**The Avatamsaka Sutra**

**CHAPTER24**

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

**Explanation by VM. Hua**

**Praises in the Tushita Heaven Palace**

Commentary:

This chapter is still spoken in the Tushita Heaven Palace. Shakyamuni Buddha is in the Hall of All Jeweled Adornments speaking Dharma for the great assembly. He’s proclaiming the Avatamsaka Sutra. At that time there were a great many Bodhisattvas who had come from the ten directions. And in the ten directions, each direction had a Bodhisattva leader who spoke verses praising Shakyamuni Buddha. This is Chapter Twenty-Four. The entire title reads, Praises in the Tushita Heaven Palace, Chapter 24.

Sutra:

At that time, because of the Buddha’s spiritual power, in each of the ten directions there was a Great Bodhisattva, each of whom was accompanied by Bodhisattvas as many as dust motes in ten thousand Buddha kshetras. They were from worlds beyond lands to the number of dust motes in ten thousand Buddha kshetras, and they all came to the Buddha’s place.

Their names were: Vajra Banner Bodhisattva, Solid Banner Bodhisattva, Courageous Banner Bodhisattva, Bright Light Banner Bodhisattva, Wisdom Banner Bodhisattva, Jeweled Banner Bodhisattva, Vigorous Banner Bodhisattva, Apart-From-Filth Banner Bodhisattva, Constellation Banner Bodhisattva, and Dharma Banner Bodhisattva.

And the countries from which they came were called: Wonderful Jeweled World, Wonderful Bliss World, Wonderful Silver World, Wonderful Gold World, Wonderful Mani World, Wonderful Vajra World, Wonderful Padma World, Wonderful Utpala World, Wonderful Chandana World, and Wonderful Fragrance World.

Commentary :

The Buddha is in the Tushita Heaven Palace where he is speaking the Avatamsaka Sutra to the Dharma assembly--the great assembly. And while he is speaking Dharma, he is manifesting all kinds of adornments, all kinds of wonderful characteristics, all kinds of music, all kinds of clouds, and all kinds of flowers.

At that time, because of Shakyamuni Buddha’s great, awesome, spiritual power, in each of the ten directions there was a Great Bodhisattva. In the east, south, west and north--the four cardinal directions--there are four Bodhisattvas. In the northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest--the four intermediary directions--there are also four great Bodhisattvas.

Also, above and below there are two Bodhisattvas. In each of the ten directions, there is a representative Bodhisattva, a leader among the Bodhisattvas. There were ten Bodhisattvas, each of whom was accompanied by Bodhisattvas as many as dust motes in ten thousand Buddha kshetras. Each Bodhisattva has as many Bodhisattvas along with him as there are numbers of dust motes in ten thousand Buddha lands. There are that many Bodhisattvas altogether! And They were from worlds beyond lands to the number of dust motes in ten thousand Buddha kshetras. They arrived from remote world systems farther away than ten thousand Buddha Kshetras. and they all came to the Buddha’s place. They came to Shakyamuni Buddha’s Avatamsaka Dharma Assembly. They are part of the influential assembly.

Their names were: Vajra Banner Bodhisattva. A Vajra banner is extremely sturdy, and tremendously solid. Since this Bodhisattva is like a Vajra banner, he was given that name. There is another Bodhisattva named Solid Banner Bodhisattva. He’s not Vajra; he’s “solid.” means that all of the heavenly demons and those of outside ways are unable to destroy him. Courageous Banner Bodhisattva is constantly vigorous and never rests. He’s courageous and vigorous at all times in teaching and transforming living beings.

Bright Light Banner Bodhisattva emits a bright light and within this light there is manifested a jeweled banner. Wisdom Banner Bodhisattva has wisdom which is extremely high, like a jeweled banner, and so he is called Wisdom Banner Bodhisattva. There is also Jeweled Banner Bodhisattva and then Vigorous Banner Bodhisattva, whose body and mind are vigorous throughout the day and night. And there is also a Bodhisattva named Apart-From-Filth Bodhisattva. He is without any defilements and is therefore pure. After Constellation Banner Bodhisattva comes Dharma Banner Bodhisattva. This Bodhisattva raises the Dharma banner everywhere and destroys the net of doubt, layer by layer.

The countries from which they came were called: Wonderful Jeweled World . This is a country of splendid gems. Wonderful Bliss World is extremely and wonderfully blissful. They came from countries called Wonderful Silver World; Wonderful Gold World; Wonderful Mani World; and Wonderful Vajra World. They also came from the Wonderful Padma World. “Padma” is the red lotus flower. These Bodhisattvas came from the Red Lotus Flower World; Wonderful Utpala World--“Utpala” is the blue lotus flower; and Wonderful Chandana World. “Chandana” is a rare incense. They also came from the Wonderful Fragrance World. The Bodhisattvas arrived from that many worlds and they all came to the Bodhimanda.

Sutra:

Each of them had purely cultivated Brahma Conduct in the presence of the Buddhas, specifically: Inexhaustible Banner Buddha, Wind Banner Buddha, Liberation Banner Buddha, Awesome Manner Banner Buddha, Bright Mark Banner Buddha, Constant Banner Buddha, Most Supreme Banner Buddha, Comfortable Banner Buddha, Brahma Banner Buddha, and Contemplating Banner Buddha.

All of these Bodhisattvas having arrived at the Buddha’s place, bowed at the Buddha’s feet. Then using the Buddha’s spiritual power, they created by transformation wonderful jeweled treasury lion thrones. Jeweled nets covered and encircled them, filling every part. All of the multitudes of Bodhisattvas, according to the direction from which they came, sat on them in full lotus.

Their bodies all emitted hundreds of thousands of millions of nayutas of asamkhyeyas of pure bright light. This measureless light had arisen from the great vows of the Bodhisattvas’ pure mind-jewel, which is apart from the host of transgressions and evils.

Commentary:

Previously it was said that each of the Bodhisattvas, no matter which country he was from, came to be part of the influential Dharma assembly. And so they have come to the Buddha’s place from worlds in the ten directions. Throughout these worlds of the ten directions, they constantly follow the Buddhas in studying and cultivating the Buddhadharma. Each of them had purely cultivated Brahma Conduct in the presence of the Buddhas. Now, in the Tushita Heaven Dharma assembly, they all diligently cultivate Brahma conduct. In the past, they constantly cultivated pure Brahma conduct, so now they are apart from all defiles dharmas.

What were the names of the Buddhas’ places from which these Bodhisattvas had come? They were specifically: Inexhaustible Banner Buddha--some had come from the Bodhimanda of Inexhaustible Banner Buddha. Some had come from the Bodhimanda of Wind Banner Buddha. Some had come from the Bodhimanda of Liberation Banner Buddha. Some had come from the Bodhimanda of Awesome Manner Banner Buddha. Some had come from the Bodhimanda of Bright Mark Banner Buddha. Some had come from the Bodhimanda of Constant Banner Buddha. Some Bodhisattvas had come from the Bodhimanda of Most Supreme Banner Buddha.

Some Bodhisattvas had come from the Bodhimanda of Comfortable Banner Buddha. Some Bodhisattvas had come from the Bodhimanda of Brahma Banner Buddha. And some Bodhisattvas had come from the Bodhimanda of Contemplating Banner Buddha.

All of these Bodhisattvas, having arrived at the Buddha’s place , that is, before Shakyamuni Buddha, bowed at the Buddha’s feet. They reverently made prostrations before the Buddha. Then using the Buddha’s spiritual power--having received Shakyamuni Buddha’s great, awesome spiritual power--they created by transformation wonderful jeweled treasury lion thrones. Each of the Bodhisattvas manifested before himself, by transformation, a wonderful jeweled lion throne. Jeweled nets covered and encircled them, filling every part. Precious nets were hoisted up in empty space, encircling the thrones on all sides, and filling up all places.

All of the multitudes of Bodhisattvas, according to the direction from which they came, sat on them in full lotus. Each Bodhisattva manifested a throne in his own particular direction and then sat upon it in the Vajra full lotus position.

Their bodies all emitted hundreds of thousands of millions of nayutas of asamkhyeyas of pure bright light. Each of these Bodhisattvas released pure bright rays of light--uncountable, unfathomable, illimitable in number. And This measureless, pure bright light had arisen from the great vows of the Bodhisattvas’ pure mind-jewel, which is apart from the host of transgressions and evils. This light had emerged from the Bodhisattvas’ pure minds--pure jeweled minds--which were apart from transgressions. This is to say, their minds didn’t have any transgressions at all.

What are transgressions? They are your own thoughts of selfishness and seeking self-benefit. They come from your thoughts of not wishing for anyone else to know or see any of you faults. Bodhisattvas don’t have such thoughts. They don’t have thoughts of not wanting anyone to know their faults. “Arisen from great vows” means that the Bodhisattvas in the past, while on the causal ground, brought forth all kinds of great vows. It was because these great vows had been produced that now this measureless bright light was emitted.

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I often say that when I lecture Sutras, I don’t rely on the aid of commentaries. And so sometimes it’s possible that I might explain the meaning of the Sutra incorrectly. No matter who you are, if you look at the Sutra and see that I have lecture incorrectly, you ought to quickly let me and everyone else know. Don’t wait till tomorrow. We don’t want to make one mistake and then another mistake. This is very important--don’t make another mistake on top of the first mistake.

You’re all very polite. When I lecture incorrectly, you don’t dare speak out. Perhaps some of you are trying to be polite to your teacher. But I hope that you will not be afraid to speak out. When I say something incorrectly, you should quickly tell me. But of course, I myself hope that I won’t speak incorrectly. So, no matter who you are, use your true wisdom and correct me if you happen to think that I have not spoken in accord with principle, and I will definitely receive your correction.

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Sutra:

They displayed all of the Buddhas’ comfortable, pure Dharmas. Using all the Bodhisattvas’ level and equal power of vows, they were able to universally save and protect all living beings. All in the world were happy to see them. And their seeing was not in vain, for they all became subdued.

Commentary:

They displayed all of the Buddhas’ comfortable, pure Dharmas. “Displayed” means very clearly manifested. These Bodhisattvas who had come from the ten directions, very clearly manifested all Buddhas’ comfortable and pure Dharmas because they wanted to show all living beings how to cultivate them, too. If they didn’t wish to cause all living beings to also attain these comfortable and pure Dharmas, they wouldn’t need to manifest them. Why not? Because all Buddhas have already accomplished comfortable and pure Dharmas. Bodhisattvas already clearly understand about comfortable and pure Dharmas. But since living beings have not yet obtained them, and do not yet understand what comfortable and pure Dharma are, the Buddhas reveal them and the Bodhisattvas also display them.

Using all the Bodhisattvas’ level and equal power of vows, they were able to universally save and protect all living beings . They rely on the Bodhisattvas’ impartial power of vows made in the past to rescue all living beings alike. Bodhisattvas are not selective and do not make discriminations in saving and protecting all living beings. If any living being encounters tragedy or difficulty, the Bodhisattva comes and uses his compassionate hand and vows to rescue and save this living being.

All in the world were happy to see them. Living beings in the world like to see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, And their seeing was not in vain. Whoever sees the Buddha plants good roots of Bodhi, so it says, “Their seeing was not in vain,” for they all became subdued. All the obstinate living beings who are hard to regulate and hard to subdue became subdued.

Sutra:

These multitudes of Bodhisattvas had already accomplished measureless merit and virtue, which is to say, they could pervasively roam throughout all Buddhas’ countries without obstruction. They could see the pure Dharma body which was without reliance. By means of the wisdom body, they manifested measureless bodies.

They pervaded the ten directions to serve all Buddhas, and entered into all Buddhas’ measureless, boundless, inconceivable, Dharmas of self-mastery. They dwelt in measureless doors of All-Wisdom. With the bright light of wisdom they understood well all Dharmas. In the midst of all Dharmas they attained fearlessness, and accordingly proclaimed the Dharma with unending eloquence, to the exhaustion of the boundaries of the future. By means of great wisdom, they opened Dharani doors.

Commentary:

These multitudes of Bodhisattvas--these great Bodhisattvas who came together from the ten directions--had already accomplished measureless merit and virtue. They have perfected innumerable merit and virtue. And they are pleased that all living beings can also attain and accomplish measureless merit and virtue, which is to say, they could pervasively roam throughout all Buddhas’ countries without obstruction. They have attained measureless merit and virtue which enables them to “pervasively roam throughout all Buddhas’ countries without obstruction.”

They could see the pure Dharma body which was without reliance. The Dharma body has no place of reliance. It’s not present, and it’s not absent. The pure Dharma body Vairochana Buddha pervades all places. Since it pervades all places, it doesn’t have to rely on anything. And because it doesn’t rely on anything, it’s called the pure Dharma body.

By means of the wisdom body, they manifested measureless bodies . They use the substance and nature of wisdom to manifest measureless bodies. They pervaded the ten directions to serve all Buddhas. They travel comfortably to absolutely everywhere to serve all Buddhas. They have this kind of merit and virtue. And they entered into all Buddhas’ measureless, boundless, inconceivable, Dharmas of self-mastery. They also are able to deeply enter all Buddhas’ measureless, boundless, inconceivable, comfortable dharmas. These are free and easy dharmas.

Moreover, They dwelt in measureless doors of All-Wisdom. And With the bright light of wisdom they understood well all Dharmas. By means of the bright light of wisdom they are able to clearly understand all dharmas. In the midst of all Dharmas they attained fearlessness. They are able to speak the Dharma without trepidation. They can skillfully speak all Dharmas without fear. And they accordingly proclaimed the Dharma. They speak and lecture Dharma to all who come, with unending eloquence , to the exhaustion of the boundaries of the future. To the exhaustion of the future ages they explain the Dharma, and their eloquence is cleaver and expedient and inexhaustible.

By means of great wisdom, they opened Dharani doors . Using their greatest amount of wisdom, they open up and explain the Dharani Dharma doors, the doors of “uniting and holding.”

Sutra:

With the pure wisdom eye, they entered the profound Dharma Realm. Their states of wisdom had no boundaries, being ultimately pure, like empty space.

Just as it is in the Tushita Heaven Palace of this world where all of the multitudes of Bodhisattvas came and assembled in this way, so too, in all of the Tushita Heaven Palaces of the ten directions, all those Bodhisattvas having the same name also came and assembled together. And in those countries from where they came, all the Buddhas’ names were identical with these, without any discrimination.

At that time, from the wheels of the World Honored One’s two knees, there was emitted hundreds of thousands of millions of nayutas of bright light, which universally illumined all worlds in the ten directions, to the exhaustion of the Dharma realm and the realm of empty space. In all worlds, all those Bodhisattvas could see the appearance of this Buddha’s spiritual transformations, and all these Bodhisattvas could also see the appearance of the spiritual transformations of all those Thus Come Ones.

Commentary:

With the pure wisdom eye, they entered the profound Dharma Realm. All of these great Bodhisattvas have pure Wisdom Eyes. They pervasively enter the Dharma Realm. They take the Dharma Realm as their mind. They take the Dharma Realm as their body. And they take the Dharma Realm as their nature.

Their states of wisdom had no boundaries. This kind of wisdom is the highest state of wisdom, and it has no boundaries. It also doesn’t have a number or measure. It is ultimately pure. In general, the Wisdom Eyes is like empty space. And now the Sutra gives an analogy. What is it like? It’s like empty space, with nothing at all in it.

Just as it is in the Tushita Heaven Palace of this world--this Saha World--where all of the multitudes of Bodhisattvas came and assembled in this way--all the great Bodhisattvas came and assembled at the Tushita Heaven Palace, so too, in all of the Tushita Heaven Palaces of the ten directions, all those Bodhisattvas having the same name also came and assembled together. Within the Tushita Heaven Palace in the Saha World, there are a great many Bodhisattva attending the Dharma assembly. Within the Tushita Heaven Palaces in all worlds throughout the ten directions there are Bodhisattvas with names identical to those in the Saha World’s Tushita Heaven Palace, who come and assemble together in the same way.

And in those countries from where they came, all the Buddhas’ names were identical with these, without any discrimination. Their names are also the same. This is to say that the Buddha’s Dharma body pervades all places. This place has Buddhas; other places also have Buddhas. The Buddhas are in all places. This place has Bodhisattvas; other places also have Bodhisattvas. And these Bodhisattvas and those Bodhisattvas all have the same name. So, are they just one?

Originally, there weren’t two, but let’s use a present-day analogy to try and explain it. You all understand television. In one house, there is a television and a certain image appears on the screen. In another house, it is also the same. We people rely on the scientific invention of television to make appear certain states. This is an analogy for the Buddha speaking Dharma in the Tushita Heaven Palace in the Saha World while the same Buddha appears in all worlds to speak the Dharma. We can use the principle of television as an analogy, but the realm of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas far surpasses and transcends this state. And so, these Bodhisattvas with the same name have all come and assembled together.

Moreover, in those countries where they came from, “All the Buddhas’ names were identical.” They all had the same name, “Without any discrimination.” There wasn’t any difference in all those Buddhas’ titles. And so it is said,

The one is measureless;
The measureless is just one.

This is the state of the unobstruction of phenomena with phenomena.

At that time, right then, from the wheels of the World Honored One’s--Shakyamuni Buddha’s--two knees, there was emitted hundreds of thousands of millions of nayutas of bright light--so many dazzling rays--which universally illumined all worlds in the ten directions, to the exhaustion of the Dharma realm and the realm of empty space. That light shines to the ends of the Dharma Realm and empty space.

In all worlds of the ten directions, all those Bodhisattvas could see the appearance of this Buddha’s spiritual transformations. The Bodhisattvas in the worlds of the ten directions can see the Buddha and all the Bodhisattvas in the Saha World. They can see the power of Shakyamuni Buddha’s spiritual penetrations. And, conversely, all these Bodhisattvas in the Saha World, could also see, throughout the worlds of the ten directions, the appearance of the spiritual transformations of all those Thus Come Ones. They can also see the marks of all those Thus Come Ones’ spiritual changes throughout the worlds of the ten directions, and these appearance are all the same.

Sutra:

All of these Bodhisattvas had, in the past together with Vairochana Thus Come One, planted identical good roots, and cultivated the Bodhisattva conduct. They had already awakened to and entered all Buddhas’ comfortable, most profound liberation, and had attained the non-discriminating body of the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

All of these Bodhisattvas in this world--the Saha World, and all the other worlds of the ten directions--are now gathered together. They convene at the Tushita Heaven Palace in the Saha World and at the same time at the Tushita Heaven Palace throughout all worlds everywhere. Every one of them had, in the past , been together with Vairochana Thus Come One. They had planted identical good roots. During the time when Shakyamuni Buddha was on the causal ground, they cultivated the same practices and planted the same good roots, and cultivated the Bodhisattva conduct. They practiced the Bodhisattva Way on the causal ground. They had already awakened to and entered all Buddhas’ comfortable, most profound liberation.

Just as Shakyamuni Buddha had accomplished Buddhahood, all of these Bodhisattvas had also all awakened and entered “all Buddhas’ comfortable, most profound liberation.” They perfected the Buddhas’ self-mastery, and attained the Buddhas’ liberation. Once awakened, they clearly understood the Buddhas’ most profound liberation. and had attained the non-discriminating body of the Dharma Realm. They had all obtained the non-differentiating Dharma Realm body. They took the Dharma Realm as their substance, as their body. They accomplished the Dharma Realm’s principle and substance.

Sutra:

They entered all lands, without having a place of dwelling. They saw measureless Buddhas and went to serve them all. Within a single thought, they traveled throughout the Dharma Realm, comfortably and without obstruction. Their minds and thoughts were pure, like priceless jewels. All the measureless, numberless Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, constantly aided them with protective mindfulness, and together endowed them with strength. They had ultimately reached the foremost other shore.

Constantly, by means of pure mindfulness, they dwelt in Unsurpassed Enlightenment. In thought after thought they constantly entered the places of All-Wisdom. By means of the small they entered the great. By means of the great, they entered the small, having completely attained self-mastery and unobstructed penetration. Having already attained the Buddha’s body, they dwelt together with the Buddhas.

Commentary:

They entered all lands . Because the Bodhisattvas have attained the Dharma body of non-discrimination, they can, by means of this Dharma body, enter all lands. Because they have realized the Wisdom body of the Dharma Realm and because all lands are contained within the Dharma Realm, they don’t have to go outside the Dharma Realm and are able to enter all lands.

They enter all lands without having a place of dwelling. They dwell nowhere and yet there is nowhere they do not dwell. Not anywhere, yet everywhere. This is because the Bodhisattva’s body does not dwell, and yet does not not dwell; it’s not anywhere, yet, it’s everywhere.

They saw measureless Buddhas. These measureless Buddhas also are within the Dharma Realm. From beginningless time these Bodhisattvas have taken the Dharma Realm as their body, as they drew near and made offerings to these measureless Buddhas, and went to serve them all. They go before the Buddhas to serve and make offerings to them. Within a single thought, they traveled throughout the Dharma Realm. One thought can encompass the Dharma Realm, and the Dharma Realm is all in one thought. They went comfortably and without obstruction. Why is it that in a single thought these Bodhisattvas can pervade throughout the Dharma Realm? It’s because they have attained the state of unobstructed comfort. Their minds and thoughts were pure, like priceless jewels. Their minds are the same as empty space, also like priceless gems whose value cannot be know.

All the measureless, numberless Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, constantly aided them with protective mindfulness . All Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, constantly help these Bodhisattvas with protection and mindfulness. and together endowed them with strength. Each of the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions, by means of the spiritual strength of the Buddha, is able to aid and protect these Bodhisattvas. They had ultimately reached the foremost other shore. Moreover, they are able to arrive at the complete, perfect, foremost Paramita, “the other shore.”

Constantly, by means of pure mindfulness, they dwelt in Unsurpassed Enlightenment. By means of pure, undefiled thoughts, they forever dwell in unsurpassed enlightenment, the unsurpassed wisdom sea of enlightenment. In thought after thought they constantly entered the places of All-Wisdom. They are able to dwell in the wisdom-sea of enlightenment. And so, in thought after thought they constantly enter the place of All-Wisdom. In every moment they constantly, deeply enter this state of wisdom.

By means of the small they entered the great . They are able to form an entire world-system by means of dust motes. And from this world system, they are able to enter into a dust mote. So it says, By means of the great, they entered the small. For them the great and small are mutually and perfectly fuse and unobstructed. This is due to their having completely attained self-mastery and unobstructed penetration. The Bodhisattvas have completely attained comfort, ease, and convenience of transport without obstruction. They have all penetrated through to that state.

Having already attained the Buddha’s body, they dwelt together with the Buddhas . Why are they like this? Because they have already attained the Buddha’s Dharma body, and so they dwell in the same place as the Buddhas and are the same as all Buddhas.

Sutra:

They had obtained All-Wisdom. Their bodies had come forth from All-Wisdom. They were all able to accordingly enter the places of all Thus Come Ones’ practices. They opened and revealed measureless Dharma doors of wisdom. They reached the other shore of Vajra Banner’s great wisdom. They obtained the Vajra Samadhi and cut off all doubts and delusions. Having already attained all Buddhas’ self mastery of spiritual penetrations, everywhere in all countries of the ten directions they taught, transformed, and subdued incalculable hundreds of thousands of billions of living beings, and although they were not attached to any of these numbers, nonetheless, they were well able to cultivate, study, bring expedient means to ultimate perfection, and securely establish all Dharmas.

In this way, hundreds of thousands of billions of nayutas of ineffable, inexhaustibly pure Bodhisattva multitudes who were storehouses of all measureless merit and virtue throughout the three periods of time, all came and assembles at the Buddha’s place. Because of this light, they could see all Buddhas’ places in the same way.

At that time, Vajra Banner Bodhisattva, receiving the Buddha’s spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions and spoke these verses.

Commentary:

They had obtained All-Wisdom. They constantly emit the wisdom light of understanding and are without ignorance. Their bodies had come forth from All-Wisdom. The wisdom-body is just the Buddha. Since they have obtained All-Wisdom, the text says, “their bodies had come forth from All-Wisdom.” From wisdom is produced the wisdom-body. They were all able to accordingly enter the places of all Thus Come Ones’ practices. They practice what all the Thus Come Ones practice. Whatever Dharma door the Buddhas cultivate, they also cultivate. Thus they “enter the place of all Thus Come Ones’ practices.”

The wisdom of each of these Bodhisattvas is such that they are able to comply with and enter into all different types of wisdom, whatever they may be. Thus, They opened and revealed measureless Dharma doors of wisdom. They are able to enter these doors into All-Wisdom and are able to practice at the level of Thus Come Ones’ conduct. They can accordingly enter into these doors of wisdom and also can open limitless entrances into wisdom. They reached the other shore of Vajra Banner’s great wisdom. They have arrived at the solid narayana of wisdom, which is adamantine, like the Vajra Banner. What is meant by “other shore of wisdom” ? it’s just the paramita--reaching the other shore--of prajna.

They obtained the Vajra Samadhi. The Vajra samadhi is a very solid samadhi. And they cut off all doubts and delusions. They serve all doubts, delusions, and confusion. Having already attained all Buddhas’ self mastery of spiritual penetrations, everywhere in all countries of the ten directions, universally pervading each and every land therein, they taught, transformed, and subdued incalculable hundreds of thousands of billions of living beings. They are able to teach, transform, and subdue them, causing all to be tamed and regulated. How many living beings are they able to subdue? They subdue hundreds of thousands of ten thousand of ten millions--numberless--living beings. It is not known how many living beings they are able to subdue. and although they were not attached to any of these numbers, nonetheless, they were well able to cultivate, study, bring expedient means to ultimate perfection, and securely establish all Dharmas. Being without attachment, they can cultivate, study, perfect, and ultimately, with skill-in-means, peacefully establish all dharmas.

In this way , as has just been described, hundreds of thousands of billions of nayutas of ineffable, inexhaustibly pure Bodhisattva multitudes who were storehouses of all measureless merit and virtue throughout the three periods of time, all came and assembles at the Buddha’s place. And so there are hundreds of thousands of billions of nayutas--that many--inexpressible, inexhaustibly pure Bodhisattva assemblies.

“Inexhaustibly pure” means that there is no end to the pristine clarity of these Bodhisattvas. “The three periods of time” refer to the past, present, and future, which are also inexhaustible, because there isn’t any end to them. And since the “storehouses of all measureless merit and virtue”--the Bodhisattva multitudes--extend throughout the three periods of time, they are said to be “measureless” as well. All these assemblies of Bodhisattvas came and conviened at the great Dharma assembly. They came to the Buddha’s Way place.

Because of this light, they could see all Buddhas’ places in the same way. Because of the hundreds of thousands of millions of lights which were emitted from the wheels on the Buddha’s knees, the Bodhisattvas in this vast multitude could see Buddhas in all Buddhas’ places in the same way that they saw this one Buddha’s place in the Saha World. The Bodhimandas of the Tushita heavens in all the worlds of the ten directions were just like this one in the Saha World.

At that time, Vajra Banner Bodhisattva, receiving the Buddha’s --Shakyamuni Buddha’s--spiritual power, which was awesome and mighty, universally contemplated the ten directions and spoke these verses. He pervasively regarded the causes and conditions of all living beings, and then used verses to explain these Dharma doors of all kinds of wisdom.

Sutra:

The Thus Come Ones do not appear in the world.
Moreover, there is no Nirvana.
By means of the power of original great vows,
They manifest the Dharma of self-mastery.

This Dharma is difficult to conceive of;
It is not located in the mind’s workings.
When wisdom has arrived at the other shore,
One sees all Buddhas’ states.

Commentary:

These verses are spoken by Vajra Banner Bodhisattva. This Bodhisattva’s stanzas praise the Thus Come Ones--Tathagatas. “Thus” means they ascend the way which is “thusness.” “Come” means they come to accomplish power enlightenment. Although there is no coming or going on the way of “thusness,” it is for the sake of living beings that we say the Buddhas come and accomplish proper enlightenment. Originally there is no coming and no going. The Thus Come Ones are without a place from which they come, and have no place to which they go, and therefore they are name “Thus Come Ones.” This is just a false name we give them. “Thus Come One” is one of the ten Titles of a Buddha.

They do not appear in the world. The Buddhas are constantly in the Pure Land of Eternal Stillness and Light. They are:

Thus, thus unmoving, Clear, understanding, constantly bright;
Not big, not small, Not inside, not outside;
Without coming, and without going.

The Bodhisattva says that the “Thus Come Ones do not appear in the world,” so how is it that living beings have seen a Thus Come One cone into the world? It is because of their causal affinities that he manifests in the world. Because living beings’ affinities have mature, he manifests the body of a Buddha and come into the world. So, does he come into this worlds or not? Originally, the Buddha doesn’t come into the world: he is unmoving what manifests is just one of his transformation bodies.

Moreover, because he doesn’t come into this world, there is no Nirvana. Basically, there isn’t any Nirvana. It is also because of living beings’ causal conditions that he manifests Nirvana. If he didn’t manifest Nirvana, then living beings would become too dependent upon him and just wait around for the Buddha to help them open enlightenment and accomplish Buddhahood. To prevent beings from becoming overly reliant on him, he manifests first coming into the world, and eventually he manifests entering Nirvana.

Why does he do this? Why does he come to do something when basically there is nothing to do? It is By means of the power of original great vows. In the past when the Buddha was cultivating, he brought forth powerful, great vows. What was the power of the great vows he produced? He vowed that when he accomplished Buddhahood, he would come back to guide all living beings and help them accomplish the Buddha Way. Because of the power of great vows, the Buddhas do not forsake any living being, and They manifest the Dharma of self-mastery. Every Buddha manifests this kind of self-mastery of coming into the world and yet not coming; of entering Nirvana and yet not entering Nirvana. This is the Dharma of self-mastery.

This Dharma is difficult to conceive of . Manifesting this kind of Dharma of self-mastery isn’t something that living beings can talk about or think of.

The path of language is cut off.
The palace of the mind’s workings is extinguished.

It is not located in the mind’s workings. This isn’t a place the mind can conceive of, or a state which can be attained. When wisdom has arrived at the other shore, One sees all Buddhas’ states. By means of the Buddha’s great wisdom, one is able to reach the other shore. Then one is able to see all Buddhas’ states. If you are not able to use wisdom to reach the other shore, then you will be unable to understand the states of all Buddhas.

Sutra:

The form-body is not the Buddha;
the same is also true of sound.
Yet it is not apart from forms or sounds
That one sees the Buddha’s power of spiritual penetrations.

One with little wisdom is unable to know
All Buddhas’ true and actual states.
When one has cultivated pure karma for a long time,
Then one is able to understand this.

Commentary:

The form-body refers to the Buddha’s thirty-two fine marks and eighty minor characteristics. But the form-body is not the true Buddha. The true Buddha isn’t simply a form-body. This is to say, everything with form is false.

Everything with form is empty and false.
If one can see all marks as no marks, then one sees the Thus Come One.

If you can see marks and yet be apart from marks, then you will not have attachments. Why does the Buddha manifest the thirty-two fine marks and eighty minor characteristics? It is just because living beings are all attached to marks. If the Buddha were without marks, then living beings wouldn’t recognize him. If there are marks, then living beings will know it’s the Buddha. Apart from marks, they won’t know that empty space and the Dharma Realm are all the Buddha’s body. So it says,

If one wishes to know the state of the Buddhas,
First one to make one’s mind pure like empty space.

In empty space there aren’t any obstructions--there’s not even a single thing. If people can cultivate to the point where there are no obstacles then they can come to understand the Buddha’s body. The Buddha’s body doesn’t come or go. The Buddha’s body is neither produced nor destroyed. The Buddha’s body is neither defiled nor pure. The Buddha’s body doesn’t increase or decrease.

The same is also true of sound. The form-body isn’t the Buddha, so is the Buddha’s sound the Buddha? No, it is not the Buddha either. If you are attached to sound, you are making another mistake. Yet it is not apart from forms or sounds. It’s not apart from the form-body or the substance of sound That one sees the Buddha’s power of spiritual penetrations. The Buddha uses the substances of forms and sounds, skillfully combined with his wonderful spiritual penetrations, to bring about inexhaustible changes and transformations. But you don’t want to get attached to any of these!

One with little wisdom is unable to know. If you are a person who doesn’t have wisdom--the kind of great wisdom which can thoroughly fathom the source of dharma--you won’t be able to know the states of the Buddhas. You won’t be able to understand All Buddhas’ true and actual states. When one has cultivated pure karma for a long time, then one is able to understand this. If you wish for a true mind, then cultivate pure Way-Karma for a long time. This means ridding your mind of defilements. When cultivating, you don’t want to cheat yourself. You should ask yourself whether or not you have thoughts of desire. False thoughts of food, drink, clothes, money, and / or fame, are all thoughts of desire. Perhaps you have a desire for fame. Then you’re defile by the desire for fame. Or perhaps you have desire for benefit. Seeking benefit is also defiling. Maybe you have desire for forms, so you end up being defiled by forms. Or, if you have desire for sleep, then you become defile by sleep.

You don’t want to cheat yourself. Instead, you should return the light and illumine within. Ask yourself, “Have I really cut off desire?” If you haven’t cut off desire, then at all times you should very carefully not give rise to it. You shouldn’t follow your desire. Don’t be lead away by desire-thoughts. To indulge in desire is to be impure. Therefore,

If you’re off by a hair in the beginning,
You’ll be off a thousand miles in the end.

This is the place where you should apply your skill. Day after day ask yourself: “Are my desire thoughts increasing or decreasing? Are my desire thoughts diminishing? Am I clear in mind with few desires? Have I cut off desire and done away with love? If you haven’t, then you should quickly cultivate pure Karma. You don’t want to cultivate defiling dharmas. You should only cultivate pure karma. This isn’t a matter of one day and one night. In life after life without end, you want to cultivate pure karma. If you cultivate pure karma, then you can obtain true wisdom. If you can obtain wisdom, it can take you to the “other shore.” If you don’t cultivate pure karma, then you become very stupid. Every day your seeking for wealth gets you in a frenzy. Every day you look at forms, until it drives you crazy. Every day you strive for fame and end up going mad. Even if you don’t have enough to eat, you absolutely go insane. If you don’t get just the right amount of sleep, it drive you up the wall. This isn’t having pure karma.

All of you Good and Wise Advisors, these are places where you should apply your skill. If you don’t apply effort at these places, then even if you were to cultivate for eighty thousand great kalpas, you wouldn’t be able to accomplish pure karma. If you are unable to accomplish pure karma then you won’t be able to understand the Buddha’s state. If one can cultivate pure karma, then one is able to understand this. You will be able to understand the principle expressed in the previous verse:

The form-body is not the Buddha;
The same is also true of sound.
Yet it is not apart from forms or sounds
That one sees the Buddha’s power of spiritual penetrations.

Sutra:

The ones of proper enlightenment have no place they come to,
Nor is there anywhere they go.
Their pure and wonderful form-bodies
Manifest because of spiritual penetrations.

Within measureless world systems,
The Thus Come Ones’ bodies manifest.
While extensively speaking the subtle, wonderful Dharma,
Their minds are without any attachments.

Commentary:

The ones of proper enlightenment is a name for Buddhas, also referred to previously as Thus Come Ones--Tathagatas. “Proper Enlightenment” refers to Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment. What is meant by “Proper Enlightenment”? there is no place in which there is not enlightenment. So Proper Enlightenment is also called Great Enlightenment, and it is also called Wonderful Enlightenment. These are all other names given to Buddhas.

They have no place they come to. This is to say, the Buddhas have no place from which they come. Do they have any place which they go to then? If there isn’t any place from which they come, how could they go anywhere? So the next line says, Nor is there anywhere they go. There is no coming and no going. They exhaust empty space and pervade the Dharma Realm. They completely fill up all Buddha kshetras. And so all Buddha kshetras are places in which the Buddha’s Dharma body is found. It is not present, and yet not absent in any place. The places where it is are also the places where it is not.

Their pure and wonderful form-bodies Manifest because of spiritual penetrations. The Buddhas’ form bodies are “pure”, meaning that their body, mouth and mind karmas are all pure. Their bodies don’t have any of the three evil--killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct. What’s more, there isn’t even the thought of killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct. If there were thoughts of killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct, then there wouldn’t be any purity.

“Pure” also means that the three evils of the mind--greed, hatred, and stupidity--are gone. The body which is without killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct, and the mind which is without thoughts of greed, hatred, and stupidity, are purified in one single thought.

The mouth has four evil. It has more evils than either the mind or the body. The mouth is able to engage in irresponsible speech, false speech, abusive speech, and divisive speech. When there is no divisive speech, abusive speech, irresponsible speech, or false speech, the mouth karma is pure. When the three karmas are purified, the wonderful form-body is obtained. The body then manifests the thirty-two file marks and the eighty minor characteristics.

How do these manifest? The Buddhas’ pure and wonderful form-bodies “manifest because of spiritual penetrations.” Their pure and splendid form bodies appear because of the Buddhas’ spiritual powers.

Within measureless world systems, the Thus Come Ones’ bodies manifest. The “World systems” being referred to here include not only our Saha World but Worlds of the ten directions, like fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions in ineffably ineffable and infinite numbers of worlds. The Buddhas go to all these worlds and manifest the Dharma body of Buddha. Originally there isn’t anything, but now they make appear this body. While extensively speaking the subtle, wonderful Dharma, their minds are without any attachments. “extensively speaking” means explaining in such great detail that nothing surpasses what they have to say. It’s higher than anything else. It’s so deep and profound that there isn’t anything more weighty. Nothing else is higher than it, nor is there anything more profound. So this is said to be inconceivably “subtle, wonderful Dharma.” Because the Buddhas speak this subtle, wonderful, inconceivable Dharma, “their minds are without ant attachments.” Their minds are not attached to dharmas nor are they attached to “self.” all attachments are non-existent.

Sutra:

With wisdom which is boundless
They thoroughly understand all Dharmas;
Universally entering into Dharma Realms,
They manifest the power of self-mastery.

Living beings as well as all Dharmas
Are thoroughly understood without obstruction.
They universally manifest a multitude of forms and images,
And pervade all kshetras.

If one wishes to seek all-wisdom,
And quickly accomplish Unsurpassed Enlightenment,
One should used the pure and wondrous mind
To cultivate the practices for Bodhi.

Commentary:

With wisdom which is boundless they thoroughly understand all Dharmas. This is praising the Buddhas’ wisdom. It’s saying there aren’t any boundaries to the Buddhas’ wisdom. Because their wisdom doesn’t have any boundaries, they thoroughly understand the Real Mark of all dharmas. Universally entering into Dharma Realms, they manifest the power of self-mastery. The Buddhas’ Dharma body universally pervades the Dharma Realm. It reaches to the ends of empty space and pervades the Dharma Realm. They manifest this power of great self-mastery of spiritual penetrations to teach and transform living beings.

Living beings as well as all Dharmas are thoroughly understood without obstruction. The Buddhas understand all living beings’ minds and all dharmas, totally without obstruction. There are no obstacles to their understanding, and so they penetrate through without obstruction. They universally manifest a multitude of forms and images. The Buddhas everywhere pervade and make appear a variety of forms and images. And they pervade all kshetras. They pervade all Buddha lands.

If one wishes to seek all-wisdom--the unsurpassed, highest wisdom--And quickly accomplish Unsurpassed Enlightenment, one should used the pure and wondrous mind. Then very quickly one can accomplish Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment--the Buddha fruit. You should use the “Pure and wondrous mind.” A mind that is without defilements, that is not upside-down, and that is without ignorance is a pure and wonderful mind. A mind with ignorance is not a pure and wonderful mind. And so you should use a pure and wonderful mind To cultivate the practices for Bodhi. Use this pure and wonderful mind to cultivate practices for Bodhi, and practice to attain the fruit of enlightenment to the Way. Cultivate these practices and separate from all defiling attachments.

Sutra:

If there is one who sees the Thus Come Ones’
Powers of awesome spirit such as these,
One should make offerings to the most supreme Honored Ones,
And not have any doubts.

Commentary:

If there is one who sees the Thus Come Ones’ powers of awesome spirit such as these, one should make offerings to the most supreme Honored Ones . Suppose there are living beings who can see the Tathagatas “power of awesome spirit such as these.” As previously mentioned one should, with the utmost respect, use verses to praise the Buddhas’ great awesome spiritual powers. And one should not have any doubts. You should vastly cultivate the giving of offerings to the most supreme Honored Ones and not produce a mind ridden with doubt. This verse is exhorting all living beings to rely on the Dharma to cultivate and not give rise to doubts. Then the Buddha’s superior, awesome spirit will certainly protect and aid them.

Sutra:

At that time, Solid Banner Bodhisattva, receiving the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions and spoke these verses:

The Tathagatas are superior beyond compare;
Inexpressible, deep and profound.
They transcend the path of words and language,
And are pure like empty space.

You should contemplate these lions among men,
With their powers of comfortable, spiritual penetrations,
Who are already apart from discriminations,
Yet able to cause those who discriminate to see them.

The Guiding Masters proclaim
The most profound, subtle, and wonderful Dharma.
And according to the causes and conditions,
They manifest incomparable bodies.

Commentary:

At that time , that very instant, Solid Banner Bodhisattva, receiving the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power--he received Shakyamuni Buddha’s great awesome, spiritual power-- universally contemplated the ten directions . He everywhere contemplated the causes and conditions of all living beings throughout the ten directions, and then spoke these verses . He used the following verses to praise the Buddha.

The Tathagatas are superior beyond compare. The Tathagatas, the Buddhas, are the most supreme beings. Nothing else can compare to the Buddhas. It is said,

Above and below heaven,
Nothing can compare to the Buddha.
In all the worlds throughout the ten directions,
He is incomparable.
I have exhaustively observed everything in the world,
And none of it comes up to the Buddha.

The Bodhisattva says that the Buddhas are Inexpressible, deep and profound. The Buddhas’ subtle, wonderful state is most profound--it’s measureless, inexpressibly inexpressible. They transcend the path of words and language. They leap over the path of worlds and languages. Words and language aren’t able to praise the Buddhas enough. And they are pure like empty space. The Buddhas’ state is pure like empty space.

You should contemplate these lions among men. All of you living beings, take a look at the Lions Among Men--another name for Buddhas. With their powers of comfortable, spiritual penetrations. They have great comfortable power of spiritual penetrations. They are ones Who are already apart from discriminations. They have already separated from all discriminations of marks and appearances. Their minds therefore, don’t discriminate. Yet they are able to cause those who discriminate to see them. Yet they can enable all those living beings who still discriminate to constantly see Buddhas. The Buddhas are apart from discrimination, but living beings are able to see the Buddhas simply because they allow these beings caught up in discriminations to see them.

The Guiding Masters proclaim the most profound, subtle, and wonderful Dharma . The Guiding Master is just the Buddha. And according to the causes and conditions, they manifest incomparable bodies. Now because Shakyamuni Buddha wishes to open up the causes and conditions for proclaiming this subtle, wonderful Dharma, he manifests this body which, above and below heaven, is without comparison. In the worlds of the ten directions, nothing compares with it. And so it says, “I have exhaustively observed everything in the world, and none of it comes up to the Buddha.”

Sutra:

This is great wisdom:
The place of all Buddhas’ practices.
If one wishes to understand,
Then one should constantly draw near the Buddhas.

With mind karma constantly pure,
One makes offerings to all Tathagatas.
One’s mind is never weary
And one is able to enter the Buddha’s Way.

Commentary:

This is great wisdom. This is just speaking of the Avatamsaka Sutra. The Avatamsaka Sutra is indeed the great wisdom of all Buddhas. “Great wisdom” is also The place of all Buddhas’ practices. Therefore, if you want to have great wisdom, you should recite the Avatamsaka Sutra, and use the principles of the Avatamsaka Sutra in your cultivation. These are exactly the Dharma doors that all Buddhas cultivate. If one wishes to understand, then one should constantly draw near the Buddhas. It you truly wish to understand the principles of the Avatamsaka Sutra, you should constantly draw near to all Buddhas and not be apart from the Buddhadharma. You should forever practice and investigate the Buddhadharma within this Sutra. To investigate the principles of the Avatamsaka Sutra is just to draw near to all Buddhas. This is making offerings to all Buddhas. This is cultivating all Dharma doors, all Buddhas’ places of conduct.

However, this doesn’t mean that you cultivate only when the Avatamsaka Sutra is being lectured and when you’re listening to the Sutra; rather, you should recite and uphold it, read it, receive it, study it, and write it out. Use your pen to constantly write out the Avatamsaka Sutra. Or you can constantly recite the Avatamsaka Sutra. Or you can receive and uphold it. To “receive and uphold” means you don’t need to use a book--you have it memorized. You should constantly receive and up-holt it. All of these practices are ways of drawing near to the Buddha, because the Avatamsaka Sutra is in fact, the Buddha’s Dharma body. It’s the Buddha’s wisdom light itself. If you can listen to the Avatamsaka Sutra, recite the Avatamsaka Sutra, and write out the Avatamsaka Sutra, you are drawing near to the Buddha. You shouldn’t feel you have to see the Buddha in order to draw near to the Buddha. If you see the Dharma of the Avatamsaka Sutra, that in itself is drawing near to the Buddha.

With mind karma constantly pure, One makes offerings to all Tathagatas . When one’s mind is constantly pure one does not have any greed, hatred, or stupidity. No greed, no hatred, no stupidity--just that is having a mind which is pure. Keep the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind constantly pure while making offerings to all Buddhas; vastly cultivating the giving of offerings. “All Tathagatas” refers to all Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time. You make offerings to them. Bring forth a great Bodhi mind and vastly cultivate offerings. With pure mind karma, one’s body karma and mouth karma are also pure. Pure body karma means the body is without killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Your mind is without greed, hatred, or stupidity. Your mouth is without the four offenses of irresponsible speech, false speech, abusive speech, and divisive speech. Then the three karmas are purified. Making offerings to the Buddha isn’t a matter of making offerings just once or twice, but constantly making offerings and vastly cultivating offerings.

One’s mind is never weary. No matter how long you make offerings, you mind never grows weary, and you never decide that you don’t want to make offerings. You don’t ever conclude that you’ve made enough offerings and so you’re not going to make them anymore. And one is able to enter the Buddha’s Way. If you are able to constantly make offerings and are without the slightest thought of weariness, then eventually you will be able to enter the path of the Buddha, which means you will have an opportunity to accomplish Buddhahood.

Sutra:

Replete with merit and virtue inexhaustible,
One firmly dwells in the Bodhi mind.
Thus one casts out the net of doubts
And contemplates the Buddhas without growing tired.

Thoroughly penetrating all Dharmas,
One is a true disciple of the Buddha.
Such a one is able to understand and know
All Buddhas’ powers of sovereignty.

This is what vast and great wisdom proclaims:
Desire is the origin of all Dharmas.
One should give rise to supreme hopes and expectations,
And with determination, seek the Unsurpassed Enlightenment.

Commentary:

Replete with merit and virtue inexhaustible, one firmly dwells in the Bodhi mind. People who cultivate should be replete with inexhaustible merit and virtue. One should establish merit, establish virtue, and establish literature. In life after life, you establish merit, establish virtue, and establish literature. From a little comes a lot, and from the small comes the great. From the exhaustible comes the inexhaustible. That is how your merit and virtue becomes inexhaustible.

Once you are replete with inexhaustible merit and virtue, you are able to firmly dwell in the Bodhi mind. You are able to solidify your resolve for enlightenment--your determination to enlighten to the way. If your merit and virtue isn’t complete then your Bodhi mind won’t be solid. What’s it like your Bodhi mind won’t be solid? It is like a person who is straddling two boats and has one foot in each. One boat is headed north and one boat is pointed south. That’s the position you’re in when your Bodhi mind is not solid. In your first thought you want to go to the west, and in your next thought you want to go east. You are lacking in samadhi power. You’re not able to stay on the road that you’ve chosen. Being that way isn’t “firmly dwelling in the Bodhi mind.” With a solid mind for Bodhi, you should think, “I want to make vows and cultivate the Way. No matter what obstructions I encounter, I still want to cultivate the Way. No matter what sufferings or difficulties confront me, I still want to cultivate the Way. I certainly won’t stray from my original intention. No matter what kind of state confronts me, whether it’s according or opposing, I will maintain this attitude:

‘According with conditions, yet not changing;
Not changing, yet according with conditions’”
That is to firmly dwell in the Bodhi mind.

Thus one casts out the net of doubts. Because you firmly dwell in the Bodhi mind, therefore, you break through all nets of doubts. One may wander, “Are there really Buddhas? Are there really Bodhisattvas? Are there really Arhats? Is the Buddhadharma spoken in the Sutras true or not?” one may constantly have these nets of doubts--so many doubts. You’re afraid that if you cultivate the Way, you might not be able to take a loss. You don’t know if there is any hope that you’ll be able to accomplish Buddhahood. All kinds of nets of doubts plague you. Smash the net of doubts to bits and establish the Dharma banner everywhere!

How do we do this? We can start by building great Bodhisattvas everywhere. You shouldn’t want to establish small Bodhimandas. Don’t be someone who dwells in a “small hut”--a small Way-place. In Buddhism, in America, people shouldn’t dwell by themselves in small huts. If you dwell in small huts, you’ll certainly fall. You won’t be able to cultivate. When you dwell in a small hut, it’s very easy to become casual since nobody is watching over you. It’s very free and comfortable there with nobody watching over you. If you want to sleep, you sleep. If you want to eat, you eat. Whatever you want to do you can do. This is called “dwelling in a small hut.” It’s seemingly all very “free.” I say this because the day before yesterday, a layman came here and I said to him, “Some people make small temples and I destroy them. Most of the people in them don’t cultivate. I destroy these small temples and create large ones. people should live together in a large monastery and protect each other and mutually help each other cultivate. People who cultivate the Way shouldn’t be looking for what’s convenient or be greedy for ease and luxury or be unwilling to have others watch over them. If nobody’s watching over them, then it’s certainly easy for them to fall.” And so, for the true Buddhadharma to spread everywhere, we must build large temples and not live in small ones. Smash the net of doubts to bits! To do this you have to break up all of your small doubts ad delusions.

And one contemplates the Buddhas without growing tired. One constantly contemplates the Buddha. Contemplating the Buddha means that at all times you don’t want to forget the Buddha; you want to always contemplate the Buddha. Although the Buddha is without marks, living beings seek the Buddha by means of marks. Therefore, you want to tirelessly contemplate the Buddha, and then the Buddha, in turn, will contemplate you without growing tired. If you don’t contemplate the Buddha, then the Buddha does not contemplate you. This is like the situation between two people: if one isn’t looking at the other, the other one won’t look back. But if they are mutually looking at each other, that’s called contemplating. So one contemplates the appearance of all Buddhas at all times, and never grow tire.

Thoroughly penetrating all Dharmas, one is a true disciple of the Buddha. In this way one constantly draws near the Buddhas, make offerings to the Buddhas, and worships the Buddhas. One draws near the Dharma, worships the Dharma, and makes offerings to the Dharma. One draw near the Sangha, worships the Sangha, and makes offerings to the Sangha. One draws near to good and Wise Advisors, and then one is able to thoroughly penetrate all dharmas. When all dharmas are penetrated, then “one is a true disciple of the Buddha,” a true, faultless disciple, a genuine Buddhist disciple. Such a one is able to understand and know all Buddhas’ powers of sovereignty.

This is what vast and great wisdom proclaims: Desire is the origin of all Dharmas. “What vast and great wisdom proclaims” means what the Buddha proclaims, for the Buddha is one of vast and great wisdom. The Dharma he speaks springs from vast, great wisdom. What particular Dharma is this? He says, “Desire is the origin of all dharmas.” Desire is greed. Greed for fame is desire. Greed for food is desire. Greed for sleep is desire, and even you greed for cultivation is desire. Greed for the Buddhadharma is also desire. If you’re greedy to draw near a Good and Wise Advisor, you also have desire. However, you want to uplift this desire. So it said,

The superior man rises,
And the inferior man falls.

The inferior person is constantly greedy for wealth, greedy for sex, greedy for name, greedy for food, and greedy for sleep--the five desires of wealth, sex, name, food, and sleep. People who cultivate the Way are greedy to seek the Buddhadharma, greedy to draw near the Triple Jewel, and greedy to cultivate great wisdom. All of these are desire. All dharmas come about from desire. And so desire is at the source of all dharmas. For example, greed to bring forth a mind for Bodhi and greed to accomplish Buddhahood is also desire. The desires which arise are boundless and inexhaustible, and so the Buddha told us that desire is the origin of all dharmas.

Therefore, One should give rise to supreme hopes and expectations. Since desire is the source of all dharmas, you should give rise to the most superior hope and expectations, the loftiest and purest aspirations. You shouldn’t give rise to defiled desires and expectations. Therefore the verse admonishes us: And with determination, seek the Unsurpassed Enlightenment . If your desire brings forth superior aspirations, then you will resolutely seek the Unsurpassed Enlightenment. Make up your mind that you’re going to cultivate this unsurpassed path for Bodhi, right through to accomplishing Buddhahood.

It is true that one the Eight Dharmas of Respect that Bhikshunis uphold calls for Bhikshunis to show due respect to Bhikshus. But before a Bhikshu can be respected by others, he must first have a little self-respect. And his mind has to be very pure. Such a Bhikshu is worthy of being respected. If a Bhikshu doesn’t do anything all day long but have false thinking, there’s absolutely no way that he can be called a Bhikshu. He’s just the same as an ordinary person. It’s not to say that you can put on a robe of a Bhikshu and be Bhikshu. You have to actually practice the dharmas of a Bhikshu and to always be striving to purify your three karmas of body, mouth, and mind.

The meaning of the word Bhikshu is”

* One who begs for food.
* One who frightens the demons.
* One who destroys evil.

To “destroy evil” means to destroy all impure thoughts. If you have impure thoughts you should be greatly ashamed. This respect we’re talking about isn’t a superficial respect: it has to be earned. It comes from maintaining purity of the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind. A Shramanera, a male novice, can’t look down on Bhikshunis. So whether you’re Shramanera, a Shramanerika, a Bhikshu or a Bhikshuni, you have to cultivate pure karma of body, mouth, and mind. If you three karma are impure, you should be greatly ashamed.

This doesn’t have anything to do with how well-educated you are. If you’re impure in the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind, it’s not going to work--you’re not going to make it. By means of the purification, one gradually certifies to Arhatship--the first, second, third, and forth fruitions. One who certifies to the fruit is called an Arhat who is apart from desire. “Apart from desire” means that one has cut off desire. To cut off desire is to be pure. When you’ve reached the level of having cut off all desire, when you can truly remain unmoved by what’s going on around you--by states--then you may be counted as having done something. If you are not turned by states, then your three karmas of body, mouth, and mind can be said to be pure.

If that is the case, you can say whatever you want, and it’s all Buddhadharma. But if you haven’t cut off desire, then no matter what you say, it’s non-ultimate dharma. In fact, if you’re like that, then when you’re lecturing Sutras, you can talk around and around in circles but you’ll just be dwelling on the surface. You won’t be able to get down to the genuine bones and marrow, the true doctrine within the Sutra.

Sutra:

If there is one who is respectful of the Buddha,
And mindful to repay the Buddha’s kindness,
That one will never be apart
From dwelling with all Buddhas.

How could a person with wisdom
Having seen or heard the Buddha,
Not cultivate pure vows
And walk the Buddha’s path?

Commentary:

*If there is one who is respectful of the Buddha, and mindful to repay the Buddha’s kindness, that one will never be apart from dwelling with all Buddhas*. To be “mindful” is to want to repay the Buddha’s kindness. One always thinks of repaying the Buddha’s kindness, and wants to constantly follow the Buddhas in study. This person doesn’t ever want to leave the Buddhas, he doesn’t want to leave the Way Place. What is a Way Place? “The straight mind is the Way Place.” The straight mind is the place where all Buddhas dwell.

*How could a person with wisdom having seen or heard the Buddha, not cultivate pure vows*? If this person is able to constantly see the Buddha and constantly hear the Dharma, how can he not gives rise to or cultivate pure vows, *And walk the Buddha’s path?* You should constantly want to walk down the path of all Buddhas. You don’t want to follow your own mind and casually talk and casually create karma. That is not walking the path of the Buddhas. To walk the Buddha’s path, your three karma of body, mouth, and mind have to constantly be pure. You don’t want to create the three evils of the body--killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; the three evil of the mind--greed, hatred, and stupidity; or the four evils of the mouth--irresponsible speech, false speech, abusive speech, and divisive speech. You shouldn’t do any of these. If you don’t engage in these evil, then your three karmas are pure and you are in fact, walking the path of all Buddhas.

Sutra:

At that time, Courageous Banner Bodhisattva, receiving the Buddha’s spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions, and spoke these verses.

Commentary:

At that time, Courageous Banner Bodhisattva spoke verses. This Bodhisattva is so-named because he is courageous, vigorous, and pure. He courageously changes his faults and he bravely advances. So he’s courageous and vigorous. He’s not lax, not at all lazy, and he never lets the time pass in vain. Whatever mistakes this Bodhisattva has made, except for those that he doesn’t know about, he immediately repents of. He changes his faults. Therefore, he’s called Courageous Banner Bodhisattva. The mention of this Bodhisattva’s name is a way of reminding living beings that whenever they create offense karma, they should immediately bring forth a mind of repentance, change their former faults, and go towards the good.

This Bodhisattva was receiving the Buddha’s spiritual power. He received and relied upon the great, awesome spiritual power of Shakyamuni Buddha, and all of the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time. And then he universally contemplated the ten directions. He everywhere contemplated the causes and conditions of all living beings throughout the ten directions and three periods of time; and spoke these verses. He used verses to praise the Buddha.

Sutra:

Just like clear and pure eyes
Which, because of the sun, can see a multitude of forms,
So too, the pure mind in the same way
Can see the Tathagata by means of the Buddha’s power.

Just as with the power of vigor
One is able to fathom the source of the sea,
So too, the power of wisdom
Enables one to see measureless Buddhas.

Commentary:

Courageous Banner Bodhisattva said, *Just like clear and pure eyes which, because of the sun, can see a multitude of forms*. The analogy he uses is of a person’s clear and pure eyes which have bright light if wisdom. Although one with these pure eyes can see at night, still it’s not as easy for him to see things as it is during the day. With the aid of sunlight he is able to see all kinds of shapes and forms. *So too, the pure mind in the same way*. “Pure eyes” are analogous to a “pure” mind. However, even if you have a pure mind, but don’t obtain the Buddha’s power, you still won’t be able to see him. But if a mind is pure and it moreover unites with the light of the Buddha’s wisdom, then the principle and substance of the Real Mark come together.

Therefore it says, “So too, the pure mind in the same way” *Can see the Tathagata by means of the Buddha’s power*. With the Buddha’s power aiding you, you’ll be able to see the Buddha. The power of his aid and protection is inconceivable. If everyone had a pure mind without any defiled thoughts, then each person would obtain the Buddha’s protection and aid. The Buddha would help you. If your mind isn’t pure and you have a lot of defiled thoughts, then it’s not easy for the Buddha to help you. Pure mind is also analogous to pure water--from above, you can see straight to the bottom. An impure mind is like murky water in which there’s a lot of sediment. In that case, your mind is so clouded over that even when the Buddha wants to protect and help you, he doesn’t find it easy. Therefore it is said:

When the mind is pure
The moon appears in water;
When thoughts are still,
There’s certainly not a cloud in the sky.

*Just as with the power of vigor one is able to fathom the source of the sea* . If one can be vigorous throughout the six periods of the day and night, constantly being vigorous, bring forth a great Bodhi mind, cultivating unceasingly and without any laziness in one’s cultivation, then one will be able to exhaust the great source of the sea. If you work vigorously, you will be able to plumb the source of the sea, which is analogous to reaching the source of all dharmas. It means penetrating the source of all dharmas, and reaching the ultimate place of the Dharma.

*So too, the power of wisdom enables one to see measureless Buddhas* . “The power of wisdom” is likened to “ the power of vigor.” You want to have wisdom as great as the Buddha’s so you and the Buddha are united as one. If you have great wisdom, then you’ll be able to fathom the ultimate source of all dharmas and see measureless Buddhas. If you are without wisdom, you won’t be able to see even a single Buddha. However, with great wisdom you’ll be able to see measureless Buddhas.

*Sutra:*

Just as a rich, fertile field
Will certainly nourish and make grow what is planted in it,
So too, the pure mind ground
Produces all Buddhadharmas.

Just as a person who obtains a store-house of jewels
Leaves the bitterness of poverty forever,
The Bodhisattva who obtains the Buddhadharma
Is apart from filth and purifies his mind.
Just as Agada medicine Is able to eradicate all poisons,
So too, the Buddhadharma in the same way
Eradicates the distress of all afflictions.

Commentary:

*Just as a rich, fertile field will certainly nourish and make grow what is planted in it, so too, the pure mind ground produces all Buddhadharmas* . The Bodhisattva offers another analogy, namely that of a good, rich, and fertile field. This field is very fertile to begin with, so when the seeds of rice, grains, or other things are planted in the field, they certainly will become very abundant and full. No matter what kinds of things are planted, they will flourish. The grains that come from the fields will be shiny as though there were a lot of oil in them, and their color will be a dark, rich green, rather than a dull yellow. If the crops that grow in a field are yellow, that indicates the field is not fertile enough. If the field is fertile, then whatever is planted will thrive and be abundant.

In the same way, a mind-ground which is pure without defilement brings forth all Buddhadharmas. All Buddhadharmas are produced from a pure mind, not from a defiled mind. If your mind is pure, then all Buddhadharmas will come forth from it. The eighty-four thousand Dharma doors are not apart from a single thought in your mind. If one thought is pure, then eighty-four thousand Dharma doors will simultaneously appear. You shouldn’t go out looking for the Buddhadharma. Why not? Because it’s inherent in your nature. Your self-nature originally contains the eighty-four thousand Dharma doors. Therefore, you don’t need to seek outside.

*Just as a person who obtains a store-house of jewels Leaves the bitterness of poverty forever, the Bodhisattva who obtains the Buddhadharma is apart from filth and purifies his mind* . This time the analogy is that of a person who obtains a treasury of jewels. Inside the cache there’s gold, silver, precious gems, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearls, and carnelian--the seven jewels. These are seven kinds of precious things found in the earth. Once this person obtains these treasures, he can be apart from the suffering of poverty. The Bodhisattva who obtains the Buddhadharma is also like one who obtains a storehouse of jewels, because by means of it, he can leave the difilements in the mind and attain a pure mind. When the mind returns to its original purity, then All-Wisdom appears.

The last analogy which the Bodhisattva presents is that of *Agada medicine*. No matter what sickness one has, this medicine can cure it. Even the dead will come back to life. It *Is able to eradicate all poisons*. No matter what the poison might be, this medicine can get rid of it. This medicine is comparable to licorice root. The Chinese have a saying that “licorice is compatible with all other herbs and can cure all poisons.” Among medicines it is the “Prime Minister.” It’s also said to lend “universal tolerance” because it can dispel poisons and because very few people are allergic to it. Agada medicine is like that. No matter what kind of poisonous illness you have, it can cure it.

*So too, the Buddhadharma in the same way eradicates the distress of all afflictions*. In the same way, the Dharma which the Buddha spoke is also a kind of Agada medicine that can destroy the eighty-four thousand kinds of afflictions of people. The Buddha spoke the Dharma precisely to cure the eighty-four thousand kinds of illnesses that people have. He spoke eighty-four thousand Dharma doors designed to eradicate all afflictions and calamities. By means of them, the inexhaustible afflictions that people have are cut off. We should want to break off our afflictions and cultivate the Buddhadharma. Therefore, studying the Buddhadharma is the best method to eradicate all afflictions.

*Sutra:*

A true and actual Good Knowing Advisor
Is one whom the Thus Come Ones praise,
For it is because of his awesome spirit
That one gets to hear all Buddhadharmas.

Throughout numberless kalpas
One might offer wealth and jewels to the Buddha,
But if one does not know the Buddha’s actual mark,
One still cannot be said be truly giving.

Commentary:

*A true and actual Good Knowing Advisor is one whom the Thus Come Ones praise* . A Good and Wise advisor is “good” in that he is able to teach and transform all living beings. Only the Buddha can be called a true and actual Good Knowing Advisor. Bodhisattvas, Arhats, and all common and sagely Sanghans can be called Good Knowing Advisors, but they aren’t true and actual, completely perfected, Good Knowing Advisor. The kind of Good Knowing Advisor referred to here is one whose speech is true and actual; whose speech is “thus,” and who doesn’t speak falsely. He’s not a Good Knowing Advisor who has greed, hatred, or stupidity, but rather one who diligently cultivates precepts, samadhi, and wisdom.

Anyone who can completely eradicate greed, hatred, and stupidity, and diligently cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, is a Good Knowing Advisor “who the Thus Come Ones praise.” The Tathagatas praise him and say, “You can be a model for people and gods.” And so, he is a perfect model of a True and Good Knowing Advisor for all living beings. *For it is because of his awesome spirit that one gets to hear all Buddhadharmas*. Relying upon the Good Knowing Advisor’s awesome spiritual power, you are able to hear all Buddhas speaking the wonderful Dharma. Also, because the Tathagatas praise the Good Knowing Advisor, their spiritual power adds to the aid given all living beings, and enables them all to get to hear the wonderful Dharma spoken by all Buddhas.

*Throughout numberless kalpas one might offer wealth and jewels to the Buddha* , giving both one’s inner and outer wealth. *But if one does not know the Buddha’s actual mark, one still cannot be said be truly giving*. One doesn’t know the Buddha’s true and actual marks. The True Mark of the Buddha is originally without marks, but there is nothing that is not marked. If one doesn’t understand this, one isn’t really giving, because one still hasn’t recognized the Buddha. The Buddha is without marks. The Real Mark is without marks, yet there is no place which is not marked. It is just like empty space. If you become attached to giving with marks, then blessings accrued just lead to rebirth in the heavens. A poem explains this well:

Blessings attached to marks reap the result of the heavens.
But just as an arrow shot into space
Falls when its velocity wanes,
So too, what you get next life will make you unhappy.

If you can recognize the Real Mark of the Buddha, then you won’t perceive there to be anyone who gives or anyone who receives, and in between, anything that is given or received. The substance of the three wheels will be empty. True giving is apart from the mark of giving. If you are attached to the marks of giving, your giving is limited. To give apart from the marks of giving is to practice limitless giving.

Sutra:

A multitude of measureless forms and marks
Adorns the Buddhas’ bodies.
Yet it’s not by means of forms or marks
That one is able to see the Buddhas.

The Thus Come Ones of Equal and Proper Enlightenment
Are tranquil and constantly unmoving
Yet they are able to universally manifest bodies
Which pervasively fill up realms in the ten directions.

Just as the realm of empty space
Is neither produced nor extinguished,
So too, all Buddhas’ Dharmas
Ultimately are not produced or destroyed.

Commentary:

The next line says that the forms and marks which adorn the Buddhas’ bodies are by no means the true body of the Buddha. *A multitude of measureless forms and marks adorns the Buddhas’ bodies*. The Buddhas’ bodies have thirty-two fine marks and eighty minor characteristics. They compose the “multitude of measureless forms and marks.” They are just the Buddhas’ physical adornments. The true, basic substance is by no means the Buddhas’ thirty-two fine marks and eighty minor characteristics. They aren’t the Buddhas’ bodies; they are just one aspect of the adornments of the Buddhas’ bodies.

*Yet it’s not by means of forms or marks that one is able to see the Buddhas* . If you truly understand the Buddhadharma, you shouldn’t cling to marks when you cultivate. Therefore, the *Vajra Sutra* said,

If one sees me in form,
If one seeks me in sound,
One practices a deviant Way,
And won’t be able to see the Thus Come Ones.

The Buddhas are without marks. Taking no marks as marks, the Real Mark is the True Mark; the Real Mark is just no marks. You shouldn’t look for the Buddhas in marks, nor seek the Buddhas in sound. If you become too attached to seeking the Buddhas in forms and sounds, you aren’t truly seeking the Buddhas. “It’s not by means of form or marks that one is able to see the Buddhas.” You don’t want to seek the Buddhas in form. If you want to seek the Buddhas in form, then Wheel Turning Kings are also Buddhas, because Wheel Turning Kings and Buddhas are alike in form and marks. You can’t use marks and forms to recognize the Buddhas’ true and actual body--their original substance. What is the Buddhas’ original substance like? It’s like nothingness, or the void in empty space.

*The Thus Come Ones of Equal and Proper Enlightenment are tranquil and constantly unmoving*. The Buddhas have accomplished Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment. They are constantly still, quiescent and pure. *Yet they are able to universally manifest bodies*. Although the Buddhas are unmoving, yet in the unmoving stillness, the response accordingly penetrates. This is to be,

According with conditions, yet not changing;
Not changing, yet according with conditions.

The Buddhas are “tranquil and unmoving,” therefore they are not changing. “yet they are able to universally manifest bodies.”

The Buddhas manifest bodies *Which pervasively fill up realms in the ten directions*. This is also “according with conditions, and yet not changing.”

*Just as the realm of empty space is neither produced nor extinguished* . The body of the Buddhas is just like the realm of empty space. The Buddhadharma is also just like empty space. And yet within the realm of empty space we speak of there being the Dharma Realm. What is it? It is that there isn’t a place--even the size of a mote of dust--where the Buddhas’ Dharma body doesn’t reside, where the Buddhas’ Dharma isn’t to be found, and where the worthies and sages of the Sangha of the ten directions are not present. Therefore, within True Emptiness is Wonderful Existence. That is just the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha--the Triple Jewel--pervading and filling up empty space. Although they pervade and fill up empty space, there is still True Emptiness.

Within True Emptiness is Wonderful Existence, and
Within Wonderful Existence is True Emptiness.
True Emptiness doesn’t obstruct Wonderful Existence;
Wonderful Existence doesn’t obstruct True Emptiness.

True Emptiness is not empty and yet manifests Wonderful Existence. Wonderful Existence is not existent, and yet it’s in the realm of empty space. The realm of empty space is just like that.

It “is neither produced nor extinguished.” Tell me, at what point in time is empty space produce? At what point in time is it extinguished? If you are able to smash empty space, you will be able to break your attachments. If you aren’t able to smash empty space, you still have an attachment to empty space remaining. And so the true substance and nature of empty space “is neither produced nor extinguished.” *So too, all Buddhas’ Dharmas Ultimately are not produced or destroyed*. Ultimately, at no time are they produced or extinguished. The Dharmas of all Buddhas are also not produced or extinguished.

Sutra:

At that time, Bright Light Banner Bodhisattva, receiving the Buddha’s spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions, and spoke these verses:

In the world of humans and in the heavens above
In all the world-realms there are
One can universally see the Thus Come Ones’
Pure and exquisite form bodies.

Commentary:

Courageous Banner Bodhisattva finished speaking the previous praises of all Thus Come Ones. These verses spoke of the principles of “right within marks there are no marks,” and how one can’t really see the Thus Come Ones in even a single physical mark.

Following him, *At that time, Bright Light Banner Bodhisattva* also spoke verses praising the Buddhas in order to reveal the Buddha’s state. Bright Light Banner Bodhisattva also diligently cultivates the Six Paramitas. He especially has faith in the Paramita of Wisdom, and he deeply enters Prajna. He deeply enters Real Mark Prajna, and so the light of his wisdom is very sublime. Therefore, his name is Bright Light Banner Bodhisattva. This Bodhisattva’s wisdom light is like jewelled banner which illumines everything. This Bodhisattva, *receiving the Buddha’s*--Shakyamuni Buddha’s--great, awesome *spiritual power*, and the aid of all the Buddhas throughout the ten directions, increased and grew in wisdom, and he *universally contemplated the ten directions*. He everywhere contemplated the causes and conditions of all Buddha worlds within the nine Dharma Realms. As it is said,

Observing the opportunity, he entices with the teaching.
According with the person, he speaks the Dharma, and
Dispenses the medicine based on the the illness.

That is the principle spoken of here. *and he spoke these verses*. He used simplified verses to praise the Buddha.

*In the world of humans and in the heavens above* , including all the Buddha lands in the ten directions--*In all the world-realms there are--One can universally see the Thus Come Ones’ Pure and exquisite form bodies*. All living beings are able to universally see the Buddhas. They see the Buddhas’ pure, awesome, and wonderful physical bodies.

Sutra:

Just as the power of a single mind
Is able to produce all kinds of thoughts,
So too, the Buddha’s single body
Universally manifests all Buddhas.

Bodhi is a non-dual Dharma.
Furthermore, it is without any marks.
Yet within the midst of dual Dharmas,
There manifest the marks of the adorned body.

Upon understanding the Dharma nature is empty and still,
And arises like an illusion,
Then that which one practices is without exhaustion:
In this way, the Guiding Master appears.

Commentary:

*Just as the power of a single mind is able to produce all kinds of thoughts, so too, the Buddha’s single body universally manifests all Buddhas*. “A single mind” refers to the Mind King. “All kinds of thoughts” are those Interactive with the Mind. “The Buddhas’ single body” is just the true Dharma body of the Buddha, while “all Buddhas” refers to the transformation bodies. The Mind King is able to produce all kinds of dharmas which pertain to the mind--those Interactive With the Mind. The single, true Dharma body of the Buddha is like the previously mentioned Mind King. It’s able to everywhere make appear all the response and transformation bodies of all Buddhas, just like the Mind King produces Dharmas Interactive With the Mind. So all these Buddhas universally manifest and yet are produced from the Buddha’s true Dharma body.

*Bodhi is a non-dual Dharma* . Bodhi is not two kinds of dharmas. So, if Bodhi doesn’t have two Kinds of dharmas, then is it a single Dharma? *Furthermore, it is without any marks*. There isn’t even a single dharma that’s set up. There isn’t even a single dharma. Bodhi is just the path to enlightenment. It’s just a name. Names are basically empty. And with not even a single dharma established, the ten thousand dharmas are all empty. Because of this, you shouldn’t have an attachment to the marks of Bodhi. You shouldn’t have attachments to dharmas. You shouldn’t go looking for Bodhi in existence and non-existence.

*Yet within the midst of dual Dharmas, there manifest the marks of the adorned body* . Within these dual dharmas of existence and non-existence, you aren’t able to go looking for Bodhi. Bodhi has no mark. Within the dharma of one and two, and the dharma of existence and non-existence--right within these dual dharmas--you will find the thirty-two fine marks and eighty minor characteristics which adorn the Buddha’s body.

*Upon understanding the Dharma nature is empty and still*. One should clearly understand that the nature of all dharmas is basically empty and still.

The path of language is cut off,
And be place of the mind’s activities is extinguished.

One should realize that the Dharma *arises like an illusion*. If one realizes that it’s just an illusion, *Then that which one practices is without exhaustion*. Although all dharmas are still and empty and are manifested, like transformations and illusions, nonetheless, they are also like cloud formations in space--multi-layered and inexhaustible. And so, “That which one practices is without exhaustion.” *In this way, the Guiding Master appears*. The Buddha’s response and transformation bodies are multi-layered and inexhaustible. They manifest without stop. However, you don’t want to be attached to the Buddha’s response and transformation bodies and consider them to be the Buddha’s body, for these aren’t the true body of the Buddha.

Sutra:

All Buddhas of the three periods of time
Have Dharma bodies which are completely pure.
According to those who should be transformed,
They can universally manifest wonderful form bodies.

The thus Come One doesn’t think to himself,
“ I will make a body like this.”
Rather it naturally reveals itself,
And he never gives rise to distinctions.

Commentary:

*All Buddhas of the three periods of time have Dharma bodies which are completely pure*. All the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time are like measureless and boundless sand grains in the Ganges River--there are nayutas of asamkhyeyas, inexpressible, incalculable numbers of them. Despite the fact that there are so many Buddhas, the Dharma body of all Buddhas is just one Dharma body. Although we talk about all the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time, nonetheless, they mutually share a single Dharma body. The lights of Buddhas reciprocally illumine one another; the emptiness of Buddhas is interpenetrating; the minds of Buddhas are mutually sealed; and the bodies of Buddhas are of one identical substance. There aren’t any differences among them. There isn’t any discrimination of self or others. Just as one Buddha teaches and transforms living beings, so too are all Buddhas teaching and transforming living beings. And all Buddhas teaching and transforming living beings is just a single Buddha teaching and transforming living beings.

So the Buddha’s Dharma body, his response and retribution body, and his transformation bodies are all of the same substance--they’re all one body. There isn’t any discrimination of self or others between them. They aren’t at all like people who think, “You do your thing, and I’ll do my thing.” They don’t make such distinctions. When the Buddhas do things, “One is all and all is one.” Buddhas don’t make distinctions among themselves. You could also say that many Buddhas are just one Buddha, and one Buddha is many Buddhas. They divide and yet are not divided; they are unified, and yet are not unified. And so the Dharma body is completely pure. Although the Buddhas have different names, their basic substance is one. We people in this mundane world make all kinds of discriminations of self and others. The Buddhas don’t make discriminations among themselves, so there’s no self and no others as far as they are concerned. And so,

All is one,
One is all.

What is mean by “Buddha”? When most people think about the Buddha, they are confused about the Buddha. They say the Buddha is some spiritual entity, that the Buddha is inconceivable. In fact, that’s not the way it is.

The Buddha is just true principle, and true principle is just the Buddha, if you understand true principle, you have a clear understanding of the Buddha. If you don’t clearly understand true principle, you do not have a clear understanding of the Buddhadharma. True principle says there is wisdom you can enter; there is cultivation that can be cultivated. If you have wisdom and you can cultivate the Dharma, then you can deeply enter the basic substance and nature of the Buddha. If you don’t have wisdom and you don’t cultivate, then you won’t be able to enter the substance and nature of the Buddha. And yet, you are also never apart from the substance and nature of the Buddha. You are still there within the true principle.

Before it was said that you can’t see the Buddha in marks or form. Well, if we can’t see the Buddha in forms or characteristics, what do we look for? Look for true principle. True principle doesn’t have substance or marks. It doesn’t have characteristics. It is the Real Mark which is without marks. Because it has no marks, therefore it has no distinctions.

*According to those who should be transformed, they can universally manifest wonderful form bodies* . Although True Emptiness is without marks, that does not prevent it from containing Wonderful Existence. And so, within the unchanging basic substance, there is still “according with conditions.” If you can accord with conditions, then you can manifest whatever transformation is appropriate. The Tathagata appears in whatever transformation body is appropriate in order to teach and transform living beings and cross them over. This is to say, he speaks to living beings in whatever body is appropriate, to cross them over and to cause them to accomplish the Way. Whatever transformation is appropriate for whatever kind of living being is the transformation body he appears in.

For example, if one needs to be crossed over by the body of a Buddha, then the Buddha will manifest the body of a Buddha and speak the Dharma. If one needs to be taken across by the body of a Pratyekabuddha, then the Buddha will manifest the body of a Pratyekabuddha to speak the Dharma and cross over this living being. If the body of a Brahma King is appropriate, he manifests the body of a Brahma King to speak the Dharma and take living beings across. If the body of a Prime Minister is needed to take one across, then the manifests the body of a Prime Minister to speak the Dharma for living beings. If the body of an elder or layperson is needed to take one across, then he manifests the body of an elder or layperson to speak the Dharma. If the body of a young lad or a maiden is needed to cross one over, then he manifests the body of a young lad or a maiden and speaks the Buddhadharma. And so, whatever living being’s body is appropriate in order to take someone across, that’s the body the Buddha manifests.

According to their kind, the Buddha teaches and transforms living beings and speaks the Buddhadharma for them. All kinds of wonderful form bodies universally pervade and manifests everywhere. The Buddha can universally display bodies of all living beings and then speak the Dharma for them.

*The thus Come One doesn’t think to himself, “I will make a body like this.”* The Buddha isn’t like living beings who strike up false thoughts every day. He doesn’t think in this way, “I think this and I think that. I think I want to accomplish Buddhahood. I think I want to become a living beings. I think I want to be number one. I want to be finer than everybody else. I want to get rich. I think I want to be famous.” These are all just big false thoughts. Nor does he think, “I think I want a good family. I want a good body--a really healthy body.” Thoughts like that are aimed at seeking self-benefit; they’re thoughts to help yourself. The Buddha doesn’t have false thoughts that he has manifested a body, perhaps the body of a Buddha, or the body of a Pratyekabuddha, or an Arhat’s body. He doesn’t have these kinds of thoughts. It is in the absence of false thoughts that such transformations can occur. He doesn’t have to think, and yet these transformation bodies very naturally appear. They are very naturally brought about without any kind of effort in their creation. When a transformation is appropriate, it isn’t thought up, *Rather it naturally reveals itself*. All kinds of bodies are manifested. *And he never gives rise to distinctions*. He manifests all kinds of bodies and yet doesn’t make any kind of discrimination.

Why is this? It is because in the past, his vow-power and the various virtues attained from his cultivation of the Six Perfections, the ten thousand conducts, and his great, awesome, spiritual powers, were completely brought to accomplishment. And so, he doesn’t need to make any kind of effort in the creation of these bodies. He doesn’t have to think about it. For instance, if you’re asked a question you have to think about it before you answer, and once you have to think about it, before you answer, you’ve already fallen behind--you’re way behind. If you didn’t have to think before answering, you would be capable of “effortless creation.” If you have to think about it even for a second, then you’ve fallen behind by several tens of thousands of great kalpas. To think about it means you have no wisdom. People with real wisdom understand immediately, without even having to do anything. It’s like a really sharp knife which can slice a hair into many sections. The knife is so sharp that if a stand of hair were blown against it, it would sever it instantly. The blade is that sharp. That’s the kind of sharpness that’s meant here. Being that way is called,

Understanding the mind and
Seeing the nature.
Having no afflictions and
Having no worries.

Sutra:

He makes no discrimination about the Dharma Realm,
And also does not rely on it.
Yet, in the midst of the mundane world,
He manifests measureless bodies.

Commentary:

*He makes no discrimination about the Dharma Realm*. The worlds of the ten directions are within the Dharma Realm of the Buddha. The Buddha considers one world to be all worlds and all worlds to be one world. To be exhaustion of empty space and the boundaries of the Dharma Realm, all those different worlds are without ant kind of distinction among them. *And* he *also does not rely on it*. The Dharma Realm is without a place of reliance, and the Buddha’s Dharma body also has no place of reliance, either. If he had a place of reliance then there would also be places that he didn’t rely on, because it would be by means of the places he didn’t rely on that his place of reliance would be defiled. But a Buddha has no place of reliance whatsoever.

*Yet, in the midst of the mundane world, he manifests measureless bodies* . Within the world he displays a limitless number of bodies.

Sutra:

The Buddha’s body is changeless.
However, it does transform.
For in the midst of the unchanging Dharma
He makes appear shapes by transformation.

Commentary:

*The Buddha’s body is changeless*. Originally, the Buddha’s body cannot be sought in form. You don’t look for it in form. And yet it never leaves form. You can’t leave aside physical form when you talk about the Buddha’s body. The Buddha’s body never changes. But you can’t leave aside changes and transformations when you go looking for the Buddha. “Changeless” refers to it being True Suchness. Therefore, True Suchness is the Buddha’s Dharma body. The Buddha’s Dharma body is unchanging, it accords with conditions and yet doesn’t change.

*However, it does transform*. It accords with conditions and so you can’t say it doesn’t change and transform, *For in the midst of the unchanging Dharma he makes appear shapes by transformation*. From within the Dharma which does not change, according to conditions, shapes are brought about through transformation. What is this like? It’s like the situation of some people walking together down the road at night who see a tree trunk from a great distance, and one of them say, “There’s somebody up there.” An ignorant person in the crowd agrees and says, “Yup, there’s somebody up there.” But a person with wisdom who can see a little better, then tells them, “You say it’s a person, but it’s not.” The one who thought it was a person then jumps to another conclusion and say, “Oh, it’s not a person, look, it’s a ghost! It certainly must be a ghost.” But all along it’s just a tree trunk. The principle here is that at first glance, you mistake shape for something it’s not; then at second glance, you speculate further about what the shape is, and eventually, may distinguish the thing as being a tree trunk.

The person has the Nature Everywhere Calculated and Attached To and the Nature That Arises Dependent on Something Else, so he gives rise to false speculations. Both conclusions he jumps to--that it is a person and that it is a ghost--are the Nature Everywhere Calculated and Attached To. Finally recognizing it as a tree is the Nature That Arises Dependent on Something Else.

Another way to put it is that a person sees a rope, and his first thought is, “What is that?” the second thought is, “That’s definitely a snake.” That’s the Nature Everywhere Calculated and Attached To. He’s scare when he thinks it is a snake. But upon closer examination, he realizes it’s a rope. That’s the Nature That Arises Dependent on Something Else. If he were to take the rope apart and discover that it is just fibers of hemp, then it out there’s really nothing there at all--it’s empty. That’s the Perfectly Accomplished Real Nature. So, if you can understand this analogy, you can also understand the Buddha’s body. Within non-changing, it follows conditions. Unchanging and yet changing, it doesn’t move and yet follows conditions.

Sutra:

Proper Enlightenment cannot be measured.
It is equal to the Dharma Realm and empty space.
Unfathomable in its depth and vastness,
It is completely cut off from the path of words and language.

The Thus Come One is skillfully able to penetrate;
He practices the way in every place.
He can travel without obstruction
To the multitudes of countries in the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

*Proper Enlightenment cannot be measured. It is equal to the Dharma Realm and empty space*. “Proper Enlightenment” is just the Buddha. Ultimately, how many Buddhas are there? They are innumerable. How many living beings are there? There are as many living beings as there are Buddhas. Living beings are just the division bodies of the Buddha. Buddhas are the basic substance of living beings. Divided, they’re measureless; united, they’re one. Therefore, there isn’t any division between living beings and Buddhas. Buddhas are the Buddhas of living beings, and living beings are the living beings of Buddhas.

So, how do living beings accomplish Buddhahood? First they have to cast out greed, hatred, and stupidity, and diligently cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. Let’s take greed as a case in point. Everybody has a mind that is greedy--filled with insatiable greed. If we don’t satisfy our greed, we give rise to ignorance, and then we become afflicted. And when we have afflictions we do all kinds of stupid things. This whole process reveals a lack of propriety. So greed, hatred, and stupidity are called the Three Poisons. Speaking of greed, perhaps one is greedy for name, perhaps one is greedy for benefit, or maybe, one is greedy for blessings and profit. There are many kinds of greed and desires.

Where do greed and desires come from? They come from thoughts which are selfish. If you don’t have selfish thoughts, then you won’t have a lot of greed and desire. If you were without greed and desire, you wouldn’t have a lot of afflictions. If you didn’t have a lot of afflictions, then your wisdom would manifest. You wouldn’t be stupid or confused. So by purely cultivating precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, we completely eradicate greed, hatred, and stupidity. Percepts mean “stopping evil and guarding against transgressions.” They also mean “not doing any evil and offering up all kinds of good conduct.” If you don’t do any evil and can offer up all good conduct, then you are constantly in samadhi. Having proper concentration produces wisdom. From holding precepts, samadhi arises, and from samadhi comes wisdom. When you have wisdom, you can smash through stupidity and ignorance. So why haven’t we have people accomplish Buddhahood? It’s just because we have greed, hatred, and stupidity, and so we haven’t been able to purely cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom.

The Buddhas purely cultivated precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, and completely eradicated greed, hatred, and stupidity. They did this over a long period of time, little by little, step by step. Buddhas basically are the same as living beings. But because they got rid of all their faults and bad habits, they accomplished Buddhahood. If we living beings could get rid of our bad faults and habits--completely casting them out--then we too could very quickly accomplish Buddhahood. Buddhas are greatly enlightened beings. They truly understand. Everyone can accomplish Buddhahood. Everyone can attain great enlightenment and great wisdom.

“Buddha” isn’t an exclusive name laid aside for Buddhas only. There’s hope for all of us living beings too. We can all become Buddhas. Living beings are included with the nine Dharma Realms:

* The Dharma Realm of Bodhisattvas;
* the Dharma Realm of The Conditionally Enlightened Ones;
* the Dharma Realm of Sound Hearers;
* the Dharma Realm of gods;
* the Dharma Realm of humans;
* the Dharma Realm of asuras;
* the Dharma Realm of hell-beings;
* the Dharma Realm of hungry ghosts, and
* the Dharma Realm of animals.

These are all called living beings.

When Shakyamuni Buddha realized Proper Enlightenment he said, “All living beings have the Buddha-nature; all can accomplish Buddhahood.” All of you people who have wisdom, think about it. We are all included within the definition of “living beings.” We can all accomplish Buddhahood. Buddhas and living beings are level and equal. However, Buddhas have already attained their inherent great wisdom. We living beings haven’t attained our inherent wisdom yet, and so we continue to be stupid and attached. When the Buddhas first began their cultivation of the Way, they were living beings just like we are. But they endure what people cannot endure; they yielded where people cannot yield; they ate what people are unable to eat; they bore what people cannot bear. That is why they were able to rise above the crowd and become outstanding individuals. Thus the Buddhas were able to return to the origin and go back to the source. They returned to their inherent wisdom. They cultivated and sacrificed themselves for others. Shakyamuni Buddha, for instance, gave up his body for a tiger and he cut up his flesh into pieces to feed an eagle. He practiced bitter practices that are too difficult for most people. He was a person who made a vow to cultivate, and then later he was certified to the fruit of Arhatship. Then he cultivated the Bodhisattva path, the Six Paramitas, and then ten thousand practices. He helped to cross-over living beings by cultivating the Bodhisattva path.

He first attained self-enlightenment. “Self-enlightenment” refers to enlightening oneself. Enlightening oneself means that he himself obtained great wisdom. Then he enlightened others. He caused other people to also attain great wisdom . That’s called the Enlightenment of others. And when he had attained great wisdom himself and enabled others to also attain great wisdom, he is said to have the Perfection of Enlightenment and Practice, the third type of enlightenment. The Three Kinds of Enlightenment are perfected, and the ten thousand virtues are complete. Therefore he’s called Buddha. Buddhas are those who have attained Unsurpassed Proper and Equal Right Enlightenment, so they are also called Greatly Enlightened Ones, and Greatly Wise Ones.

So the text says, “Proper Enlightenment cannot be measured.” For as many living beings as there are, there are equal number of Buddhas. Buddhas just come from living beings. Therefore, it’s not certain how many Buddhas there are. If you don’t believe this, try to calculate a little. If we only consider the human realm--just how many human beings are there on earth? You could try to get the total number, but even if you could determine the total number of living beings in this world at a given moment, you would discover that beings are constantly being born, and dying. So it’s hard to get the exact number. In the future, if you’re able to figure out the total, you’ll still be faced with more birth and deaths. You won’t be able to get an exact number. The past is also like this. Therefore, the number is limitless.

Living beings are limitless and Buddhas are limitless. We people shouldn’t think of Buddhas as being so far away from us. The Buddhas are right in front of us. Buddhas are living beings who have completely turned themselves around. They understand the mind and see the nature. They know how they got born and they know how they will die. When they’re born, they know where they came from, and when they die, they know where they’re going. It’s right at this point that Buddhas are different from us living beings. When we’re born, we don’t know where we came from, and when we die, we don’t know where we’re going. Coming we’re confused, and going we’re confused. We’re busy fighting for fame and profit in the world. And yet, just when you’re about to understand, you die. Would you say this is pitiful or not?

“The Buddhas are equal to the Dharma Realm and empty space.” The Buddhas, the Dharma Realm, and the realm of empty space are all alike. How big is empty space? The Buddhas’ Dharma body is that big too. However lofty the Dharma Realm is, the Buddhas are also that lofty. The Buddhas are identical with the Dharma Realm and the realm of empty space. Proper Enlightenment is *Unfathomable in its depth and vastness*. If you’re talking about depth, the Buddhas’ state is unfathomable. If you’re talking about vastness, the Buddhas’ state doesn’t have any boundaries or limits. Moreover, *It is completely cut off from the path of words and language*. Ultimately speaking, what are the Buddhas like? You can’t express that in words and language.

The path of words and language is cut of,
And the place of the mind’s activities is extinguished.
This is the inconceivable state of Buddhas.

*The Thus Come One is skillfully able to penetrate*. The Buddha can proficiently fathom all principles. *He practices the way in every place*. He cultivates and teaches and transforms living beings in every place. *He can travel without obstruction to the multitudes of countries in the Dharma Realm*. Whatever place the Buddhas wish to go in all of the Buddhalands in the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, they can go to. There aren’t any obstructions in their way. That is because the Buddhas are nowhere present, and yet are nowhere not present. There isn’t any place where the Buddhas don’t live, there isn’t any place where the Buddhas do dwell. To the exhaustion of the worlds of the ten directions, the wisdom body of the Buddha exists. There isn’t a single dust mote where all the Buddhas of the past, all the Buddhas of the present, and all the Buddhas of the future, haven’t sacrificed their lives to teach and transform living beings. Therefore, the Buddhas, in order to teach and transform living beings, sacrificed thousands of bodies without begrudging any. Now we, not to speak of sacrificing our bodies to help living beings, can’t even give up a small finger to help living beings. We can’t even pull out a single hair from our heads to aid living beings. If we could benefit everything under heaven by pulling out a single strand of hair, we still wouldn’t do it, because we’re selfish. If we weren’t so selfish, we’d open great wisdom.

Sutra:

At that time, Wisdom Banner Bodhisattva received the Buddha’s spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions, and spoke these verses.

Commentary:

Bright Light Banner Bodhisattva had finished speaking, praising the Buddha, praising the Dharma, and praising the Sangha. Then, *At that time*, again there was a Bodhisattva called *Wisdom Banner Bodhisattva*. “Wisdom” refers to his great wisdom. “Banner” represents the fact that his wisdom is just like a jeweled banner, everywhere illumining the dark, ignorant minds of living beings, causing all living beings to attain the light of wisdom. *Bodhisattva* is a Sanskrit word which can means both “enlightening sentient beings” and “enlightened sentient being.” Bodhisattvas enlighten both sentient and insentient beings, and are living beings who have attained enlightenment. You yourself will also become enlightened with wisdom, if you wish to enlighten living beings.

This Bodhisattva *received the Buddha’s spiritual power*. Bright Light Banner Bodhisattva received Shakyamuni Buddha’s great, awesome, spiritual power. Using all the great, awesome, spiritual power of the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time, he *universally contemplated the ten directions*. He everywhere contemplated all of the causal conditions of living beings throughout the lands of the ten directions, in great detail, deciding who should be crossed over. Then he spoke Dharma for them. *And* so for those living being who ought to be crossed over, he *spoke these verses*. He used simple verses which are very easy to understand, in order to speak the Dharma for living beings.

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VENERABLE ABBOT: “If you have a question, you can bring it up and we’ll discuss it.”

FIRST QUESTIONER: “You were talking about the root of greed and desire being selfishness. I was wondering, where does selfishness come from?”

VENERABLE ABBOT: “From ignorance.”

FIRST QUESTIONER: “Where does ignorance come from?”

VENERABLE ABBOT: “From your non-enlightenment; non-awakening.”

FIRST QUESTIONER: “What makes me non-awakened?”

VENERABLE ABBOT: “Because you’re ignorant; you haven’t awakened. If you could break through ignorance, then you’d be enlightened.”

SECOND QUESTIONER: “Since there are many different kinds of afflictions which are cause by ignorance, how is the one who is afflicted to know what is the proper way to end his affliction? Since he is afflicted, he won’t be able to see his own afflictions.”

VENERABLE ABBOT: “The back of your hand is affliction, and the palm of your hand is Bodhi. Realizing Bodhi is just like flipping your hand from back to palm. When you turn affliction around, it’s Bodhi. Afflictions are the same as Bodhi. Birth and death are the same as Nirvana. If you understand, then afflictions are Bodhi. If you don’t understand, then Bodhi is affliction. Bodhi isn’t outside of afflictions, and there are no afflictions outside the scope of enlightenment. So I constantly cite the analogy of water and ice. If you pour a bowl of water over a person’s body, even you use a lot of strength, still you won’t hurt the person. However, if this bowl of water turned into ice, and you hit the person in the head with it, this person would certainly die. Bodhi is just like water. Afflictions are like ice. If you melt ice, it becomes water; when you freeze water, it becomes ice. So, afflictions are Bodhi; birth and death are Nirvana. This is the principle.

“Today, many young students have come to investigate the Buddhadharma, and I can transmit a dharma of studying to you. The dharma of studying has three parts. If you don’t want to hear this message, you can plug up your ear. (laughter). The three parts are the eyes, mouth, and mind. The eyes. You read the book you’re studying with your eyes, and you recite with your mouth. You use your mind to ponder the principles of this book. If you can study a book this way, you can very quickly remember the contents. The principles contained in the book and your mind unite into one. This is very important. When studying, it’s a very important method. Also, in addition to the eyes, mouth, and mind, there are the three ‘on’s.’

“When it comes to studying, don’t be afraid of being too stupid or too dumb. It’s only to be feared that you won’t work hard. If you work hard, then you’ll eventually reach success. You can also use these three ‘on’s.’

1. On the rod. When you’re walking, you can recite out loud the book that you’re studying.

2. On the toilet. When you study and still are unable to remember the contents of the book, then when you go to the toilet, think about the book that you’re studying, and at that time, you can very quickly remember it. When you’re going to the toilet you don’t have any false thinking. It’s very easy to remember the book that you are studying.

3. On the pillow. At night when you are about to go to bed, as you lay your head on the pillow, don’t have so many extraneous false thoughts. Don’t think about boy friend and girlfriend, old friend and young friends--all kinds of thoughts like this. As you lie there on the pillow, keep your head cool and lucid, and you can very easily recall the principles of the book you’re studying. Therefore, at that time, it’s very easy for you to mesh with the principle of the book. It’s easy for you to understand it at this time.

“So this is the method for studying. Why do you study? You study in order to understand true principle; in order to increase your wisdom. That is why you study. Because you want to acquire a little erudition, a little brains. If you want to acquire any learning, remember that it will be a great aid to developing your wisdom if you decrease the amount of your false thinking.

You’ll be able to develop wisdom very quickly. Because I see that you are very sincere in coming here today, I decided to give you a brief outline of this method of studying. Not only is studying that way, learning to be a human being also requires adherence to a code of ethics. You have to abide by certain principles. You should ask yourself, ‘Am I studying for my own benefit, or for the sake of all people?’ if it’s just for myself, then it will only be of benefit to me and not of benefit to other people.” You should try to expand your mind and develop this kind of selfless thinking a bit. If you expand your mind, your future will be bright without limit. As it is said,

Sacrifice the small ego for the Big Self.”

Sutra:

If a person can believe and receive
All-Wisdom without obstruction.
And if he cultivates Bodhi practices,
His mind will be limitless.

Within all countries
The Buddha universally manifests measureless bodies.
Yet these bodies do not have a location.
Nor do they dwell in Dharmas.

Commentary:

*If a person can believe and receive All-Wisdom without obstruction. And if he cultivates Bodhi practices, his mind will be limitless*. “If” means supposing. Wishing to further clarify his meaning, Wisdom Banner Bodhisattva brings up a hypothetical case. He say, “suppose there is a person who can believe and uphold the Dharma spoken by the Buddha. The Buddha is All-Wisdom itself, and and the Dharma spoken by the Buddha is one Dharma of All-Wisdom.” “Without obstruction” means perfectly fused without any hindrances. If he practices the Dharma of awakening to the Way--Bodhi--then “his mind will be limitless.” Once you give rise to great mind for Bodhi, this mind becomes limitless and has no boundaries. It has no limit, no number.

*Within all countries*. The limit of the mind is like the Dharma Realm. It’s like empty space. So within all countries, *The Buddha universally manifests measureless bodies*. The Buddha, in all the countries of the ten directions, universally manifests measureless, wonderful form bodies. *Yet these bodies do not have a location*. Although they are limitless, they are without a place of dwelling. *Nor do they dwell in Dharmas*. Moreover, they don’t come attached to dharmas. So people are seen as empty and dharmas are seen as empty. Because people are empty, this body doesn’t dwell anywhere; and when dharmas are empty, one doesn’t dwell in dharmas. When attachments to self and dharmas are both emptied, one is totally apart from attachments. One is nowhere and everywhere at the same time.

Sutra:

Each and every Tathagata
Makes appear bodies by means of spiritual powers.
Throughout inconceivable kalpas,
No calculations or reckonings
can reach their end.

As to all living beings of the three periods of time,
Their number can completely be known,
But the number of bodies revealed by the Thus Come Ones,
Cannot be ascertained.

Sometimes they manifest one or two;
At other times, limitless bodies.
Although universally manifesting in lands of the ten directions,
In fact, they are not two kinds.

Commentary:

*Each and every Tathagata makes appear bodies by means of spiritual powers*. This is speaking of all the Buddhas throughout the ten directions and three periods of time. Every Buddha has hundreds of thousands of millions of transformation bodies. This is to say, by means of spiritual penetrations they can manifest these bodies. Through the Buddhas’ great, awesome, spiritual power, these bodies manifest in infinite variety. So Wisdom Banner Bodhisattva goes on to say, *Throughout inconceivable kalpas, no calculations or reckonings can reach their end*. Even if one uses calculations and analogies, the number of these Buddhas’ bodies still cannot be fathomed.

*As to all living beings of the three periods of time, their number can completely be known*. There are Buddhas of the three periods of time, and there are also living beings of the three periods of time--that is, the past, present, and future. As to all these living beings, how many are there? Their number can still be known. It is reckonable. *But the number of bodies revealed by the Thus Come Ones, cannot be ascertained*. As to the bodies the Buddhas manifest--how many bodies are there? What is their number? They can’t be reckoned.

Wisdom Banner Bodhisattva continues, *Sometimes they manifest one or two*. Maybe the Buddhas will each manifest one body of a Buddha. Maybe they will manifest two bodies. *At other times*, they will display *limitless bodies*--up to and including a limitless number of Buddhas’ bodies. *Although universally manifesting in lands of the ten directions, in fact, they are not two kinds*. These bodies manifest everywhere throughout all Buddha-lands within the ten directions. Yet actually, there isn’t any duality to the Buddhas Dharma body; the Buddhas don’t have two bodies. Although they manifest limitless bodies, it’s just one Dharma body. From this one Dharma body appear limitless bodies. And limitless bodies return to the one Dharma body. That is why the Bodhisattva says they are not two kinds; they are non-dual.

Sutra:

Consider for instance, the pure, full moon,
Which everywhere appears in all waters.
Although its reflections are infinite,
Originally, the moon isn’t two.

The same is true for one with unobstructed wisdom,
Who accomplishes Equal, Proper Enlightenment.
Although he universally appears in all lands,
The Buddha’s substance is non-dual.

It is neither one, nor two;
It is also not limitless,
But merely accords with those who should be transformed
To display limitless bodies.

Commentary:

*Consider for instance, the pure, full moon*. Another analogy is used to explain the Buddha’s state. It is like the pure, full moon in empty space, *Which everywhere appears in all waters*. The light of the moon everywhere appears in all waters. This is not to say that the moon’s own substance goes into the water; rather, it’s just a reflection of light. So there’s a saying,

One moon is universally reflected in all waters;
All the reflections return to a single moon.

And *Although its reflections are in-finite, originally, the moon isn’t two*. This reflection of moonlight appears in limitless waters. Although there are so many reflections, originally there is only one moon, not two. The Buddha is like the pure, full moon. Although each living being feels that he or she is face to face with the Buddha, yet the Buddha has only on Dharma body. It is said,

In the water of a thousand pools
A thousand moons appear.
For ten thousand miles there’s not a cloud;
For ten thousand miles, the sky is clear.

*The same is true for one with unobstructed wisdom, who accomplishes Equal, Proper Enlightenment*. This wisdom is like the perfectly fused and unobstructed wisdom of a Buddha. It was due to this kind of wisdom that he was able to accomplish Buddhahood--Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment. *Although he universally appears in all lands, the Buddha’s substance is non-dual*. The Buddha accomplishes Buddhahood in this world, that world, and in measureless other worlds. So this line says he “universally appears in all lands.” Yet, no matter how many worlds he manifests in to accomplish Buddhahood, the Buddha’s basic substance is non-dual.

*It is neither one, nor two*. Not only is the Buddha’s basic substance said to be non-dual, it isn’t even one. If it’s not even one, how can it be two? *It is also not limitless*. It’s also not limitless or boundless. It’s merely a manifestation, that’s all. *But merely accords with those who should be transformed to display limitless bodies*. The Buddha contemplates the causes and conditions of living beings and dispenses the teachings by speaking Dharma for them. According to the roots and natures of living beings, he teaches and transforms them. Those who have not yet planed good roots, he causes to plant good roots. Those who already have planted good roots, he causes to increase their good roots. Those who have already increased their good roots, he causes to bring their good roots to maturity. Those whose good roots have already matured, he causes to attain liberation. According with those living beings who should be transformed, the Buddha “displays limitless bodies.” He makes appear measureless bodies to teach and transform living beings. He breaks their attachments and enables them to return to their true original source and ultimately to become Buddhas. This is the Buddha’s hope.

Sutra:

The Buddha’s body is not of the past,
Nor is it of the future.
In a single thought it presently appears,
Accomplishing the way and entering Nirvana.

Like forms conjured from an illusion,
Which are not produced and which do not arise,
The Buddha’s body is also this way:
It manifests without having been produced.

Commentary:

The previous verse teaches people how to break off their attachments so that they don’t engage in false reckonings such as how many bodies the Buddha has. To calculate like that is to try to find something to do when there’s really nothing to do, you shouldn’t make this kind of trouble for yourself.

Now, lest someone say, “Well their number may be unreckonable, but Buddhas did exist in the past, at any rate,” this stanza of verse says The Buddha’s body is not of the past. In the past were there bodies of the Buddha? No. Nor is it of the future. It’s also not the case that the Buddha’s bodies will be produced in the future. Then are there bodies of the Buddha in the present? No, there aren’t. In a single thought it presently appears. The Buddha, in a single thought, manifests being born. He also manifests accomplishing the Way right in that single thought. And he manifests Accomplishing the way and entering Nirvana. The Eight Stages of a Buddha’s Accomplishing the Way do not go beyond a single thought. The eight stages are:

1) Descending from the Tushita Heaven Palace;

2) Entering the womb;

3) Dwelling in the womb;

4) Leaving the womb;

5) Leaving the home-life;

6) Accomplishing the Way;

7) Turning the Dharma Wheel;

8) Entering Nirvana.

Like forms conjured from an illusion, which are not produced and which do not arise, the Buddha’s body is also this way: It manifests without having been produced . The Buddha manifests characteristics, but they are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows, or conjured appearances. But at the ultimate level, the Buddha’s body isn’t produced, nor doe it arise. Just as illusory forms are not real, so too, the Buddha’s body is not produced and does not arise. The Buddha’s body is also like the principle revealed in this analogy. “It manifests without having been produced.” It’s not produced, nor is it extinguished. And so,

It’s not defiled, no pure, and
It neither increases nor decreases.

This is the basic substance of the Buddha, which is, “Thus, thus unmoving, clear and constantly bright.”

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QUESTION: “What are the three periods of time? You mentioned that the Buddha manifests his bodies throughout the three periods of time.”

ANSWER: “They are the past, present, and future.”

QUESTION: “Who is Dragon-seed Buddha?”

ANSWER: “it’s just the name of that Buddha.”

QUESTION: “Is it a name like Joe or John?”

ANSWER: “Yes.”

Sutra:

At that time, Jeweled Banner Bodhisattva received the Buddha’s spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions, and spoke these verses.

Commentary:

At that time refers to the time when Wisdom Banner Bodhisattva finished speaking verses for all living beings in the ten directions according to their potentials. Jeweled Banner Bodhisattva received the Buddha’s spiritual power . Because he had perfected the Six Paramitas and the ten thousand practices which are extremely valuable and lofty Dharma-doors, he’s given the name Jeweled Banner Bodhisattva. He also received Shakyamuni Buddha’s, Vairochana Buddha’s spiritual power, and also relied upon the power of spiritual penetrations of all Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time.

“Spirit” penetrates outward, and the “power” arises from within. So the power of spiritual penetrations comes from within and without. When this Bodhisattva spoke these verses, he received the powers of the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time. What does it mean “to receive the Buddha’s power”? it means that he knew the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time abiding in the Pure Land of Constant Still and Unmoving light using the power of their spiritual penetrations to aid him. He was aided by their power and as a result, attained great wisdom, great eloquence, and great spiritual strength. Then he universally contemplated the ten directions. He investigated the cause and conditions of living beings throughout the ten directions, and then he spoke these verses. He used verses to speak the Buddhadharma that he chose to express.

Sutra:

The Buddha’s body has no limit,
Yet it can manifest bodies that have a limit.
According to what should be seen,
The Guiding Master Thus appears.

The Buddha’s body has no location,
Yet it fills up all locations,
Like emptiness, it has no boundaries.
Thus it is difficult to conceive of.

It is not the place of the mind’s workings,
Nor does the mind arise within it.
Within the states of all Buddhas,
Ultimately, there in neither production nor extinction.

A cataract that covers the eye
Is neither within nor without
Those in the world who see the Buddha
Should know he’s also like this.

Commentary:

The Buddha’s body has no limit. The Buddha’s true body pervades and fills up all places. The Bodhisattva tells us in these verses that there is no way to speak of its measure. How vast is everywhere? You don’t know. Since you cannot know, it’s therefore said that “the Buddha’s body has no limit.” It reaches to the end of empty space. But if you try to grasp at appearances, then there isn’t even one body which exists. Yet it can manifest bodies that have a limit. Although the Buddha’s original substance is limitless and boundless, still, it can manifest perhaps one, two, three, four, five--up to limitless bodies--According to what should be seen. According to what living beings should perceive, The Guiding Master Thus appears. The Buddha spontaneously manifests so it is said,

The Buddha is like the pure moon
Eternally abiding in empty space.
If the water of living beings’ minds is clear,
Bodhi will be reflected in it.

The Buddha’s basic substance is limitless. His responses to the limited capacities of living beings is also limitless. So the text says, “According to what should be seen, the Guiding Master thus appears.”

The Buddha’s body has no location. The body of the Buddha doesn’t reside in any certain place. He is “present,” and yet not present.” The Buddha’s body is numberless and limitless, Yet it fills up all locations. The Buddha’s body has no location, no place of existence, yet it fills up all places. There is nowhere where it is not present. Like emptiness, it has no boundaries. The Buddha’s body is just like the void. There are no boundaries, no end to it. Thus it is difficult to conceive of. You can’t conceive of it with the mind, or speak of it with language.

It is not the place of the mind’s workings. Your mind can’t cognize this principle. The mind can’t conceive of the Buddha’s body, Nor does the mind arise within it. The mind also doesn’t give rise to an understanding of the principle of this body. Within the states of all Buddhas, ultimately, there in neither production nor extinction. Why does Jeweled Banner Bodhisattva say that the mind cannot conceive of this principle nor understand it? Because within the state of all Buddhas, “ultimately there is neither production nor extinction.” This state is neither produced nor destroyed, so how can the mind arise within it? Arising is a form of production. So these states, which are not produced and not extinguished, cannot come forth from the mind.

A cataract that covers the eye is neither within nor without those in the world who see the Buddha should know he’s also like this. The analogy here is a film over the eye. The film is not within the eye, nor is it outside of the eye. Yet there is something between the eye organ itself and the connected tissue which makes up this film. By the same token, the sentient beings who perceive the Buddha, “should know he’s also like this.” You should know the Buddha can be likened to a film on the eyes which is neither in the eyes, nor outside of the eyes. It also isn’t the middle. Living beings see the Buddha. They also see the transformation bodies of the Buddha, and the pure response body of the Buddha. But the Buddha’s basic substance isn’t the transformation bodies or the response body. It fills up all places. So the Bodhisattva says, you “should know he’s also like this.”

Sutra:
In order to benefit living beings,
The Thus Come One comes into the world.
Living beings perceive his coming,
But in actuality, he does not appear in the world.

It can’t be that one perceives the Buddha
In a certain country, or on a certain day or night.
Nor is it possible to delineate him
In terms of years, months, or a single kshana.

Commentary:

The Buddha comes into the world In order to benefit living beings. He causes all living beings who have affinities with him to see the Buddha enter the world, so that give rise to the resolve for Bodhi and cultivate Proper, Equal, and Right Enlightenment. The Thus Come One comes into the world. The Buddha enters the world to benefit all living beings. Living beings perceive his coming. Living beings are attached to provisional dharmas. They mistake the false for the true. They don’t know the Buddha is unmoving within the Land of Constant Stillness and Light, and that in actuality, he does not appear in the world. In reality the Buddha doesn’t come into the world. It’s only because living beings are attached to the idea, that they see the Buddha as coming into the world and then entering Nirvana.

It can’t be that one perceives the Buddha in a certain country, or on a certain day or night. Originally, the Buddha pervades and fills up the Dharma Realm to the exhaustion of empty space, so it’s not principled to say that the Buddha comes into a certain world and doesn’t enter another world and so forth. The Buddha manifests in response to the conditions and potentials of living beings. You can’t say that the Buddha is perceived in a certain country. You can’t see the Buddha in terms of daytime or night time, Nor is it possible to delineate him in terms of years, months, or a single kshana. You cannot figure out the Buddha by means of time or space--not by means of one lifetime, or one month, or a split second. The Buddha transcends time and transcends empty space. The Buddha can take limitless kalpas and compress them into a single kshana. He can take one kshana and expand it into immeasurable kalpas. The realm of the Buddha transcends time and transcends empty space. It can’t be conceived of--it’s ineffable. You should know that you cannot understand the Buddha in terms of countries, day or night, years, months, or kshanas, or any other divisions of time or space, for the Buddha’s state is incalculable and inconceivable.

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Those who cultivate the Buddhadharma should take on the responsibility of saving the entire world. Every thought, world, and deed should be dedicated to the good of the entire world. Why are there wars in the world? It’s because the fighting in the minds of living beings is especially heavy. People’s minds continually engage in battling and false thoughts. The false thoughts set up a struggle between reason and desire. “Reason” is heavenly principle, something very spontaneous and natural. “Desire” refers to sexual desire and greed without satiation. Thoughts of desire obstruct great wisdom. They do battle with great wisdom. That is why, day by day, the world becomes worse. If everyone can purify his mind so it becomes clear and still, and one can destroy false thoughts, then one’s true wisdom will manifest. If one person has true wisdom, then there’s one person who is peaceful. If ten people have true wisdom, then ten people are peaceful. If all the people in an entire country have true wisdom, then the entire country will be peaceful. This can be extended all the way up to the point where the entire world could become peaceful.

Why isn’t the world peaceful? Because the minds of living beings are constantly filled with desire, and there’s little wisdom in evidence anywhere. So day by day the world becomes worse. That is why each person in the world should make it his or her responsibility to make the world a good place. So everyone should get rid of his or her thoughts of selfishness, self-benefit, greed, hatred, and stupidity. Once you purify them, the world will become a good place. The Buddhadharma is also like this. Everyone should purify his or her mind and get rid of his or her desire, habits, and faults. One should not listen to ghostly talk. Listen to the Buddhadharma, don’t listen to what the ghost says. What’s meant by listening to ghostly talk? This refers to your ghost of selfishness who whispers to you, telling you that what you’re doing doesn’t carry any benefit for you, that you should change your thinking, and so on and so on.

To make Buddhism right, Buddhist disciples should purify themselves and not have impure thoughts. If you have even a hair’s worth of defile thoughts, you won’t attain any wisdom. For so many years we’ve been cultivating, so why is it we’re still so stupid and don’t understand anything? It’s because our defiled thoughts are too heavy, so that pure wisdom isn’t able to manifest.

When the heart is pure,
The moon can reflect in its waters.
When the mind is in samadhi,
There are no clouds in the sky.

If we can be without selfish desire and random thoughts, the true wisdom can manifest. We shouldn’t be unhappy when we hear people talk about our faults. If someone says we are incorrect, we shouldn’t be unhappy. The ancients said, “Whoever is able to bring up our faults is our teacher.” We should be pleased with whoever speaks about our faults. This person is our Good Knowing Advisor.

When Tzu Lu heard others speak of his faults, he was happy.
When Emperor Yu heard wholesome words, he bowed.

When Tzu Lu heard from others about his own faults, it made him incredibly happy. He would think, “You are truly my Good Knowing Advisor! If you hadn’t told me, I never would have been able to recognize this in myself.”

Great King Yu was an Emperor, and yet whenever he heard someone say a sentence of good words, he would make obeisance to that person. There are both people who were willing to correct their faults.

Mistake must be corrected by yourself; they can’t be corrected by other people. Other people can only bring them up, but you have to correct these problems yourself. A Good Knowing Advisor can bring them to your attention, tell you about them, but whether you listen or not is up to you.

Those who cultivate the Way can’t obstruct other people’s cultivate of the Way. It’s already bad enough that you don’t cultivate the Way yourself, but if in addition you proceed to confuse other people, cause them not to cultivate, cause their minds to be disturbed, and cause them to have a lot of false thinking, then you are creating an extremely dangerous situation.

It’s not the world that’s not good, it’s I who am not good. If I want to make the world right, then I first have to be right. If you don’t want your family to fight, then you yourself shouldn’t fight. It all stems from you yourself. It’s not that my disciples are bad, but that I’m bad. I want to correct myself, then my disciples will be good.

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Sutra:

Living beings say:
“ On such and such a day, the Buddha accomplished the way”;
Yet the Tathagata’s attainment of Bodhi
Is actually not fixed to a certain day.

The Thus Come One is apart from discriminations;
He is not of this world and transcends all calculations.
All Guiding Masters of the three periods of time
Appear in this way.

Consider how, although the pure solar orb
Actually does not unite with the dark of night,
We still make reference to “day and night” together;
So too do we treat the Dharmas of all Buddhas.

All kalpas in the three periods of time
Do not unite with the Thus Come Ones.
Yet we speak of the Buddhas of the three periods of time,
And also regard the Dharma of the Guiding Master like this.

Commentary:

Jeweled Banner Bodhisattva also says that worldly marks and world-transcending marks are not the same. The world has marks and what is transcendental is without marks. Living beings say, “on such and such a day, the Buddha appeared in the world, and on a certain day, the Buddha left the home-life. On such and such a day, the Buddha accomplished the way, and on such and such a day, the Buddha turned the Dharma Wheel. Then on a certain day, the Buddha entered Mahaparinirvana.” It is in accord with the common truths of the world that one speaks this way. Yet if one speak in accord with the absolute truth, the Tathagata’s attainment of Bodhi is actually not fixed to a certain day. The Buddha’s accomplishment of the Way, his accomplishment of Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment, did not occur at a fixed time on a certain day.

The Buddha, in countless kalpas past, had already accomplished the Way. He says in Brahma Net Sutra,

I have into this Saha World eight thousand times.

Eight thousand times is also just a number. But it’s not just eight thousand times. The Buddha, according with the opportunities of living beings, manifests. There isn’t anything definitive about it.

The Thus Come One is apart from discriminations. If you wish to understand the Buddha, you can’t use the mind which discriminates to calculate or to think about him, because the Buddha is inconceivable. So once you use your mind to think about it or use words to conceptualize it, then you have already fallen into a secondary meaning. He is not of this world and transcends all calculations. The Buddha isn’t like us living beings who use our minds, bound up in attachments, to think with. He transcends all calculations. He’s apart from all reckonings so he isn’t contained in any number. Numbers are very subtle and wonderful. For instance, rockets go into space. This is all calculated by mathematics, and it can’t be off by a hair. These rockets go to the moon, then return, and this belongs to the realm of mathematics. But, the Buddha transcends all numbers. One can neither think of him within one’s mind, nor speak of him with words.

All Guiding Masters of the three periods of time. Speaking on a small scale, the three periods of time refer to this past hour, the present hour, and next hour. In slightly broader terms, this means yesterday, today, and tomorrow--these are also the three periods of time. Or a longer period would include last month, this month, and next month--these too, are the three periods of time. Yet, extending it for even a longer period, the three periods of time also include last year, this year, and next year. So you don’t necessarily have to say that the past time is last life, and that this time is this life, and future time is next life. You can speak of the three periods of time right within this very life. Also, there are past kalpas--past time; this kalpas--present time; and future kalpas--future time. So, the three periods of time are not fixed.

In the line, “All Guiding Masters of the three periods of time,” “all” is a grammatical particle that can mean both “one” and “all.” If it were to mean just one, which Guiding Master would it be referring to? Shakyamuni Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha is also the Guiding Master of the past, present, and future. And so the next says that “All Guiding Mater of the three periods of time Appear in this way.” No matter whether there are many or just one, the Guiding Masters manifest in the world all in the same way. They aren’t without production, yet they “sweep away all dharmas, and are apart from all marks.” They act as if not acting. So we living beings shouldn’t use our common, ordinary minds to fathom the wisdom of the sages.

Consider how, although the pure solar orb actually does not unite with the dark of night, we still make reference to “day and night” together; so too do we treat the Dharmas of all Buddhas . Here the analogy is made to the sun in a completely clear sky. As they say,

Not a cloud in the sky for ten thousand miles.

Although this clear and pure sun doesn’t unite with the night, yet day turns into night, and night turn into day. Most common people speak of “day and night” in the sense that they are connected, that is, day connects with night, and night connects with day. However, this is just a common way of speaking. And just as it is with the pure sun, “so too do we treat the Dharmas of all Buddhas.” All Buddhadharmas are also like this; like the pure sun. we living beings, while in the midst of marks, should be apart from marks; while in the midst of dharmas, should recognize the absence of dharmas. One shouldn’t be attached to things which have form and characteristics.

All kalpas in the three periods of time--the great kalpas of the past, present, and future--Do not unite with the Thus Come Ones. Kalpas are kalpas, and Buddhas are Buddhas. Although they don’t unite, people speak of the Buddhas of the three periods of time, and also regard the Dharma of the Guiding Master like this. The Dharma of Shakyamuni Buddha is also like this. Although Buddha don’t unite with the three periods of time, yet it is said that there are Buddhas throughout the three periods of time. And the Buddhadharma is also like this.

Sutra:

At that time, Vigorous Banner Bodhisattva received the Buddha’s spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions, and spoke these verses:

All Guiding Masters’ bodies are the same, and
So too are their meanings.
Universally in the lands of the ten directions,
According to potentials, they appear in various ways.

You should contemplate the honored Muni:
That which he does is extremely rare and special.
He completely fills the Dharma Realm,
And there is nothing left out.

The Buddha’s body is not within,
Nor is it without.
Because of spiritual power it is revealed;
The Dharma of the Guiding Master is just like this.

Commentary:

When Jeweled Banner Bodhisattva had finished speaking his verses, At that time, Vigorous Banner Bodhisattva received the Buddha’s spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions, and spoke these verses. In this Dharma assembly, there is a Bodhisattva called Vigorous Banner Bodhisattva. This Bodhisattva is vigorous both day and night. In the six periods of the day and night he is constantly vigorous. He doesn’t rest either in the day or night. With his body he is always diligent by constantly following the Buddhas in study. With his mind he is ever-vigorous by continually reflecting on and investigating the Buddhadharma. Therefore, he’s given the name Vigorous Banner Bodhisattva.

This Bodhisattva also relies on the great, awesome spiritual power of Vairochana Buddha, that is to say, Shakyamuni Buddha. He receives the great, awesome spiritual power of all the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time. Having attained the protection and support of the of the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time, his eloquence and wisdom increase and he becomes unobstructed. Then he is able to universally contemplate the causes and conditions of the living beings of the ten directions and three periods of time, and according to the proper Dharma door that ought to be used to teach and transform them, he speaks that Dharma. He uses verses which are very simple in meaning to explain the Buddhadharma for them.

All Guiding Masters’ bodies are the same . All the Buddhas of ten directions and the three periods of time have bodies which are identical. They all share the Dharma body. and So too are their meanings. They have the same body, and their meaning are also the same. The path of all Buddhas is the same. Buddhas are identical to other Buddhas. There isn’t any discrimination of this and that. Although in the East there’s Medicine Master Buddha, in the South there’s Jeweled Victory Buddha, in the West there is Amitabha Buddha, in the center there is Shakyamuni Buddha, and in the North there is Accomplishment Buddha, although there are all these distinctions, yet, ultimately they all have one substance. And so Universally in the lands of the ten directions, according to potentials, they appear in various ways. According to living beings’ mind and responses, the Buddhas produce all kinds of bodies to teach and transform them.

You should contemplate the honored Muni. Each of you living beings--you, me, and him--are included, all the present living beings spoken of here. You should take a look at Shakyamuni Buddha, World Honored One, because That which he does is extremely rare and special. What he does is very unique and excellent. He completely fills the Dharma Realm. His Dharma body completely fills up the Dharma Realm to the ends of empty space, And there is nothing left out. In all places he is neither present nor is he not present.

The Buddha’s body is not within. The body of the Buddha is present, yet it’s not present. It’s not inside, Nor is it without. He’s also not outside. Because of spiritual power it is revealed. Because of the spiritual strength cultivated by all Buddhas based on the power of past vows, he therefore appears. The Dharma of the Guiding Master is just like this. The Buddhadharma is that way too.

VENERABLE ABBOT: “Did anybody get enlightened? Did anybody get stupid?

QUESTION: “If Vigorous Banner Bodhisattva is vigorous day and night throughout the six periods, my question is, when does he sleep, and for how long? Does he sleep for a couple of hours? Does he sleep for three hours? How long?”

VENERABLE ABBOT: “Every day he sleeps. While sleeping, he’s vigorous; vigorous, he’s also sleeping. Being vigorous he sleeps; while sleeping, he’s vigorous. There’s no difference.

“What’s meant by ‘sleeping’? when he’s vigorous, he doesn’t have false thoughts. When he’s sleeping, he doesn’t have any dreams. Not having false thoughts is one aspect of being vigorous, as is not having dreams. That’s why for him, sleeping and being vigorous are the same. He isn’t like we people who when sleeping, have false thoughts, and then start dreaming. But he isn’t like this. Long has he cultivated pure deeds; constantly does he enter samadhi.

“He’s constantly vigorous, which means he’s vigorous in samadhi. He doesn’t distinguish between sleeping and being vigorous. He vigor is such that he can, for example, sit in meditation for five-hundred great kalpas--that’s vigor! It’s certainly not the case that he takes a five-hundred kalpas nap! And yet five-hundred kalpas do not go beyond a single thought in the mind. From the viewpoint of common people who sleep for seven hours, bow for several hours, and sit for several hours, there’s basically no way one can make a comparison. If you talk about his cultivation, it entails several hundred great kalpas, and how do you figure that? How do you compare that with your several hours? You can’t compare it--it’s inconceivable!”

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Sutra: According to the categories of living creatures,
And the karma they accumulate from previous lives,
Various kinds of bodies appear,
And each one of them is different.

The bodies of all Buddhas are like that--
Limitless and unreckonable.
With the exception of the Greatly Enlightened Honored Ones,
No one else can conceive of them.

Commentary:

According to the categories of living creatures, and the karma they accumulate from previous lives, various kinds of bodies appear, and each one of them is different. The Buddha complies with all living beings, taking into account the good and bad karma they collected in former lives. Because the categories of living beings aren’t the same, and because the karma they create aren’t the same, the Buddha transforms bodies according to their categories or class. He responds according to their kind in order to teach and transform them, “And each one of them is different.” Complying with the different kinds of living beings, the Buddha manifests different kinds of bodies.

The bodies of all Buddhas are like that. The transformation and response bodies of the Buddhas are like that. They are Limitless and unreckonable. Because they have no number, they cannot be counted. With the exception of the Greatly Enlightened Honored Ones, no one else can conceive of them. Only the Buddha and other Buddhas can know the ultimate Real Mark of all dharmas. Only the Buddhas can know of these states of Buddhas. No other living beings of the other nine Dharma Realms--the Bodhisattvas, the Sound Hearers, the Conditionally Enlightened Ones, the gods, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-beings--can fathom the state of the Buddhas.

Sutra:

Just as the self is difficult to conceive of,
And the mind and its karma cannot be grasped;
So too, the Buddha is difficult to conceive of:
It is not through the mind’s karma that he appears.

Just as lands cannot be conceived of,
Yet their pure adornments can be seen;
So too, the Buddha is difficult to conceive of,
Yet all of his wonderful marks appear without exception.

Just as all Dharmas
Arise from a number of conditions,
So too is seeing the Buddha
Dependent on a myriad of good karma.

Commentary:

Just as the self is difficult to conceive of, and the mind and its karma cannot be grasped; so too, the Buddha is difficult to conceive of. The self, the ego, is inconceivable, and the karma that is created by the mind is inconceivable. You can’t grasp them. The Buddha can’t be seen, and the Buddha can’t be sought after. He’s also inconceivable. Not only that, but It is not through the mind’s karma that he appears.

Just as lands cannot be conceived of, yet their pure adornments can be seen; so too, the Buddha is difficult to conceive of. Buddha lands are as many as dust motes--inconceivable in their quantity. These Buddha lands are either defiled or pure, either adorned or not adorned, and they’re all inconceivable. So too is the Buddha beyond conception. Yet all of his wonderful marks appear without exception. The Buddha is inconceivable too. There are no lands where the Buddha’s wonderful form bodies do not appear. Throughout all Buddha lands, the Buddha’s bodies appear without exception.

Just as all Dharmas Arise from a number of conditions, so too is seeing the Buddha dependent on a myriad of good karma . All dharmas come about because of cause and conditions. So it says,

The dharmas produced from causes and conditions,
The Buddha says are all empty.
They’re known by false names;
They’re also called the meaning of the Middle Way.

All dharmas are produced because of conditions and have no nature of their own, and seeing the Buddha is also this way. The Buddha is not produced nor destroyed, however, he does manifest. If you can see the Buddha, then you certainly must have planted good roots in former lives. If you didn’t plant good roots, you wouldn’t be able to see the Buddha, hear the Buddhadharma, or meet the Sangha.

The same applies to coming to Gold Mountain Monastery. Those people who have good roots in this present life have the opportunity to come to Gold Mountain Monastery. If they didn’t have good roots, then even if they thought about entering Gold Mountain Monastery, they wouldn’t have the causes and conditions which would enable them to do so. So in order to see the Buddha, hear the Dharma, and meet the Sangha, you must have good roots.

You are able to come to Gold Mountain Monastery and bow to the Buddha and listen to Sutras because you have good roots. People without good roots won’t be able to come to Gold Mountain Monastery at all. Why? Because they don’t have good roots. Or, their good roots aren’t complete: they don’t have enough. So they can’t come to Gold Mountain.

Without blessings, it is difficult to ascend to the ground of the Triple Jewel.
Without virtue, it is difficult to enter the door of the Great Vehicle.

The ground of the Triple Jewel refers to the Buddha Jewel, the Dharma Jewel, and the Sangha Jewel. Without virtue, it’s hard to enter into the door of the Great Vehicle. If you don’t have virtuous conduct, then you can’t come to Gold Mountain Monastery, or draw near a Good Knowing Advisor. So this state is also inconceivable.

Sutra:
Just as an As-You-Will pearl
Can fulfill the minds of living beings,
So too can the Buddhadharma
Completely fulfill all your wishes.

Within limitless countries
The Guiding Masters appear in the world.
Because of the power of their vows
They respond everywhere throughout the ten directions.

Commentary:

Just as an As-You-Will pearl can fulfill the minds of living beings, so too can the Buddhadharma completely fulfill all your wishes . Those of you cultivating the “As-You-Will Pearl Hand,” will know what a Wish-fulfilling pearl is. Why is it called “Wish-fulfilling”? Because it fulfills your wishes in the sense that whatever you think about comes to be the way you want it. For instance, if you think about gold, the As-You-Will Pearl will produce gold. If you think about silver, the As-You-Will Pearl will give you silver. Whatever you want, it will give to you. This is the way the As-You-Will Pearl function. The only way it won’t give you something is if you don’t think about it. If you think about something, it will fulfil your wishes; it will satisfy your mind. So, if you cultivate and accomplish this “As-You-Will Pearl Hand,” then according to the wishes of your mind, your fulfillment will be unlimited. An As-You-Will Pearl is able to satisfy the minds of all living beings. Whatever your mind thinks about, then you’ll get it. All of the Dharmas spoken by the Buddha are also like the As-You-Will Pearl. Whatever it is in the Buddhadharma you seek for, then that’s what you’ll obtain. If you’d like to end birth and death, then ultimately, you’ll end birth and death. No matter what it is you wish for, you’ll be able to attain it.

Within limitless countries the Guiding Masters appear in the world . Of all in the world, the Buddhas are without measure. In measureless lands, they constantly manifest coming into the world. Because of the power of their vows they respond everywhere throughout the ten directions. The reason all Buddhas can universally manifest in all worlds throughout the ten directions is because of the practice doors they cultivated in the past, and through the power of vows they brought forth. The Buddhas respond to fulfill all of the wishes of living beings.

Sutra:

At that time, Apart-From-Filth Banner Bodhisattva received the Buddha’s spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions, and spoke these verses:

The Tathagata’s great wisdom-light
Universally purifies all worlds.
Once these worlds have been purified,
He explains the Buddhadharma.

Supposing there are people who wish to see
Buddhas equal in number to living beings;
They will certainly all appear in response to such thoughts;
Yet there’s actually no place they come to.

Commentary:

At that time, Apart-From-Filth Banner Bodhisattva received the Buddha’s spiritual power. After Vigorous Banner Bodhisattva had finished speaking his verses praising the Buddha, at that time, Apart-From-Filth Banner Bodhisattva, who got his name because he constantly cultivated pure conduct, respectfully received Shakyamuni Buddha’s, which is to say, Vairochana Buddha’s, great, awesome, spiritual power, plus the great, awesome, spiritual power of the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time, and universally contemplated the ten directions. He pervasively contemplated the causes and conditions of all living beings throughout measureless worlds in the ten directions, and spoke these verses. He used verses to speak the Buddhadharma.

The Tathagata’s great wisdom-light universally purifies all worlds. Apart-From-Filth Banner Bodhisattva says the great wisdom light of the Thus Come One, the Buddha, purifies all worlds, universally causing living beings to obtain liberation. Once these worlds have been purified, he explains the Buddhadharma. The Buddha uses his great wisdom light and illumines the darkness in these worlds, causing them to be pure and adorned. Once he causes the worlds to be purified and adorned, he expounds and proclaims the Buddha’s Mind-Ground Dharma doors.

Supposing there are people who wish to see Buddhas equal in number to living beings. Living beings are numberless--there are a great many of them. Yet, even though there are so many living beings who all simultaneously want to see the Buddhas, there are none for whom the Buddhas do not appear. They will certainly all appear in response to such thoughts. The Buddhas appear before anyone who thinks about seeing them. Yet there’s actually no place they come to. According to the wishes of every living beings, they all get to see Buddhas right before them, yet originally, the Buddhas don’t come from anywhere, nor do they go anywhere. There’s no place the Buddhas come from and no place the place the Buddhas go to.

Coming, yet not coming;
Going, yet not going.

The Tathagatas accord with living beings, yet they don’t use the common person’s mind to fathom the world. If you use the mind of a common person to fathom the state of the Buddha, then you won’t be able to understand.

Sutra:

One who takes the Buddhas’ state as one’s own,
And concentrates one’s mind without rest,
Is one who will get to see Buddhas
Equal in number to one’s thoughts.

Accomplishing pristine, pure Dharmas,
Perfecting all merit and virtue,
One has total concentration
And never lets one’s mind forsake All-Wisdom.

Commentary:

One who takes the Buddhas’ state as one’s own, and concentrates one’s mind without rest, is one who will get to see Buddhas Equal in number to one’s thoughts. What’s meant by taking the Buddhas’ “state” as one’s own? It means to see the Buddhas right in front of your own face. This is telling you to contemplate the Buddha; to single-mindedly be mindful of the Buddha and never rest. Constantly, at all times, be attentive with single-minded determination. If you’re singleminded, then eventually you’ll be able to attain the samadhi of being mindful of the Buddha. When you attain the samadhi of mindfulness of the Buddha, at that time you’ll be able to see the Buddhas. That’s what’s meant by “one will get to see Buddhas equal in number to one’s thoughts.” This person will be able to see limitless and boundless Buddhas who are equal in number to living beings’ minds.

Accomplishing pristine, pure Dharmas, perfecting all merit and virtue, one has total concentration. You are capable of perfecting pure, white dharmas. These dharmas are pure; they aren’t defiled dharmas. If you can perfect the pure Buddhadharma, then you can accomplish all Buddhas’ merit and virtue. A person like this who can perfect all merit and virtue, who accomplishes pristine, pure dharmas, is one who And never lets one’s mind forsake All-Wisdom. He’s single-minded regarding All-Wisdom. His mind also never rests--it doesn’t stop. He constantly cultivates white, pure dharmas, and perfects all merit and virtue.

Sutra: The Guiding Master, for the sake of living beings,
Explains the Dharma in accord with what ought to be spoken.
Complying with potentials which can be transformed,
He universally manifests most supreme bodies.

The Buddha’s body and those of beings in the world
Are all without a self.
Awakening to this, one can accomplish Proper Enlightenment;
And moreover, proclaim it for living beings.

The lion among men,
With measureless power of self-mastery,
Manifests bodies in number equal to minds;
And these bodies are each different.

Commentary:

The Guiding Master, is another name for the Buddha. for the sake of living beings, he Explains the Dharma in accord with what ought to be spoken. In accord with the conditions which have ripened, all living beings should be crossed over, and so the Buddha manifests all the response and transformation bodies in accord with living beings, and speaks the Dharma. Complying with potentials which can be transformed, he universally manifests most supreme bodies. No matter what world or what country he is in, he is able to manifest response bodies in accord with the conditions of living beings. “Most supreme bodies” refers to his manifestation of the Buddha’s body.

The Buddha’s body and those of beings in the world are all without a self. The Buddha’s transformation body and the bodies of sentient beings are all ultimately selfless. Awakening to this, one can accomplish Proper Enlightenment. If you don’t have attachments to a self, you can accomplish Anuttarasamyaksambodhi--Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment--And moreover, proclaim it for living beings. The Buddha proclaims and speaks the Dharma for living beings.

The lion among men, with measureless power of self-mastery. Each Buddha of the ten directions and three periods of time has measureless, awesome, spiritual powers of self-mastery, and can Manifests bodies in number equal to minds--to the thoughts of living beings--that many. And these bodies are each different. Each of these bodies which appears is different.

Sutra:

The bodies of those in the worlds
Are the same as Buddhas’ bodies.
One with complete understanding of the self-nature
Is called a Buddha.

The Thus Come One has universal knowledge and views,
And completely understands all Dharmas.
But as to the Buddhadharma and Bodhi,
Neither one can be obtained.

The Guiding Master has no coming or going;
Moreover, he has no dwelling place.
Far apart from all upside-downness,
He is called one of Equal and Proper Enlightenment.

At that time, Constellation Banner Bodhisattva received the Buddha’s spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions, and spoke these verses:

The Thus Come One has no dwelling place,
And yet universally dwells in all countries.
Traveling to all lands
He can be seen in all places.

Commentary:

The bodies of those in the worlds are the same as Buddhas’ bodies. The bodies of all Buddhas and those of living beings in all the worlds are the same. There are just as many Buddhas’ bodies as there are living beings. One with complete understanding of the self-nature is called a Buddha. If you understand the principle that living beings’ nature is just the Buddha-nature, and that the Buddha-nature is just living beings’ nature--that they are two and yet not two; not two, and yet are two--then you can also understand the Buddha’s basic meaning.

The Thus Come One has universal knowledge and views. The Buddha possesses universal knowledge and universal views. There is nothing he doesn’t know, and nothing he doesn’t perceive. He completely understands all Dharmas. He has penetrated the substance of the true mark of all Buddhas. But as to the Buddhadharma and Bodhi, neither one can be obtained. The Buddhadharma is just Bodhi, the path of Enlightenment. However, these two cannot be obtained. These two are just names. If you seek their basic substance, you won’t be able to find it.

The Guiding Master has no coming or going. The Buddha doesn’t come from anywhere, and doesn’t go to any place. Moreover, he has no dwelling place. The Buddha produces the thought which is nowhere supported. So there’s no dwelling place. Far apart from all upside-downness, he is called one of Equal and Proper Enlightenment. Why is the Buddha called the “Buddha”? Because he is far apart from all upside-down dream thinking, and has attained ultimate Nirvana. When one isn’t upside-down, then there are no afflictions, and having no afflictions is called having Equal and proper Enlightenment. Fi you can be without any upside-downness, then you have obtained Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment.

At that time, when the Bodhisattva-Apart-From Filth Banner had finished speaking verses, Constellation Banner Bodhisattva, who constantly emits light which is like the stars, received the Buddha’s spiritual power. He too relied upon great, awesome, spiritual power of the Buddhas of the ten directions and that of Shakyamuni Buddha, that is, Vairochana Buddha, and universally contemplated the ten directions. He pervasively investigated the causes and conditions of living beings throughout the Buddha lands in the ten directions, and spoke these verses. He used verses to explain the principles of the Buddhadharma in order to teach and transform living beings.

The Thus Come One has no dwelling place. The thus Come One is nowhere present, yet nowhere not present. And yet, he universally dwells in all countries. It’s not that he only dwells in one place, but rather he universally and pervasively dwells in all Buddha lands. Traveling to all lands--he can go to all Buddha lands. He can be seen in all places. For this reason, all living beings throughout the worlds of the ten directions can see the Buddha.

Sutra:

The Buddha accords with the minds of living beings
And everywhere reveals all bodies.
He accomplishes the way, turns the Dharma wheel,
And then enters parinirvana.

All Buddhas are inconceivable.
Who is able to conceive of the Buddha?
Who is able to perceive proper enlightenment?
Who is able to manifest the most supreme body?

Commentary:

The Buddha accords with the minds of living beings. The Buddha, according with the conditions, fulfills the whishes of the minds of living beings. In order to do this he everywhere reveals all bodies. The Buddha manifests bodies according to what living beings wish to see. If a Buddha’s body is needed to cross over living beings, then the Buddha manifests the body of a Buddha to speak the Dharma. He manifests all kinds of bodies to cross over living beings. He accomplishes the way, turns the Dharma wheel. The Buddha leaves the inner court of the Tushita Heaven Palace, enters the womb, dwells in the womb, leaves the womb, leaves the home-life, accomplishes the Way, turns the Dharma Wheel, And then enters parinirvana. These are the Eight Marks of Accomplishing the Way which cause all living beings to bring forth the resolve for Bodhi.

All Buddhas are inconceivable. All of the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time are inconceivable. Who is able to conceive of the Buddha? Who can speak of the Buddha’s inconceivability? Only the Buddha and Bodhisattvas can fathom the pure, ultimate mark of all dharmas. Who is able to perceive proper enlightenment? Who can understand the Buddha’s principles? Who is able to manifest the most supreme body? Who can manifest the most victorious body? It’s only the Buddha who can manifest the body of a Buddha. It’s only the Buddha who is able to see the Buddha’s body. No one else is able to manifest the most supreme body to teach and transform living beings.

Sutra:

All Dharmas are Thus;
So too are the states of all Buddhas,
Even to the point that there is not a single Dharma
Which is subject to production and extinction in the midst of thusness.

Living beings falsely discriminate:
This is the Buddha, this is the world.
For one who completely penetrates the nature of Dharmas,
There is no Buddha and no world.

The Tathagata universally appears before us,
Causing living beings to believe and be happy.
The Buddha’s substance cannot be obtained;
Neither can it be seen.

Commentary:

All Dharmas are Thus. Previously the Bodhisattva said that all Buddhas are inconceivable. “Who is able to conceive of the Buddha?” “Who is able to perceive proper enlightenment?” “Who is able to manifest the most supreme body?” and now he says, “All dharmas are thus.” “All dharmas” include form dharmas, mind dharmas, dharmas interactive with the mind, non-interacting dharmas, and unconditioned dharmas. All these dharmas are still and unmoving. The substance of dharmas is Thus. “Thus” means they are quiescent and still. Originally, they’re just the way they are. They’re neither produced nor destroyed; neither defiled nor pure; and neither do they increase nor diminish. All dharmas are Thus; a single Thusness, not two. So too are the states of all Buddhas. The states of the Buddhas are also Thus. They are also not created. Originally, they’re just the way they are--they are Thus. This is true Even to the point that there is not a single Dharma which is subject to production and extinction in the midst of Thusness. If you use your mind to discriminate finely enough the wide variety of dharmas, you’ll find that:

Not a single dharma is established;
The myriad dharmas are all empty.

There isn’t a single dharma because all is Thus. “Thus” also means the original unmovingness of all dharmas. In the midst of Thusness, there isn’t any production or extinction.

Living beings falsely discriminate. Dharmas are neither produced nor extinguished, but living beings use their false, attached minds to make discriminations. They say that there’s production and extinction. Discriminating, they hold that the Buddha comes into the world and enters Nirvana. They say, “This is the Buddha, this is the world.” Living beings make many discriminations. For one who completely penetrates the nature of Dharmas, there is no Buddha and no world. If you understand the principle substance of the true mark of all dharmas, the (real) Buddha is Thusness, living beings are Thusness, and worlds are Thusness. All are originally unmoving. This is also saying that originally, there’s nothing. There’s no Buddha, no living beings, and no world. That’s speaking ultimately. It is only because of living beings’ attached minds that they say there are Buddhas, worlds, and living beings. This is just a case of having nothing to do and creating something to do. As the Sixth Patriarch put it,

The wind is not moving, nor is the flag. Your minds, Worthy Ones, are moving.

It’s only because people’s minds move that discriminations arise, causing them to say, “This is Dharma, this is Buddha, these are living beings, and this is the world.”

The Tathagata universally appears before us. The Buddha universally manifests before all living beings, Causing living beings to believe and be happy. He causes all living beings to bring forth a mind of happiness and delight. However, The Buddha’s substance cannot be obtained. Originally, the Buddha can’t be attained by marks. As the Vajra Sutra says,

All marks are false and illusory.
If one can see that all marks are false and illusory,
Then one can see the Thus Come One.

So the Buddha’s body can’t be obtained. You can’t get attached to the marks of the Buddha. And Neither can it be seen. The Buddha’s true Dharma body also can’t be seen. The Buddha is nowhere present and yet nowhere not present. All living beings abide within the Dharma body of the Buddha, it’s just that they aren’t aware of it.

Sutra:

If you can, while within the world,
Be far apart from all attachments,
And be happy and unobstructed in mind,
Then you’ll enlighten to the Dharma.

What appears through spiritual powers
Is called the Buddha.
At all times throughout the three periods
He may be sought; But he doesn’t exist.

If one can know this,
Then the mind and all Dharmas
Are completely known and perceived;
And one can quickly become a Tathagata.

Within words and language is revealed
The self-mastery of all Buddhas.
Proper Enlightenment transcends words and language;
Yet words and language are falsely used to express it.

Commentary:

If you can, while within the world, be far apart from all attachments, and be happy and unobstructed in mind, then you’ll enlighten to the Dharma. “If” means that this is a hypothetical situation. Basically, people can’t do it, but the Bodhisattva says “if”--just supposing that living beings could do it. Basically living beings do not understand this Dharma, but here, it’s theorized what it would be like if they did understand. So the Bodhisattva proposes this situation. There are two kinds of Worlds: 1) The World of Sentient Beings. This refers to the world of living beings, which is also called the world of Proper Retribution. 2) The Material World. This refers to the world of things and is also known as the World of Dependent Retribution. Now the Bodhisattva is supposing that within the worlds of sentient beings you can “be far apart from all attachments.” “All attachments” includes the things you like. For instance, greed for wealth creates attachments to wealth; greed for form creates attachment to form; greed for fame creates attachments to fame; greed to eat good things creates attachments to food; and for people who are greedy for sleep, there’s an attachment towards sleep.

This is how greed and the five desires work. For example, if you don’t allow someone to get a lot of sleep, that person will get afflicted to the extent that his vicious nature will manifest and he could even be driven to the point of murder, just from not having enough sleep. Greed for good things to eat is also an attachment. If you don’t give people good things to eat, they become very unhappy. They’re greedy for the five kinds of flavors, which are: bitter, hot, sour, salty, and sweet. Everyone has his or her own preference for flavor. Some like things sweet, some like thing salty, some sour, hot, or bitter. So everyone has his or her own attachments.

Then there are people who have an attachment of fame. No matter what happens, they want to save face. They want their names to be well-known, and they can’t break this attachment. There is even a fiercer attachment and this is towards form. Some people are obsessed by beautiful forms, to the point that their every thought is related to the pursuit of sex, and this kind of attachment is also not easy to break. Then there are those who are greedy for wealth. At all times they want to make it rich. They constantly think of money and consequently, are really upside-down. When you look into the Chinese character for “money” (錢), you’ll find it is written with a gold radical on the left and two spears on the right side. As the ancients put it,

Two spears fight for gold, and the killing energy mouths high.
People bicker and squabble just because of it.
Those who can make good use of money can transcend the Triple World,
But those who can’t make good use of it, can’t be separated from their evil offenses.

Whereas those who know how to use money can establish good merit and virtue with it, those who don’t know how to use money only plant bad cause with it. So you should be far apart from all these attachments, to the point of breaking the attachment to a “self.” wanting things only for your own benefit is being selfish. Selfishness and self-benefit are attachments to a self.

You can also develop an attachment to dharma in studying the Buddhadharma. For instance, a person can lecture a Sutra and so that person develops an attachment towards that Sutra. He says, “I can understand the Buddhadharma better that you,” and this is just an attachment to dharmas. Originally there isn’t any attachment before studying the Buddhadharma--he doesn’t produce that kind of attachment--but once he studies the Buddhadharma, he produces this kind of attachment. This person becomes conceited and arrogant. He can’t see anybody else. And this all comes about because of attachment to dharmas.

Living beings are like silkworms making their cocoons. They are themselves up and can’t attain liberation. There are all kinds of attachments, but if you can be apart from them And be happy and unobstructed in mind, then you’ll be able to attain liberation. To be apart from all obstructions is liberation. To be without obstructions is to be happy. At that time, your mind gives rise to great happiness and you truly become free! Not having any attachments is just attaining liberation. Then you’ll enlighten to the Dharma. At that time, you’ll understand that dharmas are originally complete within our self-natures. There’s a precious pearl inside each of us and it can’t be sought after outside of the self-nature. The treasure is in your own pocket; it’s not something you look for somewhere else. So if you can understand that all dharmas are originally within your own self-nature, then you’ll be able to understand and open enlightenment.

What appears through spiritual powers is called the Buddha. The Buddha’s great awesome, spiritual power manifests a response body through transformation. Because he can manifest this, he is said to be the Buddha. This is a transformational body.

At all times throughout the three periods he may be sought; but he doesn’t exist. The past, the present, and the future are the three periods. Past time can’t be got at, present time can’t be got at, and future time can’t be got at. Why is this? Past time has already come and gone. You say now is the present time, but the present time doesn’t stand still; it doesn’t stop. You make reference to the future, but the future hasn’t yet come. The three kinds of though--of past, present, and future--cannot be got at. The three periods of time can’t be got at. If you go looking for them, you will find they can’t be got at.

If one can know this, then the mind and all Dharmas are completely known and perceived. If you can understand that everything is impermanent, that nothing can be got at, that nothing is true and actual, that everything is empty and false, then you’ll realize that your mind, your intention, and your attention to all the various dharmas are still applications of effort at the gates of knowledge and views. None of them have come to the ultimate state where they are apart from knowledge and views. They are still functions of the gates of knowledge and views of the six roots: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. And it’s right there--at the six roots--where you need to apply your skill. If one can do this, then one can quickly become a Tathagata. If you can understand that everything is not true, but is just knowledge and views, then you can very quickly attain the wisdom of the Thus Come One.

Within words and language is revealed the self-mastery of all Buddhas. Through the use of language, the self-mastery of all Buddhas’ spiritual powers is revealed. Proper Enlightenment transcends words and language. Ultimate proper enlightenment transcends all words and language. It is a state wherein,

The path of language and words is cut off;
The place of the mind’s activities is extinguished.

“The path of language is cut off”--there’s nothing. “The place of the mind’s activities is extinguished”--if you try to think about this, you can’t. Although the mouth wants to say something, the words aren’t there. Although the mind wants to contemplate, the thoughts are gone--there’s nothing there. You want to think about it, but you can’t, and this is an inconceivable state.

Yet words and language are falsely used to express it. The Buddha transcends all words and language. Words and language are cut off, and the place of the mind’s activities is extinguished, however, we still use language to explain the state of the Buddha. Originally, words and language are falsely used to explain this state, and no amount of speaking about it can clarify it. Still, words and language are spoken, otherwise people wouldn’t know of the true and actual state of the Buddha. And although we speak about it, there’s no end to this explanation, for it can’t be exhausted with words.

Sutra:

At that time, Dharma Banner Bodhisattva received the Buddha’s spiritual power, universally contemplated the ten directions, and spoke these verses.

**Commentary:**

At that time, Constellation Banner Bodhisattva finished speaking verses, and so Dharma Banner Bodhisattva arose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, put his palms together respectfully, and spoke to the Buddha. He received the Buddha’s, Shakyamuni Buddha’s spiritual power , that is, the great, awesome, spiritual power of Vairochana Buddha, and also of the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time, universally contemplated the ten directions, and spoke these verses. He contemplated the causes and conditions of living beings throughout the ten directions and three periods of time and reiterated his meaning in verses.

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When the time comes to circumambulate, take a look to make sure that people are walking in accordance with Dharma. What is meant by “according with Dharma”? when people are circumambulating, some put their palms together, and some have them separated. When we walk, we should make sure that everyone has their palms in a “cupped” position just above their waist, and then when the bell is rung and we switch the chanting pattern, someone can watch to make sure that everyone has their palms together. Maybe someone can be Dharma Protector and make sure that people act in accord with the Dharma.

Perhaps there are new people who don’t understand, and you need to tell them. So when we start circumambulating, someone should stand beside the stairs or beside the window, and make sure that everyone has their palms together. Then this will make everything appear solid and awesome. Everyone should be careful and pay attention to this. When new people come here and don’t know where to bow to the Buddha, you should tell them where to bow. If they don’t know where to sit, you should tell them where to sit. This should be done by the Upasakas and Upasikas; it shouldn’t be done by left-home people. Upasakas and Upasikas are the Dharma Protectors, and should be responsible for these matters. They should protect and uphold the Way-place.

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Sutra:

It would be better to constantly and completely endure
All of the world’s suffering,
Than to ever be apart from the Tathagatas
And not see their power of self-mastery.

If there are living beings
Who have not brought forth the resolve for Bodhi,
Upon once hearing the Buddha’s name,
They will certainly accomplish Bodhi.

Commentary:

It would be better to constantly and completely endure all of the world’s suffering, than to ever be apart from the Tathagatas and not see their power of self-mastery. To eat but not eat your fill; to dress, but not dress warm enough, is called enduring suffering.

That means at all time one is willing to completely and incessantly endure suffering on behalf of all the people in the world.

There are Three Kinds of Sufferings: the Tree Sufferings, the Eight Sufferings, and the Limitless Sufferings. You want to endure them all. You’d rather undergo this “than to ever be apart from the Tathagatas.” The reason you want to undergo this suffering is so that you’re never separated from the Buddhas. You vow, “I’d rather receive the suffering of living beings than to ever be apart from the Buddhadharma. I want to constantly see the Buddha’s awesome spiritual powers of self-mastery. I want to see the Buddha, hear the Dharma and see the Sangha.”

If there are living beings who have not brought forth the resolve for Bodhi, upon once hearing the Buddha’s name, they will certainly accomplish Bodhi . Supposing in this world there are living beings who haven’t been able to draw near the Triple Jewel, who haven’t been able to meet with a Good Knowing Advisor, who haven’t been able to give rise to the resolve to become enlightened--they haven’t produced the resolve for Bodhi. However, if they can hear the Buddha’s name just one time, it is a certainty that one day they can become enlightened. Fi it passes by the ear just once, it’s eternally a seed of the Way. On this one occasion that they hear the Buddha’s name, a Vajra seed is planted within the Eighth Consciousness, and there is no way that it can be destroyed. So the Bodhisattva assures us in this verse, “They will certainly accomplish Bodhi.” In the future, these people will accomplish Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment--the fruition of Buddhahood.

Sutra:

If there is a person of wisdom
Who in a single thought, can bring forth a mind for the Way,
He will certainly become an Unsurpassed Honored One;
But he must be cautious not to produce doubts or delusions.

The Tathagata’s power of ease and comfort
Is difficult to meet in measureless kalpas.
If one produces a single thought of faith,
One will quickly certify to the Unsurpassed Way.

Supposing within thought after thought,
One makes offerings to limitless Buddhas
And yet fails to know the true and actual Dharma:
Then one can’t be said to be making offerings.

Commentary:

If there is a person of wisdom. Now supposing there is a person with wisdom. Originally, he doesn’t have wisdom, but supposing he acquires some. And further, this person in a single thought, can bring forth a mind for the Way. In a single thought, he can bring forth a mind for Bodhi. Then He will certainly become an Unsurpassed Honored One. Because he is a person of wisdom, in a single thought he brought forth a mind for Bodhi, to the extent that in thought after thought his mind is set on Bodhi, and so “he will certainly become an Unsurpassed Honored One.” He will certainly accomplish Buddhahood. But he must be cautious not to produce doubts or delusions. All of you living beings should certainly not harbor any doubts with regard to this principle; you shouldn’t produce a mind of doubt. In a single though you produce a mind for Bodhi, but then you start to have doubts. “Will I be able to accomplish Buddhahood?” you have this doubt, “If I just have one thought of producing a mind for the Way, how can I possibly accomplish Buddhahood?” be careful that you don’t produce such thoughts of doubts and delusions.

The Tathagata’s power of ease and comfort Is difficult to meet in measureless kalpas. The Buddha has self-mastery and great, awesome spiritual powers, and in measureless kalpas is difficult to meet. In measureless and boundless kalpas of time, it isn’t easy to meet the Buddha; it’s not easy to meet one of Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment. However If one produces a single thought of faith, one will quickly certify to the Unsurpassed Way. If person is able to produce a mind of faith within a single though, then he can very quickly accomplish Buddhahood--the Unsurpassed Way, the fruition of Buddhahood.

Supposing within thought after thought, one makes offerings to limitless Buddhas. Supposing in each thought you can make offerings to limitless and boundless Buddhas--that many Buddhas. And yet, such a one fails to know the true and actual Dharma: Then one can’t be said to be making offerings. If you can’t understand the true and real mark of the Buddhadharma, if you can’t understand the ultimate dharma of Nirvana, then this can’t be called making offerings. If you can’t understand this true and actual principle, then even if you were to make offerings to limitless and boundless Buddhas, still you wouldn’t be truly making offerings. Making true offerings is when you understand the principle of the ultimate dharma of True Marks. When you understand the principle that the True Mark is without marks; when you understand the principle that all dharmas are empty, and you don’t become attached to marks; when within marks you’re don’t apart from marks and not attached to marks, then this is a true and actual offering. But, if you don’t understand that offerings should be apart from marks, then these offerings can’t be called true and actual offerings.

Sutra:

If one hears such Dharmas
From which all Buddhas are born,
Although one passes through limitless sufferings,
Still one does not renounce the practice of Bodhi.

Upon once hearing of great wisdom,
This Dharma which all Buddhas enter,
Universally throughout the Dharma realm,
One becomes a Guiding Master of the three periods of time.

Although one may exhaust the bounds of the future,
Pervasively roaming throughout all Buddha lands;
If one does not seek this wonderful Dharma,
One will never be able to accomplish Bodhi.

**Commentary:**

If one hears such Dharmas From which all Buddhas are born. Previously, it was said in a verse that:

Supposing within though after thought,
One makes offerings to limitless Buddhas
And yet fails to know the true and actual Dharma:
Then one can’t be said to be making offerings.

So it says, “If one hears such dharmas,” these true and actual dharmas. What are true and actual dharmas? They are dharmas which are apart from marks. What are dharmas which are apart from marks? This refers to the Mind-Seal Dharma. What is the Mind-Seal Dharma? The Mind-Seal Dharma is apart from words and language. It’s the mind that’s apart from the marks of reasoning. It’s apart from language. Apart from all marks is just all dharmas. This is the primary meaning of the Middle Way. What is the primary meaning of the Middle Way? It isn’t one-sided; you do not fall into existence nor do you get hung up in emptiness.

Not being attached to either emptiness or existence is the meaning of the “Middle Way.” The Middle Way is the Real Mark wonderful Dharma. The Real Mark, wonderful Dharma is the understanding of the meaning of the Middle Way. “Such dharma” refers to the ultimate meaning of the Middle Way “from which all Buddhas are born.” What dharmas are all Buddhas produced from? They are produced from the Real Mark, that which is markless and yet not devoid of any marks. This is the Mind-Seal wonderful Dharma, the primary meaning of the Middle Way. It is True Emptiness which doesn’t obstruct Wonderful Existence, and Wonderful Existence which doesn’t obstruct True Emptiness. That is the Dharma spoken of here. And whoever obtains this Dharma will be able to accomplish Buddhahood. If you can rely on this Dharma to cultivate, then you’ll be able to accomplish Buddhahood. If you don’t rely on this ultimate Dharma of the Middle Way to cultivate then you’re still a living being. So the Bodhisattva tells us that it is that “from which all Buddhas are born.” All Buddhas are born from understanding the meaning of the Middle Way.

Although one passes through limitless sufferings, still one does not renounce the practice of Bodhi . If you can cultivate this Dharma--even to the point of personally undergoing limitless suffering--then you won’t renounce the practice of Bodhi. Not retreating from Bodhi conduct is just to cultivate the Ultimate Meaning of the Middle Way. It is also cultivating the wonderful Mind-Seal Dharma, the Real Mark Dharma, the inconceivable Dharma for which,

The path of language and words is cut off;
The place of the mind’s activities is extinguished.

Therefore, one doesn’t ever retreat from the Bodhi conduct. One doesn’t ever turn away from the Dharma of the Middle Way.

Upon once hearing of great wisdom, this Dharma which all Buddhas enter, universally throughout the Dharma realm, one becomes a Guiding Master of the three periods of time . Upon hearing of the Dharma of great wisdom, one produces great wisdom. If you cultivate this Dharma, you’ll produce great wisdom. What Dharma is this? This is what was previously spoken of--the Mind-Seal Dharma, the Dharma “from which all Buddhas are born.” All Buddhas come forth from this Dharma, and all Buddhas enter this Dharma. To enter this Dharma you need to understand it, then you can accomplish Buddhahood. All Buddhas also enter and cultivate this Dharma. This Dharma totally pervades the exhaustion of empty space and the Dharma Realm. Those who cultivate to become Guiding Masters of the three periods of time, become Buddhas of the past, present, and future. As for us living beings of the present, although we haven’t accomplish Buddhahood yet, we’re all future Buddhas. You shouldn’t look down upon yourself as being so small, so unimportant, or so common.

People say few words to you and you can’t put it down. For example, somebody says you’re no good, and it just about knocks you over to the point that you can’t get up. You say to yourself, “Oh, I’m no good; I can’t cultivate! Oh, I don’t have right to be cultivating, I’m really rotten! They all say I’m rotten. My cultivation is absolutely useless!” or you say, “Oh, I’m no good; I don’t have anything going for me. I’m just too rotten!” too rotten?! No, you’re just too good! You can be good. So why do you fall over and not get up? Just stand up! Don’t fall over and let people push you around--don’t be such a spineless worm. A person with any backbone has his feet on the ground and his head in the heavens all the time. So if somebody says you’re no good you should reflect, “You say I’m no good? I’ll give you some thing to look at!” and not, “They all say I’m no good, I can’t handle it any longer, I’m just going to lay down and die--that’s the best.” You prefer to die rather than cultivate. “They all look down on me so I’m going to commit suicide. They’re all bad to me--I just want to die!” you have courage to kill yourself, but you don’t have the courage to cultivate. What meaning is there in this? A person who wants to die and not cultivate can’t even make it into the rank of being considered a stupid person. After all, if you’ve reached the point where you’re willing to die, then it should be even more okay to cultivate. You should have the attitude, “I’ll cultivate and you can just consider me as if dead.” After all, you cultivate in order to be a living dead person”? it means you’re going to kill all of your desires, all of your greed for fame, offerings, and so forth--all of those desires.

One may exhaust the bounds of the future , that is, exhaust all future kalpas, Pervasively roaming throughout all Buddha lands. One goes to all Buddha lands, drawing near to and making offerings to all Buddhas. However, If one does not seek this wonderful Dharma--if one doesn’t seek this wonderful Mind-Seal Dharma, if one doesn’t understand the primary meaning of the Middle Way as being the Real Mark which is unmarked--then One will never be able to accomplish Bodhi. It doesn’t matter how long or how far you travel, you’ll never accomplish Buddhahood. If you want to accomplish Buddhahood, you absolutely have to understand that,

True Emptiness doesn’t obstruct Wonderful Existence, and
Wonderful Existence doesn’t obstruct True Emptiness.
True Emptiness isn’t empty and Wonderful Existence doesn’t exist.

This is the ultimate meaning of the Middle Way. This is the Mind-Seal Dharma. All Buddhas have transmitted this Mind-Seal Dharma. If you don’t understand the Mind-Seal Dharma, you won’t obtain the wonderful Dharma nor will you accomplish Bodhi. No matter how long you cultivate, you won’t be able to accomplish Buddhahood.

The first thing you have to do in order to cultivate this Dharma is cut off all desire. If you can’t cut off desire, then you won’t be able to leave the dust; you won’t be able to transcend the Triple realm. Therefore, in cultivating this Dharma, you have to sever the mind of sexual desire. Each of you should pay particular attention to this point. Men shouldn’t think about finding wives; women shouldn’t go looking for husbands. If you want to cultivate but can’t put down the pleasures of the world, then you won’t be able to attain the fruition. So it’s said,

Fish and bear paws are both delicious,
But you can’t eat them both at the same time.

If you want to cultivate world-transcending Dharmas, you can’t hang on to worldly dharmas. If you want to hang on to worldly dharmas, how are you going to transcend the world? However, although we wish to cultivate transcendental Dharmas, we should realize that,

The Buddhadharma can be found right in the world. It can’t be looked for apart from the world. To look for Bodhi apart from the world is like looking for a rabbit with horns.

--Sixth Patriarch Sutra

 And so you should study world-transcending Dharma right within the world, and not seek them apart from the world.

Sutra:

From beginningless time onward, living beings
Have long revolved in birth and death,
Not understanding the true and actual Dharma.
Because of this, all Buddhas come into the world.

All Dharmas are indestructible;
Nor is there any one who can destroy them.
This comfortable, great, bright light
Universally appears in the world.

Commentary:

From beginningless time onward, living beings have long revolved in birth and death . Living beings revolve in birth and death within the six paths without a beginning or an end. In this beginningless and endless time, living beings spin back and forth, going around and around. They are just like motes of dust--suddenly in the heavens; suddenly on the ground; suddenly they are in the path of people; suddenly in the paths of hungry ghosts; suddenly they become animals; suddenly they fall into hells; and all of a sudden they’re asuras. This is what is meant by no time when it begins and no time when it ends. At whatever time you are able to certify to the fruit and accomplish Buddhahood, at that point, you will be able to stop the wheel of birth and death. But before you become a Buddha, you are still turning on the revolving wheel.

Even Bodhisattvas experience a kind of delusion during transmigration and moving about in a skandha body, and Arhats become confused from dwelling in the womb. So even when great lords of the Dharma body appear in the human world, sometimes they find themselves caught up in the flow of birth and death to the extent that their brains are addled and their heads are bewildered and they don’t know how they can cut off the flow of birth and death. Birth and death means being born and dying; dying and being born again. You can speak of major births and deaths, and there are also minor births and deaths. On the day that you are born, although there’s birth, there’s also a kind of death. Because on the day that you’re born, you bring along with you the day of your death. This life that we lives is a major birth and death, and every single thought that goes by is a minor death. The day that we’re born is also the day that we die. Because when there is birth, there is also a death, and if there were no births, then there would be no deaths.

To speak about “beginningless,” most people explain beginningless by saying that it has no start and no end. “Without a beginning” means the time from beginningless kalpas in the past. There’s no beginning to kalpas and no end to kalpas. But if you talk about it back and forth, exactly what is it? What does it mean to have no beginning and no end? It’s what we call “O”--a zero. In Chinese, it’s called a ling (零). This zero has no beginning and no end. There’s no point where it starts and no point where it ends. It’s a complete, round circle and it represents the beginningless and endless. The beginningless is represented by the zero. If you break this zero, then it becomes a one, and that is called a beginning.

Last night I told each of you to pay special attention to this passage, and today I’m going to tell you about the zero which is very important. Once you cut it open, there’s a one--that which has a beginning. Add a one to it and you have two. Add another one to it and you’ve got three. Add another one and you’ve got four, then five, six, seven, eight, nine, and ten. Once there are ten it multiplies into one hundred, and one hundred multiplies into one thousand, and one thousand multiplies into ten thousand, one hundred thousand, a million, a billion, ten billion, up to a figure that can’t be reckoned. Now in the Scientific Age we’ve made rockets which orbit in space. They can orbit around in space without ever stopping. This is a product of these numbers. The beginning of numbers makes it possible for rockets to venture into space. Physics is just a function, the myriad transformations and changes of numbers. That’s the beginning

Well, what about the end? Right now we don’t know when the end will be. The end refers to the fourth of the four stages of: formation, existing, decay, and emptiness. The end refers to the period of going empty. The formation of a kalpa is its beginning. There are twenty small kalpas of formation, twenty small kalpas of existing, twenty small kalpas of decay, and twenty small kalpas of emptiness. You could speak of this in terms of a beginning and an end. So now we are speaking of all living beings from beginningless time onward. Where do all these living beings come from? Let’s investigate it. Let’s talk about the human race. Would you say men came first or women came first? If you say men came first, without any women, how did the men get here? And if you say women came first, if there weren’t any men, how could there be women? This is also the beginningless because no one knows where it began.

You can also talk about chickens. Which came first, the chicken or the egg? From beginningless kalpas onward, there were no chickens. Where did they come from? They came from eggs. Now if there were no chickens, how could there be eggs? So this isn’t something you can solve with research. This principle is just a principle of the beginningless. People also came from this no beginning, from this zero. Because they came from this zero, there’s no beginning, no end, no inside, no outside, no big, and no small. In terms of the small, this zero represents a small mote of dust, an atom. If you speak about it in larger terms, it includes the entire Dharma Realm. To the end of space and pervading the Dharma Realm, nothing gets left outside of the zero. To the end of space and the end of the Dharma Realm, if you pound it all into fine motes of dust, still, any one of those tiniest notes of dust is itself the zero.

So this zero is the source of all creation. It has no beginning and no end. It’s the principle of True Emptiness and Wonderful Existence. The zero, if spoken of in large terms, includes all of space and the Dharma Realm. This is True Emptiness. If you shrink it way down, it turns into a single atom. And although these atoms are small, they make up Wonderful Existence. The zero is True Emptiness and Wonderful Existence. All of you should think this over. If you understand this doctrine, then you understand the true Dharma. If you don’t understand this doctrine, then you’re still a confused, muddled person and you have no real wisdom. If you’re enlightened, the zero is a great, bright, wisdom light. If you haven’t become enlightened, then it is no--light, in other words, ignorance. This ignorance is also the zero. Wisdom light also makes up the zero. The zero is beginningless, endless; it has no inside, no outside; it is neither small nor large. The zero is so large that nothing gets outside of it. You can draw it as large as you like. If you want to shrink it down you can shrink it down as small as you want. It’s so big there’s nothing outside of it, and so small you can’t fit anything inside. If you draw it really large, then it is the pure basic source of the wonderful suchness nature. If you shrink it way down, make it very, very small, it becomes your very first thought of ignorance. So when I speak of the “beginningless,” that’s the way I explain it.

Living beings “have long revolved in birth and death.” In the six paths of rebirth, the revolving wheel is included in the zero. Not being able to smash through the zero, one is born and dies, dies and then is born again. And nobody knows for how many kalpas one turns in the six paths. This is called turning in the six paths of birth and death for a long time. Isn’t this really terrifying--turning around and around in the revolving wheel?

I’ll present another topic for you. This turning for a long time refers to what you have created through your continual thought processes. If you produce a defiled thought, then when that thought matures, you may become an animal, a hungry ghost, or fall to become a hell-dweller. However, if you become just a little bit purer, you can be born as a human being or an asura, or perhaps get born in the heavens. These different paths of rebirth all come about from thoughts. The revolving wheel is created by your thoughts alone.

We undergo the retribution of the six paths because of the karma which our thoughts create. It doesn’t happen immediately, but eventually we receive retribution for our thoughts. In the distant past, say, if you had false thoughts about the heavens, then you will eventually be born in the heavens. If you had false thoughts about asuras, then you will sometime have to be an asura. If you had false thoughts about human beings, then you will spend time as a human being. If you had false thoughts of animals, you will become an animal. Having had hungry ghost thoughts, you will have to be a hungry ghost. Having had hellish thoughts, you will fall into the hells. If you mainly did offensive things and created evil karma, then you will fall into the three evil paths. If you did good things which gained merit and virtue, you will be born in the three good paths. This is speaking in very general terms. If one were to speak of it in detail, one couldn’t finish explaining it until the end of time. So the world is the creation of the false thinking of living beings. If people didn’t have false thinking, the whole world would be empty.

But living beings continue to get born and die, Not understanding the true and actual Dharma. Living beings fail to understand the principle of the Dharma of True Emptiness and Wonderful Existence--the Real Mark of True Suchness, which is the true and actual Dharma. The Dharma of True Emptiness and Wonderful Existence is what I have just explained as the zero. It is through the zero that this huge heaven and huge earth were created. And this huge world was also born from the zero. The myriad living beings also came out of the zero. Everything has come forth from the zero. This is because the zero is not included in numbers--it transcends numbers. It has no beginning, no end, nothing inside of it, nor outside of it; it’s neither big, nor small.

He rolls it up and secretly hides it away;
And lets it go to fill the entire world.

--Verses from the Hear Sutra (BTTS)

It would seem to disappear. The “true and actual Dharma” is just the Dharma of True Emptiness and Wonderful Existence.

True Emptiness is not empty. Why isn’t it empty? Because it has Wonderful Existence. And Wonderful Existence is not existence. Why is it not existence? Because it still has True Emptiness. True Emptiness doesn’t obstruct Wonderful Existence, and Wonderful Existence doesn’t obstruct True Emptiness. This principle solves the problem of “which came first, the men or the women?” it also solves the problem of “which came first, the chicken or the egg?” in fact, all of the questions can be solved by using the zero.

Why is this? The zero is True Emptiness. And within True Emptiness, Wonderful Existence manifests. All creation can manifest. Although there is Wonderful Existence, it is not separate from True Emptiness. If you haven’t attained the Mind-Seal Dharma of all Buddhas, you won’t be able to understand this. If you understand the “using the mind to seal the mind” Dharma of all Buddhas, then you’ll understand this Dharma. So “not understanding the true and actual Dharma,” living beings put a head on top of a head; they run around on a donkey looking for a donkey; they look outside, grasping outwardly, and they don’t know to return the light and reverse the illumination. The true and actual Dharma is inherent within their original self-nature. It is forever complete within their own self-nature. It is fundamental to their self-nature. They don’t have to go out looking for it. If you look outside, you can look for 80,000 aeons, but you’ll never find it. But if you can return the light and reverse the illumination, then you’ll immediately realize it. So it says,

The sea of suffering is boundless,
But a turn of the head is the other shore.

This means, if you look outside, the sea of suffering is boundless. But if you turn around and look inside and apply your efforts to your self-nature, then that is to “turn your head and arrive at the other shore.”

Because of this, because living beings don’t understand the true and actual Dharma, all Buddhas come into the world. We living beings are so upside down and confused. All day long we seek after false conditions. We get caught up in the six sense organs and the six objects and we run after them. Originally all Buddhas abide in the Pure Land of Constant Stillness and Light, sitting in full lotus and wrapped in samadhi. But now they enter the world. Why is this? Because they see that you and I--all these stupid creatures--are really pitiful! All day long we forget about what is true and all we know how to do is to get attached to what is false.

People don’t know to turn away from their confusion and head for enlightenment; to turn away from the false and head for the true; to borrow what is false in order to cultivate what is true; to turn around and look for it inside. This is really pitiful. So, all Buddhas, in their samadhi, produce a mind of great compassion and come into the world to show living beings how to get out of the path of confusion. But we people get caught up pursuing false conditions and don’t recognize the true Dharma.

The Buddha speaks the Dharma for us and the more the Buddha speak, the more we try to run away. We try to turn back; we don’t listen. The Buddha gets so nervous he stars shaking his head! What is he to do? We’ve turned our back on him, but the Buddha pays no heed. Instead, he races around and gets in front of us again so as to meet us face to face while he goes right on teaching and transforming us. That’s exactly why all Buddhas come into the world.

All Dharmas are indestructible. True and actual Dharma cannot be destroyed by any outside ways. Nor is there any one who can destroy them. If you understand and recognize the true and actual Dharma, then you know that it includes everything to the ends of empty space and the exhaustion of the Dharma Realm. No matter whether it’s the Buddha, or a heavenly demon, or one of outside ways--they are all included in this true and actual Dharma; they can’t get out of the Dharma Realm. So the heavenly demons and those of outside ways eventually have to comply with the Proper Dharma. Why? Because they can’t destroy it. The Proper Dharma is indestructible. Nobody can destroy the true Dharma. If it can be destroyed, then it’s no the true and actual Dharma, because the true and actual, Dharma can’t be ruined.

This comfortable, great, bright light universally appears in the world. When you cultivate the zero to perfection, then the storehouse of great bright light which exhausts empty space and the Dharma Realm appears. It universally shines throughout the world in order to instruct all living beings to end birth and be free of death. It is just the Dharma door of returning the light and reversing the illumination; returning to the root and going back to the source. This is your great wisdom light which destroys all your ignorance so that your original Dharma-nature can shine. Even if you don’t believe this, go ahead and try it out, and then when the time comes, when it happens to you, there will be no way that you won’t believe it. If you don’t believe it, you’ll still have to believe it, because that’s the way it is, and what reason would you have for no believing?

The great, brilliant storehouse is your own. It’s not something other people give to you. It’s not something that the Buddha can give you. It’s your own; it’s inherent within yourself.