentient beings is the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi; it is prajna paramita; it is also the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge of the Buddhas.”

After teaching the profound knowledge storage meanings of prajna paramita serving to tame sentient beings, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, and so forth, “Those who hear this dharma gate can further believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn it, will be able to not only tame their own anger and hatred, but also tame all sentient beings. They will always be reborn in good destinies and enjoy wonderful pleasures. They will treat enemies and adversaries with loving-kindness. They will be able to cultivate all bodhisattva actions well and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

(The Buddha taught the dharma gate of taming sentient beings for bodhisattvas.)

At that time, based on the Thus-Come’s features of establishing equal nature, the World-Honored One taught bodhisattvas about the profound meanings of prajna paramita, the supreme dharma gate of all dharma natures. The Buddha said, “As the natures of all sentient beings are equal, so is the nature of the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharma natures are equal, so is the nature of the fathomless prajna paramita. As the natures of all sentient beings are tamed, so is the nature of the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharma natures are tamed, so is the nature of the fathomless prajna paramita. As sentient beings have genuine meanings, so does the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas have genuine meanings, so does the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are realness, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are realness, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As

all sentient beings are dharma realm, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are dharma realm, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are dharma nature, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are dharma nature, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are reality, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are reality, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are originally empty, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are originally empty, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are formless, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are formless, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings have no aspiration, so does the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas have no aspiration, so does the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are faraway, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are faraway, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are tranquil, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are tranquil, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are unattainable, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are unattainable, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are nonexistent, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are nonexistent, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are inconceivable, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are inconceivable, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings have no nonsensical arguments, so does the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas have no nonsensical arguments, so does the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings are boundless, so is the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas are boundless, so is the fathomless prajna paramita. As all sentient beings have karmic operations, so does the fathomless prajna paramita; as all dharmas have karmic operations, so does the fathomless prajna paramita.”

After teaching the profound meanings of the equal nature supreme dharma

gate, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, “If one hears the meanings of the supreme dharma gate of equal prajna and believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn it, they will be able to thoroughly understand the equal dharma nature of the fathomless prajna paramita, know the minds of the sentient beings without hindrance, and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

(The Buddha taught the equal dharma nature gate for bodhisattvas.)

At that time, based on the Thus-Comer’s features of dwelling in dharma storage, the World-Honored One taught bodhisattvas about prajna paramita in regard to the profound meanings of the superior dharma storage that permeates all sentient beings and said, “All sentient beings are the Thus-Comer storage because they are permeated by the self-entity of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. All sentient beings are diamond storage because they are irrigated by diamond storage. All sentient beings are correct dharma storage because they act following correct words. All sentient beings are exquisite karma storage because all things and karmas performed with additional effort will rely on this foundation.”

(The Buddha taught the dharma storage gate, including Thus-Comer, diamond, correct dharma, and exquisite karma storages, for bodhisattvas.)

After teaching the profound meanings of the superior storage in which the sentient beings dwell, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, “If one hears the superior meanings of the superior storage dharma-gate that prajna permeates and can believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn them, this person will be able to thoroughly understand the superior storage of dharma nature and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

At that time, the World-Honored One further taught the ultimate meanings of prajna paramita equal diamond dharma gate to the bodhisattvas based on the Thus-

Comer's features of the ultimate and boundless dharma and said, "As the fathomless prajna paramita is boundless, so are all Thus-Comers. As the fathomless prajna paramita is timeless, so are all Thus-Comers. As the fathomless prajna paramita has only one taste, so do all dharmas. As the fathomless prajna paramita is the ultimate, so are all dharmas."

(The Buddha taught bodhisattvas about the equal diamond dharma gate.)

After teaching the boundless and timeless ultimate meanings of the diamond dharma, the Buddha said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, "If one hears this ultimate meanings of the diamond dharma gate and can believe in, understand, accept, embrace, read, recite, cultivate, and learn them, they will become free from all hindrances of dharmas, and definitely will acquire the diamond nature held by the Thus-Comer and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly."

At that time, the World-Honored One, following the features of Universally Illumination Thus-Comer, taught bodhisattvas about the secret dharma nature of prajna paramita, the dharma gate of great pleasure diamond genuine magic spell, the unsurpassed dharma gate of the supreme and extremely profound essential meanings, through initial, meddle, and later phases, as such: "The supreme achievement of great craving and so forth enables great bodhisattvas to fulfill supreme achievement of great pleasure. The supreme achievement of great pleasure enables great bodhisattvas to fulfill supreme achievement of great enlightenment. The supreme achievement of great enlightenment enables great bodhisattvas to fulfill the supreme achievement of subjugating all great demons. The supreme achievement of subjugating all great demons enables great bodhisattvas to fulfill the supreme achievement of self-ease across the three realms. The supreme achievement of self-ease across the three realms enables great bodhisattvas to completely relieve the realm of sentient beings and bring

benefits and happiness to all sentient beings. What is the supreme achievement of ultimate great pleasure? Observing the drifting of birth and death, those with superior knowledge will benefit sentient beings with equal dharma while they themselves choose not to enter nirvana. They further adopt expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita to make all pure efforts to purify all sentient beings. They efficiently tame greedy sentient beings and let all regulate themselves naturally, like lotus, which can avoid contamination caused by defilements. Therefore, great craving can benefit the world without being contaminated; great craving will bring about purity, great pleasure, great fortune, self-ease in the three realms constantly and truly bringing benefits to sentient beings.”

(The Buddha taught how great bodhisattvas expediently and efficiently guide sentient beings in accord with prajna paramita to benefit all sentient beings.)

At that time, the Thus-Come spoke the supernatural magic spell:

namo bhagavate prajna paramitaye

bodhi vajraye aparimitagunaye

sarva tathagate prapustaye

sarva tathagate gatanujnata nujnata byanujnataye

tadyatha om prajne prajne

mahaprajne prajna-avabhasakare

prajna-lokare andhakarabidhamani

siddhe susiddhe siddhyabtu mam bhagavate

sarvaanga sundhare bodhivasare

prasarita haste samasvasakare

tistha tistha buddha buddha

siddha siddha khampa khampa cala cala

rabar rabar agaccha agaccha

bhagavate mabhilambha svaha

“This magic spell is taught and protected by and kept in the minds of the Buddhas in the three phases of time. Those who accept and embrace it will remove all hindrances and be able to accomplish all things as they wish. They will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

At that time, the Thus-Come again spoke the supernatural magic spell:

namo bhagavate prajna paramitye tadyatha munidharme

samgraha dharme anugraha dharme vimukti dharme

sadanugraha dharma vaisramana dharma

samanta nuparivartana dharma runasamgraha dharma

sarva kara paripurna dharma svaha

“This magic spell is the mother of all Buddhas. Those who can recite and embrace it will eliminate all sins. They can always see the Buddhas, attain the supernatural power of knowing all previous lives, and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

(The Buddha highlighted the benefits and strengths gained by those who sincerely recite this spell.)

At that time, the Thus-Come reiterated the supernatural magic spell:

namo bhagavate prajna paramitye tadyatha

sriye sriye sriye

sriyese svaha

“This magic spell possesses great compelling powers. Those who accept and embrace it will remove karmic hindrances. They can always remember whatever correct dharma they hear. They will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.”

At that time, after speaking the spells, the World-Honored One said to Diamond Hand Bodhisattva, “If sentient beings whole-heartedly listen to and recite the fathomless meanings of prajna paramita, the supreme dharma gate, incessantly every morning, then all their negative karmic hindrances will be removed, while the superior jubilant pleasures will always be with them. They will attain the great pleasant, diamond like, genuine magic spell presently, and fulfill Thus-Comers’ supreme secret dharma. They will before long achieve the state of vajradhara, the Thus-Comer nature. If sentient beings have not planted many virtuous roots at many Buddhists’ places and aspired to the bodhi long enough, they will not be able to hear, write, read, recite, offer respectfully, reflect on, cultivate, and learn the profound meanings of prajna paramita. They should plant many virtuous roots at many Buddhists’ places and aspire to the bodhi consistently, so that they can listen to each word and sentence of the very profound meanings of the supreme dharma gate and further read, recite, accept, and embrace them. If sentient beings can make offerings respectfully to, esteem, and acclaim as many koti nayuta Buddhas as the sands of eighty Ganges, then they will be able to hear the fathomless essential meanings of prajna paramita. If this sutra circulates in an area, all heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, and so forth, will make offerings to it as they do to the Buddha’s pagoda. As someone carries this sutra, all heavenly and human beings will pay homage to it too. If sentient beings accept and embrace this sutra for koti kalpas, they will acquire the superior power of knowing previous lives; they will cultivate diligently and assiduously all virtuous dharmas and not be hindered by evil demons and other-paths practitioners. They will always be protected by the four heavenly kings and the rest of heavenly beings, and will not die in accidents or encounter misfortune. Because the Buddhas and bodhisattvas always keep and protect them, their virtues will increase and evils will decrease. They will be reborn in any Buddha land as they wish and will

not regress and fall into bad destinies until attaining the bodhi. If sentient beings can accept and embrace this sutra, they will attain boundless superior benefits, merits, and virtues, of which I have only spoken a little portion now.”

(The Buddha taught that the sentient beings, who can accept, embrace, and consistently cultivate the dharma gate of prajna paramita, will gain many superior benefits and virtues.)

After hearing the teaching of this sutra given by the Bhagavat, Great Bodhisattva Diamond Hand, the rest of great bodhisattvas, and all heavenly beings rejoiced. They believed in, accepted, and practiced it immediately.

Fascicle 579

Giving Paramita (1)

(In the Eleventh Assembly)

This is what I heard.

The Bhagavat once stayed in Jeta Anathapindika Garden in Sravasti with 1,200 senior bhiksus.

At that time, the World-Honored One asked Sariputra, “For how long do great bodhisattvas cultivate giving paramita so that they can fulfill it?”

In the meantime, Sariputra replied to the Buddha, “The Buddha is the foundation of the correct dharma. The Buddha is the leader of the correct dharma. The Buddha is the one upon whom the correct dharma depends. We sincerely hope the World-Honored One will share teachings and explanations so that all bhiksus may understand and embrace them.”

The World-Honored One repeatedly encouraged Sariputra, stating, “Now you should lecture on giving paramita for great bodhisattvas.”

At that time, owing to the Buddha’s encouragement and supernatural powers, the long-lived sage Sariputra taught and cautioned great bodhisattvas for the first time, “If great bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should cultivate giving paramita based on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge under the guidance of great compassion. If great bodhisattvas can cultivate giving paramita based on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge under the guidance of great compassion, they will be able to absorb the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge and realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly. Furthermore, the great bodhisattvas should practice giving with a morally unrelated mind; they would do nothing instead

of practicing giving with an attempt to transfer it toward the two vehicles. Why? The great bodhisattvas should be on the alert for and stay away from the stages of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one.”

At that time, Fully Loving-Kind One (Purna) asked Sariputra, “Why should great bodhisattvas be on the alert for the stages of voice-hearer and self-enlightened one?”

Sariputra replied, “Great bodhisattvas should not believe that the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge is the same as the two vehicles. Therefore, I feel they should remain cautious regarding the two vehicles.”

Meanwhile, Fully Loving-Kind One asked the long-lived sage Sariputra again, “What is the difference between bodhisattva giving and voice-hearer giving?”

Sariputra replied, “The voice-hearers practice giving to transfer the merits toward nirvana, the arhat effect, while the bodhisattvas practice giving in order to transfer its merits toward the bodhi, the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. That is the difference.

“Besides, Fully Loving-Kind One, two persons were practicing giving. One practiced giving with an attempt to seek the position of king; when practicing giving, he thought, ‘I wish I will become a king and will rule freely and at ease the lands in the eight directions.’ Then this person realized his wish and became a king; he ruled the lands of the eight directions well and freely. Another person practiced giving in order to become a high-ranking official. When practicing giving, he vowed, ‘I wish to become a high-ranking official to accomplish all tasks that my king entrusts me.’ Because of this aspiration, this person will never become a king. Both have practiced giving, but they achieve different effects because of different aspirations. So do the bodhisattvas and the voice-hearers. The bodhisattvas have practice giving based on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge under the guidance of great

compassion and transferred the merits thus derived along with sentient beings equally toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. On the other hand, the voice-hearers have practiced giving to pursue self-liberation instead of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Both great bodhisattvas and voice-hearers have practiced giving, but because their aspirations differ, the great bodhisattvas will attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge that is superior, while the voice-hearers will attain arhat effect that is less advanced. This is where the difference lies between these two kinds of giving practice.

(Sariputra explained why these two kinds of giving are different.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, someone has cultivated giving intending to become an elder or a layperson, while another person has cultivated giving intending to become a servant to the elder or the layperson. Similarly, bodhisattvas and voice-hearers attain superior or inferior effects owing to different aspirations in practicing giving.”

At that time, Fully Loving-Kind One admired Sariputra, “The similes that you spoke of are very unusual. You have very well manifested how these two kinds of giving differ. Let me also speak simile about these two different kinds of giving. Someone made hundreds of thousands of treasures as offerings to a very wealthy person and said, ‘I am presenting these offerings to you, hoping that you can accept me as your servant. I will accomplish everything you want me to do.’ So do the voice-hearers who practice giving to become the Thus-Come’s disciples. But bodhisattvas are different. Furthermore, a woman abandoned the pleasures of living in the king’s palace and went to an elder or great merchant’s home, saying, ‘I am presenting these treasures to you, hoping that you will accept me as your wife. I will serve you for the rest of my life and will never do anything to annoy you.’ So do the voice-hearers who have cultivated giving with an attempt to become the Thus-Come’s disciples, while

the bodhisattvas are different.”

In the meantime, Sariputra also admired the long-lived sage Fully Loving-Kind One, “You have very well spoken the similes that are unusual. Because the voice-hearers do not have skillful means, they attain voice-hearer effect by practicing giving. While the bodhisattvas use skillful means to attain the perfect knowledge of everything; they have practiced giving to universally benefit all sentient beings.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, if great bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should first practice giving with such a thought, ‘The karmas that I am making through practicing giving will be given to all sentient beings in the ten directions in order to relieve them permanently from the birth and death in bad destinies. I hope those who have not initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed bodhi will initiate immediately; those who have initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed bodhi will never regress; and those who have attained nonregression will attain the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.’ As these bodhisattvas reflect on outer phenomena, they will not stay away from their inner minds; they should absorb the virtuous roots and let them grow and increase step by step. As the bodhisattvas absorb virtuous roots and always nurture and protect them, they will get closer to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, then they will gradually fulfill virtuous roots, approach the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, and bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings in the endless future.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, when cultivating giving, the great bodhisattvas will think, ‘Wherever sentient beings are, they will receive the food, drinks, and other provisions that I offer. When they receive the food, and so forth, they will enjoy the portion they need and give the rest of supplies to other sentient beings. These other receivers will also enjoy the portion they need and give the rest of

supplies to other sentient beings. If the giving proceeds this way, all sentient beings in the world will share the living supplies that I give. Because of this cause and condition, I will be able to absorb boundless virtuous roots. I will further give these numberless virtuous roots universally to the sentient beings in the ten directions, so that they will be liberated permanently from the birth and death in bad destinies.

Those who have not initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi will initiate it soon; those who have initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi will not regress; and those who have attained nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi will fulfill the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge quickly.’ Because the bodhisattvas have absorbed the virtuous roots and let them always grow and increase incessantly, they will be able to absorb all paramitas and will become closer to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. Because of the expedient skillfulness, these bodhisattvas can acquire numberless virtuous roots caused by practicing giving although they have only given a little. Why? Fully Loving-Kind One, it is because they have transferred limitlessly giving minds toward the attainment of the perfect knowledge of everything.

(Sariputra further explained how giving practice will expand its effects and how bodhisattvas extend their limitless minds of giving to more sentient beings, thereby enhancing their merits and virtues.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, when great bodhisattvas cultivate giving, they think, ‘I practice giving and acquire virtuous roots not for the sake of other effects but attaining the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and bringing benefits and happiness to all sentient beings in the endless future. If I can transfer the virtuous roots toward the unsurpassed bodhi instead of other effects, I do practice giving paramita, and thus I will be able to universally fulfill all paramitas. If I do not

transfer the virtuous roots toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi based on the perfect knowledge of everything, I will practice giving instead of giving paramita; I cannot cultivate to fulfill other paramitas quickly, not to mention I can achieve the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.’

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, the great bodhisattvas have given a little, but because they can transfer the virtuous roots toward the unsurpassed bodhi, their giving practice becomes deep and broad and certainly can realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of everything. Some great bodhisattvas have given much, but they do not transfer the virtuous roots toward the unsurpassed bodhi; their giving practice becomes shallow and narrow, and they cannot realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of everything.

(Transferring the merits and virtues from cultivating giving toward the unsurpassed bodhi makes a significant difference for great bodhisattvas pertaining to the results attained.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, some great bodhisattvas have cultivated giving, but they have not transferred the virtuous roots toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, nor have they based cultivation on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. These great bodhisattvas have practiced giving but not giving paramita. Consequently, they cannot attain the perfect knowledge of everything; they will fall into birth and death. If they have cultivated giving and further transferred the virtuous roots thus derived toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi based on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, they indeed practice giving paramita; they will invite the perfect knowledge of everything instead of birth and death.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, if great bodhisattvas practice giving without attachment, transfer the merits thus derived toward the unsurpassed, perfect,

and universal bodhi without attachment, and rely on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge without attachment, then they will fulfill giving paramita quickly because of their expedient skillfulness. They can also fulfill all other paramitas, realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, and bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings in the endless future.”

(Sariputra stated that practicing giving without attachment, transferring the merits toward unsurpassed bodhi without attachment, and relies on the perfect knowledge without attachment lead to supreme results.)

At that time, Fully Loving-Kind One asked Sariputra, “The venerable one, do you lecture on the essential meanings of the dharma with your own talent of debate or with the support of the Buddha’s powers?”

Sariputra replied, “It is with the Buddha’s powers instead of my own talent of debate that I can lecture on the essential meanings of the dharma.”

Meanwhile, Sariputra continued saying to Fully Loving-Kind One, “Suppose all sentient beings in numberless and boundless worlds of the ten directions, in order to realize and attain arhat effect, have given properties to innumerable ordinary sentient beings, voice-hearers, or self-enlightened ones for as many great kalpas as the sands of the Ganges, they thus gain innumerable, countless, and inconceivable blessings. On the other hand, some great bodhisattvas have practiced giving and think, ‘I will joyfully partake in the blessings gained by these sentient beings.’ They universally transfer the virtuous roots of the bliss-inviting karmas thus derived toward the sentient beings, wishing that all sentient beings will permanently get rid of the bad destinies of birth and death; those who have not initiated aspiration toward the bodhi will initiate immediately; those who have initiated aspiration toward the bodhi will never regress; and those who have attained nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi will quickly fulfill the perfect knowledge of

all perfect knowledge. The virtuous roots of joyful participation and transference thus gained by these bodhisattvas are superior to the former sentient beings by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and even one upanisadam times. These bodhisattvas' minds of joyful participation and transference are also nobler. Their expedient skillfulness can bring about numberless blessings with less effort.

(Sariputra emphasized the significance of expedient skillfulness.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, suppose all sentient beings in numberless and boundless worlds of the ten directions have always made numberless and boundless offerings to the Buddhas and bhiksus for as many great kalpas as the sands of the Ganges. They gain innumerable blessings because of this cause and condition. On the other hand, some great bodhisattvas have been deeply joyful to participate in these sentient beings' blessings. They think, ‘It is excellent that these sentient beings of the ten directions can make offerings tirelessly in body and mind to the real, pure field of bliss. I am deeply joyful to participate in them.’ The blessings thus derived by these great bodhisattvas owing to their joyful mind of participation are superior to the blessings gained by all sentient beings of the ten directions by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and even one upanisadam times. The bodhisattvas' joyful minds of participation go beyond the blessings caused by practicing giving in the world. The lights of all treasures and fireworks in the four continents become very dim because of the appearance of the moon, so the blessings caused by the sentient beings' giving practice in the ten directions have also become dim because of the virtuous roots elicited by the bodhisattvas' joyful minds of participation. All lights in the four continents are overshadowed by the sunlight, so the blessings caused by the sentient beings' giving practice in the ten directions are overshadowed by the virtuous roots of the bodhisattvas' joyful minds of participation.

(Sariputra emphasized the significance of joyful participation.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, as we gather hundreds of thousands of *kācamaṇi* (crystal gem) together, we will have beautiful colorful lights. But if we place a piece of *vaidūrya* stone (Cat’s Eye Stone) on them, all their lights will become invisible. The sentient beings in the ten directions have dwelled and made the most exquisite music and entertainment as offerings to others or the Buddhas and the monastics for as many great kalpas as the sands of the Ganges, but once bodhisattvas initiate a mind of joyful participation in others’ blessings, they will gain much more blessings than those gained by former sentient beings by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and even one upanīśadam times.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, there are hundreds of thousands of ordinary horses that are herded together. But once a wheel-turning king’s horse-treasure appears among them, all their authority, powers, and lights will become invisible suddenly. The sentient beings of the ten directions have dwelled for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges to cultivate giving and accumulate virtuous roots. But once the bodhisattvas initiate a mind of joyful participation, the blessings gained by these bodhisattvas will be more than the former ones by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, as well as one upanīśadam times.

“Therefore, the bodhisattvas’ minds of joyful participation will overshadow the bliss-inviting karmas of the world. If the bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should joyfully participate in the merits and virtues made by various sentient beings.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, great bodhisattvas should initiate joyful mind to participate in various bliss-inviting karmas, and then transfer and offer blessings to all sentient beings in the ten directions, wishing them all to permanently get rid of the birth and death in bad destinies; wishing those who have not yet initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed bodhi will initiate immediately; wishing those who

have initiated aspiration will never regress in their pursuit of the unsurpassed bodhi; and wishing those who have attained nonregression will quickly fulfill the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. If bodhisattvas always renounce their virtuous roots and offer them to sentient beings, then they will get closer to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. If bodhisattvas refrain from attachment to virtuous roots, transfer virtuous roots to sentient beings, and wish them a peaceful and happy life without suffering, these bodhisattvas will become closer to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge even if they have not cultivated the factors for the bodhi. If bodhisattvas are not attached to their virtuous roots and the associated images, rather, they give their own virtuous roots to the sentient beings in the ten directions, wishing all to become liberated from suffering and attain permanent peace and happiness, then these bodhisattvas' virtuous roots will grow and increase, and become closer to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and realize the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge quickly. They can absorb numberless superior roots only because they are not attached to their virtuous roots and the associated images. Why? Fully Loving-Kind One, these bodhisattvas have transferred their limitless minds toward the perfect knowledge of everything.

“Owing to the expedient skillfulness of their joyful minds of participation, these bodhisattvas can bring the virtuous roots elicited by joyful participation to sentient beings, but they are neither attached to the virtuous roots nor the sentient beings. Wishing sentient beings to be liberated from the suffering of birth and death in inferior destinies, but the bodhisattvas are not attached to the suffering of the bad destinies and birth and death, nor the sentient beings. Wishing to absorb sentient beings, inspiring them to initiate aspiration to the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, but the bodhisattvas will not be attached to the initiation of the aspiration. Wishing to absorb sentient beings to let them stay from regression in the pursuit of the

unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, but the bodhisattvas are not attached to their achievement or the process. Wishing to absorb sentient beings to let them fulfill bodhisattva actions and realize and attain quickly the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, but the bodhisattvas are not attached to what they have achieved. Wishing to attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge themselves, but the bodhisattvas are not attached to this perfect knowledge. These bodhisattvas thus have possessed the expedient skillfulness because they are free from all attachment and incorrect views. Because of the powers of the expedient skillfulness, these bodhisattvas' minds of joyful participation will universally influence the rest of the bodhisattvas and bring superior benefits, peace, and happiness to them. They thus can absorb the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge themselves, and realize insightfully and attain quickly the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.

(Sariputra again emphasized the significant results generated by undertaking generous giving without attachment; this is the expedient skillfulness of prajna paramita for great bodhisattvas.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, suppose all sentient beings in the ten directions have made the best offerings respectfully to esteem and acclaim the Buddhas and the monastics for as many great kalpas as the sands of the Ganges and have additionally cultivated various bliss-inviting karmas. On the other hand, one bodhisattva has made a bowl of rice as offering to the Buddhas and monastics. Then the blessings gained by this bodhisattva are superior to the former sentient beings by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and upanisadam times. Why? It is because this bodhisattva has not seen the almsgiver, the receiver, and the things given; he has contemplated the original nature of all dharmas as empty. When practicing giving, this bodhisattva does not stay away from transference and aspiration initiation; namely, he transfers the blessings caused by giving practice along with sentient beings equally

toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, wishing all can realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge simultaneously. Therefore, when practicing giving, this bodhisattva acquires blessings superior to the former ones by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and one upanisadam times. Because of this cause and condition, this bodhisattva certainly will realize the unsurpassed bodhi and bring benefits, peace, and happiness to sentient beings.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, when great bodhisattvas cultivate giving, they should initiate this thought, ‘I would like to universally offer all superior virtuous roots caused by practicing property giving to the sentient beings in the ten directions, so that those in hells, the realm of animals, and the realm of ghosts will be relieved and become free fast; those suffer in human world and heavens will permanently cease all pains; those disgusted with the three realms will get rid of them quickly; the numberless and boundless sentient beings in the ten directions who have not yet initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed bodhi will initiate soon; the sentient beings who have initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed bodhi will never regress; and those who have attained nonregression in the pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi will quickly fulfill the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.’ If the bodhisattvas can give various virtuous roots to sentient beings at all times, they will be able to absorb giving paramita. If they can absorb giving paramita at all times, they will be able to foster all paramitas. If they can foster all paramitas at all times, they will be able to absorb innumerable superior virtuous roots. If they can absorb innumerable superior virtuous roots at all times, they will become closer to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. Because of the expedient skillfulness, the bodhisattvas can acquire many blessings with few efforts. Therefore, if bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should diligently cultivate expedient skillfulness.

(Sariputra now focused on expedient skillfulness.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, if bodhisattvas are not attached to the selfness and the associated images of their virtuous roots, then they will be able to absorb numberless and boundless virtuous roots. Why? These bodhisattvas would like to allow numberless and boundless sentient beings to realize insightfully and quickly attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. These bodhisattvas are willing to renounce all they have. They love to transfer and give without reluctance their own and others’ virtuous roots to numberless and boundless sentient beings. They love to give not only virtuous roots, but also the rarities and treasures. These bodhisattvas love to give all material and immaterial things, all virtuous roots that belong to themselves and to others, and so forth, as well as the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, so that the sentient beings can also realize and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.

“The bodhisattvas thus make a great lion’s roar: ‘I do not see any dharma. I do not see anything, material, immaterial, internal, or external. I do not see, but I can renounce.’ These bodhisattvas thus think, ‘I do not see the dharmas or the things, but I am not reluctant to give them to sentient beings.’ When realizing insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment in the future, the bodhisattvas will contemplate and investigate the world with the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge that they realize, and make a great lion’s roar: ‘I do not see any dharma; I do not see anything, material, immaterial, internal, or external. I do not see, but I want to renounce. I do not see any dharma or anything, and I do not practice giving either.’ These bodhisattvas always think, ‘When realizing insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment in the future, I will not see the dharmas. Although I do not see the dharmas, I will realize them insightfully and know them universally.’ Because the bodhisattvas can renounce all, they are able to renounce all

dharmas ultimately when realizing insightfully the unsurpassed enlightenment. Because of the ultimate renunciation, they can realize insightfully and know universally all dharmas. Because they always renounce all dharmas, they always do not see the dharmas; because they always do not see the dharmas, they can always realize insightfully and know universally all dharmas. These bodhisattvas thus can renounce all internal and external dharmas; because they can renounce them, they do not see all internal and external dharmas. Because they do not see all dharmas, when they realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, they can realize insightfully and know universally all dharmas and bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings in the endless future.

(Because great bodhisattvas can renounce all they have, they do not see anything. Because they do not see anything, they can realize the unsurpassed bodhi and understand all material and immaterial thoroughly.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, bodhisattvas should learn pure giving paramita like this. If they learn pure giving paramita in this way, they are named the genuine pure bodhisattva, who never stays far away from the mind in accord with the perfect knowledge of everything. If bodhisattvas remain in accord with the perfect knowledge of everything, all evil demons cannot take advantage to harm them, let alone yaksas, piśācas (crazy hungry ghosts), or the ordinary sentient beings. Why? If the bodhisattvas stay in a place to cultivate giving paramita and concentrate on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge incessantly without interruption, humans and nonhumans in this area cannot take advantage of them. Why? Fully Loving-Kind One, if someone continually aims to reflect on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, the outcome will be inconceivably broad, great, fathomless, and unusual. It is because the perfect knowledge of everything is inconceivable, broad, great, fathomless, and immeasurable.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, if bodhisattvas practice the great bodhi actions in this way, they provide great benefits to sentient beings by nurturing them efficiently; namely, they enable sentient beings to avoid disasters and guide them toward ceasing harmful actions and cultivating virtuous dharmas. Because of this cause and condition, the bodhisattvas, in their present stage, can always bring benefits and happiness to all ordinary sentient beings, voice-hearers, and self-enlightened ones. If they can realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment in the future, they will be able to grant sentient beings a great favor by nurturing them well; namely, they will teach correct dharma to help them cease vexations. Through this way, numberless and boundless sentient beings will attain ultimate peace and happiness in nirvana.

“Therefore, when realizing insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment, the bodhisattvas are superior to ordinary sentient beings, voice-hearers, and self-enlightened ones. They are the noblest, highest, most exquisite, subtlest, uppermost, unsurpassed, unequaled, and unequaled equal among all sentient beings. After entering nirvana, they will again grant a great favor to sentient beings by well nurturing them; namely, they will guide sentient beings to pay homage to, esteem, acclaim, and make varied best flower wreaths, spread and powdered fragrances, clothing, jewelry necklaces, treasure pennants, canopies, entertainment and music, and bright lamps as offerings to the Thus-Comers’ pagodas. Because of this cause and condition, the sentient beings will be able to plant numberless superior virtuous roots and cultivate, learn, and realize nirvana after hearing the Thus-Comer’s teaching about the essential meanings of nirvana. If the sentient beings make only an incense stick or a flower as offering to the Thus-Comer’s pagoda, the World-Honored One will confer on them the prophecy of becoming free from desires, and many of them are able to enter nirvana finally. So, when the bodhisattvas are still in the stage

of bodhisattva, they can help sentient beings by nurturing their virtuous roots. After entering nirvana, the bodhisattvas undoubtedly can continue to foster sentient beings. Because the bodhisattvas can always grant the sentient beings a great favor and nurture them well, they are the noblest and the supreme ones among all in the world. They are only second to the Buddhas.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, if bodhisattvas can achieve such superior merits and virtues, they will greatly benefit sentient beings. The solid gold can always benefit sentient beings whether it is refined, made into instruments, transformed, or not. Bodhisattvas can always cultivate the bodhi actions, when dwelling in the state of bodhisattva, and greatly benefit sentient beings. They can also greatly benefit the sentient beings when realizing insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and after entering nirvana.

(Sariputra said that bodhisattvas can always help and benefit sentient beings whether in the stage of bodhisattva, after achieving the perfect knowledge, or entering nirvana. They are the noblest among all sentient beings, surpassed only by the Buddhas.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, the sun and moon move around the four continents and greatly benefit sentient beings; namely, they can illuminate sentient beings and allow them to perform their businesses. They also allow sentient beings to know the differences between the day, night, half-moon, full moon, seasons, and years. Because of the sun and moon, all flowers, fruits, seeds, sprouts, crops, grasses, and trees grow and mature, and nurture all sentient beings. Similarly, when bodhisattvas dwell in the state of bodhisattva, they cultivate and practice bodhi actions and bring great benefits to sentient beings. When they realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi or after entering nirvana, they can also greatly benefit sentient beings.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, the bodhisattvas thus can achieve such

broad and great merits and virtues and bring many benefits to the sentient beings. The great merchants own many rarities and properties and can provide hundreds of thousands of families with sufficient living supplies. Even after they pass away, many people continue to enjoy prosperous lives owing to rich treasures and properties left behind. The bodhisattvas practice bodhi actions, stay in the stage of the bodhisattva, and bring great benefits and happiness to numberless sentient beings, not to mention after they attain the great bodhi and enter nirvana when they become more capable and powerful.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, these bodhisattvas thus can always bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings; for instance, when they are still in the state of bodhisattva, when they realize insightfully the perfect enlightenment, or after they enter nirvana, they can always assist sentient beings without interruption. The virtuous gentlepersons are so named because they possess the qualities of a virtuous gentleperson; they can not only stay in peace and ease themselves but also assist others to stay in peace and ease. They also collect rarities and treasures and give them universally to others. Therefore, they are named virtuous gentlepersons. Similarly, bodhisattvas develop various merits and virtues and bring benefits and happiness to numberless sentient beings when they are still in the stage of the bodhisattva. When they realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi or after they enter nirvana when their authorities and strengths increase, they are also able to bring benefits and happiness to numberless sentient beings and their disciples.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, the bodhisattvas thus can always bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings without a brief interruption when they are still in the stage of bodhisattva, when they attain the bodhi, or after they enter nirvana. Similarly, the bodhisattvas make themselves and others stay in peace and happiness,

stay far away from various evil karmas and vexations without falling into bad destinies and drifting in birth and death, and attain ultimate peace and happiness in nirvana, or attain perfect enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, Ksatriya King of Baptizing by Pouring Water over Head inherited the throne of the king. When he was a prince or after he became the king, he could bring peace and happiness to all sramanas, celibacy practitioners, and the rest of sentient beings. Even after he passed away, the merits and virtues left behind by him were still influential to keep the country land in peace and prosperity, preventing sentient beings from decay and annoyance. Similarly, the bodhisattvas practice the bodhi actions when in the stage of bodhisattva; they can bring peace and happiness to all sentient beings when they realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment and after they enter nirvana. After the bodhisattvas enter nirvana, numberless sentient beings will pay homage to, esteem, and acclaim the pagodas; these sentient beings thus will gain numberless blessings. In addition, they will listen to correct dharma and accept, embrace, read, recite, reflect reasonably on, and lecture on it for others. They thus will acquire boundless merits, virtues, and superior benefits. If the sentient beings, after the Buddha, the World-Honored One enters nirvana, stay in the mindfulness of all Thus-Comer’s aggregates of precepts, concentrations, wisdom, liberation, and the knowledge and views of liberation, then, owing to this cause and condition, these sentient beings will not fall into bad destinies; they will rather be reborn in heaven or in human world and enjoy pleasures. Some of them will realize nirvana in the three vehicles and bring ultimate peace and happiness to themselves and others. In their present lives, these sentient beings will not be harassed or harmed by humans or nonhumans, or others. Why? Fully Loving-Kind One, the merits and virtues caused by reciting the Buddhas’ names can eliminate all terrors caused by humans,

nonhumans, and so forth.”

(Sariputra explained how bodhisattvas could continue to benefit sentient beings after they became Buddha and entered nirvana.)

At that time, the Buddha admired Sariputra, “Excellent, excellent! It is as you say. If the sentient beings can stay in the mindfulness of all Thus-Comer’s aggregates of precepts, concentrations, wisdom, liberation, and the knowledge and views of liberation, all terrible things caused by the humans, nonhumans, and so forth, will be eliminated.”

(The Buddha approved of Sariputra’s statements.)

In the meantime, Sariputra said to the Buddha, “It is rare, World-Honored One! The Thus-Comer has achieved such pure, broad, and great exquisite dharma.”

At that time, the World-Honored One said to Sariputra, “You must know that the bodhisattvas can also achieve such pure, broad, and great exquisite dharma.”

Sariputra asked, “Which pure, broad, and great exquisite dharma can bodhisattvas achieve?”

The Buddha replied, “It means that the bodhisattvas can initiate the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment and never regress when we say that the bodhisattvas can achieve the pure, broad, and great exquisite dharma. Why? Sariputra, the purest, broadest, and greatest exquisite dharma means the nature of the Thus-Comer, the nature of the natural enlightenment, and the nature of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. If bodhisattvas can initiate the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal enlightenment and never regress, they undoubtedly will achieve such pure, broad, and great exquisite dharma.”

(The Buddha explained the meaning of the pure, broad, and exquisite dharma.)

In the meantime, Sariputra said to Fully Loving-Kind One, “The bodhisattvas should think, ‘If sentient beings come to my place and ask for living supplies, I should

give the supplies to them; I should not reject them. In case I have no supplies at my disposal at that time, I should try to get them and then give to these sentient beings. I should not stop there and do nothing if I have no supplies at my disposal. If someone else wants to give the supplies to these sentient beings, I should celebrate and joyfully join them. I should also encourage others to practice giving so that all will be satisfied. These bodhisattvas will either give living supplies to sentient beings, or make offerings and offer services to elders, teachers, and ill persons, then transfer the bliss-inviting karmas along with sentient beings equally toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi in order to bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings, liberate them from the suffering of birth and death in bad destinies, and let them all attain nirvana or the perfect knowledge of everything in the endless future. If sentient beings can practice giving and cultivate the rest of bliss-inviting karmas, the bodhisattvas will encourage them to transfer these merits toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. If the bodhisattvas can do this, the bliss-inviting karmas gained by them will be superior to those gained by these sentient beings by one hundred, one thousand, and so forth, and one upanisadam times. Why? The bodhisattvas will be able to let themselves and other sentient beings realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi if they can encourage other sentient beings to transfer their merits toward the bodhi.

(Sariputra said bodhisattvas should encourage sentient beings to undertake correct transference.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, when cultivating giving paramita, bodhisattvas should first cultivate and learn expedient skillfulness. They should cultivate giving based on the expedient skillfulness that they have cultivated and learned. They should further transfer the bliss-inviting karmas caused by giving cultivation toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, wishing that the

sentient beings will be able to realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. Expedient skillfulness enables bodhisattvas and others to gain superior benefits. If bodhisattvas cultivate giving without cultivating and learning expedient skillfulness, they will not be able to initiate the transference along with sentient beings toward the bodhi, nor can they absorb giving paramita that they are cultivating even after dwelling in and cultivating giving practice for as many kalpas as the sands of the Ganges. They will not be able to realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge that they have originally aspired to. (Sariputra explained that without expedient skillfulness, one cannot successfully transfer or attain the unsurpassed bodhi.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, suppose sentient beings carried a container as big as the large threefold thousand-world and said to bodhisattvas, ‘We need to fill this container with various supplies. Would you please give us.’ The bodhisattvas would have no other thoughts than this one, ‘Undoubtedly I will give you as you wish.’ They would never allow anger or hatred to arise in their minds and thought, ‘Why are they so arrogant and careless?’ They would not think, ‘How can I give them so many things?’ Nor would they think, ‘How can I get so many things to fill such a big container?’ Rather, they would think, ‘I should cultivate the superior supernatural powers and adopt all possible ways to seek more properties and treasures in order to satisfy their wishes.’ At that time, these bodhisattvas worked diligently to increase their superior supernatural powers to seek more properties and treasures so they can satisfy alms beggars’ wishes. In the meantime, they also absorbed diligence paramita. Because they had sought more properties and treasures to satisfy alms beggars’ wishes, they had also absorbed giving paramita. This is how bodhisattvas cultivate giving paramita and initiate tirelessly the broad and great mind. Because of this cause and condition, they are able to realize insightfully and quickly the

unsurpassed bodhi and bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings in the endless future.

(In doing so, these bodhisattvas practice generous giving while also developing forbearance paramita and diligence paramita.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, when practicing giving, great bodhisattvas should stay in loving-kindness with an attempt to bring happiness to sentient beings. They should stay in compassion with an attempt to remove sentient beings’ suffering. They should stay in joy to celebrate the sentient beings who have gotten rid of suffering and attained pleasure. They should also stay in equanimity to benefit equally all sentient beings. After practicing giving this way, they should think, ‘I would like to universally give all blessings and virtuous karmas that I have achieved to sentient beings in the ten directions, wishing they all permanently become free from birth and death in bad destinies. Wishing those who have not yet aspired toward the bodhi will do so very soon; those who have already aspired toward the bodhi will never regress; those who are not regressive in the pursuit of the bodhi will fulfill the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge quickly.’ As bodhisattvas offer their blessings and virtuous roots to sentient beings, their virtuous roots will continue to grow and increase. As bodhisattvas transfer the virtuous karmas that they have gained along with sentient beings equally toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they sincerely wish themselves and sentient beings can realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, thus, these bodhisattvas’ virtuous roots will also grow and increase.

(Great bodhisattvas help sentient beings with four immeasurable minds: loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity, to let their own and sentient beings’ virtuous roots continue to increase and grow.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, repeatedly smelting and refining solid

gold makes it brighter, more colorful, and more versatile. If bodhisattvas transfer the virtuous dharmas they have achieved along with sentient beings equally toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi with an attempt to realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, their virtuous roots will flourish, and they will move closer to achieving the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, when a woman regularly cleans her mirror, it remains clear and bright, accurately reflecting objects without any dust or stains. When bodhisattvas are determined to transfer the blessings and virtuous dharmas that they have achieved toward the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge and share them universally with all sentient beings in the worlds of the ten directions, they sincerely wish sentient beings will be liberated from birth and death in bad destinies; those who have not yet initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed bodhi will initiate soon; those who have initiated aspiration toward the unsurpassed bodhi will never regress; and those who are nonregressive in the pursuit of the great bodhi will fulfill quickly the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. When they renounce their own virtuous roots and offer them to sentient beings, their own virtuous roots will flourish more, they thus move closer to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. Because they transfer the merits toward the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge that they pursue with expedient skillfulness, their virtuous roots continue to grow and increase. They will realize the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly, so that they can bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings in the endless future.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, why do some bodhisattvas give a lot but receive few blessings, while others give little yet gain many blessings? Why do some bodhisattvas practice little and receive few blessings, while others give much

and gain many blessings? Some bodhisattvas renounce numberless rarities and properties for as many great kalpas as the sands of the Ganges and universally give them to sentient beings in the ten directions, but they do not transfer the merits along with sentient beings toward the unsurpassed bodhi and realize insightfully the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. These bodhisattvas give a lot but receive few blessings. Some bodhisattvas give few properties to sentient beings for a short period of time but transfer the merits along with sentient beings toward the unsurpassed bodhi and realized insightfully the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. These bodhisattvas give little and receive few blessings. Some bodhisattvas renounce numberless rarities and properties and universally give them to sentient beings in the ten directions for as many great kalpas as the sands of the Ganges; they further transfer the merits along with sentient beings toward the unsurpassed bodhi and realize insightfully the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. These bodhisattvas give much and receive many blessings. Therefore, to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, great bodhisattvas should transfer the virtuous roots along with sentient beings toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.

“If great bodhisattvas would like to absorb and receive numberless blessings, greatly benefit sentient beings, and realize insightfully and quickly the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, they should always stay in the intention correspondent with the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge when practicing giving. If great bodhisattvas can always stay in the intention correspondent with the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge when practicing giving paramita, they will be able to absorb and receive numberless blessings, realize insightfully and quickly the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, and greatly benefit sentient

beings. Why? Fully Loving-Kind One, if bodhisattvas do not stay far away from the intention correspondent with the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge when practicing giving paramita, their merits, virtues, and virtuous roots will grow and increase instantaneously but continually, realize insightfully and quickly the unsurpassed bodhi, and bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings in the endless future. Therefore, if great bodhisattvas would like to bring benefits, peace, and happiness to sentient beings, they should always diligently cultivate and learn expedient skillfulness in all actions, transfer the virtuous roots toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, and willingly bring benefits to all sentient beings.”

(Sariputra taught how great bodhisattvas realize the unsurpassed bodhi to benefit sentient beings.)

Fascicle 580

Giving Paramita (2)

(In the Eleventh Assembly)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, if great bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should first learn the uncontaminated giving paramita. Why? Fully Loving-Kind One, through the learning of giving paramita, the defiled stinginess that one inherits from unknown past will be left behind, and one’s body and mind thus will be closer, gradually and step by step, to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. If bodhisattvas stay more in the intention correspondent with the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, they will move closer to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. As they become closer to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, they will stay farther away from the stage of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one. As they stay farther away from the stage of voice-hearer and the stage of self-enlightened one, they will become closer to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.

(Sariputra encouraged bodhisattvas to cultivate uncontaminated giving.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, consider that when it rains, a jar placed outdoors accumulates water not solely from the initial rainfall or later showers, but through the continuous, steady accumulation of each drop. Similarly, bodhisattvas do not attain perfect knowledge merely due to their initial aspiration or final moments before enlightenment; rather, they achieve perfect knowledge through the persistent and continual arising of intention necessary to overcome all obstacles.

(Sariputra used a simile to illustrate that the primary factor in achieving perfect knowledge is persistent aspiration and consistent effort.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, if bodhisattvas would like to realize

insightfully and quickly the unsurpassed bodhi, they should stay in an uncontaminated mind and not allow any minds other than the one correspondent with the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge to arise.”

Meanwhile, Fully Loving-Kind One asked the long-lived sage Sariputra, “How can bodhisattvas stay in an uncontaminated mind?”

Sariputra replied, “When irrational thoughts arise in their minds, they should correctly reflect: ‘The unreasonable intentions should be guided to become correspondent with the perfect knowledge rather than oppose it.’ The bodhisattvas should understand: ‘The irrational thoughts that arise in my mind will become helpful to enable my body to exist long enough so I can bring benefits to sentient beings. If I do not have these thoughts, my existence will fade away, preventing me from fully realizing myself and, moreover, from helping others. This is how the bodhisattvas stay in an uncontaminated mind.

(Sariputra explained the implied meaning of an uncontaminated mind.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, if the bodhisattvas contemplate all dharmas, whether they are positive or negative, as the factors helpful for eliciting the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, then they do contemplate all dharmas in an expedient and skillful way. If they can do in this way, their minds will not be contaminated by the so-called positive or negative things; they will always stay in compliance with the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. They will not be angry because things do not go as they wish, nor crave the things that make them satisfied. Both positive and negative things can be correctly understood as useful conditions for eliciting the perfect knowledge of everything. These bodhisattvas’ minds thus will not be contaminated in all circumstances.

(The deeper meaning of an uncontaminated mind was clarified.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, a convict sentenced to death went

under escort to the location where the execution would be carried out. This person was very scared; he had no thoughts other than this one, ‘I will be killed very soon.’ Similarly, bodhisattvas have no thoughts other than the reflection on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge; they will not be contaminated by any ideas always.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, someone carried many rarities and properties and traveled through wilderness where robbers were fierce and violent. This person would have no thoughts other than this one, ‘When can I get out of this difficult and perilous place and step onto a rich and peaceful land?’ So, bodhisattvas always concentrate on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge, no other intentions can intrude into their minds. This is how the bodhisattvas maintain their bodies and minds in purity and are not contaminated by any other intentions.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, a robber was tracked down by king’s people. This person was frightened and hid in a crowded city when the robber hunter was shouting on the street in addition to ringing the bell and beating the drum to attract public’s attention. At that moment, the only thought running through the robber’s mind was, ‘I hope no one recognizes me or that I get caught.’ Similarly, bodhisattvas will only always reflect on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi; there will be no room for other thoughts. This is how bodhisattvas maintain their intentions uncontaminated when they concentrate on the cultivation.

(More suggestions provided by Sariputra to maintain intentions uncontaminated when bodhisattvas progress toward the perfect knowledge.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, a king’s messenger delivered a piece of gold to the goldsmith, instructing him, ‘The king requests that you craft this gold into a refined object within one month. If you cannot do it or if your craft is not good,

the king absolutely will kill you.’ After hearing what the messenger said, the goldsmith was very scared, so he worked attentively day and night. He dared not have any other thoughts but this one: ‘How should I do to satisfy the king?’ During that time, this goldsmith drank and ate without thinking of or recognizing the taste of food. Because of his incessant concentration on his work, he finally made a wonderful masterpiece. Why? Fully Loving-Kind One, it is because this goldsmith extremely loved his own life. When this goldsmith finished his job before the deadline and carried it to the palace, the king was very pleased, and said, ‘It is excellent! You can do this so well within one month; for others, it usually takes twelve months to have that done.’ The king thus gave him a reward generously. From the moment bodhisattvas aspire to the bodhi until finally attaining the diamond-simile concentration, they have wholeheartedly pursued the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. Like the goldsmith who has stayed attentively on creating the best ware because he loves his life, so the bodhisattvas have stayed attentively on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge because they love the bodhi. Before realizing insightfully the unsurpassed bodhi, the bodhisattvas have only reflected on the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge and spared no room for other intentions. This is how bodhisattvas should stay in an uncontaminated mind.

“If bodhisattvas can dwell in such an uncontaminated mind and diligently cultivate the actions leading to the bodhi when they pursue the perfect knowledge of everything, they will quickly fulfill the nutrition for the bodhi. If they cultivate bodhisattva actions with a contaminated mind, they will need to work hard for numberless kalpas to fulfill the nutrition for the bodhi, while the bodhisattvas with uncontaminated mind may reach their objective by taking a much shorter period. Why? Fully Loving-Kind One, when pursuing the perfect knowledge of everything, these bodhisattvas do not allow any other intentions to arise in their minds, so they are

able to prepare enough sustenance for the unsurpassed bodhi in less than one hundred kalpas. A contaminated mind that continues for a very long time will disable the accomplishment of the nutrition preparation, while an uncontaminated mind that continues for a much shorter time will enable the accomplishment of the nutrition preparation only because, in this condition, improvement is made every moment.

Therefore, if bodhisattvas would like to pursue the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and activate the action for fulfilling the nutrition for the bodhi, they should elicit diligently, expediently, and correctly the uncontaminated mind; once they have attained such uncontaminated mind, they will easily realize insightfully the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.”

(Sariputra distinguished the pure intention from the defiled one in fulfilling the preparation for the bodhi.)

At that time, Fully Loving-Kind One asked Sariputra, “What is the nature of uninterrupted and uncontaminated mind? Which intentions will cause interrupted and contaminated mind and how should bodhisattvas avoid it?”

Sariputra replied, “If the bodhisattvas pursue the perfect knowledge of everything in an expedient and skillful way without being interrupted and contaminated by other intentions, this is the nature of the uninterrupted and uncontaminated mind. The intentions correspondent with voice-hearer and self-enlightened one will interrupt and contaminate the great bodhi mind; they are the irrational intentions for bodhisattvas. Why? The intentions of the two vehicles hinder one from reaching the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. The presence of such intentions disables one to fulfill the nutrition for the bodhi because that makes one fond of nirvana and disgusted with birth and death. Therefore, the bodhisattvas should avoid them. They must think, ‘The intentions correspondent with the two vehicles lead one to nirvana instead of the perfect knowledge of everything; my mind should

not be interrupted and contaminated by them.’

(Sariputra clarified how contaminated intentions were caused and how one could avoid them.)

“Therefore, bodhisattvas should think, ‘The minds correspondent with greed, anger, and ignorance can hinder the great bodhi, but they are still in compliance with the nutrition for the bodhi and are not so extremely interruptive and contaminative as the mind of pursuing the stages of voice-hearer and self-enlightened one. Why? Greed, anger, and ignorance enable the continuation of the birth and death and assist bodhisattvas to elicit the perfect knowledge of everything. Because of this expedient skillfulness, bodhisattvas will allow the vexations to arise and thus enable them to be reborn again. Relying on the body gained in rebirth, bodhisattvas can cultivate giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas, greatly benefiting them for fulfilling the six paramitas. They may rely on the body to cultivate, learn, and fulfill the four meditations, four immeasurable minds, and four formless concentrations. They may rely on the body to cultivate, learn, and fulfill the four bases of mindfulness, four correct endeavors, four bases of power, five roots, five powers, seven factors for enlightenment, and noble eightfold path. They may rely on the body to cultivate, learn, and fulfill the liberation gates of emptiness, formlessness, and nonaspiration. They may rely on the body to cultivate, learn, and fulfill the dharani gate and samadhi gate; the five eyes and the six supernatural powers; the Thus-Come’s ten abilities, four kinds of fearlessness, four unhindered understandings, great loving-kindness, great compassion, great joy, great equanimity, eighteen distinctive features of Buddha’s wisdom and power, and the rest of numberless and boundless Buddha’s merits and virtues. Therefore, vexations can assist bodhisattvas to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. But the intentions correspondent with voice-hearer and self-enlightened one

will hinder the great bodhi and the fulfillment of the nutrition for the bodhi.’

(Sariputra cautioned that as vexations may help sentient beings learn and fulfill various superior dharmas, the two vehicles do hinder bodhisattvas from pursuing the bodhi.)

“Therefore, when great bodhisattvas have those contaminated intentions arise to interrupt their minds, they will stay farther from the unsurpassed bodhi. No intentions other than the ones correspondent with voice-hearer and self-enlightened one can really interrupt and contaminate the bodhisattvas’ minds, so these should be avoided when pursuing the great bodhi. The intentions of vexations exist in compliance with the bodies and thus are not extremely harmful. Why? Fully Loving-Kind One, as the bodhisattvas pursue the great bodhi by wearing the armor of diligence to deliver sentient beings, they need to stay long enough in the birth and death so they can greatly benefit sentient beings. Therefore, they must delay removing intentions that cause vexation. As such intentions are present, their correspondent bodies will sustain for a long time so that giving, pure-precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas, as well as the rest of numberless and boundless Buddha dharmas can be elicited and fulfilled. The vexations thus will ensure the continuation of the birth and death and assist bodhisattvas to elicit the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. One should not permanently terminate the intentions of vexations until realizing insightfully the bodhi and sitting on the throne of the exquisite bodhi.

(Sariputra further explained why vexations could help bodhisattva-path practitioners.)

“Therefore, great bodhisattvas should not be very disgusted with vexations when they arise. Why? Fully Loving-Kind One, bodhisattvas must be grateful and think that they owe a debt to vexations, ‘Because of vexations, I can elicit various kinds of nutrition for the bodhi and thus fulfill the bodhi quickly. These vexations

truly benefit me. Why? As virtuous dharmas benefit me and thus are loved and esteemed by me, so are vexations; I must not be disgusted with them.’ Because of their expedient skillfulness, the bodhisattvas will respect and love vexations and their spiritual level as they do the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones. Why? Owing to their expedient skillfulness, bodhisattvas will so reflect, ‘Because the bonds of existence are not completely and permanently terminated, I can cultivate and perfectly fulfill giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas as well as the rest of numberless and boundless Buddha dharmas and thus elicit and activate the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. As bodhisattvas progress and fulfill step by step giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas as well as the rest of numberless and boundless Buddha dharmas, they will also remove the bonds gradually until finally realizing the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi.’

“A merchant transported various treasures and goods to a big city. As his heavily loaded vehicle moved forward and got close to the city, the hub and wheels of the vehicle became looser and finally fell apart when arriving at the destination. This merchant would not regret it. Similarly, bodhisattvas with expedient skillfulness cultivate giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas as well as the rest of numberless and boundless Buddha dharmas relying on the persistent bodies caused by the bonds of vexations. As the cultivation of the six paramitas and the rest of numberless and boundless Buddha dharma are fulfilled, all bodhisattvas’ bonds and vexations diminish when bodhisattvas become close to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. When realizing the great bodhi, all their bonds are removed, and all services that they should perform are well done, so they no longer need bodies and vexations, much like the vehicle which no longer needs wheels. Therefore, although vexations may hinder the great bodhi, they can also assist

bodhisattvas to elicit the nutrition for the bodhi.

“Therefore, before bodhisattvas sit on the throne of the exquisite bodhi, their bonds of vexations need not be eliminated permanently. Once attaining the bodhi, all bonds will be removed abruptly. A sentient being came to bodhisattva’s place and asked for property after slandering him. The bodhisattva was pleased to give when he thought, ‘Now this sentient being came to help me fulfill giving and forbearance, so that I can realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. Because of this sentient being, I intensify my aspiration and strength to attain the great bodhi that is superior to other achievements.’ This bodhisattva is not disgusted with all intentions because they all are helpful for the realization and attainment of the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge except those correspondent with the two vehicles.”

In the meantime, Fully Loving-Kind One asked the long-lived sage Sariputra, “Do the two vehicles not assist bodhisattvas to fulfill the perfect knowledge of everything? Voice-hearers can also teach and caution bodhisattvas and encourage them to diligently cultivate giving, pure precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas as well as the rest of numberless and boundless Buddha dharmas. In addition, self-enlightened ones can serve as the field of bliss when bodhisattvas make clothing and food as offerings to them, enabling them to realize insightfully the perfect knowledge of everything. So, how can we say that the intentions correspondent with voice-hearer and self-enlightened one hinder them from fostering the perfect knowledge of everything and the nutrition for the bodhi?”

In the meantime, Sariputra replied to the long-lived sage Fully Loving-Kind One, “Yes, voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones can also foster the perfect knowledge of everything and the nutrition for the bodhi; namely, they can teach and caution bodhisattvas or encourage them to diligently cultivate and learn giving, pure-

precept, forbearance, diligence, meditation, and prajna paramitas; internal emptiness, external emptiness, internal-external emptiness, emptiness of emptiness, emptiness of space, emptiness of ultimate meaning, emptiness of conditioned phenomena, emptiness of unconditioned reality, emptiness in the final analysis, emptiness of nontemporality, emptiness of deconstruction, emptiness of changelessness, emptiness of original nature, emptiness of particular characteristics, emptiness of common forms, emptiness of all dharmas, emptiness of nonattainment, emptiness of selflessness, emptiness of selfness, and emptiness of selfless self-nature; the four meditations, four immeasurable minds, and four formless concentrations; the four bases of mindfulness, four correct endeavors, four bases of power, five roots, five powers, seven factors for enlightenment, and noble eightfold path; the eight liberations, eight vexation-overcoming meditations, nine concentrations in sequence, and ten universal contemplations; the liberation gates of emptiness, formlessness, and nonaspiration; the stages of ecstasy, freedom from defilements, emitting lights, flaming wisdom, being extremely difficult to surpass, realness manifestation, going far away, the unmovable, virtuous wisdom, and dharma cloud; the stages of pure contemplation, embryonic Buddha-nature, eight-forbearance, insight, slight vexations, freedom from desires, arhat, self-enlightenment, bodhisattva, and the Thus-Comer; the dharani gate and the samadhi gate; the five eyes and the six supernatural powers; the Thus-Comer's ten abilities, four kinds of fearlessness, four unhindered understandings, great loving-kindness, great compassion, great joy, great equanimity, and eighteen distinctive features of Buddha's wisdom and powers; the thirty-two perfect major marks and the eighty distinguishing minor features; staying in correct mindfulness and dwelling in equanimity at all times; the perfect knowledge of everything, the perfect knowledge of the forms of the paths, and the perfect knowledge of all phenomena; all bodhisattva actions; and the unsurpassed, perfect,

and universal bodhi. Therefore, voice-hearers can also assist bodhisattvas in their pursuit of the perfect knowledge of everything and the attainment of the nutrition for the bodhi.

(Sariputra agreed that voice-hearers can also assist and encourage bodhisattvas to learn and cultivate various superior virtuous dharmas.)

“Self-enlightened ones can serve as the field of bliss for bodhisattvas when they practice giving; namely, bodhisattvas will offer their properties, bodies, and living supplies and transfer the merits thus derived toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi. Therefore, self-enlightened ones can also assist bodhisattvas in their pursuit of the perfect knowledge of everything and the attainment of the nutrition for the bodhi.

(Sariputra affirmed that self-enlightened ones can also help bodhisattvas practice giving.)

“But the intentions correspondent with voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones are not helpful for the attainment of the perfect knowledge of everything and its nutrition. Why? The intentions correspondent with voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones can be greatly helpful for achieving the stages in the two vehicles. However, they are extremely incongruent with the bodhisattvas’ pursuit of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi and its nutrition. The two vehicles loathe the birth and death and love to enter nirvana; they are not reluctant to renounce the great bodhi and sentient beings. Therefore, bodhisattvas absolutely should not initiate the intentions correspondent with voice-hearer and self-enlightened one only because these intentions are extremely incongruent with the Buddha effect and the actions of bringing benefits to the sentient beings that the bodhisattvas pursue.

(But, Sariputra emphasized, the intentions correspondent with the two vehicles are contrary to bodhisattva’s aspiration because voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones

so hate birth and death and like entering nirvana that they are not reluctant to renounce the unsurpassed bodhi and sentient beings.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, voice-hearers can greatly benefit bodhisattvas through lecturing on all paramitas and the rest of superior actions for bodhisattvas, giving cautions and encouraging them to diligently cultivate and learn various superior dharmas, so that they will fulfill them quickly. They can also serve as a field of bliss, so that bodhisattvas make offerings to voice-hearers to attain the nutrition for the bodhi soon. For this reason, voice-hearers can do bodhisattvas a great favor. Therefore, if bodhisattvas have expedient skillfulness, they will contemplate all sentient beings and all dharmas, finding that voice-hearers are not incompliant with the perfect knowledge of everything and the nutrition for the bodhi.

“The knowledge and the mind of arhats can also do bodhisattva-vehicle practitioners a great favor. Namely, if there are no arhats, there will be no hindrances and difficulties, and we need not to say that great bodhisattvas should not initiate an arhat mind and cultivate the arhat knowledge. Because of this cause and condition, bodhisattvas must elicit and fulfill the nutrition for the bodhi and realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge quickly. Therefore, the arhats’ knowledge and mind can do bodhisattvas a great favor; that is, they allow bodhisattvas to attain the perfect knowledge of everything and bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings in the endless future. Besides, self-enlightened ones’ knowledge and mind can also do bodhisattvas a favor. Namely, if there are no self-enlightened ones, there will be no hindrances and difficulties, and then we need not to say that great bodhisattvas should not initiate a self-enlightenment mind and cultivate self-enlightenment bodhi. Because of this cause and condition, bodhisattvas must elicit and fulfill the nutrition for the bodhi and realize insightfully and attain quickly the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. Therefore, the knowledge and the

mind of self-enlightened ones can do bodhisattvas a great favor; that is, they will allow bodhisattvas to attain the perfect knowledge of everything and bring benefits and happiness to all sentient beings in the endless future.

“In addition, when contemplating the inferior mind and knowledge of two-vehicle practitioners, bodhisattvas will be reinforced to cultivate and learn the superior mind and knowledge. Without inferior mind and knowledge of the two vehicles, bodhisattvas do not need to cultivate superior mind and knowledge. The mind and knowledge of the bodhisattvas are superior to, nobler, higher, more exquisite, and subtler than the mind and knowledge of the voice-hearers and self-enlightened ones; they are only second to the Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones. Nevertheless, the mind and the knowledge of the voice-hearers and the self-enlightened ones remain in certain aspects consistent with the perfect knowledge of everything. Because of their expedient skillfulness, bodhisattvas will contemplate all sentient beings and all dharmas as they are not completely inconsistent with the perfect knowledge of everything and the nutrition for the bodhi, so they will not be disgusted with all minds, nor will they renounce them.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, when cultivating giving paramita, great bodhisattvas are willing to renounce rarities and properties, but they neither grasp nor think about what they do. Rather, they will renounce all dharma forms when transferring the merits toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi to greatly benefit sentient beings. If they do so, they will be able to realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. If they cannot renounce the forms when transferring the merits toward the bodhi to greatly benefit sentient beings, they will not be able to attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.

“If bodhisattvas acquire various kinds of gold, silvers, and treasures, they are

called gaining benefits, but not the kind of great benefits. If bodhisattvas can renounce various kinds of gold, silvers, and treasures, they are called gaining great benefits. If bodhisattvas can renounce all forms, transfer the merits toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, and bring great benefits to sentient beings, they are called gaining the unsurpassed virtuous benefits.

“When bodhisattvas become the wheel-turning kings, they will conduct the four continents in great freedom and ease; they are thus called gaining benefits, but not the great ones. If bodhisattvas renounce the positions of wheel-turning kings of the four continents, they are called gaining great benefits. If bodhisattvas can renounce the forms, transfer the merits toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, and bring great benefits to sentient beings, they are called gaining the unsurpassed virtuous benefits.

“When bodhisattvas become the kings of the realm of desire, they conduct the realm of desire in great freedom and ease; they are called gaining benefits, but not the great ones. If bodhisattvas renounce the positions as the kings of the realm of desire, they are called gaining great benefits. If bodhisattvas can renounce the forms, transfer the merits toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, and bring great benefits to sentient beings, they are called gaining the unsurpassed virtuous benefits. (Sariputra distinguished between benefits, great benefits, and unsurpassed virtuous benefits, and clarified the true great benefits attained by bodhisattvas.)

“When sentient beings renounce various forms and attain stream-entry effect, once-return effect, nonreturn effect, arhat effect, or the self-enlightenment bodhi, they are called gaining benefits, but not the great ones. If sentient beings renounce various forms, transfer the merits toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, and bring great benefits to sentient beings, they are called gaining unsurpassed virtuous benefits.

“Among all benefits, the attainment of the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi is the highest, supreme, and unequaled one. Why? The unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi that bodhisattvas pursue can bring great benefits to all sentient beings, but voice-hearers, self-enlightened ones, and ordinary sentient beings cannot do this.

“If bodhisattvas make the best drinks, food, clothing, beds, bedding, medicines, houses, properties, flowers, fragrances, and so forth as offerings to all Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones in the ten directions and their disciples, they are called gaining benefits, but not the great ones. If bodhisattvas renounce various forms, transfer the merits toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, and bring great benefits to sentient beings, they are called gaining the unsurpassed virtuous benefits. Why? The drinks, food, and so forth, have the forms; the dharmas with the forms are quantitative; and the quantitative dharmas are finite. One cannot rely on finite dharmas to realize the infinite perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.

“The bodhisattvas possessing expedient skillfulness establish connections with all Thus-Comers, Ones Worthy of Offerings, Perfectly and Universally Enlightened Ones and their disciples in the ten directions, and thus attain numberless unusual merits and virtues, but they do not grasp the forms. They make the best drinks, food, clothing, beds, bedding, medicines, houses, properties, flowers, fragrances, and so forth as offerings to the Thus-Comers and their disciples, but they do not grasp the forms. They transfer the merits and virtues thus derived toward the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi to greatly benefit sentient beings, but they do not grasp the forms. Because of this cause and condition, they realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge to bring benefits to sentient beings in the endless future. They are called gaining the unsurpassed benefits, the supreme benefits

among all kinds of benefits. If bodhisattvas can practice such expedient skillfulness in cultivating giving, they are called reaching the top of bodhisattva; they certainly can attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. Why? The perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge is very difficult to attain. These bodhisattvas have renounced all internal and external forms and refrain from attachment in the pursuit of the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge; they are the leading bodhisattvas, worthy of the name of attaining the top and unsurpassed bodhi. All the bodhisattvas in the past, future, and present had attained, will attain, and are attaining the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge because of expedient skillfulness.”

(Bodhisattvas can achieve the top and the unsurpassed bodhi due to the expedient skillfulness.)

Meanwhile, Fully Loving-Kind One asked the long-lived sage Sariputra, “How can bodhisattvas become the top bodhisattva?”

Sariputra replied, “If bodhisattvas have expedient skillfulness and do not grasp the forms of dharmas, they become the top bodhisattvas.”

Fully Loving-Kind One asked again, “Which forms of dharmas do bodhisattvas refrain from grasping?”

Sariputra replied, “Bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful form of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. They do not grasp the far away and not far away form of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of matter, feeling, thinking, action, and consciousness.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of the

eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious spheres. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious spheres. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious spheres. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious spheres. They do not grasp the far away or not far away form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious spheres. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious spheres.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image spheres. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image spheres. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image spheres. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image spheres. They do not grasp the far away and not far away form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image spheres. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image spheres.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious realms. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious realms. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious realms. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious realms. They do not grasp the far away or not far away form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious realms. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious realms.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image realms. They do not grasp the

pleasant or painful form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image realms. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image realms. They do not grasp the pure and impure form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image realms. They do not grasp the far away or not far away form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image realms. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental-image realms.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of the eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and conscious consciousness realms. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful form of the eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and conscious consciousness realms. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of the eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and conscious consciousness realms. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of the eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and conscious consciousness realms. They do not grasp the far away or not far away form of the eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and conscious consciousness realms. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of the eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and conscious consciousness realms.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious

contacts. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts. They do not grasp the far away or not far away form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of the feelings produced by eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful form of the feelings produced by eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of the feelings produced by eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of the feelings produced by eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts. They do not grasp the far away or not far away form of the feelings produced by eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of the feelings produced by eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and conscious contacts.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of the earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness realms. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful form of the earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness realms. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of the earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness realms. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of the earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness realms. They do not grasp the far away or not far away form of the earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness realms. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of the earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness realms.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of cause and condition, consecutive sequence of thoughts, conditions that stimulate the mind,

and the conditions that reinforce main causes. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful unpleasant form of cause and condition, consecutive sequence of thoughts, conditions that stimulate the mind, and the conditions that reinforce main causes. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of cause and condition, consecutive sequence of thoughts, conditions that stimulate the mind, and the conditions that reinforce main causes. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of cause and condition, consecutive sequence of thoughts, conditions that stimulate the mind, and the conditions that reinforce main causes. They do not grasp the far away or not far away form of cause and condition, consecutive sequence of thoughts, conditions that stimulate the mind, and the conditions that reinforce main causes. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of cause and condition, consecutive sequence of thoughts, conditions that stimulate the mind, and the conditions that reinforce main causes.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of ignorance, action, consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres, contact, reception, craving, grasping, existence, birth, old age, and death. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful form of ignorance, action, consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres, contact, reception, craving, grasping, existence, birth, old age, and death. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of ignorance, action, consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres, contact, reception, craving, grasping, existence, birth, old age, and death. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of ignorance, action, consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres, contact, reception, craving, grasping, existence, birth, old age, and death. They do not grasp the far away or not far away form of ignorance, action, consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres, contact, reception, craving, grasping, existence, birth, old age, and death. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of ignorance, action, consciousness, name and

form, six sense spheres, contact, reception, craving, grasping, existence, birth, old age, and death.

“The bodhisattvas do not grasp the permanent or impermanent form of the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness. They do not grasp the pleasant or painful form of the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness. They do not grasp the self or selfless form of the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness. They do not grasp the pure or impure form of the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness. They do not grasp the far away or not far away form of the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness. They do not grasp the tranquil or not tranquil form of the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness.

“If bodhisattvas can stay in expedient skillfulness to cultivate giving paramita without grasping the forms of dharmas, they will enter and be counted as the top bodhisattvas. They will attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge as other top bodhisattvas do.

(Cultivating giving paramita without being attached to the forms of dharmas due to expedient skillfulness enables one to become top bodhisattva, who can renounce all they have to help sentient beings because of their loving-kindness and because they truly understand that all dharmas are nonexistent.)

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, if bodhisattvas understand that all dharmas are unreal and far away from forms when they practice giving paramita, they will be able to become top bodhisattvas and thus will attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge as other top bodhisattvas do. They can also teach and convert sentient beings and help them aspire to the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. These sentient beings will be able to realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, if sentient beings cannot initiate definitive understanding of the formlessness of the dharmas, they will not be able to initiate aspiration toward the perfect knowledge of everything. If they cannot initiate aspiration toward the perfect knowledge of everything, they will not be able to cultivate the bodhisattva actions. If they cannot cultivate the bodhisattva actions, they will not be able to attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge. If sentient beings can initiate definitive understanding of the formlessness of the dharmas, they will be able to initiate aspiration toward the perfect knowledge of everything. If they can initiate aspiration toward the perfect knowledge of everything, they will be able to cultivate the bodhisattva actions. If they can cultivate the bodhisattva actions, they will be able to realize insightfully and attain the perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.

“Furthermore, Fully Loving-Kind One, when practicing giving paramita, if bodhisattvas can initiate aspiration to the pursuit of the perfect knowledge of everything, they will realize that what they have renounced is empty and nonexistent; namely, they will realize that what they have renounced is like transformed things, is not like the forms that they had been used to grasp since the time unknown. Because of the realization, they will be able to renounce all they have owned without grasping the forms. Some sentient beings do not accurately understand that all dharmas, like transformed things, are nonexistent, so they are attached to them and cannot renounce them. Because of this cause and condition, they become very stingy and will, after passing away, fall into bad destinies and suffer in poverty. They suffer only because they have grasped the forms.

“If bodhisattvas have expedient skillfulness, they will know that all dharmas, like transformed things, are unreal. Because all dharmas are like transformed things, in which, no self and associated images are existent; they should be renounced. Why?

As the self and associated images are unattainable, bodhisattvas should not be attached to them. If they are not attached to them, they can renounce them. Because they can renounce, they will become deeply fond of the correct dharma that the Buddha, the World-Honored One, teaches. Then they will think, ‘It is very rare, World-Honored One, you give wonderful teaching, stating that all dharmas are like transformed things. Now I am following the Buddha’s teaching to renounce all; that is, I will renounce all transformed things-like dharmas, so that I can attain illusion-like, formless, and unsurpassed bodhi.’ The bodhisattvas will also think, ‘The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, can do very difficult thing: they guide bodhisattvas to accurately understand that all dharmas are nonexistent and like transformed things. Because of the correct knowledge, they are free from attachment and can renounce without reluctance. They will realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi quickly.’ Therefore, if bodhisattvas would like to realize insightfully the unsurpassed, perfect, and universal bodhi, they should understand that all dharmas are nonexistent, like transformed things, and apart from all forms. They should work diligently to pursue, with a formless mind, the top perfect knowledge of all perfect knowledge.

(Bodhisattva should understand that all dharmas are like nonexistent transformed beings so that they would not be attached to the forms of various dharmas when practicing the Buddha dharma.)

“Fully Loving-Kind One-, don’t say that I spoke the essential meanings of the dharma because of my own talent of debate; it is because of the support of the Thus-Comer’s authority and supernatural powers that I can do this.”

At that time, the Buddha said to Ananda, “All what Sariputra says is supported by Buddha’s supernatural powers. All of you should accept and embrace what he says and disseminate it after I enter nirvana.”