**The Avatamsaka Sutra**

**CHAPTER16**

Translated in the Tang Dynasty by the Tripitaka Master Srãmana Siksananda of Khotan

**Explanation by VM. Hua**

**Brahma Conduct**

Commentary:

What is *Brahma Conduct*? “Brahma Conduct” is pure conduct. Previously we had the chapter “Pure Conduct”, therefore we translate this *chapter* “Brahma Conduct”, although its true meaning is pure conduct. It is the pure conduct cultivated by Bodhisattvas, and this chapter, *sixteen*, tells how to cultivate it.

Sutra:

At that time, the god-son Proper Mindfulness said to Dharma Wisdom Bodhisattva, “Disciple of the Buddha, in all worlds the multitudes of Bodhisattvas rely on the Thus Come Ones’ teaching, don the dyed robes and leave the home life. How do they attain the purity of Brahma Conduct and, from the position of a Bodhisattva, further ascend to the Unsurpassed Bodhi Way?”

Commentary:

*At that time,* which was right after the Ten Dwellings Chapter had been spoken and the Brahma Conduct Chapter was about to be spoken, in the heavens there was *the god-son,* the god called *Proper Mindfulness.* “Proper Mindfulness” means he had no deviant thought. That son of gods very reverently and respectfully knelt with his palms together and *said to Dharma Wisdom Bodhisattva, “Disciple of the Buddha, in all worlds the multitudes of Bodhisattvas,* who give rise to the Bodhi mind and walk the Bodhisattva path, *rely on* the doors of Buddhadharma of *the Thus Come Ones’ teaching.* They *don the dyed robes and,* wearing the most drab-colored clothing which most people wouldn’t like, they *leave the home life. How do they attain the* ability to cultivate the Dharma doors of *purity of Brahma Conduct and,* how are they able to go *from the position of a Bodhisattva* and *further ascend to* the position of *the Unsurpassed Bodhi Way,* which is Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal Enlightenment?”

Now, when Buddhism is just beginning, we absolutely must do things truly. We must sustain and protect the Proper Dharma. In order to do so, we must first get rid of our own faults and shortcomings. When people outside talk about our good points, we at Gold Mountain Monastery should not be pleased; and when they discuss our shortcomings we should pay particular attention and correct them. Why is it that from limitless kalpas up until now we have not achieved the fruit of Buddhahood? It’s because we are unwilling to reform our errors. We protect our shortcomings and refuse to change. So now we should quickly change our faults and bad habits from limitless kalpas, then go along the path of the Buddha’s light, and there will be no obstructions. If you do not change your errors, you will have lots of obstructions in your cultivation. Everyone who comes to Gold Mountain Monastery has come to a transformation factory where one changes what is wrong in one. Whoever you are, don’t cover up what’s wrong with you and refuse to change.

Sutra:

Dharma Wisdom Bodhisattva said: Disciple of the Buddha, when the Bodhisattva Mahasattva cultivates Brahma conduct, he should use ten dharmas as his basis of thought, and formulate the intention and contemplate them.

Commentary:

The son of gods Proper Mindfulness had questioned Dharma Wisdom Bodhisattva asking, “When the Bodhisattva follows the teaching of the Thus Come One, dons the dyed robes and leaves the home life, how can he attain the purity of Brahma Conduct to make daily progress, and reach the fruit of unsurpassed Bodhi?”

Dharma Wisdom Bodhisattva said: Disciple of the Buddha, when the Bodhisattva Mahasattva the great Bodhisattva among Bodhisattvas, cultivates Brahma conduct, he cultivates pure conduct. This “pure” is by contrast with “impure”. The pure is not defiled, and the defiled is not pure. Brahma conduct is purity of the body, mouth, and mind—purity in every respect. There are five types of impurity of the body:

* The impurity of its seeds.
* The impurity of its dwelling.
* The impurity of its own nature.
* The impurity of its outer marks.
* Its ultimate impurity.

The first is impurity of the seeds. Our bodies are created from our father’s semen and mother’s blood. Therefore the original seeds are impure. The second is impurity of dwelling. The mother’s womb where the embryo stays prior to birth is not clean. The womb is located between the place where the food stays for digestion and the place it leaves after digestion when it becomes excrement. This place is impure. The third is the impurity of its own nature, that is the earth, air, fire, and water of which the thirty-six parts of the body are composed. Four is the impurity of the outer marks, which means the surface of the body.

Our bodies have nine apertures which are always running with impurities. For example, our eyes have eye matter, and our ears have wax—all impure. If we go a few days without cleaning them, a lot of filthy matter accumulates. Inside our nose is mucus. There are some externalist paths that exclusively eat mucus. They claim it’s a tonic that fortifies the brain. It’s actually unclean, but they eat it anyway. No one eats earwax however, or eye matter. Our mouth has saliva and phlegm, both are unclean. Those seven openings—two of the eyes, two of the ears, two of the nose, and one of the mouth—still do not count as really filthy. Add those for defecating and urinating and there are nine. Those nine openings are constantly flowing with impurities. That’s the impurity of outer marks, also called the impurity of its own marks.

The fifth kind is ultimate impurity, the impurity of the corpse. After death, the body swells up, turns green, and breeds worms. It later becomes a skeleton, all of which is impure, the ultimate impurity. Our bodies have those five kinds of impurities. Therefore we should constantly make those contemplations of impurity, paying careful attention to these principles and not forgetting them. So it says when the Bodhisattva cultivates the pure Brahma Conduct, he should use ten dharmas as his basis of thought, as what he bases his thinking upon, and formulate the intention and contemplate them. He should take these ten dharmas as his object of contemplation, and by doing so, he will completely understand the truth of these principles.

Sutra:

That is to say: body, body karma, speech, speech karma, thought, thought karma, the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, and the Precepts. He should contemplate in this way: “Is the body Brahma Conduct?” Up to and including “are the Precepts Brahma Conduct?”

Commentary:

That is to say, the Bodhisattva investigates and studies in detail what Brahma Conduct actually is, using ten dharmas. The ten kinds are: the body. “Is the body Brahma Conduct?” “Is the body karma Brahma Conduct?” He looks into it by asking that. One may say that the body is Brahma Conduct, but the body being impure, how could it be Brahma Conduct which is pure? We put perfume and make-up on the body, giving it a false mask. But if someone scolds us, we cannot remain unmoved. If someone beats us, we become angry. If the body karma is Brahma Conduct, why are we without patience? If we are praised, it’s like eating sugar. If we are scolded, it’s like eating bitter medicine. We are moved by a single phrase from others. If the body karma is Brahma Conduct, why are we moved? So we should contemplate in that way whether the body is Brahma Conduct or not, and if it is not, whether body karma is Brahma Conduct. Karma is good or bad, but both good and bad karma are impure. Therefore, the karma of body cannot be Brahma Conduct either.

Is speech karma, the karma created through speech, Brahma Conduct? No, it is not Brahma Conduct. Is thought Brahma Conduct? No thought is not Brahma Conduct. Is thought karma Brahma Conduct? No, karma of thought is not Brahma Conduct. Is the Buddha Brahma Conduct? No, the Buddha is not. Is the Dharma Brahma Conduct? No, the Dharma isn’t. Is the Sangha Brahma Conduct? The Sangha isn’t either and are the Precepts Brahma Conduct? No, they all are not Brahma Conduct. One rests one’s attention on all of those, and in that way contemplates.

An example of resting one’s attention on something is the Arhat who wants to use the penetration of past lives to know the events of prior causes and subsequent retributions. He must first concentrate his attention and contemplate in order to know. But Bodhisattvas on the Eighth Ground and above need not put forth an effort of attention or contemplate, but simply clearly understand. However, here he should contemplate in this way the ten kinds of dharmas, and ask, “Is the body Brahma Conduct?” And are body karma, speech, speech karma, thought, thought karma, the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, Up to and including “are the Precepts Brahma Conduct?” “Up to and including” means going through the whole list from beginning to end, asking if any of these are Brahma Conduct.

Sutra:

If the body were Brahma Conduct, then we should know that this Brahma Conduct would not be good, would not be Dharma, that it would be turbid, stinking and evil, and impure.

Commentary:

If the body were Brahma Conduct, then we should know that this Brahma Conduct would not be good. Originally the body is impure, and being impure, it is not good. If Brahma Conduct were the body, then Brahma Conduct would not be good or pure, would not be Dharma. Our bodies often do things that are not in accord with Dharma. We should also know that it would be turbid. The body is a turbid thing, not clear and pure. But Brahma Conduct is clear and pure, not turbid, so Brahma Conduct certainly cannot be the body. It would also be stinking and evil. The body is stinking and very dirty. If we don’t bathe for a few days, the smell is unbearable. And if Brahma Conduct were the body, Brahma Conduct would be impure. “Impure” means defiled. We have already discussed the Five Types of Impurity which a cultivator must contemplate. He should constantly see that this body is not a precious thing and should not be cherished.

The Maha-Prajna-Paramita-Shastra (“Treatise on Great Wisdom Gone to the Other Shore”) has five gathas about the Five Kinds of Impurity.

Gatha One: The Impurity of Its Seeds

This body’s seeds are impure;  
It is not made of wonderful and precious things.   
It is not produced from pure whiteness,   
But comes through a filthy passage.

“This body’s seeds are impure,” because the body is produced by sexual intercourse of the parents. It has those karmic causes and conditions, and that retribution of consciousness. Therefore, from the start the seeds are impure and dirty. “It is not made of wonderful and precious things.” The body is not made out of some fine and precious substance. “It is not produced from pure whiteness.” It did not arise from purity, “But comes through a dirty passage.” When people are born, they come out through the mother’s vaginal tract, which is unclean. Therefore its seeds are impure, but when it is born we take it as precious. That is really upside-down.

Gatha Two: The Impurity of Its Dwelling

This body is stinking and dirty.   
It is not produced from a flower.   
It does not arise from champaka,   
Also not from a jeweled mountain.

“This body is stinking an dirty”, means the body is composed of pus and blood. It stinks and is unclean. “It is not produced from a flower”—it is not born from a lotus flower. “It does not arise from champaka.” It is not from the incense of the champaka tree, “Also not from a jeweled mountain”—it doesn’t come from the mountain of jewels. When the body dwells in the womb, it’s in a very filthy, impure place.

Gatha Three: The Impurity of Its Own Nature

The elements earth, water, fire, and wind,   
Are able to become something impure.   
Pouring out the ocean to wash the body   
Cannot make it fragrant and clean.

“The elements earth, water, fire, and wind”—our bodies are composed of the four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. “They are able to become something impure.” These can become impure things. “Pouring our the ocean to wash the body, cannot make it fragrant and clean.” Even if you used all the water in the ocean to wash the body, it would still stink. It would never emit fragrance. One cannot get the body clean no matter how one may try.

Gatha Four: The Impurity of Its Outer Marks

Various substances that are impure   
Are inside, completely filling the body,   
And constantly flow outside without cease—   
It’s like a leaky bag stuffed with things.

The fourth gatha describes the impurity of the surface of the body saying, “Various substances that are impure.” They “Are inside, completely filling the body, and constantly flow outside without cease.” Those impure things pour non-stop out of the nine orifices which were discussed before. “It is like a leaky bag stuffed with things.” Our bodies are stinking skin bags which already leak such filthy fluids. No matter how much you decorate the body, it’s like using the most beautiful ornaments to decorate a toilet. No matter how it is decorated, it is still an impure place. So how can one be so proud of it?

Gatha Five: Its Ultimate Impurity

Carefully observe how this body   
Surely will return to the place of death.   
It is hard to make it not rebel:   
It’s like a child that turns its back on kindness.

“Carefully observe how this body surely will return to the place of death.” In the future it is certain to die. “It is hard to make it not rebel.” You wish the body to obey, but it will not. You can’t keep it from getting old and dying. It rebels against you and does not obey. “It’s like a child that turns its back on kindness.” No matter how good you are to it, when the time comes, it doesn’t want you. It’s like a child that forgets the good its parents have done for it. It does not pay attention to anything you tell it.

Sutra:

That it would be disgusting, rebellious, mixed and defiled, that it would be a dead corpse, and would be a clump of worms.

Commentary:

That it would be disgusting. If you say that the body is Brahma Conduct then you should know “that it would be disgusting”. Since the body is very repugnant, Brahma Conduct would also be something people dislike very much. But because everyone is fond of Brahma Conduct, Brahma Conduct cannot be the body. It would also be rebellious. The body continually rebels against the thoughts of our minds, and often does the things the mind does not want to do. The mind does not want to kill, but the body goes and kills. The mind does not want to steal, but the body goes and steals. The body does not obey the mind’s commands. The mind may not want to engage in sexual misconduct, but the body sometimes wants to. The mind may not wish to lie, but the body sometimes makes the mouth speak falsely. Basically the mind may not want to drink wine, but the body demands wine. The body rebels against the mind’s thoughts, but Brahma Conduct is not like that. It accords with propriety and righteousness and is not rebellious. Therefore the body cannot be Brahma Conduct.

If the body were Brahma Conduct, Brahma Conduct would be mixed and defiled. The body is produced from the combining of the four elements which are earth, water, fire, and wind. Because it is composed of various impure things, the body is mixed and defiled. But Brahma Conduct is not mixed and defiled, and so Brahma Conduct is not the body. If you were to say that the body is Brahma Conduct, then it follows, that it, Brahma Conduct, would be a dead corpse. In the future, the body will die and become a corpse which is something everyone detests. But people do not dislike Brahma Conduct the way they detest a dead corpse, and so Brahma Conduct is not the body.

And if the body were Brahma Conduct, Brahma Conduct would be a clump of worms. The body is composed of a great many worms and bugs gathered together in one place, and so it is not a very clean thing. A person is a big worm made up of lots of little bugs and worms forming a group, and that is our body. The worms’ mouths are the inside and the worms’ tails are the surface of the body. For example, when we eat or drink, it’s a case of a big worm being a servant to the small worms inside. When we eat, the small worms inside open their mouths. If we fail to give them food to eat, their hunger has no patience. Within the human body are 84,000 worms, and one can further divide those 84,000 worms into 9,000,000,000,000 smaller worms. Within each and every tiny hairpore are one-doesn’t-know-how-many small worms. The physical eyes of ordinary people are unable to see them, and so we think the body is nice. Women wish to make their bodies beautiful for men to see, and men make their bodies handsome to show to women, which is really upside-down. We work from day to night for the sake of those worms.

In the Contemplation of the Seas of the Buddha’s Samadhis Sutra, it says: When the Buddha achieved enlightenment, the Demon King sent three demon women to destroy his work in the Way. They said, “We are beautiful heavenly maidens, and we are now offering our bodies to you. We will make the bed and clean the room for you. We will make things clean inside and out in service to you. Would you like that?” The Buddha did not reply, and remained unmoved in body and mind. He remained unmoved through the power of meditation. He shone a bright light on the three demon girls, and the girls appeared ugly and old. They found their eyes and ears had dirty fluids running from them, that their noses were dripping with snot, and that spit was oozing from their mouths. They found that within their bodies were many intestines, some with digested food in them, and some with undigested food. There were many small worms in the small intestines, playing football and ping-pong, and very, very happy. In the big intestines were big worms dancing and singing songs, also very happy. Among the 84,000 worms were many running here and there, making a lot of noise. The girls took one look at this and became so disgusted they couldn’t stop vomiting. So, being unable to move the Buddha from his samadhi, they retired.

From this we can see that the body is just a place where worms collect to hold a meeting. Knowing this, we don’t want to think the body is a precious treasure and give it many good things and vitamins—vitamin A, vitamin B, vitamin C—candy, and good clothes to wear. It’s a place where bugs congregate to have a meeting and discuss how to make the Great Worm do more work for them.

**Question:** In the Great Compassion Repentance it says, “Beginningless dark activity blocks this still brightness”, describing how the darkness of ignorance comes to darken the original pure nature. My question is how does the original fall of a being begin? What’s the cause of it?

**Answer:** What is “ignorance”? It’s just the love between men and women. If you ask them why they want to feel this love, why as soon as a man sees a woman his mind moves, and vice versa, they can’t tell you. Just that is ignorance, ignorance running riot. With that first thought, one lacks wisdom and pays no attention to anything. That’s ignorance. If it weren’t for that first thought, then everyone would have become a Buddha long ago. Do you understand? If you do, then don’t be so ignorant.

Sutra:

If body karma were Brahma Conduct, then walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, looking left and looking right, bending and extending, looking up and looking down would be Brahma Conduct.

Commentary:

Before, it talked about how the body is not Brahma Conduct, and not it talks of body karma. Body karma is karma which the body creates. The karma which the body creates includes walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. If body karma were Brahma Conduct, then walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, looking left and looking right, bending and extending, looking up and looking down would be Brahma Conduct. But Brahma Conduct is not walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. Looking to the left and right is karma created by the body, but Brahma Conduct is not looking to the left and right. Also, bending in and extending out, looking up and looking down, are all karma created by the body. But Brahma Conduct is none of those things, and therefore body karma cannot be Brahma Conduct.

People who study the Buddhadharma should realize the importance of such things as lighting incense. If incense is running out, you should buy more right away, not wait until there is none, which shows a lack of reverence in making offerings. It would be better for us to go without food than to omit the offering to the Buddhas represented by lighting a stick of incense. If you aren’t clear about making offerings to the Buddhas, how can Buddhism daily become more flourishing? It’s not to say that having left home makes one a Buddhist disciple, or that taking the five lay precepts yet not living by them makes one a Buddhist. Anyone who is in a Buddhist temple, whether as a left home person or a layperson, should recognize what he or she is supposed to be doing. You shouldn’t just be passing the time, letting each day go by and forgetting about it. You should know whether you are making any contribution to the temple or not, and as a Buddhist disciple help Buddhism grow greater day by day. It shouldn’t be that Buddhism doesn’t seem quite alive even though not quite dead. If it’s that way, we basically have not fulfilled our responsibility as Buddhists. That responsibility is to make Buddhism expand and spread so that everyone comes to know of it and uses the Buddhadharma to cultivate.

For that reason, every single person here should make the firm resolve that obtaining the buildings and grounds for a Way Place in the Ukiah Valley becomes a reality. We must do everything we can to bring the Way Place in the Ukiah Valley to success. Once we have it, we can establish a Buddhist University, a Buddhist home for the aged, a Buddhist refuge for troubled young people, a Buddhist hospital, and all kinds of projects of benefit to people. This is the most prominent country in the world, and form this vantagepoint we should go on to spread Buddhism throughout the entire world, so that all humankind and all living beings will be reached by Buddhism. That is the responsibility of each of us. Don’t just calculate for yourself, figuring, “If I can just make it through the day without starving I’m doing okay.” Don’t have such a narrow outlook. And don’t figure just going through the motions of the ceremonies and activities without knowing what you’re doing or listening to is all that’s expected of you. You must know the meaning behind the ceremonies and lectures.

We must exhaust our efforts and do all we can for Buddhism. At all times we should be cultivating and introducing Buddhism to all of humankind. So, you can’t waste your time without any purpose to what you’re doing or spend all of your time seeing what’s wrong with other people and figuring no one matches up to you. That is deviant knowledge and deviant views. Don’t spend all your time seeing yourself as right and everyone else as wrong. You should make a contribution to the world, and should not be a useless parasite within it. We should consider the propagation of the Buddhadharma as our personal responsibility, and feel that if it doesn’t flourish it’s because we have not done our own work well and have no Way Virtue to influence people. You should always make that kind of contemplation, and be a good disciple of the Buddha, not a bad one.

**Question**: What is the cause of insanity?

**Answer**: In most cases there is a demonic ghost troubling the person, which is the cause of the insanity. It has its ghostly penetrations and so can control the person. Heavenly demons and those of outside ways can do that, and so can li, mei, and wang liang ghosts, as well as deviant spirits and goblins. Once there was a person with that kind of sickness who was unaware of anything, and whom no one could cure. Eventually an exorcist was called in who recited a mantra over a bowl and asked a child to look and say what it saw—which was a snake. The exorcist cut the snake’s reflection with a knife and the person got well.

Later on the person talked of how a big snake beside a temple had prevented him from leaving, until the snake had been hit by lightening and he was able to return. Then in a few days he became sick again, and began moving around like a snake. A witchdoctor was summoned to speak with the snake, which turned out to be the grandparent of the snake that had been struck by lightening, and was making the person crazy.

This kind of thing happens a lot. Usually vengeance is involved when a person goes insane. Perhaps he killed or harmed people, and this is his retribution from creating that karma. So the best thing is not to tie up such conditions, but to hold the five precepts of not killing, not stealing, not committing sexual misconduct, not engaging in false speech, and not taking intoxicants. If you hold the five precepts you won’t have so many involvements. You can recite the Great Compassion Mantra when you are around the insane in order to pacify the deviant spirits and vengeful ghosts.

Sutra:

If speech were Brahma Conduct, then Brahma Conduct would be voice and breath, chest, tongue, throat and lips, expulsion, retraction, constriction and release, loudness and softness, clarity and indistinctness.

Commentary:

If speech were Brahma Conduct, then Brahma Conduct would be voice—the sounds made by our voices--and breath that we inhale and exhale. But Brahma Conduct is not those things, so that is wrong. Our speech comes about through the use of chest, tongue, throat and lips, and the other organs and places of articulation. But Brahma Conduct is not such things as the chest, tongue, throat and lips. Speech involves expulsion when it is sent out, and retraction when taken in. There is also constriction—tenseness or lowering--and release —laxness and setting loose. The manner of articulation involves highness and lowness of pitch as well as pause and stress. If you deliver a speech, it contains introduction, enlargement, alternatives, and conclusion. But Brahma Conduct is certainly none of those things. There is also loudness and softness to sounds and their tones can have clarity and indistinctness. Therefore, speech is not Brahma Conduct.

Sutra:

If speech karma were Brahma Conduct, then Brahma Conduct would be compliments and inquiries, generalizations and elaborations, metaphorical speech and direct speech, speech in praise and slanderous speech, hypothetical speech, speech adapted to the world, and evident speech.

Commentary:

If the creation of speech karma were Brahma Conduct, then Brahma Conduct would be the exchanging of compliments and the making of inquiries. It would be speaking broadly by making generalizations or else analytical speech and elaborations. It would be the metaphorical speech of analogies and the direct speech of straight talk. It would be speech in praise and slanderous speech. It would be hypothetical, theoretical speech as well as speech adapted to the ways of the world—the mundane way most ordinary worldly people speak. And it would be very intelligible and evident speech. If speech karma were Brahma Conduct, then all of the kinds of speech karma mentioned would be Brahma Conduct—which is not the case.

Sutra:

If the mind were Brahma Conduct, then Brahma Conduct would have to be perception, observation, discrimination, various kinds of discriminations, recollection, various kinds of recollections, consideration, various kinds of considerations, illusions, and slumber and dreams.

Commentary:

If the mind, the intellect, were Brahma Conduct, then Brahma Conduct would have to be perception—cognition or awareness, as well as observation —contemplation or recognition in one’s mental processes. It would be discrimination —because the mind consciousness discriminates—along with various kinds of discriminations, the different stages of discrimination engaged in by the mind consciousness. Brahma Conduct would also be recollection of events in the past, and various kinds of recollections and memories of the past. It would also have to be the consideration and reflection that one does with the mind, and its various kinds of varied considerations. It would also be fantasies, illusions that arise in the mind, and slumber and dreams—different dream states one has when asleep. All of those are not Brahma Conduct, yet they would become it if one tried to say the mind was Brahma Conduct—but it isn’t.

Sutra:

If mind karma were Brahma Conduct, then one should know that Brahma Conduct would be thought and feeling cold or hot, hungry or thirsty, miserable or happy, worried or pleased.

Commentary:

If mind karma were considered to be Brahma Conduct, then one should know that Brahma Conduct would be thought and having impressions. And Brahma Conduct would also be feeling cold or hot, for the mind registers those sensations as well as whether one feels hungry or thirsty, is miserable or happy, worried or pleased. All of those feelings would be Brahma Conduct if Brahma Conduct were mind-created karma. But thoughts and feelings of cold, heat, hunger, thirst, suffering, happiness, worry and pleasure are not Brahma Conduct.

Sutra:

If the Buddha were Brahma Conduct, then would form be the Buddha? Would feeling be the Buddha? Would thinking be the Buddha? Would formations be the Buddha? Would consciousness be the Buddha? Would the marks be the Buddha? Would the characteristics be the Buddha? Would spiritual penetrations be the Buddha? Would karmic deeds be the Buddha? Would fruit retribution be the Buddha?

**Commentary:**

If it were the case, which it is not, that the Buddha were Brahma Conduct, the Buddha is perfectly enlightened himself, perfectly enlightens others, and has brought the enlightened conduct of self-enlightenment and enlightenment of others to utmost perfection. He has great wisdom and great spiritual penetrations, and has certified to the states of all being without obstruction. If you want to say the Buddha is Brahma Conduct, then would form be the Buddha? Would feeling be the Buddha? Would thinking be the Buddha? Would formations be the Buddha? Would consciousness be the Buddha? All of those five skandhas—form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness—are illusory and empty and are not the Buddha. Those five skandhas are empty, but the Buddha has marks and characteristics. Would the thirty-two marks and having them, be what is meant by the Buddha? No, because the Buddha is unmarked. He also has eighty secondary characteristics.

Would the characteristics be the Buddha? No, they are not, and so Brahma Conduct is not the Buddha. The Buddha has spiritual penetrations. Would spiritual penetrations be the Buddha? No, that’s not right either, so you can’t say that Brahma Conduct is the Buddha. Would karmic deeds— karma that one creates and doors of practice which one cultivates-- be the Buddha? No, they aren’t. Would fruit retribution—the reward of cultivating to Buddhahood and certifying to the fruit of perfect enlightenment-- be the Buddha? No, it is not. Therefore, to say the Buddha is Brahma Conduct cannot be correct.

The clear, pure Dharma Body of Vairochana Buddha is not located anywhere, yet is not absent from anywhere. The perfect and complete Reward Body of Nishyanda Buddha is also false and empty. You cannot use marks to grasp the Buddha, but need to see all characteristics as free from characteristics. The hundreds of thousands of millions of transformation bodies of Shakyamuni Buddha, being transformations, also are not actual or real. So, if you seek the Buddha in any of the Three Bodies, still the Buddha cannot be obtained. And if the Buddha cannot even be got at, how can you say that Brahma Conduct is the Buddha? You should not consider it to be so. By making this kind of contemplation, you can break all attachments. If you have attachments, then that is not Brahma Conduct. Therefore, the Buddha cannot be Brahma Conduct.

Sutra:

If the Dharma were Brahma Conduct, then would still extinction be the Dharma? Would Nirvana be the Dharma? Would non-production be the Dharma? Would non-arisal be the Dharma? Would ineffability be the Dharma? Would non-differentiation be the Dharma? Would non-acting be the Dharma? Would non-assemblage be the Dharma? Would non-according be the Dharma? Would non-attainment be the Dharma?

Commentary:

Dharma is a method and a standard. If the Dharma were claimed to be Brahma Conduct and you considered Brahma Conduct to be the method, and the method to be Brahma Conduct, then would still extinction be the Dharma? Dharma is still, extinct, and unmoving, and so Dharma cannot be Brahma Conduct. That is because Brahma Conduct comes into being through cultivation, whereas Dharma does not depend on cultivation. Fundamentally, the Dharma is still extinction, and Nirvana, too, is Dharma. However, there is nothing cultivated about Nirvana, even though it is reached through cultivation. But pure Brahma Conduct is something cultivated, so would Nirvana be the Dharma? Nirvana is certainly not Brahma Conduct, even though it is the Dharma.

Would non-production be the Dharma? Dharma is also unproduced, but Brahma Conduct is definitely not the unproduced. Would non-arisal be the Dharma? The Dharma does not move or arise and has no substance or nature to it. However, there must be cultivation for pure Brahma Conduct to exist. Would ineffability be the Dharma? Ineffably ineffability is Dharma, but that Dharma is certainly not Brahma Conduct. Would non-differentiation be the Dharma? Non-differentiation is Dharma, but non-differentiation is certainly not Brahma Conduct. Would non-acting be the Dharma? Dharma is without discrimination, and therefore there is no place of activity. Although there being no place of activity is Dharma, it certainly is not Brahma Conduct.

Would non-assemblage be the Dharma? Dharma basically does not require gathering together and assembling to bring it about. Anything collected and assembled is not Dharma. What is Dharma is not the least bit contrived or enacted, but that is not true of Brahma Conduct. Would non-according be the Dharma? The method does not accord with states, and so although non-according is Dharma, it absolutely is not Brahma Conduct. Would non-attainment be the Dharma? Dharma basically is such that nothing is attained, but non-attainment is certainly not Brahma Conduct. So if you try to say that Dharma is Brahma Conduct, it simply will not work. The 84,000 Dharma doors are 84,000 Dharma doors, but they definitely are not Brahma Conduct.

Why does the Sutra speak this way? It’s to tell you not to have attachments, not to be attached to a Brahma Conduct, or to the further existence of a Buddha, a Dharma, or a Sangha. Don’t have any attachments at all.

Act as if not acting. Don’t be attached to the fact that you are cultivating. If you have no attachments you can certify to real mark.

When one is certified to the characteristic of reality,   
There are no people or dharmas,   
The karma of the Avichi is cancelled in a kshana.

-Song of Enlightenment by Tang Dhyana Master Yung Chia

When you truly reach the point of there being:

No self, no others, no living beings,  
And none with life-spans,

When people are empty and dharmas are also empty, the self-nature is completely understood. If you can certify to that substance and principle of real mark, then your karmic offenses meriting the Uninterrupted Hell, which are as many as the sand grains in the Ganges River, immediately disappear. Why is it that you still have karmic offenses? It’s because you have not yet broken your attachments. Before attachments are broken, all conditioned and unconditioned dharmas continue to exist. If attachments are destroyed and everything is emptied, the state at that time is:

As when one drinks water and only knows himself if it is warm or cold.

That is when you certify to the substance and principle of real mark. When you do so, then you truly obtain your own effective functioning.

When one speaks of Dharma, there are 84,000 Dharma doors, and all of them are number one. How can one say that they are all foremost? The Buddha himself said:

This Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low.   
Therefore, it is called Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

Whatever dharma matches one’s potentials is number one. Does that mean those that don't match one’s potentials are not number one? No, it doesn’t work that way. What may not suit you may be suitable for someone else, and what is not appropriate for that person may be just right for me. You and I and other living beings all have individual potentials. What matches them is number one, and what doesn’t remains level and equal with no high or low. Superiority and inferiority do not exist.

Because that is the case, we should not give rise to discriminations concerning dharmas or look for ways to make ourselves afflicted.

If one discriminates names and marks, it will never end.   
Like entering the sea to count the sand,   
Trapping oneself in vain.

-Song of Enlightenment

If you start discriminating this dharma and that dharma, discriminating names and characteristics, it will never come to an end. You will never get it all clear in your entire lifetime. It’s like going to the sea and trying to count how many grains of sand it has. You never will be able to count them all. Then what should you do? You should pick a Dharma door you like and use that dharma to cultivate; then in the future you will have accomplishment. But if all you do is become attached to Dharma marks, trying to determine which Sutras are authentic and which are forgeries, you can do research for several decades: but when the time comes to die you still won’t have it clear. Instead, you should select one Dharma door and apply yourself to its exclusive cultivation. It doesn’t matter which Dharma door it is, if you cultivate the one you want, you can accomplish your fruit of the Way.

You may remember how when the Buddha was in the world, there was a person stupid as one can get: Kshudrapanthaka. He was called that name, which means “Little Roadside”, because his mother gave birth to him while halfway on the road while going to her parents’ home for the birth. He was incredibly stupid. He couldn’t learn any dharma you taught him. If you tried to teach him Suffering, Accumulation, Extinction, and the Way, as soon as you asked him, “What did I just teach you?” He would say, “I don’t know.” He wouldn’t have any idea. You could go through it all again and then right away ask him, “What did I just teach you?” He would still say, “I don’t know,” or else, “Nobody.” Time went on and he still had not managed to learn a single line of the Shurangama Mantra, or even one line of the Great Compassion Mantra. Finally the Buddha took pity on him and said, “Okay, I’ll give you a dharma. Just recite the two words ‘sweep clean’.” Of course, he couldn’t even remember those two words. He’d remember “sweep”, but then he’d forget “clean”. Or, if he remembered “clean”, he wouldn’t remember “sweep”. It would be “sweep, sweep, sweep,” but not “clean”; or else “clean, clean, clean,” without “sweep”. He couldn’t clearly remember both at once—for a long time. But, when he finally did recall them clearly, what do you think happened? When he recited the two words “sweep clean”, he got enlightened and was certified to the fruit of Arhatship.

That story illustrates how there is nothing fixed about the Dharma. That’s why the Sixth Patriarch said:

Dharma is neither sudden nor gradual.   
Delusion and Awakening are neither slow or quick.

Dharma doesn’t have suddenness or gradualness to it. It’s just a question of whether one stays confused a little longer or gets enlightened somewhat sooner. From that we can see that Dharma is like a key to open a lock. Once a lock is opened, you should put down the key. If you still hang on to it, that’s an attachment. It’s as:

Once you cross the river   
You no longer need the boat.

After you get across, you don’t want to walk carrying the boat on your back. Of course if you don’t carry the boat yourself but put it on top of your car and let the car have the attachment it isn’t so much of a problem.

Cultivation is precisely getting rid of attachments. If you have an attachment to self, to people or to dharmas, you won’t be able to achieve liberation.

Now we are opening up new fields and breaking new ground, planting the seeds for the future growth of Buddhism in every single dust mote of the world. In every speck of dust we should turn the great Dharma Wheel and propagate the Buddhadharma. This work is the responsibility of each one of us, not someone else’s job. As Buddhist disciples we should do the Buddha’s work, sending Buddhist disciples to every mote of dust, every country of the world, and eventually throughout the entire Dharma Realm. That is the work we should do.

Sutra:

If the Sangha were Brahma Conduct, then would the procession towards streamwinner be the Sangha? Would the fruit of streamwinner be the Sangha? Would the procession towards Once-Returner be the Sangha? Would the fruit of Once-Returner be the Sangha? Would the procession towards Never-Returner be the Sangha? Would the fruit of Never-Returner be the Sangha? Would the procession towards Arhat be the Sangha? Would the fruit of Arhat be the Sangha? Would the Three Clarities be the Sangha? Would the Six Penetrations be the Sangha?

Commentary:

If the Sangha were Brahma Conduct, as you might want to say, then what is the Sangha? Would the procession towards streamwinner be the Sangha? At the First Fruit, that of Srotaapanna—“Streamwinner”—one has severed the 88 categories of View Delusions. View Delusions means:

With regard to states, producing greed and love.

One becomes greedy for the state, loves the state and wants to grasp the state to have for one’s own. For example, the eyes see forms and produce greed for forms. The ears hear sounds and produce greed for listening to sounds. The nose smells fragrances and produces greed for fragrances. The tongue tastes flavors and produces greed for flavors. The body comes into contact with outside things and the greed to touch things is produced. The mind thinks of dharmas and in the mind produces greed for the dharmas as sense objects. In short, the six sense faculties of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind produce greed for the states of the six sense objects which are forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas. With greed, one feels that the object is good, and so begins to love it. The eyes see forms and love forms. The ears hear sounds and love sounds. The nose smells fragrances and loves them. The tongue tastes flavors and loves flavors. The body feels contact with objects of touch and loves the objects of touch. The mind thinks, basing itself upon the sense objects that are dharmas, and loves those dharma-objects. Greed and love are produced when those six sense organs pair with the six sense objects. That is View Delusion because upon viewing one becomes deluded and doesn’t know what one should or shouldn’t do. One is confused.

At the First Fruit of Arhatship, which is called the Position of the Way of Seeing, one has cut off all the 88 categories of View Delusions. There are overall Sixteen Hearts or Minds, involving Eight Patiences and Eight Wisdoms.

The Sixteen Hearts or Minds

* Patience with Dharmas of Suffering.
* Wisdom Concerning Dharmas of Suffering.
* Patience with Kinds of Suffering.
* Wisdom Concerning Kinds of Suffering.
* Patience with Dharmas of Accumulation.
* Wisdom Concerning Dharmas of Accumulation.
* Patience with Kinds of Accumulation.
* Wisdom Concerning Kinds of Accumulation.
* Patience with Dharmas of Extinction.
* Wisdom Concerning Dharmas of Extinction.
* Patience with Kinds of Extinction.
* Wisdom Concerning Kinds of Extinction.
* Patience with Dharmas of the Way.
* Wisdom Concerning Dharmas of the Way.
* Patience with Kinds of the Way.
* Wisdom Concerning Kinds of the Way.

The fifteenth Heart or Mind is called Procession Towards the First Fruit. With the Sixteenth Mind, one is certified to the First Fruit, that of Srotaapanna, Sanskrit for “Streamwinner” or “Stream Enterer.” It means:   
  
Entering the flow of the Sage’s Dharma Nature,   
Going against the common person’s flow of the six sense objects.

One no longer enters the flow of the six sense objects which are sights, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas, but instead wins entry to the stream of a Sage and can now be considered a Sage. The Sage of the First Fruit, having severed View Delusions, when faced with states does not produce greed and love; but he is still not clear about principle. He has samadhi power and is not moved or turned by outside states, and can himself turn the states.

The person turns the states;   
The states cannot turn the person.

No matter what kind of thing it is that he has never seen before, he doesn’t become greedy to see it. You can say he is such that:

The eyes see forms and shapes, but inside there is nothing.   
The ears hear defiling sounds, but the mind does not know.

He also:

enters the flow and forgets the objects.

Would the fruit of streamwinner be the Sangha? First Fruit is entry to the flow of the Sage’s Dharma Nature, so is the First Fruit the Sangha? The only thing is, the Sangha of the First Fruit is not necessarily Brahma Conduct. And so you should contemplate that Brahma Conduct definitely is not the Sangha.

In the [Sutra of Forty-Two Sections](http://cttbusa.org/42s/42sections.asp) the Buddha says:

Be careful not to believe your own mind.   
Your mind cannot be believed.   
Once you have attained the Fourth Fruit of Arhatship,   
Then you can believe your own mind.

**The Four Fruits of Arhatship**

First Fruit: Srotaapanna, “Stream Winner” Position of the Way of Seeing

**Second Fruit:** Sakridagamin, “Once Returner” Position of the Way of Cultivation

**Third Fruit:** Anagamin, “Never Returner” Position of the Way of Cultivation

**Fourth Fruit:** Arhat, “Worthy of Offerings”, Position of the “Killer of Thieves”, Way of Certification; “Without Birth” also, Position of No- Study.

During the first three stages, one cannot have faith in the thoughts of one’s own mind. That is because one’s samadhi is not yet solid, and so if one believes in one’s own viewpoint, one can be mistaken.

Would the procession towards Once-Returner be the Sangha? The Second Fruit is that of Sakridagamin, Sanskrit for “Once-Returner.” He has still to undergo:

One birth in the heavens,   
One return among people.

Those of the First Fruit of Arhatship have to undergo seven instances of birth and death, and have not ended birth and death. Those of the Second

Have one birth in the heavens and one return among human beings to undergo. With the Second Fruit one begins to sever categories of Thought Delusions, defined as:

Being confused about principle and giving rise to discriminations.

One is not clear about a given principle, and starts producing all sorts of discriminations. One thinks, for example, “They’re all wrong and I am right.” “They aren’t good and I am good.” “They have no knowledge but I have knowledge.” “They can’t do things but I can do things.” These discriminations arise from lack of clarity about principle, the inability to get principle and specifics straight.

There are nine categories of Thought Delusions in the Desire Realm. After one reaches the First Fruit one works on severing them. When five categories of Thought Delusion in the Desire Realm are severed, that is the Procession Towards the Fruit of Once-Returner. When six categories of Thought Delusion in the Desire Realm have been cut off, one is certified to the Fruit of Once-Returner, the Second Fruit. While one is working on severing the remaining three categories of Thought Delusions in the Desire Realm, that is called Procession Towards the Fruit of Never-Returner. When they are cut off, one is certified to the Fruit of Never-Returner, the Third Fruit. It’s not for sure the Procession Towards Once-Returner is the Sangha; and since even that is not certain, how could it be Brahma Conduct? Weren’t you trying to say that Brahma Conduct was the Sangha? That’s not Brahma Conduct. Well, then, would the fruit of Once-Returner be the Sangha? The Fruit of Once-Returner isn’t the Sangha either. That’s because:

The Sangha means an assembly.

There must be more than four people to constitute a Sangha.\* ( foot-note at bottom of page reads- Therefore, although in the central country three masters and seven certifiers are required for transmission of the precepts, in border regions they may be transmitted by five Bhikshus.)

You can’t call just one left-home person a Sangha. So, neither the Procession Towards Once-Returner nor the Fruit of Once-Returner is the Sangha; and since neither of them is, therefore Brahma Conduct is not the Sangha.

Would the procession towards Never-Returner be the Sangha? When one is between the positions of Second and Third Fruit and has not yet certified to the Third Fruit, that is called the Procession Towards the Third Fruit. When one actually is certified to it, that is called the Fruit of Never-Returner—Anagamin in Sanskrit—so called because one no longer undergoes birth and death in the Desire Realm. Would the fruit of Never-Returner be the Sangha? No, the Fruit of Never-Returner is not the Sangha. Would the procession towards Arhat be the Sangha? “Arhat” is a Sanskrit word with three meanings and corresponds to the result of being a Bhikshu, another Sanskrit word with three meanings, which corresponds to the cause. From the cause of being a Bhikshu one achieves the result: the Fruit of Arhatship.

The Three Meanings

Causal Ground: Ground of the Fruit: Bhikshu Arhat

1. “Beggar for Food.” 1. “Worthy of Offerings.”

2. “Frightener of Mara.” 2. “Killer of Thieves.”

3. “Destroyer of Evil.” 3. “Without Birth.”

A Bhikshu on the causal ground is a:

“Beggar for Food.”   
He: Seeks Dharma from the Buddhas above, to sustain his Dharma Body,   
Begs for food from living beings below, to sustain his life.

Upon being certified to the Fruit of Arhatship on the causal ground, the “Beggar for Food” is called one “Worthy of Offerings,” because as an Arhat he is “worthy of receiving offerings from humans and gods.” As a Bhikshu on the Causal Ground one is also called a “Frightener of Mara.” That’s because when a Bhikshu receives the precepts, at one point the Karmadana asks him,

“Have you already produced the Bodhi Mind?”

He replies, “Yes, I have already produced the Bodhi

Mind.” The Karmadana then asks him,

“Are you a Great Hero?” He answers,

“Yes! I am a Great Hero.”

At that moment, all of the heavenly demons and yakshas spread the news. Earth-travelling yakshas report it to the space-travelling yakshas. The space-travelling yakshas then report it to the heavenly demons in their palaces. They say,

“The Buddha’s retinue has increased by one, and our retinue of demon kings has decreased by one. Now our demonic power is declining daily, and the Buddha’s might daily increases.”

When they hear the news, all the demon kings are frightened and tremble with alarm. That is how a Bhikshu is a “Frightener of Mara,” “Mara” being the name of the demon king.

On the ground of the Fruit of Arhatship, he is called a “Killer of Thieves,” because he slays the demons of ignorance. Ignorance is the basis of the thieves who harm the Wisdom life of one’s Dharma Body. Furthermore, on the causal ground, a Bhikshu is a “Destroyer of Evil,” that is, he destroys the evil of afflictions. On the result ground of Arhatship he is known as one “Without Birth,” for he has ended birth and death and no longer undergoes them. However, it is Share Section Birth and Death that he has ended, not Change Birth and Death. Certification to that Fourth Fruit of Arhatship is called the Position of No-Study, for there is no further need for study or practice. Would the fruit of Arhat be the Sangha? Would the Three Clarities be the Sangha?

The Three Clarities:

* Penetration of the Heavenly Eye.
* Penetration of Past Lives.
* Penetration of the Exhaustion of Outflows.

Would the Six Penetrations be the Sangha?

The Six Penetrations:

* Penetration of the Heavenly Eye.
* Penetration of the Heavenly Ear.
* Penetration of Others’ Minds (or: Thoughts).
* Penetration of Past Lives.
* Penetration of the Exhaustion of Outflows.
* Penetration of Spiritual Fulfillments.

With the Penetration of the Heavenly Eye, one can know everything

Being done by the living beings among people, in the heavens, and in the hells. With the Penetration of the Heavenly Ear one can hear what is being said by the gods and spirits in the heavens, people in the human realm, and ghosts in the hells—all very, very clearly. With the Penetration of Others’ Minds (or: Thoughts), one knows what other people are thinking, their every movement of thought. With the Penetration of Past Lives one can know the causes and conditions with their retributions of each being’s last life, the life before that, back through limitless past lives. The Penetration of the Extinction of Outflows means that one is rid of all habits, faults, and thoughts of desire, so that even their seeds are gone. When there are no outflows, one no longer undergoes birth and death in the Three Realms: The Desire Realm, the Form Realm, or the Formless Realm. The Penetration of Spiritual Fulfillments is also called the Penetration of Spiritual States. It means having great spiritual penetrations so that one can do whatever one intends, has infinite transformations, and can appear or disappear at will. That kind of state is inconceivable. Those are the Six Spiritual Penetrations. But whether it’s the First Fruit Srotaapanna, the Second Fruit Sakridagamin, the Third Fruit Anagamin, or the Sage of the Fourth Fruit of Arhatship with the Three Clarities and the Six Penetrations, they are the Sangha, aren’t they? They are the Sangha, but none of them is Brahma Conduct; and so you cannot say that Brahma Conduct is the Sangha.

Sutra:

If the precepts were Brahma Conduct, then would the platform area be the precepts? Would the questioning about purity be the precepts? Would the teaching of awesome deportment be the precepts? Would the three karmavachana pronouncements be the precepts? Would the Upadhyaya be the precepts? Would the Acharyas be the precepts? Would the shaving of the head be the precepts? Would donning the kashaya sashes be the precepts? Would begging for food be the precepts? Would proper livelihood be the precepts?

Commentary:

“Precepts” means rules and regulations. Their purpose is:

To stop evil and avoid misdeeds.   
Not to do any evil,   
But to offer up all good conduct.

Precepts include:

The Precept Dharma.   
The Precept Substance.   
The Precept Mark.

The Precept Dharma includes:

The Five Precepts (for laypeople).   
The Eight Precepts (for laypeople).   
The Ten Precepts (for novices).   
The Ten Major and Forty-Eight Minor Bodhisattva Precepts (for both left-home and laypeople).   
The 250 Bhikshu Precepts   
The 348 Bhikshuni Precepts.

All of those precepts are to tell you not to do any evil but to offer up all good conduct. You should hold the precepts purely and not go against them.

It is really not easy not to do any evil but to practice only doing good. Therefore, when the Buddha was in the world, all of the Bhikshus took the Buddha for their Teacher; but after the Buddha entered extinction, they took the precepts for their Teacher. The precepts direct all of our actions to be in accord with the Dharma, and so one should act in accordance with the precepts and not in opposition to them. Now it says, *If the precepts were Brahma Conduct,* if that is what you would like to say, *then would the platform area be the precepts?* When the precepts are transmitted, a platform must be established, which has to be pure and adorned. The platform is set up for the Buddhas of the ten directions, and the area means where it is located. So, is the area where the precept platform stands the precepts? Of course not.

The Buddhas of the ten directions have to come and transmit the precepts for there to be precepts. *Would the questioning about purity be the precepts?* During the Precept Transmission it is always asked, “In the past did you do things not in accordance with the rules? Did you kill people or set fires or steal or commit sexual misconduct or engage in false speech or take intoxicants? Did you do any of those things, and if you did, can you change and become a new person and return to purity?” There has to be that asking about purity, but is that questioning the precepts? It’s certain that questioning about purity is not the precepts, but that the precepts are what is transmitted; and so Brahma Conduct is not the precepts.

*Would the teaching of awesome deportment be the precepts?* When the precepts are transmitted, the Instructing Masters must teach those newly receiving precepts the Four Great Awesome Deportments.

The Four Great Awesome Deportments

* Walking. One should walk like the wind.
* Standing. One should stand like a pine.
* Sitting. One should sit like a bell.
* Lying down. One should lie like a bow.

There is an awesome manner for each of those Four Deportments. When one walks, one should be like a gentle breeze and not jump or dash around like a tornado. Standing, one should be tall and erect like a pine tree. One should sit as steady as a bell, not like a bell’s clapper that sways back and forth. When one lies down it should be like a bow, in the “lucky lying-down position”, with one’s right hand supporting one’s cheek and one’s left hand resting on one’s thigh. The instructing Masters teach those comportments, which means they teach the manners and style becoming to a left-home person. There are:

Three thousand awesome deportments   
And eighty thousand refinements of conduct.   
That they are awesome means:   
One has awesomeness that overawes.   
That they are deportments means:   
One has deportments which can be respected.

It also means that whether one is walking, standing, sitting, lying down, entering, exiting, going or returning, all of it is in accord with protocol and with the precepts. Is the teaching of awesome deportments the precepts? No, it isn’t. It’s just that when you take the precepts you further need to study the awesome deportments.

*Would the three karmavachana pronouncements be the precepts?* When the Shramanera precepts and the complete precepts of a Bhikshu are transmitted, karmavachana is enacted in three pronouncements. That is, the Precept Transmitting Upadhyaya asks three times, and the Karmadana, the Teaching Master, and all of the Certifiers reply three times, enacting karmavachana in three pronouncements. Is that the precepts? It isn’t, it’s just a ceremony. *Would the Upadhyaya be the precepts?* Is the Upadhyaya who transmits the precepts the precepts? No, he simply represents the Buddha in transmitting the precepts, but is not the precepts themselves. *Would the Acharyas be the precepts?*

The various types of Acharyas “Teachers of the rules who are models”, are not the precepts either. *Would the shaving of the head* when one receives the precepts *be the precepts?* No, that just symbolizes becoming a Bhikshu and is not the precepts. *Would donning the kashaya sashes be the precepts?* Is putting on the precept sashes, the kashaya robes, the precepts? No, it isn’t. *Would* taking up one’s bowl and going out *begging for food be the precepts?* No, it is not. *Would proper livelihood be the precepts?* Proper livelihood is the opposite of deviant livelihood, of which there are five kinds.

The Five Kinds of Deviant Livelihoods

* Displaying an unusual appearance.
* Using a loud voice in order to appear awesome.
* Speaking of one’s own merit and virtue.
* Performing divination and fortune-telling.
* Speaking at length of offerings made to one.

The first improper livelihood is deliberately looking unusual so one stands out from everyone else. Another is at times to speak, chant or yell especially loud to impress others with how awesome one is. The third is to tell others about the merit and virtue one has oneself. The fourth is doing divination, astrological or other reckonings concerning good luck and bad luck for people. The fifth is telling people how one has received this or that offering so that their minds move and they say, “Wow! Other people have made huge offerings like that. The least I can do is make some kind of offering to this person.” All of these are improper ways of supporting one’s life. When Bhikshus go out on their daily alms rounds it is simply to sustain the physical body, and that certainly is not the precepts.

For example, one time the Venerable Shariputra entered a city to beg for alms. When he had obtained them he sat down to eat. A Brahmacharin named Pure Eyes came up and asked him, “Do you eat?”

He answered, “Yes, I eat.”

Pure Eyes said, “Do you eat by using a lowered mouth?”

He answered, “No.”

“Do you eat by using an up-turned mouth?”

“No,” he replied.

“Do you eat by using a mouth turned to the cardinal points?”

His answer again was, “No.”

“Do you eat by using a mouth turned to the intermediate directions?”

“No,” he said once more.

Pure Eyes said, “I’ve asked you each of the four kinds of eating, and I don’t understand how you can deny employing any of them. You’d better tell me what you understand them to mean.”

Shariputra said, “Some left-home people, in order to sustain their lives, concoct medicines from such things as herbs and tree bark for people, which is an impure livelihood and is called eating with a lowered mouth. The impure livelihood of making predictions based on observations of stars and planets, sun and moon, wind and rain, thunder and lightening, is known as eating with an upturned mouth. Or perhaps one fawns on those in power or tried to get people to feel sorry for one; or one acts as a go-between or uses one’s connections to coerce people, going throughout the four points of the compass speaking craftily and doing much seeking and climbing on conditions. That impure livelihood is called eating with a mouth turned to the cardinal points. If one recites different sorts of magic spells and incantations for people, or does divination and casting of fortunes to determine good luck and bad for them and so forth, that is the impure livelihood of eating with a mouth turned towards the intermediate directions. I do not fall under any of those four. I employ the livelihood of purely seeking alms.”

When Pure Eyes heard this, he was delighted, believed and understood, and because of the Dharma spoken for him by Shariputra, was certified to the fruit of Srotaapanna.

Bhikshus do not use any of those four kinds of methods to obtain the food they eat. They are not the lowly beggars people feel sorry for. Their livelihood is proper. They follow the Eight Proper Paths.

**The Eight Proper Paths**

* Proper Views.
* Proper Thought.
* Proper Speech.
* Proper Deeds.
* Proper Livelihood.
* Proper Vigor.
* Proper Mindfulness.
* Proper Samadhi.

Everything they cultivate should be proper, and so they must avoid falling into the five kinds of deviant livelihoods.

Clear, pure Brahma Conduct does not belong to any of those ten kinds of dharmas, and therefore the mark of precepts must be emptied. One should not have any attachments.

Sutra:

After contemplating in this way, do not grasp at the body, do not grasp at cultivation, and do not dwell in dharmas. The past is already extinguished, the future has not yet arrived, and the present is empty and still. There is no one who creates karma, and there is no one who receives retribution. This world does not move, and other worlds do not change. Among these things what dharma can be called Brahma Conduct? Where does Brahma Conduct come from? To whom does Brahma Conduct belong? Who or what is its substance? By whom is it created? Is it existent? Is it non-existent?

Commentary:

After contemplating in this way, using the ten dharmas of contemplation just discussed, do not grasp at the body. One cannot find Brahma Conduct in one’s own body. Do not grasp at cultivation. One should not become attached to Brahma Conduct as being in cultivation either. If you have an attachment in your mind to the thought, “I am cultivating Brahma Conduct,” then you have not reached the state of the emptiness of people and dharmas. And do not dwell in dharmas. That you should not dwell in dharmas means you should not be attached to them. The past is already extinguished. If you discuss this in terms of the three periods of time, past time has already perished, and the future has not yet arrived. It hasn’t come yet, and the present is empty and still. None of it exists at all. Because the three periods of time are empty, the body, mind, and worlds are empty too. Every single thing is empty, and so there is no one who creates karma; for when all is empty, what karma could be created?

And there is no one who receives retribution. If no one creates karma, who could receive retribution? This world does not move, and other worlds do not change but remain as they are. Among these things what dharma can be called Brahma Conduct? If you investigate in detail which of these Dharmas could be Brahma Conduct, none of them is. All are empty. Where does Brahma Conduct come from? Since all dharmas are not Brahma Conduct, from where can Brahma Conduct arise? To whom does Brahma Conduct belong? Who owns it? It doesn’t have an owner. Who or what is its substance? Who or what is it that underlies the substance of Brahma Conduct? By whom is it created? Who has made Brahma Conduct? Look further into Brahma Conduct and try to determine is it existent? Is it non-existent? If you contemplate it carefully to the utmost point, basically it is empty.

Sutra:

Is it form? Is it non-form? Is it feeling? Is it non-feeling? Is it thinking? Is it non-thinking? Is it activities? Is it non-activities? Is it consciousness? Is it non-consciousness?

Commentary:

Is it form? Of the five-skandhas—form, feeling, thinking, activities, and consciousness—form dharmas are what has obstructiveness, shape, and form. Feeling, thinking, activities, and consciousness are mind dharmas. Does Brahma Conduct belong to form dharmas? In the dharmas of form there is no Brahma Conduct. Is it non-form? Is it feeling? Is it non-feeling? Is it thinking? Is it non-thinking? Is it activities? Is it non-activities? Is it consciousness? Is it non-consciousness? You won’t find Brahma Conduct in any of the five skandhas.

Sutra:

Contemplating in this way, because Brahma Conduct cannot be got at; because the three periods of time are all empty and still; because one’s mind has no grasping or attachment; because one’s mind has no obstructions; because what one practices is non-dual; because of expedients of self-mastery; because of receiving the Dharma of no-marks; because of contemplating the Dharma of no-marks; because of knowing that the Buddha and Dharmas are level and equal; because of endowment with all Buddhadharmas, therefore it is called Pure Brahma Conduct.

Commentary:

Contemplating Brahma Conduct in this way, we find it ultimately is empty and non-existent, that it ultimately cannot be obtained. That is because Brahma Conduct cannot be got at. It is also because the three periods of time—past, present, and future--are all empty and still with no actual substance to them. It is also because one’s mind has no grasping or attachment. In the mind consciousness there is nothing grasped at or attached to; and because one’s mind has no obstructions. It is also because what one practices is non-dual. All that one cultivates are Dharma doors of non-duality. All are the ultimate meaning of the Middle Way and do not fall into either extremes of existence or emptiness. It is also because of expedients of self-mastery. This is a Dharma of expedient means and self-mastery. It is also because of receiving the Dharma of no-marks. Every single thing is without marks.

Form, feeling, thinking, activities, and consciousness are all empty. It is also because of contemplating the Dharma of no-marks, being able to contemplate the dharma of marklessness. It is also because of knowing that the Buddha and Dharmas are level and equal. One arrives at the knowledge that Buddhadharmas, living being dharmas, and mind dharmas are, all three of them, the same. And it is because of endowment with all Buddhadharmas. All living beings are endowed with the Buddhanature and with the nature of all dharmas, without excess or deficiency. Therefore it is called Pure Brahma Conduct. If one can be without attachments in that way, sweeping away all dharmas and separating from all marks, then that is called purity, pure Brahma Conduct. If in cultivation one does not give rise to a single thought, when there is not a single thought, what dharma is there that can be got at? So, if one does not give rise to a single thought, then one will be complete with all dharmas. That then is pure Brahma Conduct.

Sutra:

Moreover, one should cultivate ten kinds of dharmas. What are the ten? They are: the knowledge of what is and what is not the case; the knowledge of the karmic retributions in the past, present, and future; the knowledge of all dhyanas, liberations, and samadhis; the knowledge of all superior and inferior faculties; the knowledge of the various kinds of understandings; the knowledge of the various kinds of realms; the knowledge of where all paths lead; the knowledge of the unobstructed Heavenly Eye; the knowledge of the unobstructed penetration of past lives; and the knowledge of forever cutting off habitual energy. Each and every one of the Tathagata’s ten powers is to be contemplated. Within each power are unlimited meanings which must be investigated.

Commentary:

Moreover, everything discussed to now has shown that Brahma Conduct is false with no actuality. The Brahma Conduct the Bodhisattva cultivates is pure, bright, without shape and without mark. But having understood this principle, one should further cultivate ten kinds of dharmas, Dharma doors of wisdom. These ten are also called the Tathagata’s Ten Powers, for if we have the wisdom from those powers, we will be able to cut off delusions and certify to truth. What are the ten kinds of powers, the ten kinds of Dharma doors? They are first of all: the knowledge of what is and what is not the case. There are a lot of ways of explaining “what is the case”. It is the case there are Buddhas. It is also the case there are hells. Within the Ten Dharma Realms, it is the case that “Buddha” means “enlightened”, and that hell-beings are deluded, that one obtains bright light upon awakening, and darkness when in delusion. If one has the great wisdom to illuminate the real mark of all dharmas, that is also what is the case. If one is stupid and senseless and does not know enough to escape from the Three Realms, that is being in something that is not the case. What holds true is enlightenment and what does not hold true is delusion. Certifying to the Sagely Fruit is called what is the case. Falling into the three evil paths is what is not the case. Understanding the real mark of all dharmas is what holds true. Not having any wisdom and being covered by ignorance so one does not understand anything is what does not hold true. Cutting off the false and certifying to the truth is what does hold true. Being confused about one’s original enlightened nature is what does not hold true. And so there are limitless meanings. One and the same knowledge and wisdom can divide into limitless and boundless principles and explanations. The Buddha has that kind of power of wisdom to know what is and is not the case.

He also has the knowledge of the karmic retributions in the past, present, and future. The Bodhisattva should also practice the contemplation of how evil karma created in the past leads to undergoing evil retribution in the present life, along with how good karma created in the past leads to receiving good retribution in the present life. He should also contemplate how evil karma created in this life will lead to undergoing evil retribution in future lives, and how good karma created in this present life will lead to receiving good rewards in lives to come. If in the present you create all kinds of evil karma, in future lives you will undergo all kinds of evil retribution.

The three periods of time are like a revolving wheel, a cycle of alternating repayments through retributions. The karma of one’s past life is carried over into this life, and the karma of this life will carry over into the next life, and none of it will be off by a hair. Why is karma created? It is because one gives rise to delusion. The reason we give rise to delusion is due to ignorance. Ignorance is because:

In one unenlightened thought,   
There are the three subtle marks.

The Three Subtle Marks

* The Mark of Karma.
* The Mark of Turning.
* The Mark of Manifesting.

Once there are the three subtle marks, measureless, limitless karmic retributions are produced. The Buddha has the wisdom to know the karmic retributions which must be undergone in the past, present, and future.

If one wishes to know the causes planted in past lives,   
They are the retribution one is receiving in this present life.   
If one wishes to know what the results will be in future lives,   
They are what one is creating in this life.

The causes we plant in this life are the fruits we will reap in lives to come. The fruit we are harvesting now in this life comes from causes planted in past lives. These principles, too, are limitless and boundless, difficult to tell of completely.

The next power of a Tathagata is the knowledge of all dhyanas, liberations, and samadhis. “Dhyana” is a Sanskrit word meaning “Thought cultivation”. Investigating dhyana—Ch’an—is like drilling a hole. When the hole is drilled through, that is one’s investigation breaking through. What is it breaking through to? It’s breaking through to one’s original Buddha Nature and breaking up ignorance. That’s called one’s investigation breaking through. After ignorance is destroyed the bright light of wisdom appears. So that’s what is meant by investigating Ch’an. Ignorance is just not understanding anything and not being able to see through states as they arise but being turned by states. If one can turn the state without being turned by the state, one has samadhi power. You’ve investigated Ch’an until you’ve received a little “good news”. One investigates until not a single thought arises and one arrives at the state of there being originally not one thing.

No matter how many years one cultivates, if one cannot renounce one’s attachments it is just head-mouth Ch’an. That means you can talk but you cannot practice. One is like a stone man who can speak but has attachments so heavy he cannot move, so one cannot cultivate. Cultivation is not becoming attached to states which you like and not rejecting states which you do not like. Then you have dhyana samadhi, and whatever state comes you are able to recognize it. Some states oppose you while others accord with you. Adverse states you face mean affairs that do not suit you and which are very rude to you, not at all the way you want them to be. If one cannot break through such barriers in front of one, one has no skill. If you can break through them, then you have samadhi power. If states arise which are favorable to and benefit you and you like them, then you have no samadhi power, and have not broken through the state.

If whether the state is favorable or adverse one is vigorous and one’s mind remains unmoved, that is the state of the Bodhisattvas of the Ten Dwellings previously described. Whether praised or blamed, one’s mind does not move.

“All Dhyanas” refers to the First Dhyana, the Second Dhyana, the Third Dhyana, and the Fourth Dhyana. If one has been certified to the position of the state of First Dhyana, whenever one sits one can immediately enter samadhi in whatever situation one finds himself. In the First Dhyana one’s pulse stops, and one is like a living dead person. The Second Dhyana is deeper than the first. At that time, the breath stops. Although one is then really like a dead person with no outer breath, the inner breath comes alive. The breath of the nose stops, but the hair pores still breathe. It’s just that one cannot detect this. In the Third Dhyana there is no thought. Then really not a single thought arises. In the First Dhyana there is much joy and in the Second there is still a kind of joy within samadhi. But in the Third Dhyana one renounces that joy, and obtains a kind of happiness and wonderful bliss of:

neither emptiness nor form.

At that time thought does not move. In the Fourth Dhyana there is truly no movement of thought. All thoughts are stopped and renounced.

The First Dhyana is called the Stage of Joy of Leaving Production. The Second Dhyana is called the Stage of Joy of Production of Samadhi. The Third Dhyana is called the Stage of Wonderful Bliss of Leaving Joy. The Fourth Dhyana is called the Stage of Purity of Renouncing thought. However, the Four Dhyanas are just states within cultivation of dhyana-samadhi, and are definitely not certification to the Fruition of Sagehood. Therefore, when the Bhikshu with no knowledge mistook the Fourth Dhyana for the Fourth Fruit of Arhatship, it was a major error. He did not understand cultivation and thought he had attained something he had not actually attained and he said that he had certified to something to which he had not certified. He had not obtained wisdom but said he had, and he had not actually become enlightened but claimed he was. As it turned out he had told a great lie for which he fell into the hell of pulling-tongues.

There are further eight kinds of liberation, also called the Eight “Castings off the Back”, that is, turning one’s back on the dust and renouncing it. One then has the knowledge and wisdom of samadhi.

The Buddha also has the knowledge of all superior and inferior faculties. He has the power to know and contemplate the root-natures of all living beings and understand if they are superior or inferior. He can know whose good roots are mature and whose good roots are just ready for liberation. He can know whose good roots are already growing and who needs good roots planted. The Buddha contemplates all the roots and faculties of living beings—their eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind—by means of one of the ten wisdoms, and determines whether their roots are superior or inferior.

The Buddha also has the knowledge of the various kinds of understandings. Living beings all have their own wisdom as well as their own kind of thought and understanding from their wisdom. The Buddha:

Knows about himself and knows about others,   
And for a hundred battles has a hundred victories.

It takes that kind of self-mastery to teach and transform living beings.

The Buddha also has the power from the knowledge of the various kinds of realms, all of the myriad particulars of living beings’ individual differences and all their different kinds and categories. He also has the power from the knowledge of where all paths lead. The Buddha knows where one goes by following each path, what position one reaches by cultivating any given dharma. He also has the knowledge of the unobstructed Heavenly Eye. This is the penetration of the Heavenly Eye. The amount of obstruction depends upon how perfectly one attains this penetration. If it is perfected, then everywhere throughout the Great Trichiliocosm and the entire Dharma Realm can be seen without obstruction. He also has the knowledge of the unobstructed penetration of past lives. This refers to the root-nature of life after life, whether one has planted good roots deeply or shallowly; whether one has planted them in one life, or perhaps in many lives time after time one has studied and practiced the Buddhadharma. If one obtains this wisdom of the penetration of past lives, one can observe all living beings’ causes and conditions from past lives and know what methods to use to teach them now.

And the Buddha has the knowledge of forever cutting off habitual energy. Life after life we have developed many defiled habits and even if we wish to cut them off we cannot. We cannot do so because we have no wisdom. Habits are such things as greed for food, greed for good clothing, and greed for a fine place to live. That is all habitual energy. We also have greed to listen to fine music, greed to look at nice sights, and greed to accumulate more knowledge. We have greed for nice toys to play with and greed to hear praise from others. We don’t like to hear people tell us the truth. All of these things are habits. The field of the eighth consciousness is filled with these habitual energies. If we have no greed for wealth, we do have greed for sex. If we don’t have greed for sex, we do have greed for good food. If not greedy for food, we have the habit of liking to get angry. Otherwise we have greed for drinking liquor or smoking cigarettes or taking drugs. There are too many kinds of habitual energies. If you have habits, you have outflows in your mind. And if you have outflows you will lose your precious treasures. Once you lose your precious treasures, you will not be wealthy and noble or honored, but will be low and cheap. Therefore, habits are limitless and are the cause of limitless kinds of problems if one tries to name them. The Buddha has the power of wisdom to have known how to cut off not only his own habit energies but can also cause all living beings to also study the Buddhadharma and cut off all of their own habits once and for all.

Each and every one of the Tathagata’s ten powers is to be contemplated. When the Bodhisattva cultivates pure Brahma Conduct, he uses very subtle wisdom to contemplate and investigate each and every one of the ten wisdom-powers of the Buddha. Within each power of wisdom of the Buddha there are unlimited meanings which must be investigated. In each power there are limitless and boundlessly many principles. Therefore, they cannot completely be described in words. They are infinite. These powers have to be meditated upon and investigated by one’s self. One can’t be casual and sloppy about it, but must carefully look into these powers of wisdom for a long period of time, turn the light within and investigate for one’s self the real mark of all dharmas.

Sutra:

After one has heard them one must produce a mind of great kindness and compassion. One must contemplate all beings without renouncing or separating from them. One must consider all dharmas without resting. One must practice unsurpassed karma without seeking for rewards. One must completely understand that all states are like dreams, illusions, shadows, echoes, and also like transformations.

Commentary:

The Bodhisattva who cultivates pure Brahma Conduct contemplates the previously described Dharma doors of the Buddha’s ten kinds of powers of wisdom, and within each and every one of those powers is also able to understand limitless and boundlessly many meanings and Dharma doors, and should himself carefully investigate them. After one has heard them—either through one’s own investigations or after hearing them spoken in the presence of all Buddhas--one must produce a mind of great kindness and compassion. That’s the time when there should arise:

Great kindness for those with whom one has no conditions.   
Great compassion from possessing identity in substance.

Whether or not one has conditions or affinities with beings, one should have a great attitude of kindness towards them and cherish and protect living beings as one would oneself. That’s also called great compassion of identity in substance.

All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do not see the faults of living beings, and consider beings’ mistakes to be their own mistakes. Therefore, one should have a mind of great compassion. As it is said,

Kindness can bestow happiness upon living beings.   
Compassion can pull beings out from suffering.

One must contemplate all beings without renouncing or separating from them. One contemplates all living beings of every kind and range of understanding without being biased as to whether their roots are good or bad. Not because their roots are good is one motivated to save them, nor if their roots are bad does one renounce them. One does not have a mind that draws distinctions and says, “That living being has no good roots so I won’t save him,” or refuses to save living beings if they are stupid or of low character. Instead one declares:

As long as a single living being has not become a Buddha,   
At death I will not seek the leisure of Nirvana.

“If there is even a single living being left out who has not become a Buddha, I will not become a Buddha either.” One makes that kind of most lofty and unsurpassed great vow, contemplates all living beings and never abandons them. One never separates oneself from living beings.

One must consider all dharmas without resting. Considering all dharmas means investigating dhyana. At all times one investigates all Buddhadharmas, makes a careful investigation of each and every one of the 84,00 0 Dharma doors so one clearly understands them. And one never rests. For the sake of investigating the Buddhadharma and seeking the unsurpassed Way, at all times one is always courageously vigorous---never lazy.

One must practice unsurpassed karma without seeking for rewards. To practice unsurpassed karma is to cultivate the Buddha Way, and it means doing all kinds of good deeds, accomplishing unsurpassed virtuous karma and nurturing one’s own blessings and wisdom. However, while performing all those varied kinds of unsurpassed victorious karma, one still does not seek any reward of good retribution. Most people hope for good retribution when they do anything good. But the Bodhisattva in doing things of unsurpassed merit and virtue nonetheless transfers the advantages obtained from them to all living beings, and is not always thinking that the merit and virtue he has done is infinite. That is, although he does all kinds of good deeds, he doesn’t think of himself as having done good deeds. It also means:

He is kind to others without seeking a reward,   
And gives to people without hoping for returns.   
When he does good, it’s not to get good back.

One must completely understand that all states are like dreams, illusions, shadows, echoes, and also like transformations. One should understand, know about states, recognizing them very clearly. What are all states like? All states are conditioned dharmas; and

All conditioned dharmas   
Are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows.   
Like dew and like a lightning flash:   
Contemplate them thus.

They are like states conjured up by magicians, not true and actual. They are also like the states in dreams, which also are not real. They are like the shadow of a tree as well, which constantly circles it, yet has no actual substance. They are like the echo or after sound when a bell is rung. One hears it for a time and then it fades and is gone. They are also like transformations that disappear and reappear in an endless series of changes.

Sutra:

If all Bodhisattvas are in this way able to make contemplation interact with practice, and if within all dharmas they do not give rise to dual understanding, then all Buddhadharmas will quickly manifest before them. At the time of first bringing forth the mind they right then obtain anuttarasamyaksambodhi. They know that all dharmas are just the self-nature of the mind. They accomplish the wisdom body, and become enlightened not because of others.

Commentary:

It says: if all Bodhisattvas , who differ from Arhats—Arhats have broken both attachments to people and to dharmas, so that people and dharmas are both empty. The states of Bodhisattvas, however, far surpass those of Arhats, for Bodhisattvas not only have neither of those two attachments, but basically do not have attachment to a self. They aren’t attached to being or non-being, to existence or non-existence, to right or to wrong. They have broken every kind of attachment. Arhats have ended share-section birth and death but not the birth and death of change, whereas Bodhisattvas have put an end to both kinds of dying. They don’t have share-section birth and death which is that of each person having one’s own bodily shape and allotted lifespan—their share and section. They also don’t have change birth and death which is that of the non-stop process of continual change in thought after thought. This distinguishes them from Arhats who are still subject to change birth and death. Bodhisattvas don’t know any existence of self or of dharmas, but simply cultivate the Bodhisattva Way of benefiting all living beings without paying any attention to whether they are rewarded for their efforts. They just do it. And so of Bodhisattvas it is said:

With no self or others, contemplate at ease.   
They are sovereign Bodhisattvas.

Furthermore, “Bodhisattva” means “One who Enlightens Those With Sentience”. They bring enlightenment to every sentient being. It also means, “enlightened one with sentience,” one who among sentient beings is enlightened.

If all Bodhisattvas are in this way able to make contemplation interact with practice, if they can contemplate the various dharmas described before and interact with all those dharmas, that means they understand the fundamental and ultimate meaning of all dharmas. It means illumining and viewing all dharmas, and uniting with them all so no distinction can be made between the Bodhisattvas and the dharmas. They are:

Two and yet non-dual,   
Not two, yet two.

That’s interaction. And if within all dharmas they do not give rise to dual understanding, then for them, all of the 84,000 Dharma doors are truth in the primary sense, and each is the foremost Dharma door. There is no relative, dual understanding, yet although there are no two ways of understanding, nonetheless, limitless meanings can arise. However, even as limitless meanings can arise, it’s still the non-dual Dharma door. When they are able to be that way, then all Buddhadharmas will quickly manifest before them. They will immediately illumine and view all of the Buddhas 84,000 doors of Dharma, and will attain instantaneous understanding of them all. That they appear before them means they attain samadhi of all dharmas, proper concentration and proper reception concerning all dharmas.

If they are able in that way to contemplate and interact with all dharmas, and in that way not give rise to dual understanding concerning all dharmas, then all Buddhadharmas will quickly appear before them. When that happens, then at the time of first bringing forth the mind they right then obtain anuttarasamyaksambodhi, Sanskrit for “Unsurpassed Right and Equal Proper Enlightenment.” Those of the Two Vehicles differ from ordinary common people who are not enlightened in that they are properly enlightened; but their enlightenment is not equal with that of all Buddhas the way the enlightenment of Bodhisattvas is. Bodhisattvas’ enlightenment, although proper and equal, is not unsurpassed, for the Buddha’s enlightenment surpasses theirs. The Buddha is both able to be properly and equally enlightened and to have that enlightenment be unsurpassed. He is able both to enlighten himself and others and to be perfect in both those conducts of enlightenment. So the Buddha is called “Unsurpassed Knight”, while Bodhisattvas are called “Surpassed Knights”. That means Unsurpassed Right and Equal Proper Enlightenment is another name for the position of the Fruit of Buddhahood.

When that happens, then they, the Bodhisattvas, know that all dharmas are just the self-nature of the mind, that everything is created from mind only.

If one wishes to completely understand   
All Buddhas of the three periods of time   
One should contemplate the nature of the Dharma Realm:   
Everything is made from mind alone.

Therefore, all dharmas are not apart from the self-nature, and apart from the self-nature there are no dharmas. They accomplish the wisdom body. If you are able to contemplate, investigate, illumine and view the real mark of all dharmas, then that will bring your wisdom body to accomplishment. Then your wisdom is infinite and boundless, and you become enlightened not because of others. It is not obtained from outside. When you yourself become enlightened to those kinds of states and principles and certify to the samadhi of the wisdom body, it’s not because someone else teaches you that you achieve that understanding. It’s that your self-nature is enlightened of itself.

When one is confused, one’s teacher takes one across.   
When one is enlightened, one takes oneself across.   
One crosses oneself over.

However, when enlightened, you have to go through a Good Knowing Advisor who certifies you, and that Good Knowing Advisor must himself be enlightened to be able to certify you. Someone muddled and confused can’t give you that certification. Everyone should be aware of this. You cannot declare yourself enlightened. Someone else has to certify that you are. For example, when the Sixth Patriarch departed from the Fifth Patriarch, the Fifth Patriarch certified him as being enlightened. And so he went to Kuan Tung to propagate the Buddhadharma and transmit the Buddha’s Mind Seal, teaching and transforming living beings. Within Buddhism, every single thing has to be in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Dharma. If you’re not in accord with them, but try to set yourself up as a Patriarch on your own, then it will not hold true.