

The Secrets of the Tathāgata

A Mahāyāna Sūtra

*Translated by
Shaku Shingan*

The Secrets of the Tathāgata

*The Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Inconceivable Secrets of the
Tathāgata*

A Translation of the Tathāgataguhyā Sūtra
from the Chinese of Dharmarakṣa
of the Song Dynasty

Translated by Shaku Shingan

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Any suggestions and corrections will be considered for future editions. Please feel free to contact the translator at: shakushingan@gmail.com

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Preface

1. Overview

The *Secrets of the Tathāgata Sūtra* is primarily of historical importance to Indo-Nepalese Buddhism and had a considerable influence on the commentarial literature of India and Nepal. The sūtra has been translated into Chinese twice and Tibetan once. Despite this, its eventual practical disappearance in Nepalese manuscript sources and its lower importance in the Chinese and Tibetan traditions appears to have contributed to its neglect by contemporary scholarship. Despite this, as the fortunate reader of this translation will soon discover, it is a quintessential Mahāyāna sūtra, full of exciting narrative and thought-provoking doctrinal content.

This preface will cover the technical aspects of this sūtra, including some historical and academic points of interest. More general readers might prefer to skip directly to the introduction for a purely thematic and doctrinal overview.

2. Names

The sūtra is known by many names. In Sanskrit, it is most often referred to as the *Tathāgataguhyasūtra* or the *Tathāgataguhyakasūtra* (both translate to *Secrets of the Tathāgata Sūtra*), with a common variant being the *Tathāgatācintyaguhyanirdeśa* (*The Instruction on the Inconceivable Secrets of the Tathāgata*). An old reference in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārahāsyā* sees it mentioned as the *Guhyakādhipatinirdeśa* (i.e. *The Instruction of The Lord of Mysteries*, or *Vajrapāṇi*).¹ The Chinese text, which is the basis of this translation, refers to it by many names in its entrustment section, as the Buddha is depicted as saying there:

This sūtra is called *The Section on Vajrapāṇi*, or *The Teaching of the Secrets of the Tathāgata*, or *The Inconceivable Buddha-Dharma*, or *The Heap of Immeasurable Merits*. It is called these names; you should take it up and bear it!

The term “section” refers to its eventual position as an assembly in the *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra* collection. The “guhyaka” is to be read in the plural (“secrets”), as it refers to a set of three secrets of the Tathāgata: those of body, speech, and mind. In this preface, I shall refer to it, for short, as the *Tathāgataguhyā*.

¹ Sylvain Lévi ed., *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra: Exposé de la doctrine du Grand Véhicule*, Vol. 1, Libraire Honoré Champion: Paris, 1907, 79–81.

3. Versions

The oldest version of the sūtra is as the third assembly of the *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra* (T310). It was initially translated as an independent sūtra by the prolific translator Dharmarakṣa (230–316). The date of this first translation is given as 288 CE. It was incorporated into the *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra* collection by Bodhiruci in the Tang Dynasty, around 706 to 713 CE. This translation has no chapter divisions, and the language shows heavy Confucian and Daoist influence. Nonetheless, it can be easily seen how it corresponds with the later translation.¹

The later translation (T312) was by another Dharmarakṣa, who entered the Song in 1004 and died in 1058. While the colophon of this translation suggests that it corrected mistakes made in the earlier translation, it is also based on a later Sanskrit or Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit source. This latter translation features some expansion but also some contraction in places. Most significantly, it features chapter divisions corresponding to the Tibetan edition and extant Sanskrit fragments and the incorporation of mantra materials (referred to as vidyā in the Chinese). The Tibetan translation (To. 47; O.760(3)) was a joint translation by Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, Munivarman, and Ye shes sde.²

The only known Sanskrit is an incomplete manuscript kept in the Asiatic Society of Bengal library. It has not yet been digitised or made publicly available and thus was not accessible to me.³ However, we have been privy to some Sanskrit quotations in the existing commentarial literature, dhāraṇī literature (edited and referred to in chapter 25 of the translation), and descriptions made by Hiromitsu Ikuma in a series of articles. Ikuma notes that the manuscript is of Nepalese origin and dates to around the 17th century with a Newar postscript. The first manuscript mentions the *Guhyasamājatantra* rather than *Tathāgataguhya*, which begins on the second folio—the confusion of these two texts creates substantial difficulty in finding information on manuscripts of the *Tathāgataguhya*. Ikuma points out how the transcription of this manuscript contains many errors and confusion, and even if this manuscript were available, it would be a cumbersome

¹ Several potential issues with Dharmarakṣa’s translation process are highlighted by Daniel Boucher, *Bodhisattvas of the Forest and the Formation of the Mahāyāna: A Study and Translation of the Rāṣṭrapālāparipṛcchā-sūtra*, University of Hawai‘i Press: Honolulu, 2008, 92–100.

² Tetsutaka Hamano, “『如来秘密経』の仏陀観,” *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 36, no. 1 (December 1987): 42–6, 42.

³ This manuscript is first mentioned in Haraprasād Śāstri, *Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 1, 1917, 17–21.

source for translation if used alone. Ikuma also notes that, while the chapters found in the latter Dharmarakṣa's translation are seen in the Sanskrit manuscript, they are fragmentary and out of order. For instance, the first four chapters have no chapter heading and are grouped together; the ninth and tenth chapters are both called the *Chapter on the Secret of the Mind*; the eleventh to fourteenth chapters are grouped together and called the *Chapter on Revealing the Manifestations of the Tathāgata*; chapters sixteen and seventeen are together called the *Chapter on Predictions*; the last two chapters are called the *Chapter on Revelation*. Ikuma also notes how the latter Dharmarakṣa's translation is closest to the extant, complete, Tibetan translation.¹

Lack of access to the Sanskrit means that this translation must back-translate most of these names to avoid awkward English terms as proper names. This will result in inevitable inconsistencies with the Sanskrit text and can be remedied upon publication of a translation from Sanskrit or an edition of the Sanskrit. Nonetheless, the above overview should clarify why relying upon the latter Dharmarakṣa's translation is preferable to depending upon the Sanskrit manuscript. Regarding the Tibetan translation, I cannot translate from Tibetan. Still, a comparison to such a translation will eventually also benefit future revisions of this translation. Whatever this translation's present shortcomings, I believe that Dharma should always be for the benefit of others and made available to all.

4. Historical References and Scholarship on this Sūtra

Regarding traditional references and scholarship, the sūtra is widely cited in commentarial literature from India. A reference can even be found in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, wherein the Buddha is depicted suggesting that in his speech he does not utter a single word from Chapter 8,² this is again returned to later in the *Laṅkāvatāra*, along with a line of questioning about why Vajrapāṇi always accompanies all Tathāgatas, a claim made in Chapter 10.³ Since the commonly suggested date of the 4th century for the redaction of the *Laṅkāvatāra* postdates the first Chinese translation of the *Tathāgataḡuhya* by a century, it is realistic to suggest that these are direct cross-references.

¹ Hiromitsu Ikuma, “『如来秘密経』の梵文写本について,” *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 61, no. 2 (2012-3): 888–4.

² D.T. Suzuki, trans., *The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra: A Mahāyāna Text*, Routledge: London, 1932, 142–4.

³ Suzuki, trans., *The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, 240–2.

The sūtra was at least well known by the time of Kumārajīva, c. the 4th century, whose translation of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (commonly attributed to Nāgārjuna), refers to it thrice. Its first reference is to the three secrets of the Tathāgata: his body, speech, and mind, which is a general reference to chapters 7, 8, and 9.¹ Next, it refers to the story of Maudgalyāyana leaving Jambudvīpa to see how far the Buddha's voice can be heard, from Chapter 8 (section 2f of this translation), the point being that it is boundless.² Finally, it brings up the point from Chapter 9 (section 2 of this translation) that the Tathāgata's mind is always in a state of samādhi, yet he can still preach the Dharma.³

Vasubandhu's c. 5th-century *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārahāsyā* uses it as a source for the sixty kinds of speech of the Buddha in elaboration upon the verse:⁴

vyañjanasaṃpac caiṣā vijñeyā sarvathāgrasatvānām |
 ṣaṣṭyaṅgī sācintyā ghoṣo 'nantas tu sugatānām || 9 ||

The completeness of the letters of the highest beings is to be known
 in every way;
 It consists of sixty aspects and is the boundless, inconceivable speech
 of the sugatas.

The early Dharmarakṣa translation (T310) enumerates sixty kinds of speech, but the latter Dharmarakṣa (T312) gives sixty-four. These can be found in Chapter 8, section 2, of this translation.

Candrakīrti's c. 7th-century commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*, the *Prasannapadā* refers to this sūtra twice. The first reference is an extensive quotation of the section on "calming and sense objects," found in Chapter 15 (section 3 of this translation). The second is an extensive quotation from Chapter 8 on how the Buddha does not utter a single word.⁵

In Śāntideva's c. 7th century *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, Śāntideva appears to be very fond of this sūtra, referring to it at various points. The first is to indicate that the kind of bodhicitta (of great compassion) described in the questions of King Ajātaśatru, in Chapter 22 (section 2 of this translation), is a superior

¹ T1509.58c.

² T1509.284a.

³ T1509.248b.

⁴ Lévi ed., *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, 79–81.

⁵ P.L. Vaidya, *Madhyamakāśāstra of Nāgārjuna, with the Commentary: Prasannapadā by Candrakīrti*, Mithila Institute of Sanskrit Research: Darbhanga, 1960, 153–6, 256–7.

form of bodhicitta, but not the only form of bodhicitta, which also can simply be the aspiration to attain Buddhahood (something which is, incidentally, also mentioned in the same section).¹ He quotes from Chapter 2 (section 2 of this translation) to show how the bodhisattva's speech is free from offence or negative qualities.² To display the infinitely adaptive nature of the bodhisattva's bodily activity, wherein they may even manifest as a dead body for hungry beings to eat of it and cause them to gain good qualities, it quotes from Chapter 1 (section 8c of this translation) and quotes the section on Jīvaka's medicinal woman (from section 8h) to show how merely touching a bodhisattva's body can bring about benefit for beings.³ To show how cutting off false views of physical existence is like cutting the roots of a tree, allowing one to tranquillise all afflictions, he quotes Chapter 15 (section 2 in this translation).⁴ To demonstrate how a bodhisattva can develop the power that can be used to save sentient beings, he quotes Chapter 22 (section 2 in this translation), which details ten Dharma whereby one can attain the power of Vajrapāṇi.⁵ He quotes Chapter 5 (section 5 in this translation) to detail the four dharmas whereby one can avoid ruin or loss on the path.⁶ Finally, he quotes from Chapter 19 (section f in this translation) to demonstrate how a bodhisattva practices freedom from negligence in carefully avoiding grasping at characteristics of the senses and so forth.⁷

Prajñākaramati's c. 9th-century commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the *Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā*, mentions the *Tathāgataguhyā* twice. The first is a passage on the bodhisattva's speech (Chapter 2) which does not appear to have a Chinese parallel. The second is the same passage on cutting the roots of a tree quoted by Śāntideva from Chapter 15 (section 2 in this translation).⁸

Finally, Kamalaśīla's c. 9th-century meditation manual, *Bhāvanākrama*, relies on the *Tathāgataguhyā*. The first refers to the claim made in Chapter 1 (section 5 in this translation) that by the two accumulations of wisdom and merits, one can perfect all the pāramitās. The second is a quote, which appears to differ in several respects from the Chinese, from Chapter 15 (section 3 in this translation). This selection attempts to show how bodhisattvas

¹ Charles Goodman, trans., *The Training Anthology of Śāntideva: A Translation of the Śikṣā-samuccaya*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2016, 9–10.

² Goodman, trans., *The Training Anthology of Śāntideva*, 123.

³ Goodman, trans., *The Training Anthology of Śāntideva*, 155–6.

⁴ Goodman, trans., *The Training Anthology of Śāntideva*, 233.

⁵ Goodman, trans., *The Training Anthology of Śāntideva*, 261–2.

⁶ Goodman, trans., *The Training Anthology of Śāntideva*, 294.

⁷ Goodman, trans., *The Training Anthology of Śāntideva*, 330–1.

⁸ P.L. Vaidya, *Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva with the commentary Pañjika of Prajñākaramati*, Mithila Institute of Sanskrit Research: Darbhanga, 1960, 63 & 231.

must use skilful means to calm the sense objects while also using sense objects to liberate beings.¹ Also, in his commentary on the *Tattvasaṅgraha*, the *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*, Kamalaśīla again refers to this sūtra, quoting the famous passage on the Tathāgata not uttering a single word from Chapter 8 (section 1 of this translation).²

Ritual manuals began referring to this sūtra for the purposes of creating Dharma maṇḍalas in Nepal long after the destruction of the Indian Buddhist monasteries. It formed one part of a nine-sūtra set, referred to as the Navagrantha or Navasūtra, conceived of as the sūtras that expound the quintessential exoteric Mahāyāna doctrine. The other sūtras in this collection include the *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Gaṇḍavyūha*, *Daśabhūmika*, *Samādhirāja*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Lalitavistara*, and *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, with the *Tathāgataguhyā* usually coming after the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*.³

5. Academic Scholarship on the Sūtra

With a few exceptions, most of the scholarship that has treated this sūtra has been in Japanese. I shall first review the existing scholarship in English and then review some of the existing Japanese scholarship.

The largest treatment of this sūtra has been in Étienne Lamotte's comprehensive study of the various identities of Vajrapāṇi in Buddhist literature. He covers early identities, where Vajrapāṇi is seen as a yakṣa, as Śakra, or as another ambiguous spirit. He comes to a comprehensive survey of Vajrapāṇi in his identity as a bodhisattva, the identity he takes on in this sūtra. He quotes from Chapter 5, which provides a lengthy past-life story about how Vajrapāṇi came to the ranks in which he is found in the *Tathāgataguhyā*. It is also here that, until now, the only translation of even a portion of this sūtra could be read in English.⁴

In his study of Tathāgatagarbha (Buddha-nature) doctrine in the *Mahāparinirvānasūtra*, Michael Radich observes that the Tibetan *Mahāparinirvānasūtra* refers to itself as the *Tathāgataguhyamahāsūtra*, among many other names. He shows why this is simply a self-reference playing on words,

¹ Parmananda Sharma, trans., *Bhāvanākrama of Kamalaśīla*, Aditya Prakashan: New Delhi, 2004, 87, 97–8.

² Dwarikadas Shastri, ed., *Tattvasaṅgraha of Śāntarakṣita with the Commentary Pañjikā of Śrī Kamalaśīla*, vol. 1, Varanasi, 1968, 1019.

³ Discussed, for instance, in Will Tuladhar-Douglas, *Remaking Buddhism for Medieval Nepal: The Fifteenth-Century Reformation of Newar Buddhism*, Routledge: London, 2006, 144–7.

⁴ Étienne Lamotte, “Vajrapāṇi en Inde,” in *Mélanges de Sinologie offerts à Monsieur Demiéville* 1 (Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises XX), Paris 1966, 113–59. Translated by Sara Boin-Webb in “Vajrapāṇi in India (I-II),” *Buddhist Studies Review* 20, nos. 1 & 2, II:122–6.

rather than an external reference to this *Tathāgataguhyā*.¹ However, regarding potential influences on Tathāgatagarbha doctrine, Radich suggests that the redaction of the *Tathāgataguhyā* is likely to predate the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and that we could see the following themes as setting the groundwork for the idea of Tathāgatagarbha:

secret teachings; the adamant body of the Tathāgata; some [!] docetism [the idea that the appearance of the Buddha is just a manifestation] – for example, in respect of the *bodhisattva*'s ascetic practice, bathing in the Nairāñjana, accepting the offering of milk porridge, etc.; the doctrine that [the knowledge of the Buddha] is present in the body of all sentient beings... [It] also features a variant of the demonstration of the immense strength of the Buddha—here the *bodhisattva*. ... Full examination of possible relations between [the *Tathāgataguhyā*] and [the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*] is beyond the scope of this present study, but is a desideratum for future research.²

If Tathāgatagarbha or Buddhadhātu (Buddha-nature) is conceived of as something that beings possess (including potential states), or as a substrate greater than individual selves, but somehow constituting a greater, independent, self, this is not a doctrine explicitly expounded by the *Tathāgataguhyā*. However, the conception of the Buddha that it posits is one wherein the Buddha himself is equal to space and indeed within all beings—any perception beings have of him is merely a reflection of their mind. Chapter 15 also suggests that any knowledge or understanding of the Dharma they can gain is not something they possess by their nature as sentient beings but by virtue of the wisdom of all Tathāgatas that dwells within their bodies. This implies a substratum in not so many words. Therefore, it would be fair to class the *Tathāgataguhyā* as at least a semi-Tathāgatagarbha sūtra.

Regarding Japanese scholarship on the sūtra, Tetsutaka Hamano presented a thorough overview of the sūtra and existing versions in a 1989 paper. He provided a summary of the contents and suggested that it can be divided into three sections: chapters on the three secrets of the bodhisattvas and the three secrets of the Tathāgata (Chapters 1 to 10); chapters on the life of the Buddha from the perspective of Vajrapāṇi (Chapters 11 to 14); chapters on bodhisattva conduct and the deeds of Vajrapāṇi (Chapters 15

¹ Michael Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra and the Emergence of Tathāgatagarbha Doctrine*, Hamburg University Press: Hamburg, 2015, 46–7.

² Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra and the Emergence of Tathāgatagarbha Doctrine*, 47n90. Page numbers within the original text removed.

to 25) which he regards as miscellaneous. He suggested that the original form of the sūtra could have ended in Chapter 10, but this seems to be a suggestion based only on intuition.¹ Hamano also reviewed the conception of the Tathāgata presented in the *Tathāgataguhyā*, suggesting that the conception of the Tathāgata's body in the sūtra is the source of many of Sthiramati's comments on the nature of the Tathāgata in his *Mahāyānasūtrāṅkāra*. Regarding the Tathāgata's speech, he points out that the Mīmāṃsā philosopher Kumāṛila used the claim that the Buddha never uttered a single word in this sūtra as a point of criticism of Buddhist doctrine, showing that the text was known to other schools. Hamano also suggests that the idea of beings' understanding stemming from the Tathāgata's knowledge within their bodies is an uncited basis for the *Ratnagoṭṭravibhāga*'s claim that the Tathāgatagarbha is named as such "because the knowledge of the buddhas is within beings." The omnipresence of the Tathāgata is also another point of similarity,² lending greater credence to the idea that the *Tathāgataguhyā* at least be considered a semi-Tathāgatagarbha sūtra. Finally, Hamano makes the incisive point that the idea that the subjects in this sūtra are "secrets" implies that they have never been posited before, and thus may be the origin of some of these theories about the nature of the Tathāgata and that similarities between this sūtra and the *Tathāgatopattisambhavanirdeśa*, which has many parallels, are cases of the *Tathāgatopattisambhavanirdeśa* borrowing from the *Tathāgataguhyā*, rather than vice versa.³

Most of the other substantial research on the topic of the *Tathāgataguhyā* has been by Hiromitsu Ikuma. Ikuma published the first good descriptions and accounts of the Sanskrit manuscript of the sūtra and pointed out many of the issues present in that manuscript. He provides a thorough account of the differences between the various versions, suggesting that the Sanskrit manuscript and Tibetan translation are closer to the later Dharmarakṣa's translation (T312).⁴ His remaining articles on the sūtra are comparisons between the *Tathāgataguhyā* and other sūtras. In his comparison with the *Pravaradevarājaparipṛcchā*, he suggests that both texts share themes in almost all their chapters. He shows how, at many points, the *Pravaradevarājaparipṛcchā* simply appears to replace character names. While he suggests this might be due to a further redaction of the *Tathāgataguhyā* in India, resulting in the *Pravaradevarājaparipṛcchā*, he alternatively notes that this may not be simply

¹ Hamano, "『如来秘密経』の仏陀観," 42–4.

² Hamano, "『如来秘密経』の仏陀観," 44–5.

³ Hamano, "『如来秘密経』の仏陀観," 45–6.

⁴ Ikuma, "『如来秘密経』の梵文写本について."

the matter of quotation or borrowing and that cross-influence is a possibility.¹ Considering the lateness of the Chinese *Pravaradevarājaparipṛcchā* translation (c. 565), and the close similarity of the earlier and later Chinese *Tathāgataguhyā* translations, I don't think that such a cross-influence is very likely.

Next, Ikuma compares the sections on the life of the Buddha in the *Lalitavistara* and the *Tathāgataguhyā*. He points out how the rebukes of Māra given by devas in verse, in Chapter 13 (section 2 in this translation), are identical to what we find at the corresponding point in the *Lalitavistara*. Moreover, both sūtras were translated by the earlier Dharmarakṣa in what is now part of the *Mahāratnakūta* collection. In addition, some of the same material is also found in the *Mahāvastu* but notes that prior scholarship has made good arguments that the *Mahāvastu*'s “Buddha-carita-saṅgrāha” is, in fact, based on an adaptation of both the *Lalitavistara* and the *Buddhacarita*. While the Dharmarakṣa *Lalitavistara* (308) was translated a couple of decades after the *Tathāgataguhyā* (288 CE), an earlier, non-extant translation was done in the early 200s by an unknown translator. Ikuma uses these dates to suggest that the *Lalitavistara* originated in the 2nd-century, and the *Tathāgataguhyā* originated shortly thereafter.² However, it is worth pointing out that any suggestions of dates of textual origin based on dates of translation are entirely speculative and rarely convincing.

Finally, looking at Chapter 9 (section 3 in this translation), Ikuma argues that the place names found in the text suggest that the geographic awareness of the creator or redactor of the early Dharmarakṣa translation, T310, was to the northwest of India. These names are also found in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, which may have developed with the intention of propagating Buddhism in the northwest frontier. The names, moreover, apparently correspond with the distribution of Buddhist archaeological sites in the Kushan era. These are names which classical Sanskrit texts, such as the *Mahābhārata*, defined as mleccha, or barbarians, to the west of India.³ However, the evidence for this claim rests entirely upon the supposition that knowledge of and use of these names indicates the location of the composition, or at least redaction, of this passage. The following objections might

¹ Hiromitsu Ikuma, “『如来秘密經』と『勝天王般若』の対応関係について,” *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 60, no. 2 (2012): 950–946.

² Hiromitsu Ikuma, “Lalitavistara と『如来秘密經』の伝伝の対応関係,” *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 67, no. 1 (2018): 395–391.

³ Hiromitsu Ikuma, “『如来秘密經』梵文写本における地名と民族名のリスト : 『大毘婆沙論』における並行説話との比較,” *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* (印度學佛教學研究) 68, no. 2 (2020): 1006–1002.

be presented: (1) the claims being made at this point in the sūtra depend upon the contrast of many different languages (refer to the section in question for an example), and this would not be possible by simply listing Indian countries which used Sanskrit. Hence, names of countries known through commerce could be used. (2) This tells us about developments in the transmission of the sūtra in Central Asia, but that the list only has the Śakas in the later Dharmarakṣa's translation (T312), might be evidence that its inclusion was a limited addition and not part of an earlier form of the sūtra. (3) Countries in the centre of India are also given first as those of the sixteen Mahājanapadas, and these other countries are listed later as people on the edge of the known world. Despite these reservations about the speculative side of his contributions, Ikuma's work represents the best scholarship on the sūtra thus far, and I have relied upon it to improve this translation.

6. Principles of Translation

The most essential words of preface for this translation are for me to indicate that it is an amateur translation in the literal sense of the term. This translation has been a labour of love. Since it has been performed in my capacity as a devotee and not scholar, I am publishing it under my Dharma name, Shaku Shingan. As I am not academically trained in Buddhist Chinese, a sense of curiosity and desire to practice Buddhist Chinese translation led me to undertake the first folio. At a time of excess leisure, one folio became twenty-five, and before I knew it, I had translated the entire sūtra. I do not desire this translation to be considered an academic work and do not claim a high degree of accuracy—it is only accurate to the level that I, limited as I am, can understand. Thus, I hope that this translation might be helpful for those (academic or religious) who are curious about the contents of this sūtra or who want to know what it is about and orient themselves around what was an important but largely forgotten scripture of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

To say some words about how this was translated, the basis for this translation is the Chinese text of the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) edition of the later Dharmarakṣa translation of the sūtra.¹ This, in turn, is based on the Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō Kankōkai edition published in 1988 where it can be found in volume 11, number 312. It has twenty fascicles. In this publication, when I cite texts in the Taishō canon, after a T, I cite the text number followed by page number, row letter, and sometimes line number (e.g. T312.705a). Since the earlier (T310) and later

¹ <http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T11n0312>

(T312) Chinese texts are both in volume 11, I see adding T11 as unnecessary. I see noting fascicles as necessary for those navigating the text online. Normal Taishō citation conventions do not usually facilitate this, so I note fascicle numbers after giving the page number and row letter with an *f* followed by the fascicle number (e.g. T312.704b20 *f*1). As for running page and line numbers, to improve readability, these are in footnotes only where they are found in the CBETA edition and only for new lines (a, b, c), which is usually at the start of the Chinese paragraphs.¹ T310 page and line numbers are only given at the beginning of chapters and T310 folios. As for footnote numbers, to avoid large digits that would obscure reading, they restart from 1 on each page—I prefer footnotes over endnotes, which make quick reference difficult.

This translation is not intended to be a critical translation wherein all variants between T310 and T312 are listed—a true critical translation would require consideration of the Tibetan translation and Sanskrit manuscript. However, where there are apparent and noteworthy variants, I have listed them. While this translation should be seen as a translation only of T312, in cases where T310 has substantial variants, I have provided translations of those variations in full. There are many reasons why I have chosen not to translate T310. The main reason is that T312 is the version held in common by the Tibetan translation and Sanskrit manuscript and thus will allow for fruitful comparison. The secondary, but more practical, reason is that T312 is many times clearer and shows a far more mature usage of Buddhist Chinese vocabulary than we find in the earlier Dharmarakṣa's Chinese, which clearly struggles to express these very Indic ideas in terms that are heavily inflected with Daoist terminology. This makes guessing the potential Sanskrit words behind the Chinese incredibly straightforward with the later Dharmarakṣa, which, in translating a Chinese translation of a Sanskrit or Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit text, is one of my goals. This, if anything, will be one of the shortcomings of this translation—but an entirely intentional one. In every Chinese term, I attempt to consider what the Sanskrit could be. Where such parallels are noteworthy or may assist a reader in seeking out further readings, I have noted the related Sanskrit term in footnotes. I have usually not given the Chinese in these cases, which can be found following along with the CBETA or Taishō edition. This, however, will undoubtedly bring to the fore errors if one were to compare this translation to the Sanskrit or a translation of it, particularly when

¹ This means they will usually not align with the start of the lines—a tedious task that would delay publication of this translation considerably, but which could be implemented in future editions.

considering attempts at back translating proper names. English readers of translations of Chinese Buddhist texts will be familiar with the awkwardness which literal renderings of Chinese characters for proper names gives, e.g. Universally Good, as Samantabhadra. These back translations are my remedy to this. As such, they would be better considered simply re-translations back into Sanskrit rather than attempts at reconstruction. If, however, my attempts were lucky, they will be correct—if not, then they will be remedied when access to the Sanskrit manuscript, or an edition or translation of it, is possible.

Regarding the practices of dynamic and formal equivalence: the former represents an attempt to translate into natural and culturally-localised English; the latter corresponds to an effort to represent the source language in as accurate a manner as possible. This translation attempts to emphasise formal equivalence, particularly with terminology and repetitions primarily. But I have adjusted a literal sentence syntax to more readable English, with occasional additional joining words and splitting long sentences into more comprehensible chunks. It is hoped that this translation will be able to be followed alongside the Chinese of T312 and T310 and the Tibetan and Sanskrit. It thus may be of assistance to those doing work (no doubt more rigorous than mine) on this sūtra in the future.

Finally, chapter titles are translations of the Chinese chapter titles in T312. However, section and subsections are not part of the Chinese text. These have been added to help with navigation but should be considered semi-commentarial. The main voice of the sūtra is that of Ānanda who is entrusted the sūtra in the conclusion, but most of the sūtra involves dialogue, and narrative with dialogue. To avoid issues with keeping track of quotation marks and subordinate quotation marks, quoted speech is given in indented paragraphs, and all reported speech within those quotes are in turn indented further.

7. Acknowledgements

This translation was a solitary endeavour, but I would be amiss if I did not mention the incredible debt I owe to the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (DDB) edited by A. Charles Muller, and the parsing and lookup tool for DDB and CJKV, DDB Access created by Jean Soulat. Most definitions and Sanskrit equivalents are sourced from (or started from) these, unless otherwise stated. Without these two resources, what only took months to complete would have taken me years.

Shaku Shingan
Kamakura
December 2021

Introduction

1. The History of the Sūtra

The sūtra on the *Secrets of the Tathāgata* is a quintessential Mahāyāna sūtra on the nature of the Buddha. Scripturally, the sūtra frames itself as being entrusted to the Buddha's cousin and career-long attendant, Ānanda. However, within what we can infer historically, we would speak of it as being “redacted” or put to text by dharmabhāṅakas (reciters of Buddhist scriptures) who either learned the sūtra orally from their forebears or in meditative revelation.

The redaction of Mahāyāna sūtras occurred primarily in the first few centuries of the common era. Although we can accurately date manuscripts and translations of Sanskrit and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit sūtras into Chinese and other languages, it is difficult to put exact dates upon their original redaction without creative speculation. However, the *Secrets of the Tathāgata* has a clear position within the Mahāyāna tradition, presupposing various doctrines while not mentioning other doctrines. For instance, we can note that the *Secrets of the Tathāgata* takes for granted that readers know about the bodhisattva ideal and the stages of the bodhisattva path (12.2)¹ that we read about in the various forms of the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (or *Ten Stages Sūtra*). The six perfections, including the prajñā pāramitā (perfection of wisdom), are mentioned as a matter of course (as can be read about in the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras). The wording of the life of the Buddha found in the *Lalitavistara* (a Mahāyāna life of the Buddha) is repeated in the *Secrets of the Tathāgata* verbatim (13.2). Also, the doctrine of skilful means, so crucial to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (popularly referred to as the *Lotus Sūtra*), is central to the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*, and its docetic² implications make up the bulk of its message. It should then be clear that the reader is assumed to have basic familiarity with Mahāyāna Buddhist texts and doctrines before venturing to study this sūtra.

That is what this sūtra pre-supposes. What does it not presuppose? Most importantly for the doctrines that the *Secrets of the Tathāgata* exposit, while it posits the knowledge and being that is the Buddha as being something which spans the cosmos and exists within all beings (as we find in the *Avatamsaka* literature and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*), we do not see the mention of the Tathāgatagarbha or Buddha-Nature that features most prominently in the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and other Tathāgatagarbha sūtras. We

¹ In this introduction, numbers in parentheses are chapter numbers followed by section numbers.

² The idea that the Buddha is just a manifestation, or display, of his true body and that his true form is beyond human birth and death.

also do not find any mention of the psychological structure that developed from the Tathāgatagarbha literature that we can read in texts like the *Laṅkāvatāra*.

The docetic nature of the Buddha implied by the *Secrets of the Tathāgata* is one wherein his body is one with suchness and spans all three times, and his appearance in the world is a manifestation to accord with beings' natures. And yet, the biographical details given appear to imply that the Buddha's awakening under the bodhi-tree is what activated this state and that it will end with his Nirvāṇa, as it suggests:

... from the day and night that he attained the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi to the day and night that he will enter Mahāparinirvāṇa, within that period, the Tathāgata has never once uttered a single word, he has not expressed any meaning. Why? Because the Buddha Tathāgata permanently abides in samāhita. (8.1)

Also:

... on the day and night that the Bodhisattva attained the realisation of the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi with a non-abiding consciousness up to the day and night that the Tathāgata enters Mahāparinirvāṇa without remainder, within that interval the Buddha Tathāgata does not have a mind that can transform. (9.1)

This paradox is intentional and the biographical span of time in which the Buddha is “awakened” is revealed to be a narrative sign, standing in for something which is timeless. For a bodhisattva, the work of the Buddha begins from the moment at which bodhicitta is aroused. That bodhicitta, which is also defined as “great compassion,” allows bodhisattvas also to be one with the Dharma-body (Dharmakāya) of the Buddha.¹ Yet, it is only through the expression of words (such as narratives like the life story of the Buddha) that beings can be brought to arouse faith and progress on the path, words which they later realise signify and correspond to nothing (8.1)—skilful means must not be abandoned, and bodhisattvas, while forsaking all sense objects, must still use them at the service of awakening and adapting to the natures of sentient beings (15.3).

¹ This is not necessarily to say that the path is abolished, as it certainly exists within this sūtra, but a “connection” seems to be made that allows for the Buddha to manifest and for beings to hear, understand, and speak the Dharma (cf. 15.1).

It is easy to say that the vocabulary of the Tathāgatagarbha literature would tie together all the doctrines found in the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*. Still, the emphasis on non-duality and the ineffability of the nature of the Buddha and bodhisattvas, without adding another layer of meaning and interpretation, is undoubtedly elegant and mysterious. The approach of the *Secrets of the Tathāgata* then is the classic theatrical principle commonly attributed to Anton Chekhov: “show, don’t tell.”

The *Secrets of the Tathāgata* developed over time. We know this because it was translated into Chinese twice, separated by about 750 years. It was first translated by the prolific translator monk Dharmarakṣa c. 280 (referred to by its Taishō catalogue number T130). Bodhiruci incorporated this early translation into the *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra* collection, c. 706–713. The second was translated by another monk called Dharmarakṣa, c. 1018–1058 (referred to by its Taishō catalogue number T312).¹ Some of its changes primarily appear to be word choices on the part of the translators, but others are more substantial.

We can see that several sections have been rearranged, prose has been versified, and some verse has been put into prose. Several sections have been abbreviated, for instance, the prediction of the buddhahood of Rucika Tathāgata (5.7) and the list of countries in whose languages the Buddha can speak (8.3). Other sections have been expanded or added, for instance, the list of sixty types of speech in T310 is extended to a list of sixty-four kinds of speech in T312 (8.2), a praise given by the Nāga Queen Suvarṇaprabhāsa at the bodhimaṇḍa is added (12.4), the prediction of Rucika’s buddhahood is reworded (5.7), and an enumeration of dharmas that are useful for the four world protector’s guardianship of the world in T310 (19.3) is instead moved and attributed to Vajrasena, the son of Vajrapāṇi (20.2).

However, the most noticeable change might be the addition of vidyās,² reflecting the growth in the importance of such incantatory formulae in Mahāyāna Buddhism in the centuries of development between the translation of T310 and T312. Vidyā means knowledge but comes to be synonymous with mantra in Mahāyāna Buddhism. While it can be declined in the masculine or feminine in Sanskrit, it is commonly associated with female deities such as the Pañcarakṣā devīs. Two such vidyās are given in the

¹ Dates according to Lewis Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, 2004, http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue.

² In the text, we find the wording 大明章句, mahāvīdyā. The Sanskrit equivalents, reflecting the synonymous nature of these terms, has mantrapada.

final entrustment chapter (25.1 & 25.3), which have circulated independently in Sanskrit as *Tathāgataguhyadhāraṇī* texts. They are included in the *Dhāraṇīsamgraha* collection, recently expertly edited by Gergely Hidas.¹ Another added vidyā is found in the chapter on the departure of the Buddha from Vajrapāṇi’s home in the wilderness, the vidyā which tamed the nāga king Apalāla (20.1). This story was well known and may have been in circulation at the time of T310, but its inclusion in T312 shows the flexible nature of Buddhist sūtra literature and is a nice intertextual nod to the larger narrative that various texts have painted of Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi’s identity and life.

2. Narrative Characteristics of the Sūtra

a. Settings

The *Secrets of the Tathāgata* is primarily set in Rājagṛha, on Mount Gṛdhra-kūṭa, which is the setting of many sūtras such as the *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines* (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*), the *King of Samādhis* (*Samādhirāja*), the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkā*), and the *Sūtra of Golden Light* (*Suvarṇaprabhāsa*). This is an actual mountain near present-day Rajgir, south of Patna, India. According to Buddhist tradition, the Buddha stayed there during five of his rains retreats.

Mount Gṛdhra-kūṭa means “Vulture’s Peak” and is the highest of the five mountains in the Rajgir area. The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra*, attributed to Nāgārjuna, explains that it is called that because it resembles a vulture. Moreover, vultures often came to feed on corpses left at the peak. The śāstra suggests that the Buddha frequently stayed there because, while he had more disciples in other cities such as Śrāvastī, he could be of more benefit to those who were not yet convinced of the Dharma in Rājagṛha, which, moreover, was a larger city. As for why he stayed on a mountain, the śāstra notes that this is because while it was near the city and was good for alms rounds, it was also not so easy to access, preventing the build-up of large crowds. In addition, it was the residence of previous buddhas.²

While other locations feature in narratives related by the interlocutors of this sūtra, the only other major setting is the palace of Vajrapāṇi, located in a great city in the “wilderness.”³ The equivalent term in Sanskrit is given

¹ Gergely Hidas, *Powers of Protection: The Buddhist Tradition of Spells in the Dhāraṇīsamgraha Collections*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021, 83.

² *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, T1509.76c–78c

³ Ch. 曠野

in the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism as aṭavī, dāvī, kāntāra, or a combination thereof. Aṭavī and dāvī are closest in meaning to forest, whereas kāntāra, besides forest, could also be a wasteland. Soothill’s dictionary suggests a prairie, which represents the more literal reading of the characters.¹ We are thus not given a particularly clear image of in what kind of environment the palace is situated, just that it is far from human civilisation. The city and the palace are occupied by many creatures, including yakṣas, rākṣasas, nāgas, gandharvas, kumbhāṇḍas, piśācas, mahoragas, and guhyakas, or mystery creatures. The last of these, whose name (guhyaka) translates to “mystery” or “secret,” is usually classed as a kind of yakṣa who guards the treasures of Kubera but live in dark secret places like mountain caverns. It is these creatures that give Vajrapāṇi his title, Lord of Mysteries.

While wilderness-dwelling has been highlighted as a theme in Buddhist discourse on ascetic practice, and Mahāyāna bodhisattva practice, in particular,² this sūtra is very much not in that vein and is more conventional, and when the wilderness is entered, it is into a *city* in the wilderness. The *Secrets of the Tathāgata* is not opposed to wilderness-dwelling and mentions it as a legitimate practice alongside staying in a monastery (15.3f).

b. Dramatis Personae

Some of the interlocutors of this sūtra need little introduction. Śākyamuni Buddha, for instance, appears here somewhere in the midst of his teaching career. Episodes from his life are narrated to illustrate how he manifested in countless ways to adapt to the needs of all beings. He is a Buddha that is described as a manifestation of the Dharma-body. Still, in all other respects, he fits expectations one might have from reading other sūtras—praising, reprimanding, subtly smiling, and emitting light when it serves the appropriate didactic purposes.

The star of this sūtra is, without question, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries. Vajrapāṇi has gone through various manifestations in the history of Buddhist literature. These permutations were described best by Étienne Lamotte in a series of articles on Vajrapāṇi. While the full details should be obtained in his articles, I will briefly summarise Lamotte’s findings before moving to the Vajrapāṇi of our present sūtra.³ First, the term Vajrapāṇi initially appears to have been applied to yakṣas who were not under the control of Vaiśravaṇa, and, according to Buddhaghoṣa, included

¹ William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, eds., *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://mahajana.net/texts/soothill-hodous.html>.

² Cf., Boucher, *Bodhisattvas of the Forest and the Formation of the Mahāyāna*.

³ Lamotte; Boin-Webb trans., “Vajrapāṇi in India (I-II).”

Śakra (the term yakṣa flexibly including various kinds of asuras, devas, and even the Buddha). He is labelled the Guhyakādhipati, Lord of Mysteries, because those yakṣas became “cave spirits before having become those of mysteries.”¹ In the Nikāya-Āgama literature, Vajrapāṇi often appears to serve the function of encouraging interlocutors to answer questions at the threat of shattering their heads with his vajra-mallet (the tool, also borne by Śakra, which gives him his name, “Vajra-bearer”), on occasion there are multiple vajrapāṇis who serve similar functions, standing to the sides of the Buddha.² In the Mahāyāna, such as in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, that kind of Vajrapāṇi sometimes appears only as a manifestation created by the Buddha as a teaching device.³

The more individual personality of Vajrapāṇi appears in sūtras such as the *Lalitavistara*, where he is depicted as always accompanying the Bodhisattva before his buddhahood, including at the time of his birth.⁴ In texts such as the *Sūtra on the Wise and Foolish (Damamūka)* and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, Vajrapāṇi serves the function of using his great supernormal might to destroy the pride of non-Buddhist teachers such as the six masters.⁵ In the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* account of Devadatta’s attack on the Buddha by casting down a rock on him, it is Vajrapāṇi who stops the rock in mid-air with his vajra-mallet.⁶ Other stories of Vajrapāṇi’s shows of might in the service of the Dharma, or protection, can be found in abundance, including his subjugation of the nāga king Apalāla, which is noted in Chapter 20, section 1, of this translation.

For the purposes of this sūtra, the most important identification of Vajrapāṇi is as a bodhisattva, a being whose intent is the future attainment of buddhahood. Identifying various asuras and non-human creatures as bodhisattvas is not unusual in Mahāyāna sūtras.⁷ While Lamotte suggests that the *Tathāgataguhyā* places “the humble yakṣa ... on the same footing as the great god Brahmā, ... we are not told either when or how he will one day attain supreme enlightenment.”⁸ This is, in fact, not true, and this sūtra does provide us with the complete picture of Vajrapāṇi’s career, as we shall soon show. Vajrapāṇi also serves the purpose, in the Mahāyāna, as functioning like Ānanda in his memorising of the sūtras—while Haribhadra

¹ Lamotte; Boin-Webb trans., “Vajrapāṇi in India (I-II),” I:2.

² “Ibid.,” I:5–6.

³ “Ibid.,” I:9.

⁴ “Ibid.,” I:10.

⁵ “Ibid.,” I:11–6.

⁶ “Ibid.,” I:18.

⁷ “Ibid.,” II:120.

⁸ “Ibid.,” II:126.

suggests that Ānanda still takes this role, as the entrustment passages at the end of most sūtras will show, this does not preclude the possibility that Vajrapāṇi also memorised the sūtras. While Ānanda was a worldly attendant of the Buddha, Vajrapāṇi is depicted as the eternal escort (“nityam anubaddha”) of all the manifestations of the buddhas.¹ In the Vajrayāna texts, Vajrapāṇi also serves to preside over the family of the vajra, while Śākya-muni presides over the Tathāgata family, and Avalokiteśvara over the lotus family—all three represent the “aspects of the adamantine being [Vajrasattva] immanent in beings and phenomena,”² who is their inherent buddhahood, or buddha-nature, that is uncovered through appropriate ritual practice with the body, speech, and mind. In the *Mahāvairocanaśāmbodhi*, a tantra which had significant influence over East Asian Vajrayāna, Vajrapāṇi is again the main interlocutor, and building upon the foundation set by the *Secrets of the Tathāgatas*, is depicted as the master of the three mysteries of the body, speech, and mind of the Tathāgata (expanding the definition of “mysteries” from the creatures over which he is the lord, to that of the ritual quintessence of tantric practice)—in this sense, he is “one with the Buddha, but it is the same for all beings: what is important is to realise it and mystically achieve this identity.”³

In terms of appearance, he has a few variant forms depending on the maṇḍala to which he belongs. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (*The Root Manual of the Rites of Mañjuśrī*) describes his peaceful form as follows:

Vajrapāṇi in his peaceful form [is] dark blue like a water lily, adorned with all types of jewelry. He holds a fly-whisk in his right hand; his left is clenched into a vajra fist in an expression of wrath.⁴

While he has many variations, even within the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, a blue form is the most common. He usually is depicted holding a vajra or a lotus marked with a vajra.⁵

Moving from this tantric identity back to the bodhisattva of this sūtra, Vajrapāṇi is depicted as being requested to teach on the three secrets by Śāntamati Bodhisattva and the Buddha. He always accompanies Maitreya and all manifestations of the buddhas in the Bhadra Kalpa (the Good Aeon,

¹ “Ibid.,” II:130–2.

² “Ibid.,” II:135–6.

³ “Ibid.,” II:138–9.

⁴ Wiesiek Mical & Dharmachakra Translation Committee eds., trans., *The Root Manual of the Rites of Mañjuśrī: Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2021, 2.144.

⁵ Lamotte; Boin-Webb trans., “Vajrapāṇi in India (I-II),” II:141.

or this present age). Due to the purity of his mind, he can manifest as many manifestations as all buddhas. In addition to this, he also manifests in all locations, empowering beings to understand the Buddha's teachings. For these reasons, the Buddha encourages the monk Śāriputra to have faith in the words of Vajrapāṇi when he speaks about the nature of the Buddha (10). Vajrapāṇi first aroused his aspiration to attain buddhahood as the magically born prince Aninditā, son of the Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who would become the Buddha Dīpaṅkara. Since then, he has accompanied all buddhas (5). In his present life, he has five hundred sons (19.3 T310 version), the eldest of whom is Vajrasena and the second of whom is Subāhu. Both sons possess great supernormal power (18.3). At the end of the Bhadra Kalpa, he will be born in Akṣobhya's land. After learning hundreds of mudras, he will attain great realisation. Later attending upon countless buddhas, he will eventually attain buddhahood as Vajrapada Tathāgata, in a gloriously adorned world called Saṃsuddha (16.2). This sūtra perpetuates his identity as someone who can display great strength and use supernormal power to edify beings, notably illustrated by the episode in which various members of the audience of the discourse attempt to lift his vajra mallet to no avail (22.1).

There are several foils to Vajrapāṇi's great power and wisdom in the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*. One is Śāntamati Bodhisattva. Śāntamati does not receive much introduction but appears as a listed bodhisattva in several sūtras. In the *Lalitavistara*, a devaputra (low-ranked deity) appears by the same name. It is not clear that he is a human in the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*, but we receive no indication that he is a deva. His purpose in the sūtra is solely to ask Vajrapāṇi questions, a function which he also serves in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, where he appears as one of sixteen great bodhisattvas. He is described as follows, along with three other bodhisattvas in his family:

They hold in their hands fruits and books, are adorned with all types of jewelry, and wear an upper garment and short trousers of fine silk.¹

Later in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, Śāntamati disputes with Vajrapāṇi over his use of wrathful techniques, to which Vajrapāṇi skilfully explains how such practices must only be undertaken with the utmost compassion and skilful means for the benefit of the recipient, leaving Śāntamati astonished at the inconceivability of the Buddha's teachings.²

¹ Mical, trans., *The Root Manual of the Rites of Mañjuśrī*, 4.74.

² *Ibid.* 52.1–13.

Another foil of this sūtra is the monk who is foremost in supernormal powers, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, or just Maudgalyāyana. Maudgalyāyana is a brahmin who joined the Saṅgha along with Śāriputra. Shortly after he joined, he attained arhatship and developed supernormal powers. These allowed him to teach in the realms of the ghosts (pretas) and rescue his mother from the hells. In this sūtra, he is prompted by Maitreya to seek the limit of the Tathāgata's voice, only to find, at great pains, that it is unlimited (8.2f).

King Ajātaśatru, known for his deeds that led to his father's death and his subsequent regret and seeking out of the Buddha, also is present in this discourse. He remains silent for most of the sūtra, but in Chapter 21 inquires as to how Vajrapāṇi gained his merits. We also see an interesting intertextual reference at the end of Chapter 22 to the *Sūtra on the Dispelling of the Evil Deeds of Ajātaśatru* (*Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanasūtra*), of which multiple versions exist (T626–9), wherein Mañjuśrī led Ajātaśatru to cease his evil and to be illuminated by the Buddha's light.

Various devas, past and future buddhas, and non-human characters also appear in this sūtra. But it is worth noting that here, as we find in some other Mahāyāna sūtras such as the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, Māra and his minions are forced to protect the Dharma by the force of a mantra (25.4).

c. Literary Features

One characteristic that makes certain sūtras endearing and stand the test of time is their theatricality. This sūtra, no less, features many memorable stories related by its interlocutors, almost giving one the impression that a play is being performed. Of note are: the story of Suyoga, who removes peoples' sickness by allowing them to feast on his flesh (1.8d); the story of the physician Jīvaka's creation of a medicinal woman, who, upon coming together with patients will be relieved of their sickness and suffering (1.8h); the story of a bodhisattva being able to count all the leaves of a nyagrodha tree without looking at it (2.4); the story of the Cakravartin Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who flies to listen to the Buddha with all of his courtiers in a flying tower and whose hundreds of sons are given predictions of buddhahood by lottery (5); the story mentioned above of Maudgalyāyana's attempt to measure the Buddha's speech (8.2f); stories from the life of the Buddha (11–14); and the episode of Vajrapāṇi's invitation of the Buddha and the saṅgha to his palace in the city in the wilderness (18–20).

Several other literary features are noteworthy. One is the use of parallelism. While chiasmic structures of the form A B C C¹ B¹ A¹, where themes

or even verbatim passages mirror one another, have been identified as features of Mahāyāna Buddhist literary construction,¹ in the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*, we see more simple parallelism:

- A — Secret of the Bodhisattva’s Body (1)
- B — Secret of the Bodhisattva’s Speech (2)
- C — Secret of the Bodhisattva’s Mind (3)
- D — Praise of Vajrapāṇi, the causes of Vajrapāṇi’s abilities, and the bodhisattva path to awakening. (4–6)
- A¹ — Secret of the Tathāgata’s Body (7)
- B¹ — Secret of the Tathāgata’s Speech (8)
- C¹ — Secret of the Tathāgata’s Mind (9)
- D¹ — Praise of Vajrapāṇi, the causes of the Buddha’s awakening, and fulfilment of the bodhisattva path. (10–14)

As mentioned in the preface, Hamano suggested that the original form of the sūtra ended in the tenth chapter. This is impossible to determine, though the fourteenth chapter is another possibility. Further and more detailed investigations into parallelism in the sūtra and potential parallels into the second half of the sūtra may provide us with some more to consider.

Another common feature of Mahāyāna sūtras is self-referentiality. This is kept to a minimum in the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*. We do not find references to the sūtra being copied out as a manuscript and set up for worship, but we do see a short exposition of the merits of teaching the sūtra its the conclusion (25.7). The sūtra usually appears to engage in self-reference using its own name at various points, and the use of the term “this True Dharma” (saddharma), to which one might supply “teaching” or “discourse.” Returning to matters of theatricality, we could speak of this as the sūtra “breaking the fourth wall” and speaking directly to the listener or reader of the sūtra.

¹ E.g., Matthew Orsborn, “Chiasmus in the Early Prajñāpāramitā: Literary Parallelism Connecting Criticism & Hermeneutics in an Early Mahāyāna,” PhD Dissertation: University of Hong Kong, 2012.

3. Religious Characteristics of the Sūtra

a. Doctrinal and Ritual Characteristics

One impression that a reader of this sūtra may come away with is one of a grand cosmic perspective and universality. Not only does the Buddha permeate every location and span all three times, but hundreds of people are given predictions of buddhahood in this sūtra. While the title of the sūtra characterises it as one of secrecy, one central theme in this regard is undoubtedly revelation. This revelation primarily involves the identification of various interlocutors' potential states of buddhahood, but I would posit that this revelation extends to the audience of listeners or readers themselves. The sūtra suggests that those who hear this sūtra have already received a prediction to their buddhahood in a past life, indicating that those who have already had the good merit to encounter the very passage that they are hearing, have in fact, already created a connection to the sūtra and have already planted wholesome roots (meritorious karmic seeds) in the presence of many past buddhas (3.4). A similar connection is affected by the statement in Chapter 15, that:

the superior wisdom possessed by all Tathāgatas dwells in the bodies of all sentient beings ... It would not be possible otherwise for all sentient beings abiding anywhere to accord with the secrets that the Tathāgata teaches if they did not contain the Tathāgata's power of assistance and accord with the Tathāgata's Dharma nature. Furthermore, if one hears, if one speaks, and if one has an understanding about the profound Dharma of the secrets taught by the Tathāgata, then that is all by virtue of the power of the Tathāgata's assistance. (15.1)

The effect of this passage on the listener's impression of the sūtra is fulfilled in the Tathāgatagarbha sūtras by teaching the underlying Buddha-nature of all beings and their potential buddhahood.

The ability to predict future buddhahood, moreover, is uniquely placed outside the hands of a buddha, in the episode in which the Cakravartin Dhṛtarāṣṭra predicts the order of his sons' buddhahood by drawing their names out of a kalaśa, as if by lottery—the result, of course, is predetermined by the vows of each of his sons, the last of whom vows to remain for as long as possible to bring benefit to unreckonably more beings than his brothers. Repetition and perpetual recurrence are also important to beings such as the grass cutter Svastika, who cuts grass and makes a cushion for

all buddhas of the Bhadra Kalpa, and for Brahmā, who invites each Buddha to turn the wheel of the Dharma.

While predictions of future buddhahood are liable to be apparent objects of attachment, the sūtra, through the voice of Vajrapāṇi, also reminds us that after all, predictions are nothing that can be obtained, since all things, including the words of predictions, are without any inherent existence and are like dreams. Consequently, one can but simply practice in the realisation of non-duality and ineffability. At the same time, because of the wisdom obtained by that very realisation of non-duality, predictions are possible. The Buddha's location, while non-dual (and, in fact, because of its non-duality) is declared to be within saṃsāra, allowing the Buddha to help beings by providing them with meaning found in words that conform to conventions while reminding them that those meanings do not inhere in the phenomena to which they represent (17).

Doctrine is only one side of the coin in terms of Buddhist religiosity, we can also consider ritual and practice. Ritual practice, particularly in the form of vidyās and dhāraṇīs, have an important place in this sūtra. Regarding dhāraṇīs, while the term means “bearing,” it is usually understood as being synonymous with mantra or vidyā. However, it also occasionally has the function of allowing a practitioner to bear the Dharma in mind through mnemonic formula, but also by the power of incantation. In this sūtra, a dhāraṇī is introduced called “Dhāraṇī Door of the Entry into the Characteristics of Dharmas,” which consists simply in the letter A. The letter A both precedes all letters in the Sanskrit syllabary and functions as a negating prefix, thus bearing all the meaning intended to be conveyed by the sūtra's teaching on non-duality and ineffability. It also has the incantatory power of effecting the bearing of this knowledge, since the letter A actually “achieves all actions everywhere, it accords with the arising of verbal action,” while simultaneously conveying the understanding that “there is nothing it knows and nothing it does not know” (24.1). This teaching is of importance elsewhere in the Mahāyāna tradition, as exemplified, for instance, by the sūtra on the *Perfection of Wisdom in One Letter* (*Ekākṣarīprajñāpāramitā*), which of course is the letter A,¹ and by Kūkai in his explanation of the letter A in his exposition on “The Meanings of the Word Hūm,”² which I recommend for any reader interested in diving deeper into this particularly singular letter.

¹ Donald S. Lopez, Jr., “On the Interpretation of the Mahāyāna Sūtras,” in *Buddhist Hermeneutics* edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr., Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1993, 47.

² Rolf Giebel, trans., “The Meanings of the Word Hūm,” in *Shingon Texts*, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research: Berkeley, California, 2004, 107–111.

The other side of this world of effective speech in this sūtra is that of vidyās. While dhāraṇī carry meaning, vidyās in the sūtra are simply incantations that can function to invite, restrain, and bind beings, as well as protect the Dharma. The utterance of vidyās, moreover, can serve to plant wholesome roots. For instance, the vidyā of Apalāla plants wholesome roots and promotes the longevity of the Dharma (20.1), the two large vidyās at the start of the entrustment chapter serve to promote the longevity of the Dharma (25.1) and to protect the treasury of the Dharma (25.2). The remaining vidyās serve to invite devas and restrain Māra, forcing him to protect the Dharma (25.3). This feature of the sūtra is a later elaboration upon what the earlier Dharmarakṣa was translating in the third century (T310) and betrays the influence of the increase in popularity of such formulae in Buddhism.

b. Thematic Characteristics

Many thematic contrasts have held a prominent position in the study of Mahāyāna sūtras, and we shall briefly touch upon a few of them. Firstly, two of the bulwarks of Buddhist studies in the twentieth century, Étienne Lamotte and Akira Hirakawa, were both firmly of the opinion that Mahāyāna Buddhism was a movement that opened up practice outside of the monastic elite to the lay masses, thus functioning as a democratisation of Buddhism.¹ While it is true that the laity is depicted in prominent positions in several Mahāyāna sūtras, if anything, they largely continue the normative understanding of the Nikāya-Āgama literature that the best way to practice the Dharma is to go forth from home and dwell either in a monastery or in the wilderness as a bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī. The *Secrets of the Tathāgata* is no exception, suggesting that bodhisattvas can either practise in a monastery or the wilderness (1.4). Moreover, an essential step on the bodhisattva path laid out for the assembly in chapter 19 is going forth from home prior to hearing, practising, and teaching the Dharma (19.2). While the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra is depicted as having incredible supernormal powers, his magically born sons recite in verse the suggestion that he should be diligent and leave home (5.6). If the message were not clear enough, Vajrapāṇi suggests that among all good that could be done, only going forth from home can repay the Buddha's great kindness (16). We find no such praise of the potentials of lay life.

¹ Étienne Lamotte, "Sur la formation du Mahāyāna," in *Asiatica: Festschrift Friedrich Weller*, edited by Johannes Schubert, 377–96. Otto Harraßowitz: Leipzig, 1954, 379. Akira Hirakawa, "The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Its Relationship to the Worship of Stūpas," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunko* 22: 57–106, 72–3.

We also find little praise for the popular in the face of a monastic elite, with kings clearly having a significant role in so many of the sūtra's narratives. However, the sūtra does make clear that the Buddha, by virtue of his infinite ability to manifest in whatever form is suitable for the edification of beings, can manifest as any caste or class and as male or female.

Finally, a dichotomy between caitya or stūpa worship and book worship has been a consistent theme in studies of the Mahāyāna. Out of character for the Mahāyāna, however, we see no book worship in this sūtra. Instead, we see the verbal teaching and the bearing (which usually means memorisation) of the sūtra. Stūpas, however, get no greater representation, only being mentioned in a passage about washing them (22.2). This dichotomy is thus largely absent in the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*.

4. The Message of the Secrets of the Tathāgata

The core message of the *Secrets of the Tathāgata* is found in the teachings on the secrets of the body, speech, and mind of bodhisattvas and the Buddha. The essence of these secrets is that bodhisattvas and the Buddha, knowing the natures of all beings, create infinite manifestations to teach them. These manifestations are not actions that are undertaken after any kind of calculation and intention but are inherent to the nature of the universe: it is the karmic winds of beings' mental inclinations that waft this nature and give rise to these manifestations. Thus, the actions of awakened beings are entirely automatic—all intention and calculation being purely on the side of saṃsāric beings. Likewise, the sūtra suggests that there is nothing on the part of saṃsāric beings that can enable them to attain awakening and that any understanding of the Dharma is entirely due to the power of the Buddha.¹

Regarding the differences between the secrets of the bodhisattva's body, speech, and mind, and those of the Buddha, the distinction will not be entirely clear on first reading. In the spirit of the *Perfection of Wisdom* literature,

¹ By their infinite nature, one can see how these secrets imply that everything can be understood as a training device manifested by the Buddha. For instance, Śāntideva suggests that encountering a challenging person or difficult situation can be reframed as good because it is an opportunity to cultivate patience. Thus, not only can enemies be seen and honoured as Buddhas themselves, but the field of all sentient beings can be seen as a Buddha-field (cf. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* chp. 6, vv.101–112).

One can compare this teaching to the idea of the providentially ordered cosmos in Stoic physics (particularly that of Marcus Aurelius). While people driven by sense impressions, desires, and intellect alone will be distressed, the same phenomena, when seen as an order dealt out by the logos as perfectly suited to perfecting one's character, one will love anything as it occurs.

this sūtra suggests that the true bodhisattva has the same kind of view of emptiness and non-duality as a buddha. Practice cannot be undertaken by a samsāric being and expect buddhahood to result. Instead, the result is what must undertake practice—impure cause begets impure result, pure cause begets pure result. Thus, the bodhisattva’s body, speech, and mind are truly those of the Buddha. Realising this, the actual work of cultivation (detailed, for instance, at 3.3) comes about—so, the cause comes from practising effect. Thus, the actual instance of the arousal of bodhicitta (the aspiration to attain awakening) affects the purity of body, speech, and mind (1.8k). This is not to say that bodhicitta aspiration ends the path and that buddhahood is attained instantaneously. Still, it renders one non-retrogressing from the attainment of buddhahood (1.8c) and its purity starts to shine through one’s originally impure nature.

This kind of process is expressed well by Tanluan in his *Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Discourse on the Pure Land*, quoted by Shinran as follows:

“That mind itself produces Buddhas” means that the mind becomes Buddha. “That mind is itself the Buddha” means that there is no Buddha apart from the mind. It is just as fire comes from wood but is not separate from the wood. Because it is not separate from the wood, it burns the wood. The wood becomes fire, which burns the wood and turns it, too, into fire.¹

Here the aspiration (bodhicitta) is represented by placing wood into the fire, at which point they become united. The fire is the Buddha’s mind, and the wood is one’s impure mind—this does not thereby turn the fire into wood, i.e., the Buddha does not thereby become defiled. Gradually the fire burns the wood, which itself becomes fire that continues to burn it. Bodhicitta aspiration, thus, achieves the path. In this way, the bodhisattva (not yet fully fire, i.e., not yet a Buddha) can be spoken of as already having the qualities of the Buddha. So, the secrets of the bodhisattva’s body, speech, and mind largely conform to what we would expect of the Buddha’s body, speech, and mind. Still, they are expressed more fully on the Buddha’s side in terms of their ineffable and immeasurable nature.

While the meaning of “secret” is not elaborated explicitly in this sūtra, it is clear that this fits into the model of skilful-means coloured fully in the *Lotus Sūtra*. These are definitive teachings on the nature of the bodhisattva

¹ Hisao Inagaki, trans., *Kyōgyōshinshō: On Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment*, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research: Berkeley, California, 2003, 122. Terms in parentheses and square brackets removed.

and Buddha. If taught to the wrong person, this would confuse or undermine their motivation to undertake the path. Thus, the Buddha instructs Ānanda:

In the future, you should not utter this True Dharma Gate to those who have less faith and understanding in case they may be led astray. Why? Because this True Dharma [teaching] is difficult to penetrate clearly from the very start.

Those who are not suited to hear it are precisely those who are still fixed in calculative thinking as exemplified by Maudgalyāyana, who attempted to measure the extent of the Buddha's voice and ended up having to repent sincerely for the transgression of refusing to accept the infinity and unreckonability of the Buddha and his body, speech, and mind (8.2f). We shall now move to characterise some of the salient characteristics of the secrets of the body, speech, and mind of the bodhisattvas and the Buddha, and attempt to outline what the *Secrets of the Tathāgata Sūtra* conceives of as the bodhisattva path.

a. Bodily Doctrines

The bodhisattva's body is described as that which is attained after the investigation of and awakening to the Dharma-body, which is the Buddha's true body of inherent luminous existence (not his worldly manifestations) (1.8j). By so examining, the bodhisattva attains the Dharma-body, which is equal to emptiness and all beings and is not accomplished by conditions (1.8f–g). Such a body is described as being infinite and unlimited, allowing it to take on any form to accord with beings needs and never be exhausted. Thus, merely associating (i.e. realising) with the body of a bodhisattva brings about the end of suffering (1.8h), and it can give of its own flesh for the benefit of other beings without thereby suffering or being diminished in any way—its infinitude thus allows for endless compassion (1.8d).

The teaching on the secret of the Buddha's body expresses the nature underlying the bodhisattva's body. Primarily, it accords to beings' inclinations and needs, manifesting in whatever form is needed to bring about their faith and understanding. If, however, their minds are not suited to seeing him, he will not manifest for them (7.2a). In this way, the Buddha's body is described as being like a pure round mirror, which simply reflects images within beings' minds without thereby undergoing any effort or exertion on its part—manifestation occurs, as it were, automatically and entirely on the side of the mind of the perceiver (7.2b). Like space, it accords

with and conforms to all characteristics and light (7.2e). It is not a conditioned body and thus is declared to be not sustained by food (7.2g). His body is incalculable and cannot be reckoned even by the Buddha's own power (7.2f). Despite this, he allows for a conventional generation of merit and faith in beings through his ability to take on any form and appear to receive offerings (14.1).

One is reminded of the various versions of the "historical Buddha" people have conceived of throughout history. To the Victorian orientalist and contemporary rationalists, he is someone who cast aside all traditions and rituals and hammered out a perfectly rational psychology. To Heian era emperors facing epidemics, he was a medicinal cure. To feudal monarchs, he was the head of an intricately ordered maṇḍala kingdom. Everyone sees what they most need, not necessarily what is definitively the case. While scholars use these variations as points of criticism and identify points of interpolation by the historically conditioned, the *Secrets of the Tathāgata* turns this on its head, suggesting that it is, in fact, the nature of the Buddha himself that allows for the creation of this diversity of views (without any action on his part), each one a skilful means to draw beings to the Dharma who would otherwise have been indifferent.

b. Verbal Doctrines

Like the secret of the bodhisattva's body, the secret of the bodhisattva's speech, while never increasing or decreasing, naturally accords with beings' capacities. It accords with their birthplace (allowing them to speak in any language) and realm (allowing them to be comprehensible to any being). This means that they can even allow the deaf to hear—meaning that "speech" is more so conceived of as communicative content than sound, which is inherently limited (2.1). Thus, as any perceived communicative content about the Dharma, the bodhisattva's speech is intrinsically free from bad qualities and is always true (2.2). An illustration about being able to declare the number of leaves on a tree without counting them (2.3) demonstrates how the bodhisattva's speech is the manifestation of unconditioned truth that is entirely free of contingency.

In the teaching about the secret of the Buddha's speech, we find the most often quoted line of the sūtra, declaring that:

from the day and night that he attained the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi to the day and night that he will enter Mahāparinirvāṇa, within that period, the Tathāgata has never once uttered a single word, he has not expressed any meaning. Why? Because the Buddha

Tathāgata permanently abides in samāhita [i.e., meditative equipoise].

Thus, even though the words he utters convey the Dharma that leads beings to awakening, there is ultimately nothing underlying their meaning. The Buddha's speech expresses nothing, and while sounds are heard issuing forth from his face, they, in fact, issue forth from empty space (8.2d). The Buddha has no underlying intention to give rise to the various divisions of scriptures, such as sūtras. However, his speech reflects the natures of beings—while it has no inherent existence, they can still follow it and understand (8.2b). Just as the Buddha's body is like a reflection in a mirror, the speech of the Buddha is like a magical instrument that plays when wafted by being's karmic inclinations—the Buddha exerts no effort or gives rise to any intention, but is, by his nature, awakening, and attracts beings to buddhahood as a magnet attracts metal (8.2f). Thus the scriptures that beings end up with are precisely the scriptures that they deserve. The infinitude of the Buddha's voice (not even measurable by the monk foremost in the supernormal powers) fills all beings, neither coming from within nor outside, just like an echo (8.2g). While we think of the Buddha's definitive introductory teaching as the four noble truths, these are expressed differently, depending upon the inclinations and languages of beings—the truth cannot be expressed in such limited wording (14.2).

c. Mental Doctrines

The secret of the bodhisattva's mind reflects the same principle: while the logic of the four noble truths makes sense for a limited being, bodhisattvas, no longer bound to birth, cessation, or becoming are beyond the reckoning of all dharmas and meanings, and thus have nothing to attain. If there is something to be known, then obstruction arises—if there is something to attain, one is on the level of Śrāvaka Dharma. The discrimination of all distinctions, which also goes beyond all discriminations, is the non-attainment of any Dharma (3.2). Thus the mind of the bodhisattva is knowledge of all things throughout all time because it is purity and thusness itself (3.1). Intersecting with and interpenetrating with the minds of all sentient beings,

when the mind of the bodhisattva is pure,¹ the minds of all sentient beings are also pure and is a ground from which all minds arise² (3.3).

The primary characteristic of the secret of the Buddha's mind is that it does not have any transformations, distinctions, or flows of consciousness (9.1). It does not investigate, see, or observe. It is an eternal state of samādhi. Yet, being of the same nature as all dharmas, it is neither internal nor external to all things and beings and thus can manifest and be represented in beings' minds according to their requirements. Therefore, despite its purity, it does not discard the ability to be represented to aid beings for whom perfect non-transformation and independence would be incomprehensible (9.4).

d. Bodhisattva Practice According to the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*

According to the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*, the bodhisattva path likewise stems from the inconceivable but also implies the manifestation of specific actions and words that can aid beings.

As with many formulations of the path, the start, according to the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*, is the arousal of the aspiration to attain buddhahood (bodhicitta). That arousal of the aspiration to attain buddhahood is, as we have noted, the entirety of the purity of the body, speech, and mind of the buddhas (1.8k) and gives rise to the buddha in the world (22.2). Since bodhisattvas thereafter practice *with* the unobstructed body of the Tathāgata, it is the Buddha who does the work of the bodhisattva path after that (1.8k), reminding one of self-power and other-power distinctions in Pure Land Buddhist thought. The conventional path remains, and its components such as the six perfections, brahmavihārās, and the thirty-seven factors of

¹ Cf. the *Vimalakīrtinīrdeśa*:

Maitreya, whenever you attain Buddhahood, which is the perfection of enlightenment, at the same time all living beings will also attain Buddhahood. Why? Enlightenment consists of the realization of all living beings. Maitreya, at the moment when you attain ultimate liberation, all living beings will also attain ultimate liberation. Why? The Tathāgatas do not enter ultimate liberation until all living beings have entered ultimate liberation. For, since all living beings are utterly liberated, the Tathāgatas see them as having the nature of ultimate liberation.

Robert Thurman, trans., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture*, Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park, 1976, 34.

² This resembles the idea of the ālayavijñāna, or storehouse consciousness, which is in fact the inherently pure tathāgatagarbha, but when covered by adventitious stains results in the incorrect projections of delusive existence.

awakening are still important. Still, the ability to attain them comes from the assistance of the power of the buddha that is inherent in all beings.

Within that formulation of the conventional path, the path is summarised as being the accumulation and unification of merit and wisdom (1.5). Specific formulations of the stages of the path can be found in various locations throughout the sūtra and are not identical: reflecting the idea that the teaching is adjusted to fit the temperament of the student. An example of such a formulation is found in Chapter 19: after arousing the aspiration to attain buddhahood, cultivating morality and associating with good friends (i.e., Dharma teachers), one listens to the teachings on dependent origination, and after going beyond doubt, one goes forth from home and ordains. Then, hearing, listening, and teaching the Dharma, one cultivates freedom from negligence, allowing one to become free from desire and cut off unwholesome dharmas. Attaining knowledge of being and non-being and the four Dharma seals, one quickly fulfils the factors of awakening and attains buddhahood.

Notwithstanding such a formulation, the bodhisattva who is genuinely practising the path sees nothing, and in the emergence of treasures and virtues, nothing indeed emerges (24.2). In this manner, the sūtra sees realisation as primarily being the cessation of views of physical existence and calming the senses, allowing one to end desire and cut off ignorance and suffering by seeing all dharmas as non-arising and unconditioned (15.2). Vajrapāṇi paradoxically suggests that through the non-utterance of words and realisation of ineffability, he attains knowledge of the non-duality that allows him to receive a prediction of buddhahood—yet he thus sees that the words of that prediction do not correspond to anything that can be apprehended.

Despite cutting off the fires of desire and the sense objects that give rise to the deluded mind, the bodhisattva still maintains the ability to use sense objects for awakening. So, despite the non-reality of all dharmas, bodhisattvas can still manifest among sense objects to accord with beings' inclinations (15.3c). The pāramitās that they teach are expressed in words and sense objects but result in the counteracting of them (15.3d). Thus, the transcendent bodhisattva is simultaneously depicted as being an entirely this-worldly being, able to manifest within saṃsāra to nurture and mature beings' wholesome roots, suggesting that it is fear of saṃsāra that motivates the śrāvakas to escape saṃsāra¹ (20.3).

¹ The distinction between śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas is not strong in this sūtra, but here, as with elsewhere, I sense that this is not actually a sectarian statement (as we know, the Mahāyāna was not, after all, conceived of as a sect or distinct "school" in its

Similarly, the sūtra itself, expressed in so many words, is declared indeed to be unarisen. If something is unarisen, it cannot cease: thus, the power of the vidyās for the perpetuation of the Dharma is no other than the no-self, no-being, and no-dharma, both separate and identical to all dharmas, that are the Tathāgata's body, speech, and mind. The dhāraṇī of the letter A, by which the devaputra Bhadrarāja gains eloquence, also expresses this knowledge, but is also inexpressible and unarisen (24.1). This unbounded emptiness and non-arising allow for the vast space within which manifestations, pregnant with meaning and inspiration for aspiring bodhisattvas, can spring forth from silence like an echo, reflection, or magical instrument wafted by the winds of our karmic inclinations.

Indian heyday), but rather a statement about the mental orientation of the practitioner—a bodhisattva is one who practices in a non-dualistic manner and a śrāvaka or pratyek-abuddhahood is one who practices with distinctions.

Chapter 1. The Secret of the Bodhisattva's Body

1. Setting

¹Thus have I heard: At one time the Bhagavān was staying at Rājagṛha, on Mount Gṛdhṛakūṭa, together with a great assembly of bhikṣus, forty-two thousand in all. In addition, there were eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas who had already all attained supernormal powers² and superior wisdom.

2. The Bodhisattvas from other Buddha-fields

A great multitude of bodhisattva mahāsattvas³ had come from all other buddha-fields⁴ to that assembly. They had already attained patience,⁵ non-

¹ T312.704b20 f 1; T310.42b8 f 8.

² I translate this term, 神通, which occurs frequently in this sūtra, as supernormal power(s). The Sanskrit equivalent can be either *abhijñā*, higher knowledge, and *ṛddhi*, accomplishment. Neither of those literal translations conveys the meaning of what this term indicates. As supernatural has implications of the paranormal, and indicates that these abilities are beyond nature, the term supernormal is preferred.

There are as follows (according to Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*, 97c–98b): (1) Accomplishment (*ṛddhi*): This is magical power proper. (2) Divine eye (*divyacakṣus*): the ability to see beings and substances in the six realms, regardless of size. (3) Divine ear (*divyaśrotra*): the ability to hear all the sounds of the six realms. (4) Memory of previous lives (*pūrvanivāsānusmṛti*). (5) Knowledge of others' minds (*paracittajñāna*). (6) (Sometimes added, not in Nāgārjuna) Power of the extinction of the āsravas (inflows/outflows): the āsravas are karmic propensities towards sensuality (*kāma*), being (*bhava*), and ignorance (*avidyā*).

³ This term means great being. There are several traditional explanations for why a certain class of bodhisattva is termed a mahāsattva.

⁴ Buddha-fields (*buddhakṣetra*) are lands created by the accumulation of qualities (*guṇa*) by a bodhisattva. When they attain buddhahood, they can direct the qualities they accumulated through prior vows (*pūrvaprañidhāna*) to the establishment of a buddha-field. This establishment is referred to as the adornment of a buddha-field (*buddhakṣetrāṅkāra*). The most significant such buddha-field is that of Amitābha Buddha, the buddha-field of Sukhāvātī. It is implied by the eighteenth vow of Amitābha Buddha, that all who have faith in him and say his name, even ten times, will be born in his land. It is an example, of a buddha-field wherein the conditions are made perfect for beings to attain buddhahood by practicing the Dharma. In this passage in the *Secret of the Tathāgata*, bodhisattvas who have been born in countless buddha-fields have arrived. It is typical for bodhisattvas practicing in such buddha-fields to go to other buddha-fields and worlds in order to hear the Dharma from other buddhas.

⁵ Skt. *anutpattikadharmakṣānti*. Patience at the non-arising of dharmas is implied here, rather than simple patience or the pāramitā, as it is an important aspect of the bodhisattva who is non-retrogressing. Edgerton describes it as “intellectual receptivity (see *kṣānti*) to the truth that states of existences [dharmas] have no origination (*utpatti*).” Regarding this particular Mahāyāna use of the term *kṣānti* (patience), Edgerton defines it as “Intellectual receptivity; the being ready to advance to accept knowledge; a preliminary stage leading

retrogression,¹ and had only one more birth. They had obtained all the dhāraṇīs² and samādhis, were endowed with unobstructed intelligence, and were skilled in crossing over limitless buddha-fields. They were well-instructed, having been established in all limitless buddha-fields in the ten directions. By supernormal power, they freely sported and vanquished legions of māras and refuted all non-Buddhist doctrines. They practised with the full knowledge of the minds of all beings and knew their good and other faculties using their excellent knowledge. They knew and entered all the pāramitās, principles, teachings, and Dharma gates; they were endowed with skilful means and had attained to the unsurpassed and greatest other shore and came to be praised and proclaimed as equal to all buddhas. For countless and limitless hundreds of thousands of koṭis³ of niyutas⁴ of kalpas,⁵ they practised the path of accumulating [merits] for highest bodhi, wherein their minds became equal to the conditions of earth, water, fire, wind, and limitless space. Correctly practising contemplation on compassion and attention, they came to transcend and exhaust all attachments and obstructions. They had obtained the exquisite bodily marks of Nārāyaṇa,⁶

to jñāna [knowledge] but distinguished from jñāna by the fact that it is still characterized by doubt.” Also, “receptivity to knowledge of the truth in respect to misery.” Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953, 27 & 199. I have kept at least the term “patience” to allow for other potential interpretations.

¹ This is not being liable to retrogress or turn back on the path to buddhahood (Skt. *avavartika* or *avavarta*, *anivartiya*, *avinivartya*). Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, 79.

² This refers either to qualities for bearing (*dhāraṇa*) or preventing (*vidhāraṇa*) wholesome dharmas and unwholesome dharmas respectively. There are countless dhāraṇīs, but three principal ones listed by Nāgārjuna are (1) bearing what has been heard (i.e. teachings), (2) bearing knowledge of the qualities of beings, and (3) bearing indifference to sounds. Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, 95c–96a. It also refers to longer spell or incantations—while mantra and vidyā tend to refer to shorter spells.

³ Although this is sometimes defined as ten million, in Pāli the term can have a broader sense. The impression given is simply an inconceivable amount.

⁴ The definition of this differs broadly depending upon the source, it is also simply an inconceivable amount. For this reason, the Chinese simply transliterates koṭi and niyuta. A common alternative spelling is nayuta.

⁵ A traditional simile for this also inconceivable period is that of the amount of time that it takes for a solid rock, one square mile in size, to be worn away by being rubbed once with a silk cloth every hundred years. By the time the rock has worn away, a kalpa will still not have passed.

⁶ Although this name is more popular as an epithet for Viṣṇu, in Buddhism it refers to a Vajradhara (a general vajra-wielding deity, rather than Vajrapāṇi himself) who dwells in the Garbhadhātu Maṇḍala. His consort is Nārāyaṇī. He is famous for his indestructible body adorned with the thirty-two marks. See the *Vairocanaḥhisambodhi*, translated by Rolf

were endowed with adamantite¹ bodies, and were able to preach the Dharma with a lion's roar.² Their fearlessness surpassed all in that great assembly, and their great radiance surpassed that of the sun and moon. They already knew the thusness³ of all dharmas from which they explained the equality of the three times.⁴ Through certainty, they well-expounded the greatest and most profound summaries of the Dharma. They entered deeply into the Dharma-door of the dependent origination of all things and were detached from the two kinds of extreme views of nihilism and eternalism. As they entered and emerged from the liberation of the dhyānas in the attainment of samādhi, they were able to know all. The fame of their merits and wisdom were known in the ten directions. They maintained the greatest True Dharma of the Jewel King,⁵ maintained the continuity of the noble seed of the Three Jewels,⁶ and practised and attained heaps of such immeasurable merits and wisdom.⁷

Their names were⁸ Ratnottama Bodhisattva, Candraketu Bodhisattva, Śāntiketū Bodhisattva, Prabhaketū Bodhisattva, Śrīrabha Bodhisattva,

Giebel, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research: Berkeley, CA, 2005, 115–6.

¹ This term simply refers to an indestructible material. It is roughly equivalent to vajra, i.e., diamond. That which cannot be cut.

² Just as a lion's roar reverberates and is the most powerful among all animal calls, the Buddha's preaching of the Dharma is supreme among all teachings.

³ Tathatā, or "as-it-is-ness" of reality. This is contrasted with changing form. Reality is of singular characteristic, but it is beyond expression.

⁴ While past, present, and future may appear different, in thusness they are identical. Nāgārjuna explains this as follows: "If there is no arising [in the past, due to the impossibility of causal conditionality], the future and the present are also without arising. Then how would the three times not be identical? What is more, past time is without beginning, future time is without end, and present time is without duration. This is why the identity of the three times is called the [thusness of dharmas]." Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*, 298c.

⁵ I.e., the Buddha.

⁶ I.e., they maintained the saṅgha.

⁷ T310 has a longer list of virtues possessed by those bodhisattvas.

⁸ With a few exceptions, the following names are reconstructions and likely differ from the original Sanskrit. Since in English, descriptive names come across very unusually, e.g. Bodhisattva Highest Jewel, in this translation I have opted to always try to give a Sanskrit equivalent. We hope these are close guesses, but they remain just that, guesses. In that light, I think of these not as "back" translations, but simply as retranslations into Sanskrit and not as an attempt to recover a lost original. Certainly, at such point that a Sanskrit edition or translation from Sanskrit is readily available where these names are given in their original Sanskrit forms, these can all be updated. Thus, we shirk away from the practice of inserting asterisks for reconstructed names, as that would simply become tiresome for the reader.

Śrīprabha Bodhisattva, Śrīkūṭa Bodhisattva, Śrīguhya bodhisattva, Nārāyaṇa Bodhisattva, Nāgānanda Bodhisattva, Nāgottara Bodhisattva, Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva, Adhirūpadhāra Bodhisattva, Adhideva Bodhisattva, Guṇaprabharāja Bodhisattva, Prabhapāda Bodhisattva, Nityokṣiptahasta Bodhisattva, Nityāprahāra Bodhisattva, Ratnamudrāhasta Bodhisattva, Ratnahasta Bodhisattva, Samantaprabha Bodhisattva, Nakṣatrarāja Bodhisattva, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva,¹ Vajraprajñā Bodhisattva, Vajramahāprajñā Bodhisattva, Vajrapada Bodhisattva, Acālapada Bodhisattva, Tridhātupada Bodhisattva, Anantapada Bodhisattva, Anantamati Bodhisattva, Agrataramati Bodhisattva, Anutsrṣṭamati Bodhisattva, Devamati Bodhisattva, Jyotiṣmati Bodhisattva, Varāgramati Bodhisattva, Virūḍhitamati Bodhisattva, Nityaviṣaṇa Bodhisattva, Nityapramudita Bodhisattva, Prasannendriya Bodhisattva, Upaśāntāpati Bodhisattva, Nivāraṇaviṣkambhin Bodhisattva, Svabhāvadhāravimalaprabha Bodhisattva, Nityābhīyukta Bodhisattva, Prajñācara Bodhisattva, Nityāvalokayati Bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, Agrakūṭa Bodhisattva, Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattva, Animiṣa Bodhisattva, Nirāmiṣa Bodhisattva, Maṇicīnta Bodhisattva, Sumanasikṛta Bodhisattva, Suvicintitārtha Bodhisattva, Nīta Bodhisattva, Dhāraṇīśvararāja Bodhisattva, Dharaṇīmḍhara Bodhisattva, Vyūharāja Bodhisattva, Kṣetraprasṛta Bodhisattva, Ratnakoṭi Bodhisattva, Guhyavasa Bodhisattva, Śakra Devānām Indra Bodhisattva, Varuṇa Bodhisattva, Brahmajāla Bodhisattva, Jālini Bodhisattva, Devamakuṭa Bodhisattva, Subhāhukumāra Bodhisattva, Sunetra Bodhisattva, Gandhahasti Bodhisattva, Kuṅjalagandhahasti Bodhisattva, Siṃhadhvaja Bodhisattva, Siddhārthamati Bodhisattva, Sāgaramati Bodhisattva, Suvinīta Bodhisattva, Śāntamati Bodhisattva,² Maitreya Bodhisattva, and the youth Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva.

3. The Divine and Worldly Beings in the Assembly

³In this way, the great multitude of bodhisattva mahāsattvas, up to the king of the Brahmā heaven of the trichiliocosm,⁴ were joined in the assembly by Indra and the four great kings together with the kings of great authority of

¹ Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, whose main epithet in this sūtra is “the Great Lord of Mysteries” (Guhyakādhīpati). He is one of the main two interlocutors of this sūtra. His name means vajra-handed, i.e. one wielding a vajra. A vajra is a small mallet. His identity will be explained fully in this sūtra, so I shall not give full detail in this footnote.

² Śāntamati Bodhisattva is the second main interlocutor of this sūtra.

³ T312.705a.

⁴ A collection of three thousand great thousands of worlds. An immeasurably large collection of world systems.

other heavens, the assembly of nāga kings, the assembly of yakṣa kings, the assembly of asura kings, the assembly of garuḍa kings, the assembly of kiṃnara kings, the assembly of mahoraga kings, the assembly of gandharva kings, and so forth. These included the nāga king Anavatapta, the nāga king Sāgara, the nāga king Varuṇa, the nāga king Manasvi, the nāga king Takṣaka, the nāga king Suvarṇa, the nāga king Anantavarṇa, and the nāga king Susīma. Such nāga kings, together with many hundreds of thousands of nāga retainers, came to the assembly, approached the Bhagavān, prostrated themselves before him, and listened to the Dharma.

Further, in the assembly of asura kings were the asura king Rāhu, the asura king Vimalacitri, the asura king Subāhu, the asura king Śāla, the asura king Tāla, the asura king Śīla, the asura king Mahāhāsa, the asura king Mahākroḍa, and the asura king Pāramitā. Together with many hundreds of thousands of asura retainers, such asura kings came to the assembly, approached the Bhagavān, prostrated themselves before him, and listened to the Dharma.

At that time, the king of Magadha, Ajātaśatru, son of Vaidehī, from his palace together with his consort and retainers came to the assembly, and they approached the Bhagavān, prostrated themselves before him, and listened to the Dharma. In addition, the fourfold saṅgha of bhikṣus, bhikṣuṇīs, upāsakas, and upāsikās came to the assembly.

Moreover, all the devas of the earth, devas of the desire realm, devas of the pure abodes, and many devaputras¹ came to the assembly and approached the Bhagavān, prostrated themselves before him, and listened to the Dharma.

At that time, in that great assembly with the Bhagavān, the countless hundreds of thousands of devas and humans in a great crowd respected, circumambulated, listened, and received his exposition of the Dharma.

4. The Full Collection of the Superior Practices of Bodhisattvas

The Buddha addressed the great assembly:

I have a [teaching] of the True Dharma called *The Pure Wondrous Gate of the Full Collection of the Superior Practices of Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas*. It is replete with all practices.²

¹ This refers to lower grades of devas and literally means sons of devas. They are born as devaputras by keeping wholesome conduct, even if not perfectly.

² T310 opens this teaching section as follows:

¹It teaches that if a bodhisattva practises generosity, they will achieve the ripening of all sentient beings. If bodhisattvas practice morality, they obtain the fulfilment of all excellent aspirations. If bodhisattvas practice patience, they become fully endowed with all the major and minor marks. If bodhisattvas practice diligence, they become filled with all the Buddha-Dharma. If bodhisattvas practice meditation, they cause their mind to be entirely tamed. If bodhisattvas practice wisdom, they eliminate all afflictions.

If bodhisattvas practice the exposition of the Dharma, they obtain the accomplishment of unimpeded intelligence. If bodhisattvas practice superior merit [accumulation], they nurture all sentient beings. If bodhisattvas practice excellent knowledge, they obtain unobstructed knowledge. If bodhisattvas practice śamatha, they cause the harmonisation of mental activities. If bodhisattvas practice vipaśyanā, they can become detached from all discriminations.

²If bodhisattvas practice loving-kindness, they obtain freedom from all obstructions. If bodhisattvas practice compassion, they obtain a body and mind that are together free from negligence. If bodhisattvas practice joy, they can sport in the garden of Dharma-bliss. If bodhisattvas practice equanimity, they can eradicate the duality of agreeableness and disagreeableness.

If bodhisattvas practice listening to the Dharma, they can eradicate all hindrances and fetters. If bodhisattvas practice renunciation, they can abandon all attachments. If bodhisattvas practice dwelling in the wilderness, they cultivate good dharmas, all without decay or loss. If bodhisattvas practice mindfulness, they attain all dhāraṇī doors. If bodhisattvas practice intelligence, they attain superior intellect for skilfully distinguishing all dharmas. If bodhisattvas practice abiding, they attain an invincible mind. If bodhisattvas practice aspiration, they can know the way to all destinations.

At that time, the Bhagavān, surrounded by a crowd of countless hundreds of thousands of adherents, taught a sūtra which proclaimed all the practices of bodhisattva mahāsattvas, that Dharma [teaching] was called the *Meaning of the Pure Expansive Path*: “What are the practices of a bodhisattva? ...

The text then continues along the same lines as this translation.

¹ The six pāramitās.

² The four brahmavihāras.

¹If bodhisattvas practice the four foundations of mindfulness, they can subtly examine the body, feelings, the mind, and dharmas. If bodhisattvas practice the four right strivings, they fully eradicate all unwholesome dharmas and increase all wholesome dharmas. If bodhisattvas practice the four bases of supernormal power, they attain purity and pliancy in body and mind. If bodhisattvas practice the five faculties, they can know well the nature and characteristics of self and others. If bodhisattvas practice the five powers, they attain, naturally, victory over all afflictions. If bodhisattvas practice the seven factors of awakening, they completely apprehend all dharmas as they are. If bodhisattvas practice the noble eightfold path, they can cross over all wrong paths.

If bodhisattvas can practice the four noble truths, they can achieve the unshakable Dharma. If bodhisattvas practice the four kinds of unimpeded understanding, they can eradicate all thoughts of doubt in sentient beings. If bodhisattvas practice refuge, they attain knowledge of freedom. If bodhisattvas practice being a good and virtuous friend, they can accumulate all merits. If bodhisattvas practice intention, they have non-opposition in all worlds. If bodhisattvas can practice the profound mind, they obtain the highest victory in all places. If bodhisattvas practice association, they can apply courage to help lift beings [out of saṃsāra]. If bodhisattvas practice residing in a monastery, they can accord with the Dharma just as they heard it without decay or loss. If bodhisattvas practice the four means of spreading the Dharma, they can receive all sentient beings.

If bodhisattvas practice getting hold of the True Dharma, they can maintain, unceasing, the noble seed of the Three Jewels. If bodhisattvas practice the transfer of merits, they can adorn and purify the buddha-fields. If bodhisattvas practice skilful means, they can fulfil the attainment of omniscience.

²Thus, the Bhagavān explained the extensive [teaching of the] True Dharma, *The Pure Wondrous Gate of the Full Collection of the Superior Practices of Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas*.

¹ The thirty-seven factors of awakening (*bodhipakṣadharmā*).

² T312.705c13.

5. The Two Cultivations of Merit and Wisdom

While the Bhagavān Buddha was teaching the Dharma thus, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries,¹ the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, manifesting supernatural powers, appeared at the right side of the Buddha. Then, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva Mahāsattva stood before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

It is truly rare, Bhagavān! The Tathāgata has well expounded the extensive [teaching of the] True Dharma, *The Pure Wondrous Gate of the Full Collection of the Superior Practices of Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas*.

O Bhagavān, I thus comprehend the meaning that the Buddha has expounded; I thus understand it: all the best practices of bodhisattva mahāsattvas emerge from the two cultivations of merit and wisdom. You should understand that they accord with the two cultivations of merit and wisdom. Why? Since bodhisattvas cultivate merits, they can free all sentient beings from obstructions. If they cultivate wisdom, they can skilfully explain the essentials of the Dharma to all sentient beings, causing them to give rise to joy.

O Bhagavān, all bodhisattva mahāsattvas should thus cultivate merits, cultivate wisdom, and unify the two. Why? Since bodhisattvas cultivate merits, they can fulfil the perfection of skilful means. Since bodhisattvas cultivate wisdom, they can fulfil the perfection of wisdom.

For this reason, it is by these two cultivations that bodhisattvas on two kinds of noble paths thoroughly gather all practices on the path. A bodhisattva who abides thus is a practitioner on the path; they can subdue those challenging to conquer and the many deeds of Māra's armies. Such bodhisattvas have already surpassed and overcome the various evils of Māra's realm, and they are non-retrogressing from

¹ Mysteries here translates *guhyaka*. This has two interpretations, the first is a class of demons called guhyakas, who are usually depicted as serving Kubera, and who dwell in caves, and are thus shrouded in mystery. As we shall see later, Vajrapāṇi's palace is filled with various creatures, and it is highly likely that he can be considered a lord of guhyakas. The second implication is secrets, i.e., he is a lord or master over the secrets of body, speech, and mind of the bodhisattva and tathāgata—hence he is invited to teach on this topic. Since both implications are possibilities, I have chosen to translate this as mysteries—thus maintaining the ambiguity and indicating that this term it is not exactly the same as “secrets” (which for the sake of this translation, specifically is being used for the three secrets of body, speech, and mind), and not specifically the lord of guhyaka demons, but carries the implications of both.

anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Right here, such non-retrogressing bodhisattvas can skilfully open the eye of all buddha tathāgatas, which uncovers incredibly profound and secret afflictions.

6. The Request for Vajrapāṇi to Teach this Sūtra

¹Thereupon, from within that assembly, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Śāntamati stood before Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, and addressed him, saying:

Great Lord of Mysteries! You are a constant close attendant to all buddha tathāgatas; you can easily explain the Dharma [teaching] of the secret possessed by the tathāgatas. I wish for an introduction. That [teaching] does not enter the objects of perception² of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, let alone worldlings.³

Having spoken these words, at that time, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, stood in place silently.

Then, Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, having understood, went before the Buddha, and addressed him, saying:

I wish for the Bhagavān to request Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, to clarify the Dharma [teaching] of the *Secrets of the Tathāgatas*, for the sake of this assembly. Having heard it, this assembly of bodhisattva mahāsattvas will give rise to joy

¹ T312.706a3.

² Objects of perception, standing for 境界, is a common term in this sūtra. It roughly corresponds to the Sanskrit terms viṣaya, ālambana, and gocara. The term 所緣 has the same broad ambiguity. Strictly in the sense as ālambana, this refers to that upon which perception depends to arise. For instance, the perception of a visual object depends upon physical form in order to arise. That physical form is the object of perception of visual consciousness. Viṣaya and gocara have the nuance of also being the range or sphere within which one's actions are performed and have consequences. This, naturally, overlaps with ālambana.

The reader should understand broadly that the term “objects of perception” has all these implications. In this case, the current sūtra is declared to be beyond the objects of perception of those who are not bodhisattvas. This means, on the one hand, that it is not their range of practice (in the sense of gocara and viṣaya) but also that they will not perceive it. As this sūtra proceeds, this latter sense will become clearer, but in brief, the idea implied is that the teachings accord with the minds of beings—thus, if the mind is not suited to hearing it, the sounds of the sūtra will be perceived differently. The objects presented by the Buddha or bodhisattva adjust accordingly.

³ I.e., ordinary beings.

and extensively accumulate the factors of awakening. Having accomplished the Dharma [teaching] of the *Secrets of the Tathāgatas*, they will also practice according to the truth.

Thereupon, the Bhagavān addressed Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

I am now requesting that you skilfully, for the sake of this great assembly, transmit the teaching of the secret of the bodhisattvas and the Dharma [teaching] of the true *Secrets of the Tathāgatas*. This great assembly will all joyfully listen.

Then, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva, having heard the noble request of the Buddha, stood before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

O Bhagavān, as the Buddha requests, I shall now teach the secret of the bodhisattvas and the Dharma [teaching] of the true *Secrets of the Tathāgatas*. If there is anyone who can understand and enter it, that would be entirely due to the Bhagavān's supernormal establishing power.¹ It is like how the illumination of a lamp's light can widely illuminate and manifest all forms when covered by darkness at night. This current assembly is the same as that: if a few people, having heard it, were to understand and enter the secret of the bodhisattvas and the Dharma [teaching] of the true *Secrets of the Tathāgatas*, you should understand that that would be entirely due to being so established by the supernormal power of the Tathāgata.

7. The Benefits of this Dharma Teaching

Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying,

Son of good family!² If, in this assembly, having heard the secret of the bodhisattvas and the Dharma [teaching] of the true *Secrets of the*

¹ Skt. *adhiṣṭhāna*. This is the power of the empowerment of a Buddha. The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* points out that it is by the buddhas' supernormal establishing power that they can carry out the practices of a bodhisattva for three asaṃkhyā (immeasurable) kalpas.

² Skt. *kulaputra*. This means one who is part of the Buddha's family, i.e., a disciple of the Buddha, but is roughly equivalent to what we might think of as "gentleman" in English.

Tathāgatas, one is not alarmed and does not tremble, what is their profound benefit?

¹Then, Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva addressed the great assembly:

Good sirs! The Buddha has explained that there are four kinds of inconceivability. What are the four? The first is the inconceivability of karma. The second is the inconceivability of [the speech of] nāgas. The third is the inconceivability of establishment [in meditation]. The fourth is the inconceivability of the buddhas.

Good sirs, you should know that of these four, only [the inconceivability] of the buddha tathāgatas is the most inconceivable. Having attained the Dharma of the anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi of all buddhas, the four kinds of inconceivability are accomplished in unison.

Therefore, good sirs, having heard the Dharma of the inconceivability of the bodhisattvas and the Dharma of the inconceivability of the tathāgatas, [if one is] not alarmed, does not tremble, and does not give rise to timidity, one will give rise to the highest mind of extensive joy.

Thereupon, Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, by the power of the Buddha, knew that everyone in that great assembly had joyful faith and listened to that Dharma [teaching] of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.² Immediately, heavenly flowers scattered extensively, rained up to their knees and spread widely as offerings [from the devas].

8. The Secret of the Bodhisattva's Body

At that time, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

You should listen carefully! I shall now explain the Dharma of the secret of bodhisattvas.³

¹ T312.706b1.

² T310 expresses this as follows:

Thereupon, Śāntamati, in this manner, received a samādhi, which caused all in the assembly to listen to the Dharma of the Tathāgata. Without denigrating [it], each had a mind of delight and ease. ...

³ T310 also has "and the secret of the tathāgatas."

a. Vajrapāṇi's Accompaniment of the Śākya Bodhisattva

Śāntamati, you should know that our current Bhagavān, in the distant past, when he was on the bodhisattva stage [training] in the Dharma of Dīpaṅkara Tathāgata, received a prediction from that Buddha of his attainment of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.¹ Since that time, I have always followed the Śākya Bodhisattva, and that bodhisattva's deeds have never strayed [from the path], and I have not seen him with corrupted characteristics. His speech has not strayed [from the path], and I have not heard false words [from him]. His mind has not strayed [from the path], and I have not known that he was lost in attachments.

Accordingly, his deeds have manifested the appearance of conduct only to accomplish the ripening of all sentient beings and not for personal fame. In this way, the appearance of conduct of that bodhisattva's body was thus unlimited and incorporates all the kinds of conduct of all sentient beings: all are included in the bodhisattva's appearance of conduct, and yet the bodhisattva does not conventionally exert effort and does not discover peace, but nonetheless abides in it.

b. The Variety of Manifestations of a Bodhisattva's Body to Suit Beings' Needs

²That is to say, among the varieties of sentient beings, those who are suited to dhyāna are directly manifested³ dhyāna for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to drum music accompanied by strings and singing are directly manifested drum music accompanied by strings and singing for the sake of their teaching and liberation.

Those who are suited to the body⁴ of a boy are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a girl are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body

¹ T310 excludes mention of the episode with Dīpaṅkara.

² This section reads differently in T310, but the implications are largely the same.

³ By directly manifested is meant that these appearances manifest before the beings who are suited to them. This radical teaching is suggesting that the bodhisattva's body is entirely inactive but manifests dependent upon the minds of the sentient beings who are to be taught and liberated.

⁴ I.e., suited to be taught by one with such a body.

of a man are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a woman are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a youth are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a middle-aged person are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of an elder are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation.

Those who are suited to an inferior body are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a butcher are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a mute person are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a blind and deaf person are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation.

Those who are suited to the body of the characteristics of those of the three lower realms up to the human realm are directly manifested all those bodies for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a deva are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a nāga, up to a yakṣa, gandharva, asura, garuḍa, kiṃnara, mahoraga, and so forth are directly manifested all those bodies for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of Indra are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a king of the brahmā heaven are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the bodies of the world-guardians are directly manifested those bodies for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a wheel-turning monarch are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation.

Those who are suited to the body of a bhikṣu, bhikṣuṇī, upāsaka, or upāsikā, are directly manifested all those bodies for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a śrāvaka are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a pratyekabuddha are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; those who are suited to the body of a bodhisattva are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation;

those who are suited to the body of a tathāgata are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation. Those [bodhisattvas] who do not manifest are referred to as formless.

c. The Infinitely Adaptive Nature of a Bodhisattva's Body

¹Moreover, Śāntamati, the conduct with the characteristic of form of all sentient beings, is amidst the bodhisattvas' conduct with the characteristic of form. Yet, the bodhisattva never gives rise to discrimination. The bodhisattva has a mind that is free from discrimination, is equanimous and detached. While they manifest bodily conduct, a bodhisattva's body by its nature is unmoving; because it is unmoving, it can manifest bodily deeds. Even if it is without characteristics, an indestructible bodhisattva's body is still pure. It has already manifested its radiance, illuminating all the hells, causing all sentient beings there to attain peace of mind.

Furthermore, bodhisattvas are always indifferent regarding their own lives for the sake of all sentient beings. If any being seeks the flesh of a bodhisattva's body to eat it, a bodhisattva will manifest before any such being and cut off their flesh to offer it, even down to the bones, blood, and marrow. Śāntamati, you should understand that bodhisattvas give their bodily flesh, and so forth, to suit the expectations of all sentient beings; hence, a bodhisattva's body should be known as immeasurable, by which one can know that the Dharma-dhātu is immeasurable. The immeasurable is the same as the inexhaustible body, which is the inexhaustible gate: the inexhaustible Dharma gate of dependent origination.

Bodhisattvas accordingly manifest bodies only to bring all sentient beings to maturity. If there were a person with a mind polluted by desire, who has a strong attachment to extraordinarily wonderful and beautiful forms, a bodhisattva would then manifest before him to display the characteristics of a beautiful woman. Accordingly, that man with a mind polluted by desire will come to think only of her. In time, that woman, because of his defiled attachment, will take on a withered appearance as if she is approaching the end of her life, her sense faculties will deteriorate, and she will become foul-smelling and impure; in time, that man, not knowing the reason, will dislike her and leave. Then that woman's body will die, and spontaneously a voice will emerge to explain the essentials of the Dharma. This will cause

¹ T312.707a9.

that man to give rise to an aspiration to attain awakening, and he will become non-retrogressing from the attainment of the mind of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Moreover, Śāntamati, a bodhisattva may manifest a massive body in this trichilocosm, or beneath a jewelled canopy, or may manifest on a fingertip, even up to manifesting in the fires in the kalpa-ending conflagration, where their hands and fingers may be wholly consumed. Yet, the bodhisattva's body will be entirely undamaged. Moreover, they can manifest the appearance of bodies for the sake of widely making offerings to all the buddha bhagavāns. Accumulating incredible floral canopies as vast as Sumeru and clustering jewelled-flowers as high as that mountain's peak, they will make offerings to all the buddha-tathāgatas. Furthermore, considering this trichilocosm as one great vessel, filling it with perfumed oil and so forth as high as Sumeru, and spreading therein wicks, filling it to its width as a great lamp, they would offer it to all tathāgatas: that lamp's brightness would accumulate as extensively as the sands in the Ganges River, and the light, blazing universally, will be offered to the tathāgatas.

Furthermore, bodhisattvas, on the clothes that they wear to cover their body and limbs, may pour butter oil to use as a burning lamp, and thus use it as an offering to the tathāgatas. That lamp would create a great radiance that would illuminate all buddha-fields as numerous as the sands in the Ganges River. Each sentient being would then see the bodhisattva and his manifestation formed by his supernatural powers. Seeing him like this, immeasurable and countless sentient beings will all arouse the mind of aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Among all these varieties of sentient beings are those with pride and arrogance. For them, the bodhisattva will directly reveal with his great power the body of Nārāyaṇa or the appearance of Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva's wrathful form. Such beings, having seen that, will be alarmed, and immediately the bodhisattva will have subdued their minds. They will then take refuge, pay homage, and seek to listen to the Dharma.

Furthermore, the bodhisattva may manifest in all the forests where corpses are deposited in many countries and cities, seeing them filled with countless hundreds of thousands of sentient beings everywhere. They will then, with their extensive bodies, manifest the characteristics of being dead. They will cause all the varieties of sentient beings who have fallen into rebirth as animals, who still have stores of karma

to exhaust, to then obtain the flesh of the bodhisattva's deceased body and devour it. Having eaten of it, at the end of their lives, they will all obtain birth as devas, and as a result, they will eventually come to enter nirvāṇa.

Therefore, you should know that by the power of their ancient vows, bodhisattva mahāsattvas have attained purity. Through the long night [of saṃsāra], they can fulfil their vows to engage in beneficial deeds and their vows to cause sentient beings to attain birth as a deva when they die because of eating their bodies. Due to such causes and conditions, they will eventually come to enter nirvāṇa and cause all sentient beings to achieve what they aspired, achieve what they sought after, and achieve it by the power of their vows.

¹Śāntamati, you should understand that bodhisattva mahāsattvas have these kinds of extraordinary practices and vows.

d. The Bodhisattva Offering his Flesh as Medicine

In the distant past, I know that in the four directions on this continent of Jambudvīpa, there were eighty-four thousand vast countries and cities, one hundred thousand villages and towns, and one hundred thousand niyutas of koṭis of people living. Those countries and cities had a great catastrophe at that time, and a kalpa of pestilence arose during which sickness proliferated. It is said that each person's body had a different kind of sickness: some had tumours, boils, ringworm, leprosy, others had sicknesses of wind, jaundice, mucus, and so forth; people of great and small sicknesses were scattered everywhere. Many people sought thousands of specialist doctors and required excellent medicine, but no one could fully cure all the sicknesses. Since many people were sick without a cure, and they had no one to save and protect them, and they had no one to whom to turn, they shook, and in a great voice of sorrow they cried:

Who will be able to end the suffering of my illness? Are there any devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, humans, or non-humans who can end my sickness? I would abandon all my riches and receive with both hands such a person!

Having given them instructions, I bestowed great compassion upon them.

¹ T312.707b27.

¹Śāntamati, you should understand that at that time the Bhagavān, Śākyamuni Tathāgata, was Śakra, Lord of the Devas, with a famous and marvellous sense of sight. At that time, from his heaven using his pure divine eye surpassing the abilities of the eyes of humans, he was able to see all those human beings experiencing great suffering from sickness. Again, using his pure divine ear, he heard human beings everywhere and sympathised with their voices. Having thus seen and heard, he gave rise to a mind of compassion and loving-kindness, and he immediately thought to himself:

For all these people who have no support, no help, and no one on whom to rely, I should become a support, a help, and a reliance for them.

Having so thought, Śakra, Lord of the Devas, immediately left his heaven and in a single great city in Jambudvīpa called Sukṛta, he transformed his body into the form of a man by the name of Suyoga. Then, floating in the sky, for the sake of broadly awakening others, he addressed all the people in Jambudvīpa with the following gāthā:

In the great city Sukṛta, not far from here,
There is a man called Suyoga;
Take his bodily flesh and eat it,
It will be able to remove all your sicknesses.

‘Be neither afraid nor cherish fear,
Freely and joyfully obtain his flesh;
As excellent medicine, it will save the people,
It is indeed free from harm or anger.

Then, from those countries, cities, villages, and towns, all the people suffering from infections and sicknesses, having heard that gāthā from the voice in the sky, came together at once great city Sukṛta where there was the man Suyoga. Having arrived, they each cut from and obtained his flesh, ate of it, and their diseases were healed. Even though they each took some, his bodily flesh was not exhausted.

Thereupon, Suyoga again spoke a gāthā for the people:

Even if I were to attain the awakening of a buddha,

¹ T312.707c10.

This True Dharma of mine is inexhaustible.
 Because of this truth, this body of mine
 Can provide you with flesh as you wish and will not be ex-
 hausted.¹

²At that time, all the people suffering from infections and sicknesses in all four directions came to Suyoga, and each freely cut and took his flesh. Suyoga's body was still calm and serene as before, and it neither increased nor decreased. Each time his body was cut, his appearance renewed. Then, in that country, all the people who ate his flesh each attained freedom from their sicknesses. Being without sickness, they were joyful and had no misery. In this manner, all people within Jambudvīpa together calmed down and all attained pliancy.³ Thereupon, all the people, men and women, boys and girls, all thought to themselves:

This man Suyoga has brought about the end of all of my sicknesses, he has made me free from disease, and my body has attained pliancy. What can we now use to make an offering to him?

For this reason, all the people gathered in one place, and they all came to Suyoga. Having arrived, they each joined their palms and revered him with faith. They each, at the same time, uttered this gāthā:

¹ This verse is longer in T310 and reads:

I wish to say these words:
 May beings attain the Buddha's Way,
 By my excellent wisdom and knowledge,
 May [my body] be inexhaustible.

Thoroughly learn the precepts,
 Take my skin and flesh as a gift,
 By these words of perfect sincerity,
 Quickly attain right and true awakening!

² T312.708a2.

³ T310 reads:

After seven days, all humans under the heavens were never again sick, and they did not suffer difficulties. However, they only removed bodily sickness, and did not yet remove greed, anger, and ignorance from their minds.

You are a great support, a great saviour and protector,
You are both the king of doctors and the excellent medicine;
Following your instructions, we have been completely healed,
How should we make offerings to you?

Thereupon, the man Suyoga, who had been hiding his true form, returned to his appearance as Indra. To all the people he broadly uttered this gāthā:

Gold and silver, riches, food and drink,
I have no use for such things.
Only to save and protect all sentient beings
I encourage the perfecting of the ten ways of wholesome action,

The aspiring for awakening, the performance of firm practice,
Causing benefit and joy for all sentient beings,
Giving rise to minds of mutual kindness,
And giving rise to an increase in all beneficial deeds.

Having heard this, you should give rise to the aspiration for
awakening,
You should also give rise to the thought of highest compassion,
Widely give rise to an accumulation of the most excellent
causes,
And entirely purify the ten ways of wholesome action.¹

Thereupon, Śāntamati, after Śakra, Lord of the Devas, had spoken that gāthā, he returned to his heavenly palace. Thereupon, the men and women, and boys and girls of Jambudvīpa, while not knowing how many they were, not even one fell into the lower realms, and each, at the end of their lives, were all equally born in the excellent realm of Trāyastriṃśa Heaven. Having been born there, Śakra, Lord of the Gods, taught them all the Dharma, instructing them with benefit and joy. They all attained the mind of non-retrogression from the attainment of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Thus, those sentient beings were far removed from the dust and defilement of the world and attained the eye of the pure Dharma.

¹ T310 expresses the same ideas in four verses.

¹Furthermore, Śāntamati, you should know that a bodhisattva who, having obtained purity through the bodily deeds of a disguised body, gives up a single life to ripen all immeasurable and countless sentient beings, absolutely attains the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

e. The Indestructibility of the Bodhisattva's Body

Again, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

Śāntamati, you should understand that the body of a bodhisattva is indestructible. It is solid, it is true, it is a body which neither arises nor ceases. If, among all sentient beings, there are those who are suited to a decaying body, they are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation; if, among all sentient beings, there are those who are suited to a non-decaying body, they are directly manifested that body for the sake of their teaching and liberation. Regarding all kinds of non-destruction—fire cannot burn it, and swords cannot cut it—their body is thus solid, true, indestructible, adamantine, and accomplished. Therefore, Śāntamati, bodhisattvas manifest bodily characteristics only to ripen all sentient beings and bring them benefit and joy.

f. The Mutual Identity of the Bodhisattva's Body with Suchness

Thus, the bodhisattva is not an object of thought, and his bodily characteristics are also devoid of discrimination. To know that his body is free from characteristics is to apprehend that dharmas are free from characteristics directly. It also has the two distinctions of being free from the characteristics of not being a body and free from the characteristics of all dharmas. If freedom from characteristics is not different from his body, that freedom from characteristics is not different from dharmas, and in this way, these characteristics are mutually identical. As one's own body is free of characteristics and all sentient beings' bodies are free from characteristics, both are equal. Why? Because one's own body is free from characteristics and all sentient beings' bodies are free from characteristics, they are mutually identical with the freedom from characteristics of the totality of the Dharma-

¹ T312.708b1.

dhātu. Because of the freedom from characteristics of the Dharma-dhātu, it is mutually identical with the freedom from characteristics of dharmas; in this way, there is not the slightest dharma that is obtainable. Thus, the suchness of one's own body is mutually identical with the suchness of all sentient beings' bodies. The suchness of all sentient beings' bodies is mutually identical with the suchness of one's own body.

Furthermore, the suchness of one's own body is mutually identical with the suchness of all dharmas. Due to the mutual identity with the suchness of all dharmas, one is also mutually identical with the thusness of all buddhas. Moreover, due to the suchness of one's own body, one is mutually identical with past, future, and present suchness; also, past suchness does not contradict present and future suchness. Past, future, and present suchness is identical to the suchness of the aggregates, sense spheres, and sense objects; the suchness of the aggregates, sense spheres, and sense objects is identical to the suchness of purity. The thusness of defilement and purity is identical to the thusness of birth, death, and nirvāṇa; the thusness of birth, death, and nirvāṇa are identical to the thusness of the unconditioned; the thusness of the unconditioned is identical to the thusness of all which is conditioned.

g. Examination of Suchness as Entry into the Gate of the Dharma-body

O son of good family! The suchness¹ spoken of is true nature; true nature is thusness.² It is without the nature of difference, the nature of conditions, the nature of birth, the nature of debate, and the nature of apprehension; since suchness is not a dharma that can be grasped, it is said that suchness is an ungraspable dharma. Since that suchness is nothing to cling to, it is thus obtained; in having obtained it, a bodhisattva teaches that there are clung to dharmas and that suchness is neither attached to nor conditioned. Due to freedom from attachment, there is freedom from debate. Due to freedom from debate, one can indicate among multiple forms that to which one is attached, yet that thusness is unmoved [by that attachment]. Therefore, by knowing this reality, one investigates the true body of the Tathāgata; by observing equality with the Tathāgata's body, one identically investigates the suchness of one's own body.

¹ 真如.

² 如性.

In short, examining closely how all bodies are without the nature of bodies and are entirely free from arising, one accomplishes the knowledge that all bodies are dependently arisen dharmas. Once you know this, one can awaken and enter the gate of the Dharma-body. By thus entering the gate of the Dharma-body, one attains the Dharma-body, free from the body of the aggregates, sense faculties, and sense objects. The Dharma-body is vast and superior; it is true contemplation from which bodies manifest for the sake of all sentient beings and work to bring them benefit and joy. It can bring about their benefit and joy since it knows what all sentient beings are seeing, hearing, and thinking.

h. A Bodhisattva with the Dharma-body is like Jīvaka's Medicinal Woman

¹Śāntamati, this is like if the king of worldly doctors Jīvaka, having accumulated the most extraordinary collection of medicines, were to exquisitely and precisely put them together to form the appearance of a woman² with a subtle and beautiful form and lovely demeanour. As appropriate, she would quietly stand and act; whether she came or went, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, she would discriminate phenomenon, as well as not discriminate them, and not discern them. Among people who would be sick, whether the king, ministers, a householder, layperson, they might come to Jīvaka, the king of doctors. Then that woman made of excellent medicines would, in a suitable place, come together with them. Having come together with them, they would attain the cessation of all the suffering of their sicknesses. Being free from disease, they would be pliant and joyful.³ Śāntamati! You have observed for a while how Jīvaka, the king of doctors, using his skill and intelligence for the sake of the world, puts an end to many sicknesses. Few other doctors are so ingenious.

Bodhisattvas possessing the Dharma-body grow in the same way. If they can observe the truth and reality, then all men and women, boys and girls, can [thereby] burn greed, anger, and ignorance with

¹ T312.708c13.

² T310 simply has “the form of a youth” (童子形).

³ T310 describes this process as follows:

Having arrived at the establishment of Jīvaka, king of doctors, they would look at that medicinal youth and sing songs and play with it. By the medicinal characteristics of its form, they would all be cured. They would also attain calm tranquility, quiescence, and desirelessness.

the [Dharma-]body. One who can thoroughly investigate the Dharma-body can remove all afflictions. Their mind will attain pliancy, and that [Dharma-]body will separate them from burning. Thus, you should know that bodhisattvas, by the pure power of their prior vows, grow the vast Dharma-body of the bodhisattvas and indeed observe the pure secret of the body of the bodhisattvas.

i. The Bodhisattva's Body does not Depend upon Food and is non-Arising

Śāntamati, you should understand that the bodhisattva's Dharma-body is not attained by the power of food and drink and cannot be sustained by material food. A bodhisattva, having fully known the thusness of characteristics, only out of compassion for all sentient beings, manifests the acceptance of food and drink. Despite receiving them, he does not become attached to their appearance. He also does not cherish that body, so he has no attachment to it. In this consumption [of food and drink,] the Dharma-body neither increases nor decreases.

Thus, you should know that the bodhisattva's Dharma-body neither arises nor ceases and has never been produced. He gives rise to the display of birth and death only to accomplish the ripening of all sentient beings. Cessation is identical with non-cessation as well as the unconditioned: all dharmas should be understood like this. All which has life is the same as this: all dharmas should be understood like this. Furthermore, one should know that the arising of all dharmas is non-arising.

j. The Tathāgata's Body is the Dharma-body; the Dharma-body's Qualities

The Tathāgata's body is the Dharma-body: it is Dharma food, is Dharma power, and is the Dharma refuge. The Tathāgata's body is the body of space, the unequalled body, and the most distinguished body in the triple world. It is the body that is penetrated by all tathāgatas. It is the incomparable, peerless, pure, stainless, and undefiled body. It is the body of luminous inherent existence; it is the body of unproduced inherent existence; it is the body of non-arising inherent existence. It is the body separated from mind, thought, and cognition. It is the body whose inherent existence is the reflection of the moon in shimmering water. It is the body accomplished by emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness. It is the body of the greatest ex-

tensiveness of space in the ten directions, the body equal to all sentient beings, the limitless and endless body. It is the unconditioned and undiscriminated body, free from degeneration and non-difference. It is the body of abiding, non-abiding, attainment, and non-movement. It is the body whose inherent existence is formless. It is the body whose inherent existence is without feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness.

It is the body accomplished without the earth element, the body accomplished without the water, fire, and wind element. It is the body which is accomplished without conditions, without conditions of contact, and without great conditions. It is the incomparable body without dharma conditions in any world. It is the body not produced by the eye, not supported by the ear, not known by the nose, not perceived by the tongue, not contacted by the body, and not accomplished by thought, and so forth; it is not transformed by the mind, it is not transformed by the mind-consciousness, and is also not untransformed, and also not transformed through continuity.

k. How the Bodhisattva Practices with the Tathāgata's Body

¹O son of good family! For this reason, one should investigate the Tathāgata's body in truth. In this way, the bodhisattva abides in equality with the Tathāgata's body. Having attained purity, the bodhisattva practices in all the trichiliocosm, the four great continents, Jambudvīpa, all kings' palaces, villages, and towns. Bodhisattvas broadly manifest their bodies everywhere. In doing this, however, there is no manifestation and no obstruction. Moreover, a bodhisattva can manifest many māra bodies in the ten directions. In these manifestations, there is no obstruction, and in manifesting without manifesting, there is no obstruction: all this manifestation is only to accomplish the ripening of all sentient beings.

The bodhisattva in that body is situated in mindfulness, and neither increases nor decreases, even though the bodhisattva knows the body is impermanent, knows the body is suffering, knows the body is not-self, he manifests that body for the sake of instructing sentient beings and to bring them benefit and joy. Bodhisattvas know that the body in its nature is quiescent, but they manifest a body giving rise to discriminations for the sake of the benefit and joy of all sentient beings. Bodhisattvas, moreover, fully realise that causes and conditions

¹ T312.709a21.

achieve the body. Still, amidst whatever dharmas of cause and condition there indeed are, he observes that there is neither creator nor an experiencer. Thus, they can view the body as not-knowing, like grass, trees, tiles, and stones, but though a bodhisattva's body is already purified of action, they manifest a body for the sake of sentient beings.

¹Śāntamati, you should understand that since the Śākya Bodhisattva first gave rise to the aspiration to attain awakening in the presence of Dīpaṅkara Buddha, the actions of his body, speech, and mind have been entirely pure.² Moreover, his bodily actions have immeasurable and boundless merit, so even if the Tathāgata were to speak of them for kalpas more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River, and if I were to speak of them, the vast and pure actions of the secret of the bodhisattva's body could not be described.

¹ T312.709b7.

² T310:

Since the [Śākya] Bodhisattva received his prediction of buddhahood in the presence of Dīpaṅkara, he brought about the secret of the body, which is the purity of the body. Truly, even if the Bodhisattva spoke with his mouth, he did not utter any words.

Chapter 2. The Secret of the Bodhisattva's Speech

1. The Bodhisattva's Speech Accords with all Sentient Beings

¹Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

O son of good family, what do you think is the secret of the speech of the bodhisattva? What is their pure activity of speech?

Śāntamati, you should know that bodhisattvas accord with the location in which they are born. Accordingly, bodhisattva's sounds accord with their birth [place]. The sounds and words of all sentient beings, and all the ways of expression they use for explanation and understanding, entirely gather, go, and come from characteristics. Words of subtle analysis such as pain and pleasure all abide within a bodhisattva's voice, and yet they all continue free from obscuration, unattached to cognitive views. A bodhisattva can express even the subtle sounds of mosquitos, flies, and butterflies and can cause all sentient beings to hear the bodhisattva's sound, which expresses the pliancy of body and mind. Whatever they can hear is thus expressed, and all emerges and comes forth from the bodhisattva's voice. This is expressed in the following gāthā:

All sentient beings are limitless,
The types of beings are also uncountable,
Even if one speaks without stopping for a hundred kalpas,
How could one express this inconceivability?

I thus say by means of a simile:
The explanations of the Mahāsattva's Dharma are without loss;
They neither increase nor decrease, like space,
They give rise to a broad and great mind and teach.

²Further, Śāntamati Bodhisattva, the bodhisattva accords with all the kinds of sounds issuing from the king of the Brahmā heaven, the

¹ T312.709b22f 3; T310.46b11f 8.

² T312.709c8.

kinds of sounds issuing from Indra, the kinds of sounds issuing from the world protecting kings, and the kinds of sounds issuing from the devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kiṃnaras, and mahoragas, and down to all kinds of sounds issuing from all sentient beings. To reiterate in the following gāthā:

The Bodhisattva's Brahmā-like voice speaks with joy,
 Its sound surpasses the king of the Brahmā heaven,
 It explains association with the practice of loving-kindness and
 compassion,
 And joyfully dispenses the four Dharmas together.

Indra's voice which sings with joy,
 Can be veiled over by the Bodhisattva's voice.
 In accord with that marvellous song issuing forth
 It discriminates the meanings of all Dharmas in accord with
 thusness.

The many marvellous sounds of the kiṃnara
 Are entirely surpassed by the voice of the Bodhisattva.
 It causes the cessation of the feverish torment of desire
 And it delights in speaking of thusness.

All heavens of the desire realm have sounds of joy,
 The voices of all heavens sing different songs.
 Speaking the truth in accord with the meaning of the Dharma,
 The [Bodhisattva's voice] causes all beings to experience bliss.

Greed, anger, ignorance, and pride, up to arrogance and flattery,
 All sentient beings have similar doubts and disturbances.
 Hearing, then, the Bodhisattva's voice which accords with reality,
 All can cease greed, anger, and so forth.

All groups of devas in the form realms,
 Having heard the voices of the highest people,

This section appears in verse in T310. The verse that follows is roughly of the same character, but verses are separated differently, and it would be unnecessary to go over all of the differences.

All, together, give rise to the mind of joy,
Vow to seek awakening and to be born in a good realm.

Mahoragas, Gandharvas,
Nāgas and so forth all make the sound of wonderful music.
Hearing the ocean of merit proclaimed by the bodhisattvas,
They all give rise to extensive bliss.

Proliferating in unlimited directions,
All human beings in Jambudvīpa and other continents,
Having heard and followed the marvellous voice of the bodhi-
sattva,
Can all attain liberation.

On the earth, in space, and all deva realms,
The bodhisattva's voice accords with them all,
And with a voice suited to each type of being,
They explain the perfectly true Dharma.

The Kalaviṅka, Kokila,
Geese, parrots, and cranes,
Peacocks, as well as Kovidāra,
And such auspicious birds up to the Cakravāka and so forth,

The lion, tiger, leopard, bear, and deer,
The elephant and horse, rhinoceros, cat, dog, and hog,
These running beasts up to the flying birds:
The bodhisattva accords with their sounds joyfully.

All quadrupeds and bipeds,
The many-footed and no-footed and other sentient beings,
The bodhisattva accords with their many sounds,
Admonishing and awakening those thus born of desire and
fear.

All sentient beings of the trichiliocosm,
Of superior, middling, and inferior classes and distinctions,
In the three realms up to the human and heavenly realms,
The sound of the bodhisattva's voice widely accords with them.

Among them, bodhisattvas devoid of discrimination,

Without attachment, without grasping, and without thought,
 Dwell unwaveringly with a mind of equanimity,
 And manifest appearances according to the demands of the situation.

For pure sentient beings who make vows
 Their voices expound throughout a koṭi of lands,
 Surpassing the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River
 Their mind is without conditional support and undiscoverable.

All māras of the three thousand realms,
 Together hear the bodhisattva's vast voice.
 Having heard, in alarm, they rapidly change their minds,
 Join palms, revere in faith, and pay homage to the bodhisattva.

All sentient beings who constantly delight in debate,
 Puff up their minds of pride and do not turn in faith.
 Through hearing the Mahāsattva's pure words,
 They join palms, revere in faith, and pay homage to the bodhisattva.

All those sentient beings who are deaf, dumb, up to those without tongues,
 Those with stutters, or with poor hearing,
 Through the beautiful and sublime words of the bodhisattva,
 They are immediately able to hear or speak.

Those under the constant pressure and constraint of the burning afflictions,
 Who have done transgressions and evil, or made hundreds of weapons,
 Through hearing the bodhisattva's pure words of good
 Can attain minds of tranquillity and pacify all evils.

If sentient beings hear words about impermanence,
 And can listen to words about the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha,
 And likewise, the Dharma teachings about generosity, morality, and patience,
 Diligence, meditation, and wisdom, they will all listen well.

All oceans of merit that exist [regarding the bodhisattva's voice]
Could not be fully explained in many koṭis of kalpas;
Its sound is without limits, and its wisdom is without bounds;
All, without end, abides in the Buddha's voice.

2. The Speech of the Bodhisattva is free from all Bad Qualities

¹Further, Śāntamati, you should understand that in the sound of the words of the bodhisattva mahāsattva is speech that is free from sensuality, speech that is free from corruption, speech that is free from confusion, speech that is free from defilement, speech that is free from attachment and liberation, speech that is free from high and low, speech that is free from coarseness, speech that is free from harsh contradiction, speech that is free from violation of the precepts, speech that is free from harshness, speech that is free from agreeableness and disagreeableness, speech that is free from loss, speech that is free from according with the evil, speech that is free from contradiction, speech that is free from according with defilement, speech that is free from indeterminateness, speech that is free from stubbornness, speech that is free from pride, speech that is free from aversion, speech that is free from untimeliness, speech that is free from various desires, speech that is free from tending towards delights, speech that is free from longing, speech that is free from looseness, speech that is free from rapidity, speech that is free from decaying faculties, speech that is free from decaying sound, speech that is free from averse and disturbed thoughts, speech that is free from perversion, speech that is free from weakness, speech that is free from hiding, speech that is free from decline, speech that is free from facing backwards, speech that is free from narrowness, speech that is free from non-renunciation, speech that is free from a lack of thoughts of compassion, speech that is free from harming others, speech that is free from slandering oneself or others, speech that is free from entering and exiting, speech that is free from attachment, speech that is free from impurity, speech that is free from untruthfulness, speech that is free from non-endurance, speech that is free from confusion, speech that is free from slander, speech that is free from that which is not Dharma, speech that is free from being vastly superior, speech that is free from inferiority, speech that is free from surpassing the right length of time, speech

¹ T312.710a26; T310.47b6 f 9.

that is free from dividing and wasting time, speech that is free from empty talk, speech that is free from non-Buddhist teachings, speech that is free from striving to seek profit, speech that is free from not repaying, speech that is free from deluded unclarity, speech that is free from deluded doubts, speech that is free from disagreeableness, speech that is free from transience, speech that is free from disdain, speech that is free from elevating oneself, speech that is free from scattering others, speech that is free from self-praise, speech that is free from refuting others, speech that is free from blame, speech that is free from subduing others, speech that is free from that which is improper, speech that is free from opposition, speech that is free from exposing secrets, speech that is free from non-protection, speech that is free from disdaining the wise, speech that is free from slandering the wise, speech that is free from flattery, speech that is free from excessive praise, speech that is free from expressing the faults of others, speech that is free from being forceful like an arrow, speech that is free from saying what others have omitted, speech that is free from not helping, speech that is free from expressing pride in one's spiritual attainments, speech that is free from crime, speech that is free from being unbeneficial.

3. A Bodhisattva Always Speaks the Truth

¹Śāntamati, you should understand that the words which come forth from the bodhisattva all have the power of supernormal knowledge;² they are the meritorious karmic fruit of what they have accomplished, they carry their good seeds which continue unceasing, and all their words are perfectly fulfilled.

When a bodhisattva, at one time, is walking, standing, sitting, or lying down under a tree, if a person comes to where the bodhisattva is and asks the question:

Do you know how many leaves this tree has?

Then, at that time, the bodhisattva, without looking at the tree, without counting the leaves, could reply, saying:

¹ T312.710b19.

² T310 expresses this as follows:

The bodhisattva's words and actions are in concomitance due to emptiness, spontaneity, and supernormal bravery.

This tree has such a number of leaves.

As the bodhisattva says, there will be neither more nor fewer leaves on that tree. Furthermore, if someone asks:

How many grains of sand are there in the Ganges River? How many hundreds, how many thousands, how many hundreds of thousands, how many koṭis, how many ayutas, how many niyutas, how many kaṅkaras, how many vivaras, how many vipāśas, how many akṣobhyas, how many immeasurables, how many asaṃkhyas, how many arigaṇas,¹ how many balas, how many nāga-powers,² how many uncountables?

At that time, the bodhisattva, without looking at the river, not counting its grains, could reply, saying:

This river has such a number of grains of sand.

As the bodhisattva says, there will be neither more nor fewer grains of sand in the Ganges River, and in the same way, he knows the number known by the Tathāgata. A bodhisattva speaks the truth, not lies, which cannot be indicated by devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kiṃnaras, mahoragas, and so forth, together with śrāvakas, or through the realisations of pratyekabuddhas. [Truth] is that which only a buddha-tathāgata can know and verify. Śāntamati, you should also know these kinds of conditions [of the speech of the bodhisattva].

4. A Past Life Example of the Perfect Speech of a Bodhisattva

³For instance, Śāntamati, I recall that in a world in the distant past there was a certain sage by the name of Surāga⁴ and there was a certain brāhmaṇa by the name of Śyāmatva.⁵

At that time, there was a large nyagrodha tree called Bhadra, which had many branches and leaves surrounding the area all

¹ Sanskrit uncertain.

² This is also unclear. It is a large measurement.

³ T312.710c8.

⁴ Probable Sanskrit equivalent.

⁵ Hirakawa gives Śyāmatā, which is feminine.

around. In length and breadth, it was one krośa. Once, the sage Surāga was leaning on the side of that tree, and for seven days while reciting the *Rgveda*, with his supernormal powers, he observed the tree and, in a detailed manner, counted its leaves.

¹After some time, the brāhmaṇa Śyāmatva went into the city on his alms round, and having travelled straight, he came to that tree, ate his meal, and having finished he went to the place where the sage Surāga was staying. Having arrived, he was delighted, and they mutually exchanged kind words of greeting and had many kinds of pleasant discussions together. In the course of time, the sage suggested:

O great brāhmaṇa, you certainly will know whether there is someone who can observe and count the branches and leaves of this great nyagrodha tree in a detailed manner in this world of humans.²

The brāhmaṇa replied:

Sir, there is such a person in this world.

The sage then asked:

Who is that person?

The brāhmaṇa said:

Just as you, sir, I say it is none other than myself.

The sage requested:

O great brāhmaṇa, please tell me!

Then the brāhmaṇa, without looking at that tree, without counting its leaves, replied by uttering the following gāthā:

A measure of eighty thousand niyutas
Is ninety-two koṭis,
Which is known to be sixty akṣobhyas;

¹ The following account is slightly expanded compared to T310.

² The sage is hinting that it is himself, not expecting the brāhmaṇa to suggest that he knows.

And its branches number sixteen [akṣobhyas].

Moreover, thirty niyutas
Is ninety-six kaṅkaras,
Which is a measure of thirteen vipāśas:
That should be taken to be the count of its leaves.

This tree has these many branches and leaves.
There are neither more nor less than this aforementioned calculation.
I speak accurately by my power of cognition,
Those who are in doubt should count for themselves.

Thereupon, the sage Surāga, having heard what was said, from the depths of his astonishment uttered the following gāthā:

You, O brāhmaṇa, have supernormal knowledge,
And you spoke well and with words of truth,
Bhadra, the king of nyagrodha trees,
Is indeed known thus to have that many branches and leaves.

You also did not previously look at that tree,
And you did not reckon or count;
It is difficult to fathom its number of branches and leaves;
But it is possible with a mind of wisdom and sound discrimination.

¹The sage having spoken this gāthā, further asked:

O great brāhmaṇa, it is just as you said! Did you know this using your power of cognition, or did other sages help you to say this?

The brāhmaṇa replied:

Sir! Listen very carefully now! I know the truth while in the human realm, and then I speak. Even if space is destroyed, these words will not be lies!

¹ T312.711a5.

Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

Now, you should understand that at that time the sage Surāga was none other than the present, greatly wise, Śāriputra, and the brāhmaṇa Śyāmatva was none other than the present Bhagavān, Śākyasiṃha.

In this way, the ocean of merits possessed by the speech of a bodhisattva allows them to abide in the meaning of the Dharma, which is the basis of true merits. Śāntamati, this is called the secret of the bodhisattva's speech, their pure activity of speech. If someone understands only a little of this, I declare that person to be supreme among the wise.

Chapter 3. The Secret of the Bodhisattva's Mind

1. The Bodhisattva's Mind is what Accomplishes the Path

¹Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

What do you think is the secret of the bodhisattva's mind? What is the pure activity of their mind?

Śāntamati, you should understand that a bodhisattva performs all actions with omniscience, without pride. Their supernormal cognition, sporting, and instruction are all based on their inexhaustible, supernormal, and subtle knowledge. Supernormal cognition establishes all their actions, which their vast power accomplishes.

Moreover, that supernormal cognition is characterised by the ability to bring about all appearances.² That supernormal cognition's subtle wisdom can see all dharmas. That supernormal cognition has inexhaustible characteristics which can accord with all locations. That supernormal cognition can manifest all characteristics of form since it is whatever form there might be anywhere. That supernormal cognition can accord with all voices since it is equal to sounds in the past and future. That supernormal cognition can observe the minds of all sentient beings since it can see and examine the nature of the mind. That supernormal cognition can skilfully think deeply about the limitless kalpas since it is not cut-off from the past and future. That supernormal cognition can know all kinds of dharmas since it is the wisdom of liberation from the characteristics of appearances. That supernormal cognition seeks [the path] with the time-based order for the extinction of contaminated dharmas since it does not cross beyond the divisions of time. That supernormal cognition is transcendent since it has noble penetrating insight. That supernormal cognition cannot be penetrated in its foundation by all śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas.

That supernormal cognition is of incredibly profound meaning and can subdue all māras and non-Buddhist paths. That supernormal

¹ T312.711a17f 3; T310.48a12f 9.

² 行相, Skt. *ākāra*.

cognition can reach the bodhimaṇḍa¹ and realise all the highest Buddha-dharmas.² That supernormal cognition can accord with and turn the wheel of the True Dharma. That supernormal cognition can skilfully subdue and tame the affairs of all sentient beings. That supernormal cognition attains great consecration and is capable of freedom regarding all dharmas.

³Śāntamati, this is the secret of the bodhisattva's mind, their pure activity of mind. Because of the purity of their mind, the bodhisattva is undefiled, pure and white, bright, and free from afflictions; they can skilfully tame and subdue, skilfully perform all deeds, and can skilfully enter the dhyānas and liberations, the samādhis and samāpattis, and cannot absolutely fall into anything.

2. The Bodhisattva's Mind is Unbounded

[Bodhisattvas] are born in accord with the recollection of the non-arising of dharmas and are also not moved by the desire realm. They are not bound to birth, they are not bound to cessation, and they are not bound to becoming. Why? Because they can be liberated from all discrimination, liberated from all afflictions and fetters, liberated from the bases of deluded attachment. They attain liberation from birth, attain liberation from cessation, and attain liberation from becoming. Even if they take a birth, they are non-arising.

In this way, they can perfect all the Buddha-dharmas of the Mahāyāna. In this way, regarding the Buddha-dharmas, if they are genuinely sought in all ten directions, there will be nothing at all attained and nothing unattained since all Buddha-dharmas are neither attainable nor unattainable. Thus they can attain all dharmas and all Buddha-dharmas.

Thus, among all dharmas and all Buddha-dharmas, there are neither dharmas nor non-dharmas. Why? Because, in genuinely seeking all dharmas, nothing at all is to be attained, and nothing is not to be attained. If in genuinely seeking among all dharmas nothing at all is

¹ The place where a buddha attains awakening. Maṇḍa means the scum on top of milk or butter which is considered the best delectation in ancient Indian literature. In this sense, the bodhimaṇḍa can be thought of as the "best" site of awakening. Maṇḍapa is a pavilion, but it is not clear whether bodhimaṇḍa is conceived of as an abbreviation of this term. What is more likely is that maṇḍa in bodhimaṇḍa is an abbreviation of bodhimaṇḍala, i.e., the circle or perimeter within which awakening is achieved by the Buddha.

² Rather than the teachings of the Buddha, this indicates the qualities that the Buddha gains that are not shared by arhats or pratyekabuddhas.

³ T312.711b8.

attained and nothing is not to be attained, wherein there are no existing dharmas that can be reckoned, it is because all dharmas have already gone beyond the measure of reckoning. If one can apprehend the equality of all dharmas, and grasp that there are neither any dharmas nor any non-dharmas, then the meaning is the same as one not attaching to any dharmas.

If someone apprehends a meaning, that is the same as a great non-meaning. If someone does not apprehend either a non-meaning or absence of a non-meaning, it is because they can see a provisionally established non-meaning. If someone with wisdom can fully know, that serves as an obstruction to their unobstructed wisdom. But if someone with wisdom is free from obstructions, then they have no attachment. If there is no attachment, there is no abiding; if there is no abiding, there is no exhaustion; if there is no exhaustion, there is no effort and no falling; if there is no effort and falling, there is no non-self, if there is no non-self then there is also no self; if there is no self, there is no attachment; if there is no attachment, there is no strife; if there is no strife, there is no discourse, and as there is no discourse, this teaching is a śrāmaṇa Dharma, which is mendicancy. That is just like the original equality of space. Because of the equality of space, there are no fetters of the desire realm, no fetters of the form realm, and no fetters of the formless realm.

For this reason, in every location, there are no fetters at all. Since there are no fetters, there is no form or colour, up to any characteristics or marks. Since there are no characteristics of form, one can accord with complete understanding. If one can completely understand in this way, one can fully discriminate all distinctions.

¹Śāntamati Bodhisattva said:

What is according with complete understanding of which you speak?
Also, what is the discrimination of distinctions of which you speak?

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva said:

¹ T312.711c9.

T310 presents these questions of Śāntamati as a rhetorical question asked by Vajrapāṇi.

One who does not attain the slightest dharma is declared to be one who accords with and completely understands. Through that complete understanding, one discriminates distinctions. Thus, in the Dharma, these two phrases are created.

Śāntamati, you should understand that this is called the secret of the bodhisattva's mind, their pure activity of mind.

3. How the Bodhisattva Cultivates with the Mind

¹ Then Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

Son of good family! Regarding the secret of the bodhisattva's mind, ²in cultivating the practice of compassion, one knows there is no self; if one cultivates the practice of compassion, then there are no sentient beings; if one cultivates the practice of joy, then there is no soul; if one cultivates the practice of equanimity, then there is no person.

³If one cultivates the practice of generosity, then one subdues and tames the mind; if one cultivates the practice of firmly observing the precepts, then one pacifies the mind; if one cultivates the practice of patience, then one does not exhaust characteristics of mind; if one cultivates the practice of diligence, then the mind is free from characteristics; if one cultivates the practice of dhyānas, then one stabilizes the mind; if one cultivates the practice of wisdom, then one's mind is free from examination.

⁴If one cultivates the practice of the four foundations of mindfulness, then one's mind is free from thought and free from calculation; if one cultivates the practice of the four right eliminations, then one's mind has right equanimity; if one cultivates the practice of the four bases of supernormal power, then one's mind is free from conceptual proliferations; if one cultivates the faculty of faith, then one's mind is without attachment; if one cultivates the faculty of diligence, then one's mind is without strain; if one cultivates the faculty of mindfulness, then one attains the mind of knowledge of naturalness; if one cultivates the faculty of concentration, then one attains the mind which knows essential equality; if one cultivates the faculty of wisdom, then one attains the rootless mind; if one cultivates the five powers,

¹ T.312.711c24f4.

² The four immeasurables or brahmavihāras.

³ The six pāramitās.

⁴ The thirty-seven factors of awakening.

then one attains the mind without submission; if one cultivates the seven factors of awakening, then one attains a mind with discriminating wisdom.

If one cultivates the noble eightfold path, then one attains a mind that cultivates without object; if one cultivates śamatha, then one attains a mind of tranquillity; if one cultivates vipaśyanā, then one attains the mind which contemplates non-substantiality; if one cultivates the four noble truths, then one attains a mind which fully realises ultimate nothingness.

¹If one cultivates focusing one's attention on the Buddha, then one attains a mind free from focused attention; if one cultivates focusing one's attention on the Dharma, then one attains a mind of equality regarding the dharmadhātu; if one cultivates focusing one's attention on the Saṅgha, then one attains a non-abiding mind.

²If one cultivates the practices of bringing sentient beings to maturity, then one attains the originally pure mind; if one cultivates the practice of getting hold of the True Dharma, then one attains a mind which has no distinction regarding the dharmadhātu; if one cultivates the practice of the adorning the buddha-fields, then one attains a mind of the equality of space; if one cultivates the practice of patience in regards to the non-arising of dharmas, then one attains the mind of nothing to be attained; if one cultivates the practice of the ground of non-retrogression, then one attains the mind which both does not transform and does transform; if one cultivates the practice of achieving all characteristics, then one attains the mind without characteristics; if one cultivates the dignified fruit of awakening, then one attains a mind which fills the triple world.

³If one cultivates the practice of vanquishing all māras, then one attains the mind which widely gathers all sentient beings; if one cultivates the practice of proceeding towards awakening, then one attains the mind which is fully awakened in regards to the inherent-existence of the dharmadhātu; if one cultivates the practice of turning the wheel of the Dharma, then one attains the mind of both non-transformation and not non-transformation; if one cultivates the practice of Mahāparinirvāṇa, then one attains the mind which accordingly sees the inherent existence of birth and death.

¹ Contemplations on the Triple Gem.

² Practices of the bodhisattva's mind and conduct.

³ Practices related to the life of a buddha.

¹Śāntamati! You should understand that these are all the attainment of tolerance, which is the purity of the practice of mind, which is the Dharma of the secret of the bodhisattva's mind.

If a bodhisattva has purified [their mind] in this way, the minds of all sentient beings are also pure. Thus the bodhisattva can accord with and enter the minds of all sentient beings, and all those minds of sentient beings emerge from the great light of the mind of awakening. Like space, [that mind] abides everywhere and accords with and enters everywhere. The mind of a bodhisattva is the same as this. It abides everywhere and accords with and enters everywhere.

4. The Benefits of the Assembly in Listening to this Teaching

In this way, Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, explained the inconceivable True Dharma of the secret of the body, speech, and mind of the bodhisattva.

Thereupon, in that assembly, seventy-two thousand devas and humans gave rise to the intention to attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. Thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas attained patience. Eighty-four thousand humans attained the pure Dharma-eye, which is free from the dust and defilement of the world. Eight thousand bhikṣus, not apprehending any dharmas, attained the waning of the āsravas, were liberated from discursive thought and attained mental liberation.

²Thereupon, the trichiliocosm quaked in six ways, a great blazing light pervaded universally, and many divine flowers spontaneously rained from the sky. Moreover, one hundred thousand kinds of extraordinarily wonderful musical tunes sounded without being played in the sky. From that music issued forth the following words:

If any sentient being has already attained a prediction of their future buddhahood, they are able, henceforth, to hear this True Dharma³ which has been explained by this Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva. Having so heard it, those who memorise and recite it, and practice its teachings, and broadly teach it for the sake of others as the situation demands, will never forsake great bodhicitta. You should understand that such a person does not

¹ T312.712a22.

² T312.712b4.

³ I.e., this sūtra.

have few wholesome roots and has already achieved profound wholesome roots in the presence of many buddha bhagavāns. They endeavour in the most distinguished of all practices to benefit all sentient beings and confer upon them great benefits.

Chapter 4. Nādasvara Bodhisattva Comes to the Assembly

¹Thereupon, the Bhagavān addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

O son of good family, did you hear the wonderous voice issuing forth from many kinds of music in the sky?

Śāntamati Bodhisattva replied to the Buddha:

Bhagavān! I heard it. Of what manner is this wonderous voice? I wish for the Buddha to tell me.

The Buddha said:

Śāntamati, you should now understand that there is a Bodhisattva Mahāsattva called Nādasvara who came to this Sahā World from the land of Meghasvararāja Tathāgata, the Mahāmegha World. He prostrated to me, exchanged greetings, and made offerings, and he desired to listen to and receive Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva's teaching of this True Dharma. He also saw well the many bodhisattva mahāsattvas who came to this assembly from the ten directions. Thus, Nādasvara Bodhisattva hid his bodily manifestation in the sky. He then rained down many beautiful flowers, made superior music, and made offerings to me. From the midst of that music issued forth these words:

The Bhagavān Tathāgata in this great assembly will not teach the extensive True Dharma for long.

After having uttered these words, immediately Nādasvara Bodhisattva Mahāsattva descended from the sky and entered the Buddha's assembly. He bowed his head to the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him seven times, keeping him to his right, and standing before the Buddha, he said to the Buddha:

¹ T312.712b15 *f* 4; T310.49a09 *f* 9.

Meghasvararāja Tathāgata of the Mahāmegha World inquires of the Bhagavān whether you have few illnesses and few vexations, whether you rise nimbly and are of good energy. That Buddha also said:

Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, has excellent skilful means and well-expounds this True Dharma. He is empowered by the supernormal power of the Buddha and can understand all immeasurable Buddha-dharmas.

¹ Thereupon, the Bhagavān addressed Nādasvara Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

Excellent, O son of good family! It is good that you came to this great assembly to listen to the inconceivable Dharma of the *Secrets of the Tathāgata* taught by Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva.

¹ T312.712c4.

Chapter 5. The Prior Deeds of the Cakravartin Dhṛtarāṣṭra

1. The Curiosity of the Bodhisattvas

¹At that time, all the bodhisattvas in that assembly together gave rise to the following thought:

In the presence of what past Buddha Bhagavān did this Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, serve, listen [to the Dharma], and receive various deep wholesome roots? By what kind of extensive great vows could he thus have such great eloquence in well expounding Dharma [teachings]?

2. The World of the Cakravartin Dhṛtarāṣṭra

Then, the Bhagavān, knowing the thoughts in the minds of all the bodhisattvas, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva, saying:

O son of good family! I recall an asaṃkhyā of kalpas in the past. Past inconceivably incalculable and limitless asaṃkhyās of kalpas, there was a kalpa called Sudarśana and a world named Vibhūṣaṇā. At that time, a buddha appeared in that world called Anantaḡaṇanānāratnavyūha, the worthy one, the completely and perfectly awakened one, perfect in knowledge and conduct, the well-gone one, the unsurpassed knower of the world, the charioteer and tamer of humans, the teacher of devas and humans, the Buddha, the Bhagavān.

Śāntamati, you should understand that the world, Vibhūṣaṇā, was extensive, exquisite, had abundant food, people who flourished. Its surface was as flat as the palm of one's hand, without any sand, thorns, or weeds, with grass and trees and groves which were green, lush, and lovely. It also had a flower called "soft grass," which covered the earth, making it green, moist, and exquisite. That [grass] had the delightful characteristics of a peacock turning its neck to the right and had a colour and smell which caused people to be pleased. When one stepped down with one's foot on the ground, it pressed down as far as four fingers' breadth, and when one stepped up, it returned up four fingers' breadth. It was without extreme cold and heat, and its warmth and coolness adjusted. Its [air] was as pleasing

¹ T312.712c09 f 4; T310.49a21 f 9.

as a cool breeze and made people comfortably at ease. Lapis lazuli adorned its ground.

At that time, the people were of pleasant form, with little greed, anger, ignorance, and other afflictions. The people were endowed with love and respect and were diligent; they listened to the well-spoken teachings and could develop their awareness. Moreover, in the Dharma of that Bhagavān, Anantaḡaṇānānāratnavyūha Tathāgata, there were twelve niyutas of many śrāvaka assemblies and thirty-two koṭis of many bodhisattva assemblies. At that time, the human lifespan was thirty-six koṭis of years, and among those in the human realm, they reached the ends of their lifespans.¹

²Śāntamati, you should understand that the Vibhūṣaṇā world in the Sudarśana Kalpa was in the middle of four continents. Each of those four continents was eighty-four thousand yojanas broad, and a thousand countries, cities, districts, towns, and villages were scattered within the space of each yojana. In that world, Vibhūṣaṇā, there was a tremendous walled country called Viśuddha. That walled country was vast: in the north, it measured sixty-four yojanas; in the south, it measured forty yojanas; in the east and west, it was the same. It had ten thousand gardens and was gloriously adorned; there were also ten thousand provinces, prefectures, and cities within that walled country. In that walled country Viśuddha, there was a great Cakravartin King called Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who possessed the seven treasures and was the lord of the four continents. He planted deep wholesome roots in the presence of previous buddhas and so was the best among kings due to his fortune and majesty. He was non-retrogressing from the aspiration for anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Śāntamati, that Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra's palace in that walled country was an even sixteen yojanas in length and breadth; it was vast and extraordinarily wonderful. It had seven layers of walls, each made of the seven jewels, and above it, there was also a seven-layered tower, from which a seven-layered jewelled net was suspended with many jewelled bells. Within the walls' perimeter, there were four great gardens: the first was called Nānāpuṣpa, the second was called Guṇābhinandī, the third was called Māyūrābhinandī, and the fourth was called Kālasukha. There were large lakes within all these gardens: the first was called Nanda, the second was called Nandāgra, the third was called Gandhāgra, and the fourth was called

¹ I.e., no one died a premature death.

² T312.713a1.

Niṣyanda. Those lakes measured half a yojana in length and breadth, and they had jewelled-brick floors and stairs, and on the bottom were particles of gold as in the Jambū River as well as golden sand on their lakebeds. They were filled with the waters of the eight attributes, and they were covered entirely with jewelled lotus flowers, and many flocks of birds swam within them, such as geese, wild geese, and cakravākas.

Moreover, that Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra had seventy thousand courtiers, queens, and maidens, who were all close friends, beautiful, and extraordinarily wonderful, and he was served by jewels among women. All those courtiers and women had given rise to the mind of aspiration for anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. The king also had a thousand sons who had beautiful forms, were bold and powerful, and could subdue enemy soldiers without fear. Each was gloriously adorned with twenty-eight kinds of the signs of a great man and had minds of deep, pure faith regarding the Dharma of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

3. The Faith and Devotion of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his Sons

Śāntamati, at that time, that Bhagavān, Anantagūṇanānāratnavyūha Tathāgata, was dwelling in that great walled country, Viśuddha. That Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, together with many high ministers, brāhmaṇas, householders, and even all the common people, paid respect, revered, and made offerings [to that Tathāgata]. That king had pure faith in Anantagūṇanānāratnavyūha Tathāgata and his saṅgha of bhikṣus. For a koṭi of years, he honoured and attended on them and thus spread and maintained joy. He presented many kinds of food and drink, and marvellous robes and all manner of useful things. He also gave each saṅgha of monastics three gardens to use for sojournment.

¹ Śāntamati, that Cakravartin King had many crown princes whose minds were pure and never negligent. They served that buddha and courageously listened to the True Dharma and did not act for pleasure or out of defiled attachment. Free from negligence, they established their minds in meditation. Since they listened to the True Dharma, all those princes, with time, obtained the five supernormal knowledges. They each rose into the air—just like the king of geese

¹ T312.713b4.

did they rise freely—and flew from garden to garden, from this city to that city, and wandered throughout the four great continents of that world. As they moved through the sky, they recited this gāthā:

¹What is the benefit of all buddhas appearing in the world?
 To act for the profound benefit of all masses of humans.
 You should listen well to the Dharma with a mind of pure and
 true faith,
 It is extremely difficult to obtain, even if you pass through a
 hundred kalpas.

Now, among humans, the Sage has appeared in the world.
 He teaches the True Dharma, the path to quiescence.
 I now closely honour the Well-Gone One.
 Through listening to the Dharma, I shall be born in a fortunate
 realm.

Having listened to the True Dharma, I have cut off the lower
 realms.
 Having listened to the True Dharma, I shall be born in a for-
 tunate realm.
 Through listening to the Dharma, afflictions are eliminated,
 The mind attains tranquillity and unexcelled ease.

When this gāthā was spoken in the air
 The great earth quaked in six ways,
 Devas and humans in the sky issued forth a wondrous sound
 And a great rain of many flowers. They then gave rise to this thought
 of joy:

If someone can see the great teacher, the Buddha,
 One cannot speak of the limit of that person's merits;
 One should pay homage to the most honoured one among bi-
 peds:
 Join your palms, and truly and sincerely revere him in faith.

The Buddha can know the minds of humans,
 And he teaches the Dharma as is suitable for them.

¹ This gāthā is longer, but with the same meaning, in T310.

Hearing this Dharma, thirty-six koṭis
Of humans all came to abide on the supreme path to bodhi.

Moreover, three hundred koṭis of humans
Attained the unexcelled pure eye of the Dharma;
They all gave rise to a mind of renunciation,
Took refuge in the Buddha, left home, and practised according to the
True Teaching.

Moreover, four niyutas of koṭis
Of humans received the pure precepts and performed practices for
buddhahood,
They listened to the Dharma and made offerings to the Buddha Bha-
gavān.
Having done this, they each returned to their original regions.

4. King Dhṛtarāṣṭra's Flying Tower

All those crown princes, having recited that gāthā, together made offerings to and worshipped the Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra. They selected the best fragrant sandalwood as hard as a nāga and built a tower. It was vast, distinguished, beautiful, exquisite, and gloriously adorned. It measured precisely ten yojanas in the four directions in length and breadth, and it was the same size in the four intermediate directions. Its lofty gate was entirely built of the best fragrant sandalwood as hard as a nāga. It was made perfectly, just like a heavenly palace. That best fragrant sandalwood as hard as a nāga was worth more than two and a half times the value of the particles of gold in the Jambū River, and that tower was skilfully constructed and was finished with marvellous adornments.

¹At that time, the Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra wished to go to that Bhagavān, Anantaḡaṇanānāratnavyūha Tathāgata, to prostrate before him, serve him, listen to, and receive the True Dharma from him. ² Then the king and his sons, together with the courtiers, queens, and family members, who had all attended on their father or king, entered that great sandalwood tower. The king then went and sat

¹ T312.713c3.

² T310 expresses the king's intention to meet that Buddha as follows:

A human life is hard to obtain; the arising of a buddha is hard to encounter; even passing a koṭi of kalpas, the Way of the Sūtras is difficult to hear. So, it is fitting that we go to pay homage, see, listen, and receive the sūtras.

upon a lion throne decorated with lotus flowers. The princes, courtiers, queens, ministers, vassals, and all the people together honoured him. They then spread out all kinds of flower garlands, incense, most excellent clothes, jewelled banners, flags, and subtle music and made offerings to him.

Then, they all grasped the jewel nets suspended from the tower, and the tower lifted and went forward. It rose immediately and floated into the sky. It freely proceeded just like the king of swans. Then, when they reached the Buddha, the tower gradually descended to the ground.¹

The Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, together with his sons, courtiers, and queens, peacefully alighted from that tower and came before the Buddha. They then touched their heads to the ground and honoured the Buddha's two feet. Having worshipped him, together with each assembly of monastics, they circumambulated him seven times, keeping him to the right, and then returned, standing before the Buddha. Having joined their palms, they truthfully and sincerely listened to receive the True Dharma.

5. The Teaching of Anantaḡaṇānāratnavyūha Tathāgata

Then, that Bhagavān, Anantaḡaṇānāratnavyūha Tathāgata, knowing that the Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra had come to the Buddha's assembly to pursue listening to the Dharma joyfully, at once complied. To teach the wonderful Dharma, to instruct him, and to bring him benefit and joy, that Buddha spoke thus:

O Great King, you should now understand that there are four kinds of Dharma. If one thus practices and cultivates, one will be able to abide in the Mahāyāna and proceed on the unparalleled path, possess good dharmas, and never fall into ruin or loss. What are the four? Great King! The first is that through faith in the Dharma, one can proceed on the unparalleled path. And what is this faith? I say that possessing faith one can accord with the entire noble lineage, and one will never do that which should not be done. The second is that through reverence, one can proceed on the unparalleled path. This is because, through

¹ T310 also the tower itself circumambulating the Buddha seven times.

reverence, one can hear and receive the excellent Dharma explained by all the sages. By examining and receiving the Dharma, one will not hear other words in one's ears. The third is that without pride, one can proceed on the unparalleled path. This is because, through non-pride, one can revere, have faith in, and pay homage to all Wise Ones. The fourth is that through diligence, one can proceed on the unparalleled path. This is because if one can attain pliancy of body and mind, then one can fully accomplish all the good Dharmas which one should practice. O Great King, if one thus practices and cultivates these four Dharmas, then one can abide in the Mahāyāna and proceed on the unparalleled path.

¹Further, O Great King, there are four more Dharmas, which, if fulfilled, allow one to abide at peace on the Mahāyāna, accomplish vigilance, and a non-scattered mind. What are the four? The first is to use the precepts to guard the faculties, the second is to watch for the fault of excessive desire, the third is to accept all deeds as contained within impermanence, and the fourth is to decidedly regard with one's lifeblood that the Dharma is supreme. O Great King, if one fulfils these four Dharmas, one can abide at peace on the Mahāyāna, accomplish vigilance, and have a non-scattered mind.

O Great King, there are four more Dharmas, which, if performed and accomplished by a king, will give him the appellation of a "virtuous king." What are the four? The first is never to discard great bodhicitta, the second is to instruct others in the Dharma of awakening, the third is to transfer the merit of all one's roots of good towards awakening, and the fourth is, having seen or heard of the tremendous authoritative power of the Buddha Bhagavān, to then, in the presence of all devas, humans, śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas of great power, give rise to the mind of joy and then go to seek the incredible power of a Buddha. Great King! If a king performs and accomplishes these four Dharmas, he will be given the appellation of a "virtuous king." Therefore, Great King, you should always practice vigilantly, and with pure, true faith, joyfully seek the True Dharma, give rise to delight in the Dharma, desire to strive for the True Dharma; you should always sport in the garden of the True Dharma without attaching to sense objects. Why? O

¹ T312.714a9f 5.

Great King, you should understand that one who wishes [for the Dharma] without satisfaction is satisfied and is called “nobly wise.”

Furthermore, Great King, the lifespan [of sentient beings] is truly short and does not last long. They go and are born in different realms, fearful of their evil karma. For this reason, you should know that you should always serve, make offerings to, and respect all buddha tathāgatas. This gives rise to roots of good, and one should engage in the transference of one’s merits to four ends. What are the four? The first is to transfer one’s merits to inexhaustible fruition, the second is to transfer one’s merits to inexhaustible Dharma gates, the third is to transfer one’s merits to inexhaustible and excellent wisdom, and the fourth is to transfer one’s merits to inexhaustible eloquence.

Great King! There are four more Dharmas. The first is that through the purity of the body, one can achieve the practice of wisdom, the second is that through the purity of speech, one can achieve the practice of hearing, the third is that through the purity of the mind, one can achieve the practice of the precepts, and the fourth is that through the purity of wisdom one can achieve the practice of knowledge.

There are four further Dharmas. The first is that by fulfilling skilful means, one can achieve the maturation of sentient beings, the second is that by fulfilling wisdom, one can achieve the subduing of māras, the third is that by fulfilling vows, one can practice just as has been spoken, and the fourth is that by encountering the Buddha, one can fulfil all Buddha-Dharmas.

¹Thereupon, that Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra received benefit and joy by being instructed in the True Dharma which he heard in the presence of that Buddha. He gave rise to a mind of joy and was delighted. He took up priceless pearls and beautiful jewels—all he owned and enjoyed as a king—and offered them to the Buddha as a donation. He cultivated all the pure practices for the rest of his life and esteemed and upheld the five precepts. At that time, all the king’s courtiers and queens who were in the presence of the Buddha, having heard the True Dharma, had minds which were incredibly pleased and rose and danced with joy. Each, from the garments that they were wearing and their ornaments, made offerings to the Buddha.

¹ T312.714b7.

For the rest of their lives, they cultivated all the pure practices and esteemed and upheld the five precepts, and all gave rise to the mind of aspiration for anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.¹

Then, the Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, having obtained benefit and advantage and having donated for the Dharma teaching, together with all his courtiers, queens, and each of his followers, with perfect sincerity, bowed their heads to the feet of the Buddha as well as the community of monks. Then, having performed seven circumambulations, they immediately went into the great tower and danced while [the tower] freely flew into the air and returned to the great walled country Viśuddha.

6. The King's Spontaneously Born Sons

In time, that Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, having selected a day after the full moon, adorned his horse carriages and went on an excursion to the great garden Nānāpuṣpa for the sake of enjoying the scenery. With the pure sound of music playing, he played in that place, enjoying his companions and the music. At that time, he was with two of the best court-maidens. One was called Aninditā, and the other was called Anupamā. Having washed and bathed themselves in the Nanda Pond, they came out and put on their clothes. They then went to sit on lotus flower lion thrones.

Then, before those two court-maidens sitting on those seats, two youths spontaneously manifested. Those youths were of lovely form, and their beauty was beyond compare. They were replete with the primary and secondary marks and were of handsome human form.² In the span of an instant, each danced and rose into the air. Thereupon, from the sky, noble voices uttered:³

Regarding these two youths, one is called Dharmacetana, and the other is called Dharmamati.

Because of this, their two names were decided. The youth Dharmacetana manifested sitting before the court-maiden Aninditā, and the youth Dharmamati manifested sitting before the court-maiden

¹ T310 also suggests that they said to the king:

We wish to leave home as pure śramaṇīs and cultivate noble conduct. To the end of our lives we will respectfully uphold the pratimokṣa.

The king immediately gave his consent.

² T310 reads: they had twenty-eight of the marks of a great being.

³ T310 reads: one hundred thousand devas uttered this admiration.

Anupamā. At that time, while those two youths were floating in the sky,¹ they went into the lotus position, and with their different mouths, with one voice, they uttered this gāthā:

²Good sir! We have now attained good advantage,
That is to say, we have given rise to bodhicitta,
Having given rise to bodhicitta, we encountered the Bhagavān;
Having given rise to minds of purity, we worshipped him in
faith.

The great ocean of saṃsāra is vast and deep, and difficulty pervades it,
The wheel of birth and death is without rest;
Sentient beings are carried far in the current of birth and death,
So, we will not relinquish this aspiration to attain awakening.

There is a world called Aninditāṅga,
Which has a Bhagavān named Kālāṅga.
We followed him seeking the Dharma gates,
We joyfully looked upon that muni replete with all merits.

³At that time, we each sat in the lotus position;
After that, we were born sitting from two different mothers
[here].
Our father is the great sage king Dhṛtarāṣṭra:
Therefore, come, join palms, and pay us homage.

We wish that our father investigates and listens to what we will
say.
For a niyuta of kalpas, you skilfully attained the Dharma.
Go ahead and achieve the highest awakening,
Do not forsake that which you have acquired so far.

¹ The sequence is out of order here. T310 simply excludes this mention of them flying again and suggests that at this point they are sitting in the court-maidens' laps. It seems like T312 is suggesting (referring back to the original moment at which they manifested) that while they originally manifested sitting before the maidens (not specifically in their laps), they flew afterwards, and while they were flying they recited this gāthā.

² As usual, T310 has the longer gāthā, but roughly the same meaning.

³ T310 seems to read this verse as describing the activities of the youths, but T312 explicitly maintains first person speech.

The most difficult thing in the world is for a Buddha to appear;
It is difficult to establish one's mother and father in the
Dharma;
To encounter a good Dharma friend by chance in a moment
Is a pure wonderful jewel that manifests according to one's
wishes.

Aspire to be diligent without laxity,
Leave home, obtain merits, and be endowed with right
knowledge;
Diligently cultivate a state of mental pliancy;
Aware of one's evil nature, listen broadly and be endowed with
the right precepts;

Out of compassion, loving-kindness, and pity for sentient be-
ings,
Attain vast and profound patience regarding the non-arising of
Dharmas;
Diligently endeavour to be free of the mind of attachment,
And bring to maturity and gather all kinds of sentient beings.

Since your mind is free from characteristics, you can obtain un-
impeded insight;
Do not cherish your body and life;
Assist beings by thinking of the True Dharma,
And desire to obtain the extraordinary qualities of all the bud-
dhas.

O father and king! The most difficult thing to attain,
Is the highest Dharma, which we praise.
As a result, we came from the middle of that buddha-field,
And we shall return there, depending on that Buddha.

We are already established on the stages of the bodhisattvas.
We can widely receive all good Dharmas
And in an instant, attain the five supernormal cognitions.
Through our mindfulness and observation of the mind, we can
awaken.

¹Thereupon, that Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, together with his ministers, queens, and followers, along with his two wise bodhisattva sons, using their supernormal powers ascended into the air. Together, they all came to the assembly of the Bhagavān, Anantaḡaṇanānāratnavyūha Tathāgata. Having arrived, each bowed their heads to the feet of the Buddha, and all the vast assemblies there were widely honoured. Then, that Buddha looked upon those two youths, true sons of the Buddha, who had joyfully pursued, listened, and received the Dharma of the path to awakening. The Buddha, knowing their thoughts, to expound the incredibly profound and True Dharma, said:

Sons of good family! You should understand that all dharmas arise from conditions: there is no controller within them and no doer. Know that within, they are empty and without, they have no action. All dharmas are empty, false, and insubstantial. Viewing this way, you should have utterly pure action, clinging to nothing, just like space.

When that Buddha Bhagavān had spoken extensively for the sake of expounding the pure Dharma, in that assembly, seventy-six niyutas and three koṭis of humans attained patience regarding the non-arising of all dharmas. At that time, the Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra remained in the Buddha's assembly for a continuous seven days and nights. Having made offerings, together with all his children, courtiers, queens, and followers, they returned to their original abode in the span of an instant.

7. The King Predicts the Order of his Sons' Awakening

²After some time, that Cakravartin King, in a solitary place in his sandalwood tower, climbed onto a lotus flower lion throne and privately thought to himself:

All my thousand sons already peacefully abide in the Dharma of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. So, which of them will be the

¹ T312.714c25.

This is narrated in verse in T310.

² T312.715a8.

first to attain the fruition of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi? I should try to devise a method to resolve this matter.

Having thought in this way, he ordered his attendant to make a kalaśa out of the seven treasures skilfully. With [those jewels] divided, he skilfully carried out and finished making it, and the king ordered that the names of his thousand sons be written and placed into that jewelled kalaśa. Further, having made a beautiful lotus flower out of the seven jewels, he gently placed the jewelled kalaśa in the centre of the flower. For seven days and nights, with subtle and beautiful incense, flowers, aromatic powders, unguents, and so forth, along with the playing of music, he adorned and made offerings to that kalaśa with the names within it. At that time, ten thousand gods and humans were in the air, and they assisted him with various kinds of marvellous offerings and worship.

After having made offerings in this way for seven days and nights, the king invited all his courtiers, queens, relatives, and his thousand sons, together with the two youths, to gather before him. Then, he gently placed the jewelled kalaśa on a noble and marvellous golden raised platform. Having installed it, he immediately ordered his attendant to take out a name from the jewelled kalaśa. The attendant, as ordered, took the first name out from the kalaśa and presented it to the king with both hands. The name was that of crown prince Viśuddhamati. After that, the names were taken out in order, one at a time. After this, in the span of an instant, the great earth quaked in six ways. Each of the wonderful instruments previously held by the ministers and queens spontaneously produced marvellous music without being played.

Śāntamati! You should know that crown prince Viśuddhamati, at that time, as he was the first name which came out of the kalaśa, was none other than the previous tathāgata of this Bhadra Kalpa, Krakucchanda. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince, Vijayasena, who was the previous tathāgata, Koṇāgamuni.¹ The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Śāntendriya, who was the previous tathāgata, Kāśyapa. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince, Sarvārthasiddha. Śāntamati! You should know that I, myself, was he. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Mekhala, who will become the buddha Maitreya Tathāgata.

¹ I.e. Koṇāgon or Kanakamuni.

The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Gavāṃpati, who will become the buddha Siṃha Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Vidyudeva, who will become the buddha Mahādhvaja Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Darśanarāja, who will become the buddha Kusuma Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Vimalanirbhāsa, who will become the buddha [also called] Kusuma Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Padmanetra, who will become the buddha Sunakṣatra Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Vimalaprabha, who will become the buddha Sunetra Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Viśuddhisara, who will become the buddha Subāhu Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Prajñarāja, who will become the buddha Pradyota Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Pratimaṇḍita, who will become the buddha Muktika Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Pravṛddhikāla, who will become the buddha Sārthavāha Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Śubhavyūha, who will become the buddha Guṇāgradhāri Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Maṅgalaguhyā, who will become the buddha Sudhana Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Varaprabhakāya, who will become the buddha Jñānākara Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Vairya, who will become the buddha Ratnākara Tathāgata. The next name taken out of the kalaśa was the crown prince Ratnakīrti, who will become the buddha Samantateja Tathāgata. O Śāntamati, you should know well he continued in this way until he obtained the thousandth son's name, Mahākūṭavyūha, who will become the buddha Anantaḡuṇakīrti Tathāgata.

Śāntamati, the last name obtained from the jewelled kalaśa was that of the crown prince Anantamati, and that crown prince was in last place among the thousand princes. At that time, his many brothers slighted him, saying:

When we brothers become buddhas, having performed a buddha's deeds, and liberated sentient beings. What will you be doing as the last?¹

²Then, the crown prince Anantamati explained in a gāthā:

The Buddha-Dharma is limitless like space,
Sentient beings and wisdom are also inexhaustible.
The practices and vows of my pure precepts perfume my cultivation,
You should listen well to what I am about to say about these practices and vows.

If all my brothers' lifespans were enumerated,
And if those of the various assemblies of the king were enumerated:
Altogether, that would equal my lifespan;
I vow that [in that time] I should gather as many śrāvakas [as all those of their assemblies].

When the crown prince spoke this gāthā, the devas and humans in the sky praised his excellence:

This excellent nobleman's intentions are pure and perfect!
He will benefit infinite sentient beings!

Śāntamati! You should know that the crown prince Anantamati, of that time, will become the buddha Ruciḥ Tathāgata.³ He will be the last buddha of this Bhadra Kalpa. Śāntamati! That Rucika

¹ T310, which might make more sense here, puts this as:

When we have become buddhas, defeated māras and their armies, turned the wheel of the Dharma, and have guided and liberated countless sentient beings, and entered nirvāṇa, sentient beings will have been exhausted. What will you do? Who will you save?

² T312.715c5.

³ It is conceivable that 樂欲 was a transliteration. It seems like there is a stop in the middle Chinese (*ioḥ*) meaning this could indicate Rucika. This is given as Roca in F. Weller, *Tausend Buddhanamen des Bhadrakalpa*, Leipzig, 1928.

The explanation of his name does not make sense in T310, which gives a folk etymology of Roca or Ruci as being due to his crying (which would work with Rudita). A full translation of this variant is given in a note below.

Tathāgata is the only one who can attain the sum of all the lifespans and numbers of disciples of all the buddhas of this Bhadra Kalpa. Therefore, that tathāgata will shine well,¹ hence that tathāgata is called Rucika.

Further, Śāntamati, you should also consider that bodhisattva mahāsattva's skilful means and perfection of pure precepts. He fulfilled superior practices without breaking his great vows. Compared to the other nine hundred and ninety-nine crown princes, the crown prince Anantamati perfected more merits than all of them.²

¹ Assuming 樂欲 is simply a transliteration. Otherwise, this would be something like "well intended."

² After the other princes ask Anantamati what he will be doing when sentient beings have been exhausted, T310 gives the following variant account:

Then, the crown prince Anantamati, seeing with his own eyes that he received the last ballot, and that he will be the last buddha, at once grieved:

What crime did I commit that I obtained the last ballot?

He then threw the five parts of his body [knees, elbows, and head] to the ground, just like a great landslide, and proclaimed with his own mouth:

The Dharmas of the Buddha are immeasurable,
The realm of sentient beings is also without limit,
I vow that my distinction shall be inconceivable.

Immediately he stood up and made these vows:

I vow that, after my thousand brothers have attained buddhahood and taught students, that however many or few they liberate, and however long or short their lifespans are, that the sum of all their various lifespans will be the length of time that I shall be a Buddha of the Way. All sentient beings that you, good sirs, have, when I become a Buddha, the sentient beings shall naturally be the same [in number]. The proclamation of the Dharma of the sūtras, my manifestations and liberations, for all sentient beings, will be just the same. The loft merits that you thousand good sirs attain, shall be the same, without difference, and unlimited. If the words that I speak are true, will be accomplished, and are not in vain, may the trichiliocosm, as a portent, quake in six ways, may divine flowers rain down, and may lutes and other instruments sound without being played.

When the king's innumerable crown princes understood this, they all stood at [the utterance] of this vow, and at once the trichiliocosm quaked in six ways, divine flowers rained down, and lutes and other instruments sounded without being played. From the sky, a hundred thousand devas extolled him, saying:

When, as you vowed, you become the last buddha, your name shall be Ruci
Tathāgata, the worthy one, the completely and perfectly awakened one.

The Buddha said:

Śāntamati! Why will his name be Ruci? At the time that he felt anguish, he threw himself on the ground. After obtaining the last ballot, he made his vow. As a result of this, that Bhagavān's name will be Ruci ([note by translator] Ruci means one who cries[, which would be Rudita]. [I would suggest that his name may come from his superior splendour "Ruci" as a result of his vow.]) At that time, when the crown prince had finished his vow, he uttered this gāthā:

All the Dharmas of the Buddha,
Are equal to space,
Thought is understood as being like an illusion,
Sentient beings are inexhaustible.

Having made these auspicious vows,
I shall be pure in morality and precepts,
You should now listen well,
I shall utter the vows I made:

The sum of the limit
Of your long lives, O princes,
Would be that of this noble king [of the Dharma],
And it would surpass them all.

The measure of all your fame as buddhas,
That would all be included within my one long life;
When I become a Buddha, my name will be Ruci,
And my saṅgha of bhikṣus will be the same.

Because I heard the crown princes of the king's words,
I therefore spoke these words,

All the devas that were in the sky,
Then extolled him with this verse:

Today, this pure person,
Having made this vow, will certainly fulfill it,
By these causes, all sentient beings,
Will together attain awakening as a result of your vow.

The rest of T310 here is largely the same in content, with some exchange involving Śāntamati.

8. The Identities of the Others from that Time

At that time, the thousand crown princes questioned the two youth bodhisattvas, saying:

O you two sons of good family, Dharmacetana and Dharmamati, what kind of extraordinary vows and powers did you give rise to in the past that you now have these manifestations?

The youth Dharmacetana replied:

Good sirs! I shall continue superior practices with you all as Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, never separated from the unexcelled secret of all tathāgatas, never separated from all the Buddha-Dharma, to which I shall listen and receive with faith and understanding.

The youth Dharmamati said:

Now I, together with all my brothers, have superior vows and powers, and I vow that I shall attain awakening together with all you. Having attained awakening, I shall persuade you all to turn the excellent wheel of the Dharma. These are my vows and powers. Being near the Buddha, I shall receive a prediction of my awakening.

Śāntamati, you should know that the Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, at that time, was none other than Dīpaṅkara, the Tathāgata, the worthy one, the Anuttara-samyak-saṃbuddha. Those who, in the causes from the past, were born as that cakravartin king's crown princes, are the thousand buddha tathāgatas of this present Bhadra Kalpa, from Krakucchanda Tathāgata up to Praṇihita Tathāgata. The youth Dharmacetana, born through manifestation on the seat of the maiden Aninditā at that time, is now Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, and manifested there by his supernatural powers. The youth Dharmamati, born through manifestation on the seat of the maiden Anupamā at that time, is now the Brahmā Śikhin.

Śāntamati! All the courtiers and queens of the Cakravartin King Dhṛtarāṣṭra are now all the bodhisattvas gathered in this assembly. All those courtiers and queens were brought to maturity by that king's

thousand sons. All are non-retrogressing from the aspiration for anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi and peacefully abide on the Mahāyāna. All those courtiers and queens, next, then received predictions to their awakening within this Bhadra Kalpa. Śāntamati! You should also observe the principle that dharmas arise due to conditions, and it is not otherwise. Wholesome roots all function as a cause for giving rise to the aspiration for superior practices, the fruit of which does not decay or become lost. Now, in this assembly, all the bodhisattva mahāsattvas can increase their superior intent.

Chapter 6. The Path to Awakening

¹The Buddha addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva, saying:

Suppose a bodhisattva mahāsattva wishes to realise the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. In that case, they should learn the deeds of all mahāsattvas. One does not attain the highest path only through words, but one must engage in the true practice to attain the true path to awakening.

In this regard, what is meant by the term path to awakening?² It means (1) not harming any sentient beings, and accordingly, (2) giving rise to the mind of compassion and striving to cultivate the pāramitās. (3) It is thoroughly gathering all using the four means of conversion and cultivating the four pure practices.

(4) It is attaining the Dharma of the path by striving to attain the thirty-seven factors of awakening. (5) After nurturing all wholesome roots and fulfilling the six kinds of supernormal abilities, one can teach sentient beings with skilful means in the practice of the Dharma. This is called the great path to awakening.

³(6) Further, Śāntamati, the path to awakening, also refers to the mind of joyful faith and reverence. (7) It is the deep mind, which is pure, upright, and free from falsity. (8) Because one has a mind of equality, one can practice the Dharma equally, and one has no fears because one does not engage in any misdeeds.

⁴(9) Because the path to awakening improves [one regarding] the Dharma, it is the giving pāramitā; (10) because the path to awakening directs one on a path of peace and joy, it is the morality pāramitā;

¹ T312.716a25 f6; T310.53a5 f9.

² T310 introduces this section as follows:

Śāntamati! Seeing the twelve links of dependent origination, one receives fruits even without roots of virtue. Those who have given rise to such a thought, do not lose their roots of virtue. In this way, the great being's twelve powers widely allow one to fulfil all one vows. Therefore, Śāntamati, if there is a bodhisattva who urgently desires to attain the highest and unexcelled perfect path to the attainment of highest perfect awakening, they should learn these deeds of the great being, and then apply them in practice, so one can fully realise the path to awakening. What is meant by the path to awakening?

T310, in conclusion, notes that this is a 32-part path. Accordingly, I have indicated the numbers of the elements of this path in the translation of T312.

³ T312.716b5.

⁴ The six pāramitās.

(11) because the path to awakening is free from injury, it is the patience pāramitā; (12) because the path to awakening establishes one in all the Dharma, it is the diligence pāramitā; (13) because the path to awakening is without confusion, it is the meditation pāramitā; (14) because the path to awakening is right and complete understanding, it is the prajñā pāramitā.

¹(15) Because the path to awakening is clearly understanding birth with unimpeded cognition, it is great loving-kindness; (16) because the path to awakening is non-retrogression, it is great compassion; (17) because the path to awakening is practising joy, it is great joy; (18) because the path to awakening is according with and entering the truth, it is great equanimity.

²(19) Because the path to awakening is removing thistles and thorns, it detachment from greed, anger, doubt, and other polluted dharmas; (20) because the path to awakening is following the Dharma of peace and joy, it is a mind without obstruction; (21) because the path to awakening is separating from danger and evil, it is non-attachment to form, sound, scent, taste, and contact. (22) Because the path to awakening is abandoning non-Buddhist teachings, it is observing well the aggregates, the sense-spheres, and the sense-bases.

³(23) Because the path to awakening can defeat all māras, it can remove all afflictions; (24) because the path to awakening is the vast extensive Dharma, it can detach from the practices and intentions of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas; (25) because the path to awakening is according with the True Dharma, it can accord with past buddha tathāgata, arhat, anuttara-samyak-sambuddhas.

⁴(26) Because the path to awakening can accumulate vast and great Dharma treasures, it is according well with all jewels of knowledge; (27) because the path to awakening is constant awakening, it can reveal the unimpeded light of wisdom; (28) because the path to awakening is teaching well, it is the gaining of many good friends and receiving each other.

⁵(29) Because the path to awakening is separating from thoughts of high and low, it is without agreeable and disagreeable; (30) because the path to awakening is separating from dark defilements, it is freedom from anger and laziness; (31) because the path to awakening is

¹ The four immeasurables.

² The purification of the mind.

³ Transitioning towards the core goal of buddhahood.

⁴ Qualities related to teaching and teachers (i.e., “good friends”).

⁵ A mind of non-discrimination, transitioning towards nirvāṇa.

tending towards the good realms, it can separate from all unwholesome dharmas; (32) because the path to awakening is well established on the way of peace and joy, it is finally attaining the great Dharma of Nirvāṇa.

¹Śāntamati! You should understand that the great path to awakening is practised in this way by all bodhisattvas. Suppose all those in evil realms, on wrong paths, and all śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are here established in this truth [of the path] as bodhisattva mahāsattvas. In that case, they will all attain the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

¹ T312.716c1.

Chapter 7. The Inconceivable Secret of the Tathāgata's Body

1. Śāntamati Inquires about the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*

¹Thereupon, Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva went before Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, and addressed him, saying:

O Great Lord of Mysteries! Please explain to me the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*. What is the Dharma of the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*?

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva, saying:

O son of good family! Listen carefully! Listen carefully! By the power of the Buddha, I shall now explain to you the secrets of the Tathāgata. There are three kinds. What are the three? The first is the secret of the body, the second is the secret of speech, and the third is the secret of the mind.

2. The Secret of the Tathāgata's Body

a. The Tathāgata Manifests in Whatever Form Suits Beings' Minds

What is referred to as the secret of the Tathāgata's body? Śāntamati, you should know that this refers to the Tathāgata's ability to instruct with the manifestation of any kind of conduct without any thought or discrimination.

²O son of good family, if there is a deva or a human who will give rise to reverence if they see the Tathāgata sitting, they will see the Tathāgata sitting. If there is a deva or human who would like to see him walking, they will see the Tathāgata walking. If there is a deva or human who would like to see him standing, they will see the Tathāgata standing. If there is a deva or human who would like to see him lying down, they will see the Tathāgata lying down.

³If there is a deva or human who would give rise to reverence and would like to hear him teach the Dharma, they will see the Buddha teaching the Dharma. If there is a deva or human who would like to

¹ T312.716c6 f6; T310.53b9 f10. This chapter is almost identical in the two versions.

² The four dispositions.

³ Appearances related to Dharma teaching and practice.

see him in silence, they will see the Buddha in silence. If there is a deva or human who would like to see him in meditation, they will see the Buddha in meditation. If there is a deva or human who would like to see him emerge from meditation, they will see the Buddha emerge from meditation. If there is a deva or human who would like to see him look without blinking, they will see the Buddha in looking without blinking. If there is a deva or human who would like to see him in with supernormal manifestations, they will see the Buddha with supernormal manifestations.

¹If there is a deva or human who would like to see the Buddha with a golden form, they will see the Buddha with a golden form. If they would like to see him with a silver form, with a crystal form, with a lapis lazuli form, with a cornelian form, with a coral form, with an amber form, with a ruby form, with a pearl form, with a blue, yellow, red, white, or any other coloured form, with a form like the moon, with a form like the sun, with a form like fire, with a form like light, with a form like Indra, with a form like Brahmā, with a form like snow, with a form like yellow ochre, with a form like cinnabar, with a form like water, with a form like the flower of an aśoka tree, with a form like a campaka flower, with a form like a sumanā flower, with a form like an aloe flower, with a form like a kumuda lotus, with a form like a padminī lotus, with a form like a puṇḍarīka lotus, with a form like all beautiful flowers, with a form like Vaiśravaṇa, with a form like Dhṛtarāṣṭra, with a form like a just opening lotus flower, with a form like an auspicious jewel box, with a form like a maṇi gem, with a form like an indranīla gem, or with a form like space and pure light. In this way, manifesting with many kinds of forms, manifesting the marks of limitless merits, according with the faith and joy of all, the Tathāgata allows each sentient being to see the Buddha with a body manifesting any form.

b. The Tathāgata Manifests for all Sentient Beings just like a Pure Round Mirror

²Furthermore, Śāntamati, suppose all sentient beings in the trichilio-cosm, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, were all to attain a human body. If the Tathāgata were to manifest an appearance of his physical form and conduct, they would accordingly think on his [form] and all be established in faith and understanding. Thus, all

¹ Various forms.

² T312.717a10.

sentient beings are established in faith and understanding in this way. The Tathāgata manifests an appearance of his physical form and conduct to each sentient being and thinking on his [form], they are all established in faith and understanding.

Moreover, the faith and understanding in the minds of sentient beings are distinct in each. Śāntamati, for this reason, the Tathāgata broadly causes each sentient being, by the power of their faith and understanding, to give rise to a mind of joy. Having given rise to faith and understanding, all sentient beings are made to realise the conduct of the Tathāgata fully. If the body or mind has instability and disturbances, it is not that of the Tathāgata. [The Tathāgata's body] has no exertion and is endowed with good understanding of the past deeds and various thoughts of all sentient beings. Thus, the Tathāgata universally manifests his conduct in accord with the conditions [of sentient beings].

Just as a pure round mirror reflects forms in all directions, serenely hanging in one location and reflecting all images from within, it shines equally without increase or decrease. Yet, the round mirror has no thought and no discrimination. Śāntamati, the Tathāgata is the same as this. He fully understands the minds of all sentient beings, and by manifesting characteristics to accord with them, he makes them joyful. Yet, the Buddha Tathāgata has no thought, no discrimination, and no exertion. This is what is referred to as the secret of the Tathāgata's body.

c. The Body of the Tathāgata is the Dharma-body

Furthermore, Śāntamati, the body of the Tathāgata does not consist of the aggregates, the sense-spheres, and the sense-bases; it does not consist of action; it does not give rise to afflictions, it does not have a mother and father and is not born from a womb, it does not proceed from the germinal stage to the foetal stage, it is untainted by flesh and blood, it is not joined by ligaments and bones, and it does not depend upon breathing in and breathing out to garner its sustenance.

¹Furthermore, Śāntamati, the body of the Tathāgata is thus not just a body. That is to say, it is the Dharma-body. As a body of space, it is not a body characterised by form. It is free from all conceptual proliferation and is a body without practice. If any sentient being would like to see it with marks of materiality and would then give rise to faith and reverence, the body accords with them: the Tathāgata

¹ T312.717b1.

manifests a form-body suiting the conditions of their obscurations. If any sentient being would like to see it free from phenomenal marks and would then give rise to faith and reverence, he manifests everywhere and in all kinds of conditions of non-obstruction so that he can be seen by both those with and without the divine eye.

d. Each Being sees the Same Buddha Differently

Śāntamati, you should know that all beings gathered in this great assembly see this one Buddha differently: ¹Some sentient beings see the Buddha with a body; some see him without one; some see him in the distance but not nearby; some see him nearby but not in the distance; some neither see him near nor see him far. ²Some see him with a concentrated mind and not with a scattered mind; some see him with a scattered mind and not with a concentrated mind; some see him observing others and not observing himself; some see him observing himself and not observing others. ³Some see him in a dream and not when awake; some see him when awake and not in a dream; some see him in meditation and not emerging from meditation; some see him emerging from meditation and not in meditation. ⁴Some see him with auspicious characteristics and not with inauspicious characteristics; some see him with inauspicious characteristics and not with auspicious characteristics. ⁵Some see him with a mind of exertion and not with a mind free from exertion; some see him with a mind free from exertion and not with a mind of exertion. Some see him with a unified mind and not with an ununified mind; others see him with an ununified mind and not with a unified mind. In this way, as well as others, the body of the Tathāgata is seen with incalculable kinds of characteristics.

e. The Dharma Body is Just like Space

The devas of the form realm have bodies characterised by quiescence and have conduct that is quiescent, while well abiding in the ways of comportment, their minds are composed; well calmed and well tamed their eyes thus observe movements. But they are incapable of viewing the number of characteristics and forms taken by the body of

¹ Physical arrangements and locations.

² His mental concentration and observation.

³ Variations in cases in which the viewer sees him.

⁴ His characteristics.

⁵ His mental exertion and unification.

the Tathāgata. Why? Since the Tathāgata's body has incalculable kinds of adornments and forms and is equivalent to space, this is the nature of the Dharma-body. The characteristics of the body of the Tathāgata are extensive, just like the extensiveness and unlimitedness of space. Just as space enters all places and penetrates everywhere, the body of the Tathāgata is also like that; it enters all places and penetrates everywhere. Just as space is free from conceptual proliferation, the body of the Tathāgata is also like that; it is free from conceptual proliferations. Just as space can allow for the nourishing of all sentient beings, the body of the Tathāgata is also like that; it is broadly able to nourish all sentient beings. Just as space is without types and kinds and is devoid of discrimination, the body of the Tathāgata is also like that; it is without types and kinds and is devoid of discrimination. Just as space accords with all characteristics and light, the body of the Tathāgata is also like that; it accords with all characteristics and light. Just as within space abides all characteristics and light, the body of the Tathāgata is also like that; within the Buddha's body abides all characteristics and light. Just as space serves as the basis for the nourishment and growth of all herbs, grasses, trees, and forests, the body of the Tathāgata is also like that; it can fully nourish all the roots of good of all sentient beings. Just as space is neither permanent nor impermanent, and cannot be expressed in words, the body of the Tathāgata is also like that; it is neither permanent nor impermanent, it cannot be expressed in words, and his uṣṇīṣa¹ cannot be seen.

f. A Story Illustrating the Immeasurability of the Buddha

²Moreover, Śāntamati, I do not see in this world with all its devas and humans, māras and brahmās, brāhmaṇas and śramaṇas, one who can observe the unparalleled uṣṇīṣa of the Tathāgata, Arhat, Anuttara-samyak-saṃbuddha. Why? Śāntamati, you should understand that I recall that at one time when this Bhagavān Tathāgata had not long attained awakening and was dwelling in Vārāṇasī, at Rṣipatana Deer Park, turning the wheel of the True Dharma. There was at that time, a Buddha Bhagavān in the eastern direction, called Campakavarṇa; his world was called Māyopama, and his country was called Vinayāmitra. There was a bodhisattva there called Vāyudhāra, and he came to this Sahā World. He prostrated himself

¹ I.e., his topknot. The greatest extent of his vastness cannot be seen by limited beings.

² T312.717c10.

and exchanged greetings with the Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata and having bowed his head at the feet of the Buddha and circumambulated him seven times, keeping him to the right, he stood before the Buddha. At that time, Vāyudhāra Bodhisattva, by the Buddha's power, gave rise to this thought:

Now, the appearance of this Buddha Bhagavān's body is immeasurably vast and limitless, and his uṣṇīṣa cannot be seen. I should now try to calculate the limit of the Buddha Bhagavān's height.

Vāyudhāra Bodhisattva, having thought in this way, saw his own body as sixty-eight thousand yojanas tall and saw the Buddha's bodily characteristics as eight million four hundred thousand yojanas tall. He then again thought:

Can I now, by the sporting of the supernormal powers that I have acquired on my own, calculate the limit of the height of the Tathāgata?

Having thought this, immediately that bodhisattva was bestowed the Buddha's supernormal power and by his own power rose upwards past buddha-fields more numerous than the grains of sand in one hundred koṭis of Ganges Rivers, until he got to a land called Mahāpadma. The Buddha there was called Padmaśrīgarbharāja Tathāgata, who manifested [an appearance of] expounding the Dharma and teaching sentient beings. The Bodhisattva, having arrived there, carefully observed and investigated. However, he still was not able to see the uṣṇīṣa of [Śākyamuni] Tathāgata and was also unable to calculate the limit of the height of the Buddha's body.

Then, Vāyudhāra Bodhisattva went before the Bhagavān Padmaśrīgarbharāja Tathāgata. He bowed his head to his feet, circumambulated him seven times, keeping him to his right, and standing before that Buddha, addressed him, saying:

Bhagavān! Have I come a short or long distance?

That Buddha replied:

Son of good family! You have already gone past buddha-fields more numerous than the grains of sand in one hundred koṭis of Ganges Rivers to reach this world.

Vāyudhāra replied to that Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! I am [still] not able to see the Bhagavān, Śākyamuni Tathāgata's uṣṇīṣa, and I am also not able to see the limit of the height of that Buddha's body, so I have come from afar and inquire about this matter.

That Buddha replied:

Son of good family, even if you now used all your supernormal powers and went beyond the end of all worlds, passing through them for kalpas more numerous than the sands in the Ganges River, you would still not be able to know the limit of the height of that Buddha's body. Moreover, O son of good family, even if one used many similes, one would not be able to make a simile for that Buddha Tathāgata's morality, meditation, wisdom, liberation, knowledge and vision of liberation, and various merits, as well as his body, speech, and mind, or his form and characteristics. As no metaphor can describe his characteristics, the Tathāgata passes beyond all enumerable dharmas. They are only like space: that is to say, the Tathāgata's morality, meditation, wisdom, liberation, knowledge and vision of liberation, and various merits, as well as his body, speech, and mind, and his form and characteristics are all said to be like space. Therefore, you should know that as space is immeasurable, the Tathāgata's bodily characteristics are also immeasurable.

¹O Śāntamati, that Vāyudhāra Bodhisattva, having heard what that Buddha had said, gave rise to an exceedingly rare mind, arose, and danced with joy. With pleasure, he rejoiced and immediately bowed his head to the feet of that buddha, circumambulated him seven times, keeping him to the right, and received the Buddha's supernormal power. For an instant, he remained in that Buddha's land and then returned to this Sahā World. Standing before the Bhagavān

¹ T312.718a16.

Śākyamuni, he bowed his head to the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him three times, keeping him to the right. Then, joining his palms with sincerity, he faced the Buddha Bhagavān and uttered this gāthā:

All dharmas of the Buddha are extensive and vast,
Like space, they are boundless;
If a person wants to measure their limit,
He would immediately incur harm.

I passed more than one hundred koṭis of the number of
Grains of sand in the Ganges River of buddha-fields
And reached one Tathāgata's land,
Desiring to see the size of the Tathāgata's body.

Having reached that Buddha's land,
Which was a world called Mahāpadma,
I was not able to see the Buddha's high uṣṇīṣa,
And also could not know the size of his body.

The master of manifestation Bhagavān of that land,
His name was the honourable Śrīgarbharāja.
That Buddha knew my thoughts,
And he made me say these words:

If someone wants a Dharma simile,
To know the limitless dharmas of the Buddha,
As the Buddha cannot be known through characteristics,
That person would court the fault of slandering the Buddha.

He can only be likened to one dharma,
Which is the same and not different from all dharmas of
the Buddha:
That is the vast voidness of space,
The limit of whose measurements are inapprehensible.

Thus, as space is extensive,
The Buddha, replete with merits, is likewise,
As are his morality, meditation, and gate of wisdom,
Including his knowledge and vision of liberation and so forth.

Thus, as space is without measure,
The Buddha's form, characteristics, and so forth are likewise,
His high and broad uṣṇīṣa cannot be seen,
And it is not different from the realm of space.

Thus, as space is extensive,
The Buddha's body is likewise extensive;
As his body is extensive and its measure is limitless,
Light is extensive like this;

As light is extensive,
The mystery of his speech is likewise extensive;
As the mystery of his speech is extensive and its measure is limitless,
The mystery of his mind is extensive like this;

As the mystery of his mind is extensive,
The Buddha's loving-kindness is likewise extensive;
As the Buddha's loving-kindness is extensive and its measure is limitless,
The Buddha's knowledge is extensive like this;

As the Buddha's wisdom is extensive,
The Buddha's body is likewise extensive;
The gate of superior merits which gives rise to awakening
Is extensive and unlimited like this.

Because of the merits born of bodhicitta,
The superior characteristics arising from that gate of merit
Fill the realm of space without limit,
And give rise to various superior merits.

All varieties of sentient beings
Widely gather many accumulations of merit,
All bodhisattvas likewise
All emerge from bodhicitta.

All multitudes of bodhisattvas
Have accumulations of merits which are very extensive from
teaching,

But if they can uphold the gate of the True Dharma,
They will acquire merit which is greater than all that.

Even if the practices and wisdom of all buddhas is added,
And they are taught and proclaimed for a koṭi of kalpas,
The merit of upholding the True Dharma is limitless;
Its limit is absolutely inconceivable.

The merit which emerges from great bodhicitta
And the merit from upholding the True Dharma are limitless;
If one compares it with the gate of liberation through under-
standing emptiness,
That would not make up one-sixteenth part.

The gate of liberation through understanding emptiness is sub-
sumed within it,
And is also not separable from bodhicitta;
Upholding the True Dharma is the gate of all merits,
All equally are contained within it.

If one can apprehend this thus wonderful Dharma,
One will be a bodhisattva of great renown,
And the merits of one's awakening will be limitless:
That, then, is truly the cultivation of bodhisattva conduct.

At the time that I now utter this gāthā,
A koṭi of worlds all are quaking,
And a thousand koṭis of many devas and humans
Are playing a koṭi of songs,

And a thousand koṭis of sentient beings
All are giving rise to extensive bodhicitta.
They hear of the Buddha's great supernormal power;
I, Vāyudhāra, now explain it truthfully.

The Buddha is thus inconceivable,
He is also most immeasurable and limitless.
All buddhas universally manifest many gates of characteristics,
And naturally know secret truth.

¹Śāntamati, you should understand that this teaching is just what is referred to as the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*.

g. The Buddha's Body does not Depend on Food

²Moreover, Śāntamati, some within this assembly can see the characteristics of the Tathāgata's body, and some cannot. Those able to see rejoice in and revere it, and those unable to see it remain silent and dully stare. Śāntamati, you should know that the Tathāgata does not garner his sustenance by material food. Some sentient beings see the Buddha accept food from the world, and they say that it gives him power and allows him to cultivate awakening conduct, and they see many wise [monastics] following him [on alms rounds], and they see that he receives food in his alms bowl. Those sentient beings then see the Buddha Tathāgata repeatedly eating what is in his alms bowl. After all the wise [monastics] have finished eating, if there are sentient beings who come to hear the Buddha-Dharma and practice it accordingly and are brought to maturity, that will be stored as wholesome karmic roots which will extinguish their karmic hindrances.³ If they arise somewhere where they cannot obtain food or drink and become hungry, thirsty, and weak, by that stored wholesome karma, such sentient beings will obtain what was left by the Buddha Tathāgata and eat it. Having eaten and become full, their minds will attain pliancy, their bodies and limbs will be nourished, they will deepen the purity of their minds, and they will give rise to the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. If any sentient beings were to descend to hell, be born as a hungry ghost, or the various evil destinations, they will not be able to arouse the intention to attain great awakening. But by this cause, they will be brought up to the nirvāṇa realm. Śāntamati, you should thus know that the Tathāgata does not accept the world's food and drink, the Tathāgata garners his sustenance from the so-called Dharma food.

The Buddha's body is solid as Nārāyaṇa, for it is true and real, it is indestructible, it is adamant. Śāntamati, the body of the Tathāgata does not give rise to digestion for nourishment, and it does not have tears and mucus and various unwholesome impurities. The Tathāgata's body is like the particles of gold in the Jambū River, and

¹ T312.718c8.

² T312.718c19f7.

³ T310 notes that some devas will observe that despite his bowl being filled, and despite it appearing that he eats the food, in fact, the amount of food in his bowl will not decrease—it is all for the nourishment of other sentient beings.

it is faultless, uninterrupted, and free from errors. The Tathāgata's body is a body endowed with great power; it is solid and heavy, just like adamantine, and it is very flexible, like a soft cloth.

Wherever one touches his body, all obtain great bliss. Śāntamati, you should know that there once were a certain deva and devī, and they paid homage to the Buddha's feet. At the moment that they touched the Buddha's feet, having contacted them, they gave rise to the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Therefore, you should know that the Tathāgata is not produced from that which is defiled.¹

h. Momentarily Seeing the Tathāgata's Body Frees one of Defilements

²Moreover, Śāntamati, in this world, any sentient being who has a greedy temperament, having momentarily seen the Tathāgata's body, will be free from covetousness for themselves. Any sentient being who has a hateful temperament, having momentarily seen the Tathāgata's body, will give rise to a mind of compassion. Any sentient being who has a dull temperament, having momentarily seen the Tathāgata's body, will give rise to the illumination of the light of wisdom. Sentient beings of standard temperament, having momentarily seen the Tathāgata's body will themselves be free from afflictions. Stingy sentient beings, having momentarily seen the Tathāgata's body, will be able to have faith and understanding about giving for the Dharma. Sentient beings who transgressed precepts, having momentarily seen the Tathāgata's body, will be able to have faith and understanding about the purity of the precepts. Sentient beings of angry minds, having momentarily seen the Tathāgata's body, will attain the stage of patience. Lazy sentient beings, having momentarily seen the Tathāgata's body, will give rise to zeal. Sentient beings of a scattered mind, having momentarily seen the Tathāgata's body, will attain a samādhi of tranquillity. Foolish sentient beings, having momentarily seen the Tathāgata's body, will attain superior wisdom.

¹ The *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, T375 Fascicle 23, suggests that just as the Himalayas are where good medicine springs forth, the buddhas and bodhisattvas are also where one can find good medicine. Touching and coming to the buddhas and bodhisattvas means birthlessness, deathlessness, retrogressionlessness, and drowninglessness. Touching is listening to the Dharma, meditating on which, one attains awakening.

T310 seems to suggest that it is the impression of the incredible softness of the Buddha's body, upon touching his feet, that gives rise to the aspiration to attain awakening.

² T312.719a13.

In short, O son of good family, if any sentient being momentarily sees the Tathāgata's body, they will not be indifferent to any wholesome dharma. They will all be suspicious of what is unwholesome, and their polluted dharmas will all dissolve. They will be established with a wholesome mind, and thus the Buddha Tathāgata always abides peacefully and without discriminations. This is what is referred to as the secret of the Body of the Tathāgata.

i. The Purity of the Buddha's Bodily Activity: No Addition, Effort, or Attention

Further, Śāntamati, while the Tathāgata manifests and transforms beings, conducting all the activity of a Buddha, the mind of the Buddha Tathāgata does not add actions,¹ does not have effort, and does not have attention.² The Buddha also does not think:

I am a teacher, and that is someone I am teaching.

In this way, he teaches sentient beings and may liberate them. He only acts to bring sentient beings to maturity, whether in this world or another world, up to incalculably hundreds of thousands of worlds. This teaching is called the secret of the Tathāgata's body.

³Further, Śāntamati, the body of the Tathāgata radiates a vast light, which has countless hundreds of thousands of colours. This light universally illuminates the ten directions to all buddha-fields more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River to accomplish the ripening of beings. And yet the Buddha Tathāgata has not exerted any effort, did not add actions, and did not have attention. This is called the purity of bodily activity, which is the secret of the body of the Tathāgata.

Śāntamati, you should now understand that these are just a few insignificant statements about the purity of the various bodily actions, which is the secret of the body of the Tathāgata. If I were to explain these in detail, even if I spent more than a kalpa, I indeed would still not be able to explain it to its limit.

¹ I.e., it is always sufficient and does not need addition.

² These latter two are not needed as his activity is spontaneous and natural.

³ T312.719b4.

3. The Assembly Rejoices at Vajrapāṇi's Teaching

When Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, was speaking the inconceivable Dharma [teaching] of the secret of the Tathāgata's body, ten thousand humans within the assembly gave rise to the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, and eight thousand bodhisattvas attained the stage of patience.

At that time, in that assembly, all the devas and humans scattered many beautiful flowers over the Buddha and made offerings to Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries. Thereupon the Bhagavān stretched out his golden right arm and placed it on the crown of Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, and said:

Excellent, excellent! Lord of Mysteries! You have well expounded the inconceivable Dharma of the secret of the Tathāgata's body as I understand it. I rejoice at your exposition of the Dharma.

Chapter 8. The Inconceivable Secret of the Tathāgata's Speech

1. The Tathāgata does not Utter a Single Word

¹Again, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

What, moreover, is referred to as the secret of the Tathāgata's speech, the purity of the action of his speech?

It is to say that from the day and night that he attained the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi to the day and night that he will enter Mahāparinirvāṇa, within that period, the Tathāgata has never once uttered a single word, he has not expressed any meaning. Why? Because the Buddha Tathāgata permanently abides in samāhita.² The Tathāgata also neither breathes in nor breathes out. He does not investigate or examine since he lacks discursive thought, and that which comes from his speech cuts off all falsehood. As the Buddha Bhagavān has no investigation or examination and is free from conceptualisation and discrimination, he does not explain anything, does not indicate anything, and does not express anything.

In this way, all sentient beings hear what the Tathāgata has taught while the Tathāgata is in absolute meditative concentration. In every way and always, words are used to make expressions, and yet nothing is expressed. If there are sentient beings who, with words as a cause, would give rise to faith and reverence, then that sentient being would say:

The Tathāgata speaks the Dharma for me!

And yet, the Buddha Tathāgata's mind was always abiding in peace and without discrimination.

³Further, Śāntamati, the Tathāgata also has no lips, teeth, tongue, or throat, and yet many sounds come forth from his face. If one listens well, the sound that comes forth from the Tathāgata emerges from empty space, but sentient beings say that the Buddha Tathāgata's sounds come forth from his mouth.

¹ T312.719b20 f7; T310.55c3 f10

² This is transliterated in the Chinese. This means meditative equipoise, a state of meditation in which both body and mind are brought into unity.

³ T312.719c4.

2. The Sixty-Four Characteristics of the Tathāgata's Speech

a. The Fifty-Eight Basic Characteristics

Śāntamati, you should understand that the Tathāgata's speech has sixty-four kinds of extraordinary characteristics. What are the sixty-four? The first is that it is gentle, the second is that it is soft, the third is that it is agreeable to the mind, the fourth is that it is pleasing to the mind, the fifth is that it is pure, the sixth is that it is stainless, the seventh is that it is clear, the eighth is that it is sweet, the ninth is that it is worth hearing, the tenth is that it is indomitable, the eleventh is that it is pleasant, the twelfth is that it is harmonising, the thirteenth is that it is not rough, the fourteenth is that it is free from hatred, the fifteenth is that it is good at taming, the sixteenth is that it is pleasing to hear, the seventeenth is that it is proper for the body, the eighteenth is that it produces a mind of resilience, the nineteenth is that it is joyous and blissful, the twenty-first is that it is unafflicted, the twenty-second is that it is elucidating, the twenty-third is that it is to be understood, the twenty-fourth is that it is clear, the twenty-fifth is loving, the twenty-sixth is that it produces bliss, the twenty-seventh is that it is to be taught to others, the twenty-eighth is that it is to be made known, the twenty-ninth is that it is truthful, the thirtieth is that it is efficacious, the thirty-first is that it is free from the fault of repetition, the thirty-second is that it has the sound of a lion's roar, the thirty-third is that it has the sound of a nāga's voice, the thirty-fourth is that it has the sound of thundering clouds, the thirty-fifth is that it has the voice of a nāga king, the thirty-sixth is that it has the sound of a kiṃnara's beautiful song, the thirty-seventh is that it has the call of a kalaviṅka, the thirty-eighth is that it has the voice of a Brahmā king, the thirty-ninth is that it has the call of a jīvajīva bird, the fortieth is that it has the beautiful and marvellous voice of Indra, the forty-first is that it has the sound of a reverberating drum, the forty-second is that it is not high, the forty-third is that it is not low, the forty-fourth is that it accords with all sounds, the forty-fifth is that it is not wanting, the forty-sixth is that it does not break, the forty-seventh is that it is undefiled, the forty-eighth is that it is not depressed, the forty-ninth is that it is wide-spreading, the fiftieth is that it is majestic, the fifty-first is that it is a manifestation, the fifty-second is that all its sounds are complete, the fifty-third is that it pleases all faculties, the fifty-fourth is that it is irreproachable, the fifty-fifth is that it is unwavering,

the fifty-sixth is that it is unchanging, the fifty-seventh is that it enters with and accords with all assemblies, and the fifty-eighth is that it is endowed with all characteristics.¹

b. The Kinds of Dharma Teachings Suit the Character of the Assembly

²Further, Śāntamati, the fifty-ninth³ is that the words spoken by the Tathāgata extensively give rise to joy in the minds of all sentient beings in worlds in all ten directions. Moreover, the Buddha does not think:

I can teach all Dharma teachings.

That means sūtras, geyas, vyākaraṇas, gāthās, udānas, nidānas, itivṛttakas, jātakas, vaipulyas, adbhutadharmas, upadeśas, avadānas, and Dharma teachings of past manifestations of the secrets, explanations of jātakas, explanations of the Dharma of past causes, short explanations, extensive explanations, and explanations in detail, instructions which posit the aspects of discrimination, and explanations teaching the awakening of the Tathāgata. These kinds of Dharma teachings, within all the great assemblies, whether it be the bhikṣu, bhikṣuṇī, upāsaka, or upāsikā assembly, whether it be the deva, nāga, yakṣa, gandharva, asura, garuḍa, kiṃnara, mahoraga, or another great assembly, the Buddha can expound the Dharma and discipline as suitable for the innate character and diligence of each group. Hearing the teaching of the Dharma, such assemblies all say that the teaching came from the mouth of the Buddha Tathāgata. The Dharma is taught in this way without overlapping words and repetition. Each assembly follows the sound of the words and fully understands all Dharmas. Śāntamati! This is referred to as the secret of the Tathāgata's speech.

¹ T310 has different names for most of these, and they are limited to sixty in number. It seems like the expansion of this list was a development that came in the intervening centuries between the two translations.

² T312.720a3.

³ The details of this section are found in T310, but they are not given as components of sixty-four characteristics. The same applies for characteristics sixty to sixty-four.

c. The Tathāgata's Speech Accords with the Uncountable Temperaments of Beings

Further, Śāntamati, the sixtieth is that while the number of all sentient beings is uncountable, and all the practices of sentient beings are uncountable, the Tathāgata teaches sentient beings whose minds can grasp eighty-four thousand different kinds of teachings—only in accord with the innately inferior nature of sentient beings—to cause them to enter the liberation taught by the Tathāgata.

Śāntamati, you should understand that there is no limit to the mental activities of sentient beings. In the world, there are sentient beings with a greedy temperament, sentient beings with a hateful temperament, sentient beings with a dull temperament, sentient beings with a standard temperament, and sentient beings of this and that distinctive mental temperament.

If the Buddha Tathāgata were to spend a kalpa, more than a kalpa, or if the Tathāgata were to spend up to a hundred thousand kalpas with an extremely long lifespan, he still would not be able to finish explaining all the mental temperaments of sentient beings. If the Buddha were only to explain the limitless mental temperaments of sentient beings, then all sentient beings, not being able to understand, would give rise to delusion. Therefore, the Tathāgata uses skilful means regarding the innumerable practices of all sentient beings and briefly denotes “eighty-four thousand.” Thus, all the Dharmas taught by the Tathāgata accord with the distinctions in mental temperaments of sentient beings and causes all to awaken in a manner suitable to them. Śāntamati, this is referred to as the secret of the Tathāgata's speech.

d. The Tathāgata's Speech Only Emerges from Empty Space

¹Further, Śāntamati, the sixty-first is that the speech of the Tathāgata secretly knows and accords with the minds of all sentient beings. Thus words do not come from the Tathāgata's mouth but only emerge from empty space.

Although beings say that the Buddha Tathāgata's words come from his mouth, one should not give rise to that view. Why? Some beings see the Buddha's words come from his uṣṇīṣa, some from his head, some from his hairline, some from his shoulders, some from his forehead, some from between his eyebrows, some from his ūrṇā,

¹ T312.720b1.

some from his eyes, some from his ears, some from his nose, some from his cheeks, some from his mouth, some from his neck, some from his arm, some from his hands, some from his fingers, some from his ribs, some from his chest, some from his back, some from his navel, some from his loins, some from his thighs, some from his knees, some from his calves, some from his ankles, some from his feet, some from all of his primary and secondary marks, and some from all of his pores. Sentient beings have these various kinds of different understandings. Śāntamati, this is referred to as the secret of the Tathāgata's speech.

e. The Tathāgata's Speech Comes forth Only as a Representation in Beings' Minds

Further, Śāntamati, the sixty-second is that the words spoken by the Tathāgata accord with the various kinds of faith and understanding of all sentient beings, they accord with sentient beings' minds and maturations, broadly enabling them, in accord with their faculties, to attain understanding. In this way, the Buddha Tathāgata always abides devoid of discrimination. It is like an illusion of many skilfully fashioned musical instruments, which, without being touched and without human power, play music when wafted by a gentle breeze and make beautiful music emerge. The music that emerges is all from being wafted by the wind of beings' various prior karmas. The speech of the Tathāgata is also like this: it accords with the mental proclivities of all sentient beings, and knowing them, a breeze makes a sound. Similarly, the Tathāgata does not exert any power in making this sound emerge.

Thus, the Tathāgata, according with all sentient beings' prior karma and sentient beings' different perceptual objects, has corresponding teachings. Śāntamati, it is like the sound of an echo, which, while according with the expression from one's voice, does not produce noise from inside, outside, or in-between. The Tathāgata's voice is also like this: it comes forth only as a representation in the minds of sentient beings. The Tathāgata's voice does not come from inside, outside, or in-between [the minds of sentient beings].

It is also like a wish-granting jewel from the middle of the great ocean, called Paripūrṇasarvābhiprāya, which, if hung on a high banner, naturally makes a noise. It is said that this jewel can fulfil all sentient beings' mental proclivities. Yet, the jewel is also devoid of discrimination. The Tathāgata is also like this. His words are a wonder-

ful jewel of a profound mind of purity, which, when hung on the banner of great compassion, accords with the mental proclivities of all sentient beings, and the Tathāgata's wonderful words all cause awakening. In this way, the Buddha Tathāgata always dwells in non-discrimination. Śāntamati, this is referred to as the secret of the Tathāgata's speech.

f. Maudgalyāyana Discovers that the Tathāgata's Speech is Unlimited

¹Further, Śāntamati, the sixty-third is that the speech of all buddha tathāgatas is unlimited. I do not see in this world, with all its devas and humans, māras and brahmās, brāhmaṇas and śramaṇas and so forth, anyone who can know the limit of the voice of the Tathāgata. Why? I recall that at one time when the Buddha was staying at Rājagṛha on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa, surrounded by all the bodhisattva assemblies, he was teaching a pure Dharma gate with a voice of resonance.² Then, by the power of Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana had the following thought:

What is the limit to the Tathāgata's pure voice? How far does it go?

Having thought in this way, he then disappeared from his original seat and was not seen. By his supernormal power, he rose to the peak of Mount Sumeru and heard the Buddha Tathāgata's voice in the distance. He again went by his supernormal power everywhere in the trichiliocosm. He went past the west side of Mount Sumeru, passed beyond the world of the four continents, went past the range of iron mountains, the range of great iron mountains, and stood on the peak of the range of iron mountains at the limit of the world. He listened very well to the volume of the Tathāgata's voice, which was even and without any increase or decrease.

At that time, the Bhagavān knew what he had done and thought:

Mahāmaudgalyāyana wants to fathom the limit of my voice. Now is the right time for me to grant him my supernormal power.

¹ T312.720c3.

² 輪—circle or roundness. Perhaps giving the impression of the perimeter wherein the voice can be heard.

Thereupon the Bhagavān granted his supernormal power to Mahāmaudgalyāyana. With the assistance of the Buddha's supernormal power, [Mahāmaudgalyāyana] went west of this world past buddha-fields more numerous than the grains of sand in ninety-nine Ganges Rivers. He stopped in the world called Prabhādhvaja, which has a Tathāgata called Prabhārāja, who manifests the expounding of the Dharma to teach and mature sentient beings. At that time, the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, having reached that land, examined well the volume of the Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata's voice, and he could hear his voice teaching just as if he were in the region ten forearm-lengths away from him. The way that Mahāmaudgalyāyana listened to the Buddha's voice in that world was the same; the voice was of even [volume] and neither increased nor decreased. That Prabhārāja Tathāgata has a body which is one hundred yojanas tall, and all the bodhisattvas there are fifty yojanas tall.

At that time, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, by his supernormal power, went on an alms round together with all those bodhisattva mahāsattvas. All those bodhisattvas, having seen his appearance, mocked him and said to their own Buddha:

Bhagavān! Why is there a śramaṇa as small as an insect coming with us on our alms round?

That Buddha addressed them, saying:

Sons of good family! You should not give rise to a mind of condescension. Why? He who is now on this alms round is a most excellent śrāvaka disciple of the Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata. In his great assembly of śrāvakas, he is foremost in supernormal powers.

¹Thereupon, the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana went before Prabhārāja Tathāgata, bowed his head to his feet, circumambulated him seven times, keeping him to his right, and stood before that Buddha. That Buddha addressed him, saying:

¹ T312.721a6.

Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana! All these bodhisattvas have mocked you. You should now, having received the assistance of that Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Anuttara-Samyak-Saṃbuddha, manifest many supernormal transformations by your supernormal power.

The Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana addressed that Buddha, saying:

Now, as instructed by the Buddha, I shall cross my legs and sit. In this jewel of a world, I shall perform manifestations and transformations.

That Buddha said:

Now is the right time.

The Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana then at once boldly rose his body into the air the height of seven koṭis of tāla trees and performed manifestations and transformations. There, while sitting, he manifested a hundred thousand niyutas of koṭis of strings of pearls. Each was massive and fantastically adorned. From each pearl emerged a hundred thousand koṭis of lights, and from each light came many lotus flowers. On each lotus, sitting on a throne, was the form of the Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata. All those forms of the Tathāgata taught the pure True Dharma with a wonderfully resonant voice.

Mahāmaudgalyāyana then said to that Buddha:

Bhagavān! I now cross my legs and sit and shall create many manifestations and transformations in the four great continents of all worlds. From a small cosmos of thousands of worlds, a medium cosmos of thousands of worlds, up to a trichiliocosm, I shall create many manifestations and transformations.

That Buddha addressed him, saying:

Now is the time.

Thereupon, the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, having received supernormal power [from Śākyamuni Tathāgata], manifested supernormal transformations [in all worlds]. He then returned and

stood before that Buddha. At that time, all the bodhisattva assemblies gave rise to an exceedingly rare state of thought, and standing before that Buddha, said:

Bhagavān! What did this Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana do before he arrived in this world?

That Buddha said:

Sons of good family! This Mahāmaudgalyāyana wished to calculate the extent of the voice of the Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata of his world: that is why he came here.

Thereupon, the Bhagavān Prabhārāja Tathāgata addressed the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, saying:

Now, go back, and never again give rise to the desire to measure the limit of the Tathāgata's voice because the Tathāgata's pure voice is unlimited. Hence, it is immeasurable. Even if you pass kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River going in the western direction with strong supernormal power, you would still not be able to measure the limit of the marvellous voice of that Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata, since that Buddha Tathāgata's wonderful voice is immeasurable.

¹Thereupon, the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana bowed to that Buddha's feet and addressed him, saying:

Bhagavān! I shall now confess a transgression! I shall now confess a transgression! I wished to measure the sound of Śākyamuni Tathāgata's immeasurably pure and marvellous resonance: this is my profound transgression!

Also, O Bhagavān, how far [from Jambudvīpa] is this place to which I have come?

That Buddha answered him:

¹ T312.721b16,f8.

Mahāmaudgalyāyana, you passed beyond worlds more numerous than the sands of ninety-nine Ganges Rivers to reach this land!

Mahāmaudgalyāyana said:

I came very far; my bodily strength is feeble, and I cannot return to my original land.

That Buddha addressed him:

Mahāmaudgalyāyana! Why do you think that? You did not come to this land by your own supernormal power. Why? Only by the supernormal power of Śākyamuni Tathāgata could you come to this land. As you now wish to return to your original land, you should face towards that Buddha and, with reverence, prostrate to him.

Mahāmaudgalyāyana! You should now understand that if you wished to return to your original land by your own power, even if you continued for a kalpa, you would still not be able to reach it. Moreover, even before you reach that land, you would, in the middle, enter nirvāṇa.

Mahāmaudgalyāyana! Now you have come here, say whether [your original land] is in the east, west, south, or north.

Mahāmaudgalyāyana replied:

My mind is perplexed, and I do not know which direction I am in now.

That Buddha said:

For this reason, you should now know that if by your own power, you continued for a kalpa, in the end, you would not be able to return to that world.

Mahāmaudgalyāyana replied:

In which direction is that Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata now?

That Buddha replied:

Mahāmaudgalyāyana! That Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata is manifesting in the eastern direction.

Thereupon, the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana faced the eastern direction, touched his five circles to the ground,¹ and with perfect sincerity worshipped that Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata, and recited this gāthā:

O honoured one among bipeds! Please receive me!
Humans and devas make offerings to your great power and virtue;
Your limitless voice has infinite wisdom.
I now wish to return to my original land!

²Śāntamati! Now, in Rājagṛha, on Mount Gṛdhṛakūṭa, the entire assembly, by Śākyamuni Tathāgata's supernormal power, all hear the sound of Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana's wailing.

Thereupon, the Venerable Ānanda went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

Bhagavān! We now hear the sound of wailing. Why?

The Buddha said to Ānanda:

That is Maudgalyāyana Bhikṣu, who went to the western direction. Leaving this buddha-field, he passed worlds more numerous than the grains of sand in ninety-nine Ganges Rivers. He arrived at the world Prabhādhvaja, the land of Prabhārāja Tathāgata. Currently, he is stuck there. Since he wishes to return to this Sahā World, the sound of his wailing is like this.

Ānanda addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān, why did the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana go to that world?

¹ Elbows, knees, and forehead.

² T312.721c10.

The Buddha said:

Ānanda! Mahāmaudgalyāyana will return to this land. So, you will learn the causes and conditions of this matter from him.

Thereupon, the entire assembly on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa joined their palms in respect and together addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! We would like to see that world, Prabhādhvaja, and to look at that Bhagavān Prabhārāja Tathāgata, and wish to see all his bodhisattva assemblies together with the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana!

Then, the Bhagavān, having received this request, emitted a beam of light from between his eyebrows called “Penetrating Everywhere.” Its light universally and continuously illuminated buddha-fields more numerous than the grains of sand in ninety-nine Ganges Rivers and fully illuminated the world Prabhādhvaja. Thereupon, the entire assembly could see that world Prabhādhvaja and could look at the Bhagavān Prabhārāja Tathāgata with all his bodhisattvas. They also saw the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana with his five circles touching the ground, facing the Buddha, making obeisance to him with a wailing voice.

¹Thereupon, the Bhagavān Śākyamuni Tathāgata addressed the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, saying:

You should now follow the light and return to this world.

Thereupon, the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, receiving the Buddha Bhagavān’s great light, in the span of a thought immediately returned to this Sahā World and was standing in the presence of the Buddha. Before the Buddha Bhagavān, he bowed his head to his feet, circumambulated him seven times, keeping him to his right. Once again, sincerely, he touched his five circles to the ground and spoke thus:

Bhagavān! I shall now confess a transgression! I shall now confess a transgression! I wished to measure the sound of the Bhagavān’s immeasurable pure and marvellous resonance: this is my profound transgression! I went to a distant world and heard the sound of the

¹ T312.722a2.

Buddha's voice very well. Having reached there, the sound of the Buddha's voice was not different from here.

The Buddha said:

Maudgalyāyana! It is just as you have said. The sound of the Tathāgata's voice is immeasurable, just as space is immeasurable; it is boundless and incalculable. If space could be measured, then the sound of the Tathāgata's voice could also be measured. Why? As space is extensive, the sound of the Tathāgata's voice is also extensive.

At that time, in Rājagrha, when Mahāmaudgalyāyana was explaining why he went, from the time that he left to the time he returned, ten thousand people gave rise to the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Then Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva, saying:

Śāntamati, you should know that this is the secret of the Tathāgata's speech.

g. The Mind of the Buddha can Know All minds

Moreover, Śāntamati, the sixty-fourth is that the mind of one sentient being is greater than the mental activities of the minds of all sentient beings.

Śāntamati Bodhisattva said:

Great Lord of Mysteries! Even if the trichiliocosm was full of sentient beings at the stage of a pratyekabuddha, and together they passed a kalpa in contemplation, they still would not be able to conceive, measure, calculate or examine the mental activities of the mind of one sentient being, let alone the minds of all sentient beings.

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva said:

Śāntamati! I shall now instruct you so that you will understand the matter of the mental activities of the minds of all existing sentient beings. When the sound of a Tathāgata's voice gives off an incredible resonance, and it expounds the Dharma in many ways, it causes all sentient beings to give rise to joy. Still, the Buddha Bhagavān always naturally abides without discrimination.

Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva spoke this gāthā:

If all sentient beings in the three thousand worlds
All attained the fruit of pratyekabuddhahood,
And reckoned for one kalpa,
They would not be able to understand the mind of one sentient being.

In the world, one sentient being's
Mind can only be known by a Buddha.
But even though he fully realises the inclinations of the mind of sen-
tient beings,
The Buddha does not give rise to apprehension and is devoid of dis-
crimination.

Regarding the types of sentient beings
There are thought to be three types:¹
The Bhagavān, according to their type
Proclaims of the True Dharma with a pure and resounding voice.

Amid dharmas, he freely teaches with a beautiful voice,
All who hear it together rejoice
And practice according to with what he has taught
In all his Dharma, which is called good instruction.

All types of sentient beings that exist,
With their forms, characteristics, names, up to their thoughts,
Are illuminated by light from a single pore,
And the Tathāgata skilfully discerns between and adapts to their sit-
uation.

The extraordinarily compassionate manifestations of the Bhagavān
Emit light from every pore.
The light is that of the most excellent among humans,
And the True Dharma is spoken in the resonance of the sound of his
voice.

Even if the Buddha, for one kalpa,
Were to well-explain many parables,

¹ Either three grades (superior, middling, and lower), as mentioned in a verse below, or beings of the three realms (desire, form, and formless).

In this way, the words of the Buddha and the resonance of the sound
of his voice
Would, after all, not reach a limit.

All afflictions have no characteristics of form,
And all that is taught also has no characteristics.
Since words are without characteristics or causes,
Afflictions are without characteristics and cease by themselves.

Therefore, the characteristics of the form of words
Cannot be obtained anywhere.
Since, in the end, they cannot be obtained,
The marks of the form of the afflictions are the same.

Since words are not real,
What is expressed has neither inside nor outside;
Afflictions are not real, likewise,
And the nature of defilement has neither inside nor outside.

Since even a tiny dharma cannot be obtained,
The Buddha's words reach everywhere in the ten directions;
Afflictions cannot be obtained, likewise,
Therefore, the Buddha teaches about them.

All sentient beings' ways of speaking,
Have three kinds: superior, middling, and lower grade.
Words are neither the body nor the mind;
In them, there is neither abiding nor non-abiding.

They are like illusory instruments,
Which, when wafted by the breeze, produce many sounds:
There is nowhere from whence the sound comes forth,
And there is also no one playing them.

Because of the pure nature of their stored good from the past,
When the wind of ideation wafts all sentient beings,
An incredible voice issues forth from the Buddha Bhagavān,
But by nature, the Buddha is without discrimination.

Just as an echo is a voice that answers in reply to a voice,
The sound of that voice neither comes from within nor without,

The most revered among humans issues forth beautiful words,
Which likewise neither come from within nor from without.

Just as a jewel is without discrimination,
But causes sentient beings to give rise to joy,
The Buddha is likewise without discrimination,
But the sound of his voice fills all sentient beings.

3. The Adaptation of the Explanation of the Four Noble Truths to Sentient Beings

¹ Further, Śāntamati, you should know that the secret of the Tathāgata's speech accords with all sentient beings and teaches the Dharma. In the trichiliocosm, wherever all the various kinds of sentient beings are born, the Tathāgata accords with the sounds and words of each sentient being. By different names, he teaches the four noble truths. Śāntamati, these are explained as suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

All the devas who dwell on the earth explain them like this:

²Khāpi khāpamūle khāpanaya khāpaturu.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

All the devas who dwell in the air explain them like this:

Varta, āvarta, āvartavigati, āvartatarisadhāraṇi.

¹ T312.722c2.

² The following mantras are reconstructed and accord loosely with those found at the Tripiṭaka archive at Dongguk University's Archives of Buddhist Culture website.

In principle, these have the form of four terms that are equivalent to the four noble truths. Some of these only bear resemblances to Sanskrit. Dharmarakṣa left them untranslated, and it seems more likely that they are intended to come across as nonsensical—Prakrit terms are a possibility, which might seem a strange way to present the speech of devas, but, as with proper names, until we have access to a Sanskrit edition, it will be impossible to fully verify these.

As for T310, the transliterations are mostly the same, but have some differences. The first, for instance, appears to be identical but begins with a- instead of khā-.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The four great kings explain them like this:

Ini, mini, tapi, tattapi.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of Trāyastriṃśa explain them like this:

Āvartani, āśivati, kṣayavati, kṣayānuga.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Yāma heaven explain them like this:

Sura, surahivani, surakṣaya, surakṣayebhavani.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of Tuṣita heaven explain them like this:

Uṣale, muṣale, vivānu, saṃcāri.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Nirmāṇarāti heaven explain them like this:

Taratā, saṃtaratā, tarakṣaya, taramukha.

¹This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven explain them like this:

Hahahu, hahavinaya, hahavigame, haranirgame.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of Māra's heaven explain them like this:

Aṅgaram, aṅgaramūlam, aṅgarāpaduḥkham, aṅgaraṇisiddhiraṇaṃ.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of Brahmā's heaven explain them like this:

Śubhe, śubhakari, śubhaviṣaṇa, śubhavartana.

The devas of the Brahmaṇapurohita heaven explain them like this:

Mihari, saṃhari, śaraṇi, śaraśaraṇi.

This means:

¹ T312.723a1.

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Brahmaṇḍa heaven explain them like this:

Maraṇa, maraṇasandhi, maraṇam aroṣaṇam,
aroṣaṇānupaśama.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Mahābrahmā heaven explain them like this:

Taraṇari, tarasakule, tasapuri, kulavahane.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Parīttābha heaven explain them like this:

Hihī, hehī, huhū, haraṇasandhi.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.¹

The devas of the Parīttāsubha heaven explain them like this:

Ohita,² nivahita,³ nigakṣita, nigamaṇi.

¹ Dharmarakṣa's note: Below these should be the Aparamānābha heaven and Ābhāsvara heaven's explanations of the four noble truths, but they are missing in the Sanskrit original.

² Possibly avahita.

³ Possibly nyavahita.

¹This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Apramāṇasūbha heaven explain them like this:

Savani, saṃsavani, kṣayasavani, āsavani.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Śubhakṛtsna heaven explain them like this:

Pariccheda, paricchedodaya, vanāgri, sadāviśuddha.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Bṛhatphala heaven explain them like this:

Ākṛta, ākaraṇi, araṇavigati, karaṇaniṣṭi.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.²

The devas of the Abṛha heaven explain them like this:

Anugamana, anāgamana, anusandhi, anusandhigamaṇa.

¹ T312.723b1.

² Dharmarakṣa's note: Here, among the nine heavens of the fourth dhyāna there should be the three heavens of Anabhraka, Puṇyaprasava, and Asaṃjñisattva, but they are missing in the Sanskrit original.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Atapa heaven explain them like this:

Śuddhi, śuddhavati, śuddhapariśuddhi, śuddhagamini.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Sudṛṣa heaven explain them like this:

Ahāmama, mamame, mamānugamaya, mamānugama.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

The devas of the Sudarśana heaven explain them like this:

Mocani, mocanavati, mocanamūle, mocanabhedānusandhi.

This means:

The teaching about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

¹The devas of Akaniṣṭha heaven explain them like this:

Niṣṭi, adyāntaniṣṭi, hākārapaṇi, āpratisandhi.

Śāntamati, you should know all these devas each explain the four noble truths in their own deva languages. In addition, the nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kiṃnaras, mahoragas, and

¹ T312.723c1.

yakṣas of firm body, yakṣas of matted hair, and so forth, each explain the four noble truths according to their own languages.

Śāntamati, in all the countries of this Jambudvīpa, from the rare languages of thousands of countries up to those of all the people in the sixteen Mahājanapadas, depending on the location, there are many different languages, many different voices, and many different thoughts. The Tathāgata accords with all these languages and sounds and creates names and words to present the four noble truths so that all can understand them. That is to say, from the Śaka people¹ up to the people living at the outer edge of the world, within the thousands of countries in this Jambudvīpa, all the people in them, according to their many different languages, many different voices, and many different thoughts, names and words for the four noble truths are presented. The Tathāgata accords with all these languages and sounds so that all can understand. Yet, the Tathāgata's mind, consciousness, and words have neither flowed nor scattered.

Śāntamati! In this small cosmos of thousands of worlds, there are ninety-four koṭis of niyutas of hundreds of thousands of different languages, names, and words, each with names for the four noble truths.

¹ Indo-Scythians living in the North West frontier region of India.

T310 enumerates these as follows:

the Śakas, the Aśkāniāns (the Pahlavas or Parthians), the Tukhāras (Yuezhi), the Great Qin (Yavanas), the Kambojas, the Jodo (? 擾動), the Kuchians, the Khotanese, the Khaṣas, the Shanshan (contemporary Turpan), the Agni (identified with Karashahr), many janapadas one after another, the Hūna, the Xianbei (a nomadic Turkic group), the Wu, Shu, and Qin lands (together, in Sanskrit these would be understood as Cīna, i.e., the Chinese), many small barbarian tribes such as the Darada, ignorant people, farm people, the Somayaju (? 須曼耶呪), those of the countries of women's fields (?), ox-helmet country or Mutoto (? 牟兜託國), countries of causes and conditions (?), those of Vārāṇasī, Sālaka, Svamukha, Bheraṇḍamukha, Kṛviṣamukha, Adhomukha, Ūrdhvamukha, Parāṇmukha, Ut-tarasandhika, Paścānudhāpivin, Samudrakakṣika, lands of many insects, fish, and turtles (?), of many deities in the mountains (?), those with form, containing blood and so forth (?), those of Aṃkura, Makura, Anāsika, of lands with many sheep pastures, and with many birds and beasts (?), those lands without many seeds and where minds are uneven (?), the Pūrvajātika, and the Lokottarika.

Cf. Ikuma, “『如来秘密經』梵文写本における地名と民族名のリスト。” I have given a few translations for terms that Ikuma gives without Sanskrit equivalents, but it seems like even when the name has meaningful content, it might be intended as a transliteration of some sort or another. For more on this topic, see the section on academic scholarship in the Preface.

All those spoken words have the same, identical meaning for the four noble truths: the ultimate truth,¹ the unarisen truth, things as they are,² the immovable truth. Śāntamati! This is the secret of the Tathāgata's speech.

4. The Tathāgata's Speech Can Eradicate All Doubt

Further, Śāntamati, the Tathāgata's speech can eradicate all sentient beings' doubts and uncertainties. By the Buddha's knowledge, one knows that the realm of sentient beings, [constituted by] all sentient beings in the immeasurable asaṃkhyas of worlds in the ten directions, is greater than the earth element.

Śāntamati! If all sentient beings each were to attain wisdom and be endowed with insight so that they would be equal to the Venerable Śāriputra, and if all those sentient beings, each with the same wisdom as Śāriputra, were for a kalpa or more than a kalpa to mutually question, think, evaluate, and deeply investigate, then one sentient being will still be superior to them all. Then all sentient beings, because of their doubts, having together considered the matter, would simultaneously come to inquire of the Bhagavān. Thereupon the Buddha Bhagavān in the space of a finger snap would answer all their questions. Thus, the Bhagavān, having accorded with the minds of all sentient beings, having gathered all sentient beings together, to all, with just one sound, would eliminate all their webs of doubt. He would thus cause all those sentient beings, who have had all their doubts eliminated, to give rise to joy together.

Śāntamati! This is called the speech of the Tathāgata, which is broadly able to eradicate all sentient beings' doubts and uncertainties. Yet, the Tathāgata's mind and speech have not moved: all sentient beings thus are taught things as they are.

Śāntamati, you should know that this is called an expression of the exceedingly rare secret of the speech of the Tathāgata. This is referred to as the purity of the action of his speech.

5. The Praise of Vajrapāṇi's Teaching

³Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, spoke thus about the secret of the Tathāgata's speech.

¹ Skt. paramārthasatya.

² Skt. yathābhūta.

³ T312.724a9.

In that assembly, thirty-two thousand sentient beings gave rise to the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. In all buddha-fields in the ten directions, in all bodhisattva assemblies of this Bhadra Kalpa, all the bodhisattvas, who were each cultivating the pure practices of their buddha bhagavāns, made offerings to the buddhas and Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries. ¹They hung a canopy of all kinds of jewels and scattered marvellous flowers. With bowls of flowers, they strolled to this assembly and scattered flowers over the bodies of the Buddha and Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva and then scattered them over all the assembly. Thereupon, all the treasures in the canopy spun and floated into the air above the Buddha's head. All the treasures from that canopy gave forth an incredible voice, which said:

We, all bodhisattvas of the Bhadra Kalpa, have sent this tribute to make offerings to the Bhagavān and Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries. We only wish that you accept them.

All beings in the assembly, having heard this unprecedented Dharma teaching in the presence of the Buddha Tathāgata, each gave rise to an exceedingly rare thought and prostrated in reverence to Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries. Having given rise to thoughts of extraordinarily profound faith and reverence, they together spoke thus:

Great Lord of Mysteries! We, today, having heard Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva's explanation of the Dharma gate of the inconceivable secret of the Tathāgata's speech, have quickly attained tremendous benefit. Suppose any sentient being, upon hearing this explanation, has faith and understanding and is free of doubt. In that case, all those sentient beings will attain a human body, and they will not vainly abandon their merits. This is the Tathāgata's deed and manifestation for liberation by which one attains non-retrogression from anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

²At that time, the Bhagavān proclaimed to all in the assembly, praising:

Excellent, excellent!

¹ The rest of this chapter is not present in T310, and is rather found *after* the teaching on the secret of the Tathāgata's mind, where it is largely identical.

² T312.724b8,f9.

Then, addressing Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, he said:

Śāntamati, you should know that the principle of truth of the Tathāgata, the Tathāgata's True Dharma, and that which the Tathāgata practises are, in all worlds, truths in which it is difficult to have faith and understanding. But this True Dharma has been explained well by Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries. If all sentient beings in the not distant future should obtain this teaching and be taught this True Dharma, then having heard it, they will accordingly give rise to faith and understanding. Having given rise to faith and understanding, they will uphold it without being frightened or afraid. According with the essence of the nature of reality, such a person will obtain a prediction of their attainment of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

When the Buddha Tathāgata had praised Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, for his excellent explanation of the Dharma, the immeasurable and incalculable worlds in the ten directions quaked in six ways, and a great light universally illuminated them all. In the sky, spontaneously, wonderful flowers rained down, music played, with the sounding of many kinds of drums. Incalculable beings gave rise to the intention to attain awakening, incalculable bodhisattvas attained compliant patience, incalculable bodhisattvas attained patience, and incalculable bodhisattvas attained the maturation of their wholesome roots and were limited to only one more birth. Then, that great assembly, within sixty-eight thousand yojanas around the Buddha Bhagavān, mounted on great waters which welled up like a rudrākṣa tree.¹ They rose to the sky and passed through the Brahmā realm, and then this entire trichiliocosm was filled with fragrant water.

Thereupon, the Buddha addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva, saying:

Śāntamati! Can you see this welling up of water upon which we are mounted?

Śāntamati Bodhisattva replied to the Buddha, saying:

I see! Bhagavān! What kind of an omen is this?

The Buddha said:

¹ An evergreen tree which grows incredibly quickly.

Śāntamati! Now, the great earth suddenly fractured, and we are mounted upon water that flowed forth. This matter is inconceivable. Sentient beings who have received and upheld this True Dharma are also [inconceivable] like this. Understanding regarding the True Dharma, its true principles are clearly comprehended and known. The many doors of all their ignorant views and evil actions are opened, and the inexhaustible Dharma light of its superior wisdom and eloquence manifests forth and explains its principles and teachings to them all.

In this way, Vajrapāṇi is a mahāsattva who well explains the True Dharma for sentient beings. He causes joy to arise in the minds of all sentient beings. Śāntamati! You should understand that this current True Dharma is exclusive to the Tathāgata, and its superior characteristics are not held in common [with those of the bodhisattvas].

Chapter 9. The Inconceivable Secret of the Tathāgata's Mind

1. The Tathāgata has no Transformations of Mind

¹Further, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

What, moreover, is referred to as the secret of the Tathāgata's mind, the purity of the action of his mind?

Śāntamati, there are sentient beings who have been born in the heavens of the form realm and have one state of consciousness as their perceptual object.² While abiding for eighty-four thousand kalpas, that consciousness also does not subsequently transform into other consciousnesses. Still, when it reaches cessation at the end of their lives, they are born in a place according to the ripening of their karma.

The Tathāgata is the same as that:³ on the day and night that the Bodhisattva attained the realisation of the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi with a non-abiding consciousness up to the day and night that the Tathāgata enters Mahāparinirvāṇa without remainder, within that interval the Buddha Tathāgata does not have a mind that can transform. He does not have a mind that investigates, does not have a mind that does not investigate, does not have a mind that knows and understands, does not have a mind that deeply contemplates, does not have a mind that measures and does not have a mind that accumulates. He does not have a mind that scatters and does not have a mind that is unstable or disturbed. He does not have a mind that can increase, does not have a mind that can decrease. He does not have a mind that defends, does not have a mind that inclines, does not have a mind that is brave, does not have a mind that views, does not have a mind that is harmed, and does not have a mind that wanders. He does not have a mind that meditates, does not have a mind that rejoices, and does not have a mind that is harassed. He does not have a mind that rests in one place and does not have a mind that is omnipresent. He does not have a mind that discriminates, does not have a mind that has distinctions, does not have a mind that has

¹ T312.724c8f9; T310.59c6f11.

² Skt., ālambanatva.

³ This means that the Tathāgata has one state of consciousness, and not that he is reborn according to the ripening of karma.

fabrications, and does not have a mind that ceases. He does not have a mind that observes and does not have a mind that has a flow of consciousness. He does not have the establishment of his own mind and does not have the observation of other minds. He does not have a mind that relies on the eye; he does not have a mind that relies on the ear, nose, tongue, body, or mentation. He does not have a mind that relies on form and does not have a mind that relies on sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas. He does not have a mind that abides in the objects of perception, does not have a mind that abides in the field of thought, does not have a mind that abides in an internal perceptual field, and does not have a mind that abides in an external perceptual field. He does not have a mind supported by Dharma practices and does not have a mind supported by practising in accord with wisdom. He does not have a mind that observes dharmas of the past, future, and present.

2. The Tathāgata's Mind is Unattached and Unimpeded

Śāntamati, this is the purity of the action of the Tathāgata's mind. The Tathāgata's mind cannot be grasped by a few dharmas. Amongst all dharmas, it is merely unattached and unimpeded by knowing, seeing, and transformation. The Tathāgata's own mind is already purified, and it does not observe the impurity of all sentient beings' minds.

It does not discriminate between that which is visible and that which is invisible. Even though there is vision, it also has no conceptual proliferations; seeing nothing to see is also known as its vision. That is the Tathāgata's knowledge. It does not correspond to seeing with the fleshly eye; it does not correspond to seeing with the divine eye; it does not correspond to seeing with the wisdom eye; it does not correspond to seeing with the Dharma eye; it does not correspond to seeing with the Buddha eye; it does not correspond to hearing with the divine ear; it does not correspond to knowing the knowledge of others' minds; it does not correspond to thought that cognises the remembrance of past lives; it does not correspond to the functions of supernormal knowledge, and it does not correspond to contaminated cognition.

Yet, being able to correspond to all these dharmas, it is designated as the unimpeded knowledge regarding all dharmas. In this way, the Buddha Tathāgata does not have application, does not have exertion,

and also does not have intention. In the illumination of the Tathāgata's well-established knowledge is the observation of the mental activities of all sentient beings, fully knowing all their [mental] dharmas, whether defiled or pure. All the Tathāgata's ten powers, four forms of fearlessness, eighteen distinctive dharmas of the Buddha are all not discarded by the knowledge of the Tathāgata. In this way, the Buddha Tathāgata, amidst these dharmas, does not have application, does not have exertion, and also does not have intention. The Tathāgata, separate from mind, thought, and consciousness, always abides in samādhi and also does not discard any Buddha activity. In unimpeded knowledge, he is not attached to any Buddha-dharma.¹

3. The Tathāgata's Manifestations are of the Same Nature

²For instance, Śāntamati, if a Tathāgata manifests the image of a Tathāgata, that manifested image does not have a mind, thought, or consciousness. It does not have bodily activity, verbal activity, or mental activity or transformation. By the Buddha's power, it can perform all Buddha activities. The Tathāgata also is like this, as he is the same and not different from a manifested image: seeing all dharmas, as he is entirely a manifestation, he has no discrimination, and while he does not initiate actions of body, speech, and mind he can perform all Buddha activities. In this way, he is without application, without exertion, and without intention. Why? Since the Tathāgata has fully realised that all dharmas are of the same nature as himself, he thus manifests. In this way, the Tathāgata, having become awake as to himself, out of compassion, employs skilful means to awaken all sentient beings.

4. The Tathāgata's Knowledge does not Abide

Śāntamati, you should know that this is the Tathāgata's knowledge. It does not abide conditioned, and it does not abide unconditioned. It does not abide in the aggregates, sense realms, and sense fields. It does not abide internally, and it does not abide externally. It does not abide in wholesome dharmas, and it does not abide in unwholesome dharmas. It does not abide in the world, and it does not abide apart from the world. It does not abide with faults, and it does not abide

¹ In the sense of the phenomena that constitute a Buddha, rather than the Dharma, or teaching, of the Buddha.

² T312.725a16.

apart from faults. It does not abide in the outflows, and it does not abide apart from the outflows. It does not abide in the past, it does not abide in the future, and it does not abide in the present. It does not abide in the perishable, and it does not abide in the non-perishable. In this way, it does not abide in consciousness.

Regarding all sentient beings' mental activities and intentions, the Tathāgata is merely unattached and unimpeded in knowing, seeing, and transformation. In this way, he is without application, without exertion, and without intention.

Śāntamati, this is the Dharma of the inconceivable secret of the Tathāgata's mind. Therefore, you should know that the Tathāgata always abides in samāhita,¹ and yet he also does not discard mental representation to the minds of all sentient beings.²

¹ Meditative equipoise.

² I.e., he can create manifestations that employ skilful means perceived by the minds of sentient beings.

At this point in T310, the scene with the welling up of water, found in Chapter 8 of T312, is related.

Chapter 10. The Praise of the Merits of Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries

¹At that time, the Venerable Śāriputra went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

Bhagavān! In the worlds of the ten directions in this Bhadra Kalpa, all bodhisattva assemblies now cultivate pure practices before all buddha bhagavāns. So, among all those bodhisattvas, what kind of bodhisattva would follow this Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries?

The Buddha replied:

Śāriputra! Stop! Stop! This is an inconceivable act. In this world with its devas and humans, those who do not give rise to faith in this bodhisattva will give rise to perplexity and confusion. If there are sentient beings who accept this good and virtuous friend, then having heard him thus, with pure faith, they will not be surprised or afraid.

Śāriputra addressed the Buddha, saying:

I have always had the utmost pure faith in the Tathāgata. I wish that the Bhagavān will teach me.

The Buddha said:

Śāriputra! Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, has always followed me. Are you able to see him?

Śāriputra addressed the Buddha, saying:

I can only see him now by the power of the Bhagavān, but previously I was not able to know or see him.

The Buddha said:

¹ T312.725b6f9; T310.60c7f11.

Śāriputra! That is correct. Now, you should understand that in this Bhadra Kalpa, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, always follows all bodhisattva assemblies. Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva's form can manifest everywhere by his prior vows and supernormal powers. Further, Śāriputra, this Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, manifests his original form and follows all kinds of sentient beings in the trichiliocosm. He manifests to empower those whose wisdom and power are not yet complete.¹

Moreover, Śāriputra, this Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva always follows Maitreya Bodhisattva. Are you able to see this?

Śāriputra addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! I see this now for the first time. I could not previously see!

The Buddha said:

Śāriputra! He has always followed these beings, but you did not see him. All the bodhisattvas from worlds in other quarters, the king of the Brahmā Heaven, Indra, the World Protectors and so forth, always come to see this Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, wielding his adamant Vajra mallet, who follows Maitreya Bodhisattva. Moreover, Śāriputra, sometimes in this Bhadra Kalpa all bodhisattvas, as well as Maitreya Bodhisattva, manifest hundreds of thousands of koṭis of niyutas of types of manifestations rather than Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, and follow all bodhisattvas to empower them. Even when the Tathāgata creates a manifestation, this Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, also follows the Buddha and by the power of his vows helps to propagate with sacred manifestations.

Śāriputra, you should therefore know that in just this way, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, has fully acquired all the supernormal powers, empowerments, wisdoms, and powers.

¹ I.e., they have not yet reached full buddhahood.

Chapter 11. The Bodhisattva's Most Excellent Practice of Asceticism and the Maturation of Sentient Beings by the Acceptance of Food

1. Śāntamati's Request for an Explanation

¹At that time, Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva addressed Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, saying:

Lord of Mysteries, you can unimpededly explain the ascetic practices of the Bodhisattva,² up to his arrival at the bodhimaṇḍa,³ his subduing of Māra's armies, his turning the Wheel of the True Dharma, and his adornment of the buddha-field. I now wish to hear about this and hope that it may awaken others. You have realised and know about these exceedingly rare matters.

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

Śāntamati, you should know that the ascetic practices of the Bodhisattva have immeasurable merits. So, even if one abided in the world with a lifespan of one kalpa, one still could not explain them in detail. I shall now briefly speak of them for you.

2. The Many Kinds of Ascetic Practices

Śāntamati, the Bodhisattva engaged in many kinds of ascetic practices, but the Bodhisattva only performed them for subduing all māras and tīrthikas.⁴ Moreover, the many types of precepts, the body heated by five fires⁵ and all kinds of restraint, are all for the sake of subduing all māras and tīrthikas. They cause him to become the greatest and superior, passing beyond holding precepts and engaging in all manner of asceticism. Suppose he could not subdue tīrthikas by

¹ T312.725c9f9; T310.61a4f11.

² This is referring to Śākyamuni. When it is used as a proper noun like this, the title bodhisattva is given with a capital B.

³ The site of awakening.

⁴ Tīrthika refers to those on non-Buddhist paths.

⁵ Skt. *pañcatāpas*. This refers to Brahminical ascetic practice of sitting in the middle of four fires, with the sun as a fifth fire, and using the burning heat as a means of penance. This is described in many Brahminical texts. See, for instance, *Rāghvaṃśa* 13.41.

these actions. In that case, the Bodhisattva could manifest anything [to do so], making him even more superior.

Śāntamati! Some sentient beings saw the Bodhisattva standing on one leg, some saw the Bodhisattva raising both arms, some saw the Bodhisattva staring at the sun, and some saw the Bodhisattva with a body heated by the five fires. Some saw the Bodhisattva moving on his elbows, some saw the Bodhisattva staying without moving, some saw the Bodhisattva raising both feet, and some saw the Bodhisattva with the top of his head downwards. Some saw the Bodhisattva lying down on thorns, some saw the Bodhisattva lying down on cow-dung, some saw him sitting cross-legged on a stone, some¹ lying down on a fence, some lying down on fruits of trees, some lying down on rafters, and some lying down on the earth. Some [saw him] wearing woven rush rags, some wearing straw clothes, some wearing deer-skin clothes, some veiled in clothes, some also naked, some following and turning after the sun, some wearing clothes gathered from a cemetery, and some wearing tree bark. Some [saw him] eating torn grass, some eating roots, some eating leaves, some eating flowers, some eating fruits, some eating stalks, some eating branches, some eating lotus root, some not eating for six days, some eating coarse grains, some eating defiled beans, some eating defiled rice, some eating buck-wheat, some eating kidney beans, some eating green beans, some eating rice sprouts, some eating sesame seeds, some eating millet, some only drinking water for the sake of nourishment, some eating a drop of clarified butter, some eating a drop of honey, some drinking a drop of milk, and some never eating. Some [saw him] dwelling among māras, some sitting alone, and some standing alone.

Śāntamati! The Bodhisattva used his many kinds of deportment and other uncountable types of ascetic conduct to subdue tīrthikas; he could manifest in the same way as all their painful and evil appearances. In this way, the Bodhisattva never deteriorated in one of his manifestations of [ascetic] deportment for six years. He appeared to fulfil the practice of the precepts. Controlling his temper through diligence, the Bodhisattva undertook his work and became the greatest, superior, and firm in his non-retrogression. Thus, for six years, he manifested various appearances. Those with other paths could see him and his practice of the precepts. Those with a different practice

¹ The gradual abbreviation is in the source text.

of the precepts, seeing the Bodhisattva thus practising, were all subdued.¹ Śāntamati, bodhisattvas manifest all kinds of practice, but they all abide with a mind of detachment and are free from all errors.

²Further, Śāntamati, when the Bodhisattva was practising austerities like this, sixty-four *niyutas* of devas and humans on the three vehicles matured their wholesome roots. Śāntamati, you should know that all those devas and humans who had great faith and who had performed wholesome deeds saw the bodhisattva sitting in tranquility in a jewelled tower in the *āsphānaka samādhi*,³ enjoying bliss in that *samādhi*. The Bodhisattva continued for six years and then emerged from that *samādhi*. Among all the devas and humans, if there was one who desired the Dharma and aspired to seek the Dharma, he expounded the Dharma for the sake of ripening them. All those devas and humans saw the Bodhisattva, heard the Dharma that he taught, and all undertook to practice with non-discrimination. Śāntamati, you should know that this is declared to be the Bodhisattva's great accumulation of wisdom and greatly compassionate skilful means. By penetrating the inconceivably profound principles of the Dharma, he subdues all *māras* and *tīrthikas* and enters the Dharma gate of ascetic practices with pure cognition.⁴

3. The Bodhisattva's Acceptance of Food

Further, Śāntamati, after six years had passed, having made it appear that he was undergoing extremely difficult austerities, he entered the waters of the Nairāṅjanā River. According with the world, he bathed to purify,⁵ and having purified his body, he sat on the riverbank.

At that time, in that village, a woman called Sujātā made a thick rice gruel from the milk of a hundred⁶ cows to offer it to him with a pure mind. When she reached the Bodhisattva, she held it up to him. At that time, there were also sixty *koṭis* of devas, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*,

¹ I.e., they come to follow the Bodhisattva and abandon their non-Buddhist paths.

² T312.726a16.

³ This name appears to be related to the verbs $\bar{a} + \sqrt{\text{sphāy}}$, to grow or increase, or $\sqrt{\text{sphur}}$, to expand. According to Chapter 17 of the *Lalitavistarasūtra*, this *samādhi* involves entering the fourth *dhyāna* and pervading all things like space.

⁴ I.e., the ability to undergo the appearance of performing ascetic practices without giving rise to the wrong views of non-Buddhist paths.

T310 has a brief passage about another Bodhisattva and gives the name of a *sūtra* he had. It is not clear how it fits into the flow of the text.

⁵ I.e., he was already inherently pure, but to appear that he was purifying in the manner in which beings in the world purify he entered the river.

⁶ T310 has a thousand.

gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kiṃnaras, mahoragas, and so forth. Each one prepared the most excellent food and drink and offered it with both hands to the bodhisattva. Together they said:

We only wish for the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva to accept our food and drink! We only wish for the Mahāsattva to accept our food and drink!

Śāntamati, at that time, the Bodhisattva first accepted the woman Sujāta's donation of rice gruel. Then he also accepted the food and drink donated by the sixty koṭis of devas, nāgas, yākṣas, gandharvas, and so forth. They did not see one another, and each thought:

The Bodhisattva accepts my donation of food and drink. The Bodhisattva, having accepted it, shall realise the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

The Bodhisattva's universal acceptance of these donations ripened all the wholesome Dharmic roots of all those beings for their attainment of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Śāntamati! This is the Bodhisattva's most excellent practice of asceticism. By the condition of accepting food, he performed the superior practice of skilful means for maturing sentient beings.

Chapter 12. The Bodhisattva's Reaching the Bodhimaṇḍa

1. The Offerings of Devas at the Bodhimaṇḍa

¹Thereupon, the Bodhisattva, having bathed and having accepted food and drink and regained his strength, at once went to the best and highest bodhimaṇḍa.² Having arrived, he addressed Pṛthivī Devī³ together with all the devas of the earth with the following gāthā:⁴

Supported by the great immovable earth,
The Bodhisattva is detached from desire and has cut off afflictions;
Now, under this tree, he will attain awakening;
You all may adorn this place.

⁵The excellent devas of the earth rejoiced,
And to universally purify the three thousand worlds,
They broadly scattered the most wonderful incense and flowers,
And everywhere sprinkled fragrant water to purify everything.

The karoṭapāṇis,⁶ mālādhāras,⁷
The sadāmattas,⁸ and other deities abiding in space,
Rejoiced and revered the honourable Bodhisattva,
And scattered many wonderful flowers as an offering.

The four world protectors⁹ together with their assemblies,
From all the four great continents,
Hung a golden net over the entire three thousand worlds,
Veiling it, as an offering among humans.

¹ T312.726b21 f10; T310.61c5 f11.

² Skt., *bodhimaṇḍavarāgragata*.

³ The earth deity, who sometimes appears as a male or female. She serves as a witness to Śākyamuni when he is subduing Māra. She also appears in the Garbhadhātu Maṇḍala.

⁴ T310 presents this information in prose.

⁵ The rest of the gāthā is in Vajrapāṇi's voice, not as a quote of the devas.

⁶ A class of yakṣas with firm hands who guard devas such as the Trāyastriṃśa devas. In this case they are included among the earth devas.

⁷ A class of devas who bear flower garlands.

⁸ Another class of yakṣas who are always delighted.

⁹ Skt., *lokapāla*. In the east Dhṛtarāṣṭra, in the south Virūḍhaka, in the west Virūpākṣa, and in the north Vaiśravaṇa.

In these three thousand worlds, Lord Indra,
 Made offerings to the bodhisattva of great power and merit;
 Just as his superior heavenly palace is wonderfully adorned,
 He adorned the thousand worlds just like that.

The devas of the heaven of Yāma also rejoiced,
 They adorned with a lapis lazuli net
 The breadth of the three thousand worlds, which had rare and pre-
 cious jewels,
 As an offering to this bull among men.¹

The devas of Tuṣita Heaven also rejoiced,
 And spread a string of pearls² which was gloriously adorned,
 Its pearl ornaments were like a half-moon;
 And they also scattered pearls broadly like rain.

The king of the Nirmāṇarati heaven together with his deva assem-
 blies,
 [Offered] a jewelled net made of particles of gold like those in the
 Jambū River;
 From jewelled bells on that golden net issued forth an excellent
 sound,
 Which delighted all who heard it in the three thousand worlds.

From all these nets offered by the devas,
 Unlimited stainless light issued forth.
 The Paranirmitavaśavartin devas adorned
 And made offerings to him without fear of anything.

Also, the nāgas up to the gandharvas,
 Mahoragas, asuras, and so forth,
 Just as they adorned their own palaces,
 They marvellously adorned the desire realm.

¹ Skt., *naraṣabha*.

² Skt., *muktājāla*.

2. Mahābrahmā's Praise of the Bodhisattva

¹Further, Śāntamati, when Mahābrahmā saw that the bodhisattva had reached the bodhimaṇḍa and that he already had extraordinary characteristics, he at once addressed all the devas of the Brahmā realm, saying:

O virtuous ones, do you see this? Now the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva has not abandoned the armour and helmet of his great vows. In his strong armour and helmet, he has not become lax in his thinking. He can accomplish bodhisattva conduct. He has cultivated all the pāramitās and is well established on the other shore. He has skilfully obtained mastery in all the bodhisattva bhūmis. He can become entirely purified through all the bodhisattva aspirations and skilfully comprehend all sentient beings' various characteristics. Deeply entering the secret stage of all tathāgatas, he has already transcended all the ways of Māra's deeds and has obtained indestructible faith through all his wholesome roots. He is established with the same power as all buddhas. He has insight into the ways of true liberation of all sentient beings. As a great guide, he defeats all the māras of external objects. He is honoured as the most valiant one in the trichiliocosms. Accumulating the medicine of the Dharma, he is the great king of physicians. Clothing himself in the silk robe of liberation, he is the great king of Dharma. Emitting the great light of wisdom, he raises the great flag of the Dharma. He is incapable of being defiled by any of the eight mundane dharmas.² He is born in the great lotus flower of the purity of truth.³ He remembers all dharmas without forgetting them, and arising from the vast ocean [of the Mahāyāna], he is separate from all increase and decrease. Immovable, he does not shake, just like Mount Sumeru. He is excellent, undefiled, and well purified and arises from the great maṇi gem of self-purifying marvellous wisdom. He attained non-obstruction among all dharmas, and his mental activity harmonises and is unimpeded due to its great purity.

¹ T312.726c15

² 1. Profit (*lābha*); 2. Loss (*alābha*); 3. Praise (*yaśas*); 4. Blame (*ayaśas*); 5. Slander (*nindā*); 6. Glory (*praśamsā*); 7. Pleasure (*sukha*); 8. Suffering (*duḥkha*).

³ Skt. *bhūtārthaśuddhitva*.

With just these kinds of merits, the Bodhisattva is now at the best and highest bodhimaṇḍa, and intends to obtain the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi and overcome the armies of Māra for the sake of fulfilling the ten powers of the tathāgatas,¹ the four forms of fearlessness,² the eighteen distinctive dharmas of a buddha,³ to turn the great Wheel of the Dharma widely, to preach the Lion's Roar, to teach the Dharma widely for all sentient beings, to cause all sentient beings to purify their Dharma-eye, to subdue all other mistaken and non-Buddhist teachings with the True Dharma, wishing to fulfil his ancient vows, wishing to become familiar with all buddha bhagavāns, and to attain rich self-mastery in all dharmas. O virtuous ones! We should give rise to a mind of courageous diligence and attend upon the Bodhisattva.

⁴ Then, Mahābrahmā further addressed all the devas of the Brahmā realm, saying:

O virtuous ones! Until now, this bodhisattva has practised the precepts intensively for many hundreds of thousands of kalpas and is the purest Mahāsattva. Now, at the best and highest bodhimaṇḍa, he will attain perfect awakening. You should exquisitely adorn the entire breadth of this trichilocosm.

¹ There are four sets of formulations of these ten powers. According to the *Samyuktābhidharmaḥḍayaśāstra* (T1552) they are 1. Knowing right and wrong; 2. Knowing one's own karma and the karma of all beings in the three times and its ripening; 3. Knowledge of all dhyānas and samādhis; 4. Knowledge of the capacities of all sentient beings; 5. Knowledge of the mental inclinations of all sentient beings; 6. Knowledge of the various kinds of causal factors; 7. Knowledge of the practices pursued by sentient beings; 8. Knowledge of past lives; 9. Knowledge of the locations of beings deaths and births; 10. Knowledge of the ways to destroy all outflows (āsravas).

² These are 1. Fearlessness in knowledge of right awakening; 2. Fearlessness in asserting his destruction of the outflows; 3. Fearlessness in teaching the dharmas that hinder awakening; 4. Fearlessness in teaching the way to liberation.

³ 1. Flawless body; 2. Flawless speech; 3. Flawless mind; 4. Free from discrimination; 5. Free from a distracted mind; 6. Being detached from ignorance; 7. Undiminishing aspiration; 8. Undiminishing effort; 9. Undiminishing mindfulness; 10. Undiminishing wisdom; 11. Undiminishing liberation; 12. Undiminishing knowledge of liberation; 13. All bodily deeds stemming from wisdom; 14. All verbal deeds stemming from wisdom; 15. All mental deeds stemming from wisdom; 16. Unobstructed knowledge of the past; 17. Unobstructed knowledge of the present; 18. Unobstructed knowledge of the future.

⁴ T312.727a11.

Thereupon, Mahābrahmā recited this gāthā:

The pure Mahāsattva, with precepts and decisive dhyāna,
Broadly produces benefit for humans and devas.
While among humans, the devas offer to him as a deva among
devas,
And he has reached the bodhimaṇḍa of great quiescence.

He will vanquish all the armies of Māra,
He will fully realise the knowledge of omniscience,
Perfectly illuminate all the Buddha-Dharma,
And turn the Wheel of the True Dharma for benefit and joy.

With great wisdom, he will roar a Lion's Roar,
Upon hearing which all sentient beings will rejoice.
To cause his pure Dharma-eye to open
The most revered one among humans has reached the bodhi
tree.

To entirely refute mistaken ūrthika teachings,
And to fulfil all his ancient vows,
And to produce the manifestation of the deed of right awaken-
ing,
The most revered one among humans has reached the bodhi
tree.

With excellent harmony, all resolved to concentrate
On universally adorning the lands
In the trichiliocosm,
To see the desire realm widely adorned.

Thus, this desire realm is adorned,
The form realm is adorned likewise.
Excellent brahmā assemblies of pure mind
Broadly adorn the three thousand worlds.

As offerings are manifested in the desire realm,
The upper realms also manifest many offerings.
Everywhere are scattered the most marvellous incense and
flowers,
Along with jewelled adornments and music being played by all.

All the devas in the three thousand worlds,
 See and hear these, dance with joy, and stretch out in homage.
 Up to Akaniṣṭha Heaven
 Each palace is vastly and gloriously adorned.

In the highest heavens, and the best among the best,
 All the heavenly palaces are universally manifested and
 adorned,
 And six thousand koṭis of devīs
 Set up the vajrāsana¹ at the bodhimaṇḍa.

They sprinkle fragrant water everywhere,
 And they scatter many kinds of extraordinarily wonderful flow-
 ers,
 Everywhere rows of jewels are arranged on the ground,
 And the great bodhimaṇḍa is well adorned.

It is not possible to speak the praise of the various merits
 Of the unlimited varieties of adornments.
 The Mahāsattva has practised the precepts and dhyāna deci-
 sively,
 And has worldly benefit and great power.

He will sit beneath the bodhi tree,
 Vanquish Māra's armies and all evil with his wisdom,
 All the noble one's harmonious practices
 Will broadly and gloriously adorn the three thousand worlds.

Honoured among devas and humans, he is sovereign regarding
 the Dharma,
 They make offerings to him to attain infinite merit.
 Brahmā assemblies listen to that honoured one among humans
 And exquisitely adorn the three thousand worlds.

Making adornments with marvellous flowers and jewelled ban-
 ners,
 They transform the world into one made of jewels.
 Koṭis of marvellous canopies transform in the sky,

¹ Vajra-seat, the seat on which a buddha sits when he attains awakening.

Just as beautiful as the light of the sun and the moon above.

There are flowers on the śāla trees above,
All is thus manifested like the Grove of Joy.¹
The Mahāmuni proceeds down the path joyfully,
Surrounded by seven adorned manifested carts.

Densely covered by golden jewelled lotus flowers,
Seven rows of encircling paths surround him.
Śakra, Lord of the Devas, creates adornments,
Which humans and devas have rarely seen since yore.

Like Trāyastrimśa Heaven's broad Palace of Victory,²
The four continents are likewise adorned.
As the Yama, Tuṣita, and Nirmaṇarati heavens,
As the Paranirmitavaśavartin Heaven's adornments, and the
same as Akaniṣṭha Heaven,

With courageous diligence, they all come swiftly,
And together adorn the highest bodhimaṇḍa.
Like the best adornments in the desire realm,
The devas, nāgas, and so forth, all do the same.

In the span of an instant, all manifest
And approach the Bodhisattva.
In the four directions, a koṭi of devīs
Come and circumambulate the bodhi tree.

With unguents, aromatic powders, and marvellous flowers,
Everywhere they sprinkle exquisite, scented water.
They adorn the base of the great bodhi tree
Like the Pārijātaka tree of Trāyastrimśa Heaven.

Of all these adornments,
It is impossible to praise their various merits,
And the niyutas of each of those devas'
Adornments were all extraordinarily wonderful.

¹ A park in Trāyastrimśa Heaven where devas enjoy themselves.

² Skt., *vaijyantaprasāda*, the palace of Indra.

3. The Nāga King's Praise of the Bodhisattva

¹Furthermore, Śāntamati, when the Bodhisattva reached the bodhi-maṇḍa, and he first placed his two feet marked by the thousand-spoked wheel on the ground, there issued forth a tremendous broad light. This light illuminated everywhere and into all the hells, the animal realms, the hungry ghost realms, and all kinds of blind sentient beings were illuminated by that light. Having received it, all their sufferings temporarily ceased. The great light fully illuminated the palace of the nāga king Kālīyaka.²

At that time, the nāga king Kālīyaka, having seen this radiance of the Bodhisattva, experienced bliss and jumped for joy. He immediately, for the sake of his retinue of many nāgas, recited this gāthā:

This golden light shines very brilliantly,
And greatly illumines my nāga palace.
I am dazzled by the light which issues from his body,
And give rise to a mind of great joy.

Since I, from past buddhas,
In former times saw this omen of light,
I now see that it is determined, without doubt,
That a buddha of great fearlessness will arise in the world.

You should all take up marvellous incense and flowers,
Ungents, aromatic powders, garlands, and so forth,
Pure gold and maṇi-gems,
As well as jewelled necklaces and superior vestments;

You should also take up various marvellous implements,
Jewels, decorations, and many banners and canopies,
And excellent high jewelled banners
For the sake of offering to the teacher of devas and humans.

This extraordinary palace of the nāga king,
Is extensively adorned and completely pure.
You should give rise to a mind of joy,
And all go close to the Buddha's location.

¹ T312.727c1.

² A black nāga king who dwells in the Yamunā river.

Thereupon, the nāga king Kālīyaka, together with his retinue of many nāgas, each took up various kinds of excellent incense, flowers, vestments, banners, and canopies. Playing music with drums and songs, they went up into the sky and sprinkled everywhere with a cloud of fragrant water and rained down nāga flowers, pearls, and so forth. In this way, the nāga king's supernormal power created many manifestations and came to the bodhisattva's place. Having arrived the [nāga king] at once, together with his retinue, bowed to the bodhisattva's feet, played drums, made beautiful music, prostrated before him, and made offerings. Having made offerings, at that time the nāga king stood to the right and extensively praised him with this marvellous gāthā:

The most revered among humans emits a great light,
Universally illuminating all buddha-fields;
In an instant, all the sufferings of the evil realms cease;
It also illuminates our nāga palace.

The nāgas, having encountered his light,
All experienced bliss and exclaimed:

The Bodhisattva will undoubtedly attain buddhahood,
This golden light portends this.

There are niyutas of nāga maidens,
Who respectfully offer marvellous incense and flowers,
And superior vestments and many banners,
And come to the Bodhisattva's place, prostrate, and make offerings.

Now, in this region, the flowers, parasols, and so forth,
Are all extraordinarily wonderful and decorate it broadly.
There are, moreover, medicinal herbs and many groves of
trees,
Hanging low, all bow towards the bodhi tree.

The great rivers' currents stand still and are quiescent,
The winds stop shaking and blowing and are entirely calm.
The bodhisattva shall today attain awakening.
The best in the world shall overcome the armies of Māra.

Brahmā and Indra's many lights,
 The lights of the sun, moon, and so forth all are outshone
 And concealed by his light and are calmed;
 The Buddha appearing in the world is a cause all equally at-
 taining joy.

There are also many marvellous auspicious kalaśas,¹
 Which spontaneously circumambulate to the right in the sky,
 Sages, nāgas, and so forth are also in the sky,
 Similarly, circumambulating to the right.

These devas, humans, and others in the world
 Each, with sincerity, prostrates and makes offerings.
 The Bodhisattva will attain awakening today,
 And will open the right path for those who seek wisdom.

We, today, before the Buddha,
 Will increase our prestige and attain benefit.
 We, long ago, made offerings to Krakucchanda,²
 To the great king of sages, Kanakamuni,³

To Kāśyapa,⁴ the highest and best among humans,
 And even now, we make offerings to Śākyamuni.⁵
 The seeking of awakening and great supernormal power,
 Is the best and rarest thing, not formerly seen by us.

Endowed with such qualities, the best and most revered among
 humans,
 Issues forth the great divine sound of the Lion's Roar.
 With firm mind, decidedly settled on seeking awakening,

¹ A waterpot.

² The first buddha of the Bhadrā Kalpa (the present aeon), born into a brāhmaṇa family in Khemavātī, he lived for forty thousand years and had only one assembly of eighty-four thousand monks. George Malalasekera, ed., "Kakusandha," in *Buddhist Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, 1938, http://www.vipassana.info/dic_idx.html.

³ The second buddha of the Bhadrā Kalpa, born to a brāhmaṇa family in Sobhavātī. He was awakened under an Udumbara tree, lived for thirty thousand years, and had only one assembly of thirty thousand monks. Malalasekera, "Konāgamana," in *Pali Proper Names*.

⁴ The third buddha of the Bhadrā Kalpa, born into a brāhmaṇa family in Vārāṇasī as Ṛṣipattana. He lived for twenty thousand years, had only one assembly of twenty thousand monks. Malalasekera, "Kassapa," in *Pali Proper Names*.

⁵ The present buddha, who is the fourth buddha of the Bhadrā Kalpa.

This mind is the most excellent, incomparable, and so forth.

The sun and moon may fall,
 Sumeru, king of mountains, might be destroyed,
 And today would be imperfect,
 As the world would not again have such an opportunity [to offer]
 to the honoured one who possesses the ten powers.

4. The Nāga Queen's Praise of the Bodhisattva

¹Further, Śāntamati, at that time the most excellent queen of the nāga king Kālīyaka, called Suvarṇaprabhāsa,² together with many nāga maidens revered and circumambulated him, and holding various extraordinarily wonderful jewelled canopies, various kinds of beautiful vestments and divine flower garlands, multiple types of skilfully adorned strings of pearls, different kind of the most excellent maṇi gems, numerous kinds of myriad marvellous incense and kalaśas, and singing various songs, approached the Bodhisattva. Having arrived, they worshipped him, scattered many jewelled flowers, prostrated, and made offerings. Standing before the Bodhisattva, they recited this gāthā:

With a mind that is unwavering and fearless,
 Without desire, anger, or ignorance,
 The undefiled one who can tame the difficult to control,
 Who can be free from all evil without attachment,

We now pay homage to him, of pure liberation,
 The Mahāmuni who has eradicated all the arrows of doubt,
 Who, with the great light of wisdom, breaks through ignorance,
 And who can pass beyond the world with its many sufferings.

For the world, which is without support and a protector,
 The Bodhisattva does good to support and protect it.
 His radiance universally illuminating the triple world,
 Devas and humans give rise to a mind of joy and purity.

From the sky rains down various kinds of marvellous flowers,

¹ T312.728a21.

T310 does not have this section on the Nāga Queen.

² Golden light.

And marvellous vestments broadly adorn and decorate.
 Due to these superior marks, I know that
 Today the Mahāmuni will attain perfect awakening.

The most excellent brave one has reached the bodhi tree,
 The undefiled honoured one will overcome many māras,
 And remove the net of dark afflictions,
 And realise the tranquillity of the mind of great awakening.

You, who have passed many koṭis of kalpas,
 Seeking awakening in the presence of past buddhas,
 Conducting difficult practice for the sake of the world,
 Have now perfected your superior intention.

5. The Offering of the Grass Cutter Svastika

¹Further, Śāntamati, at that time, many noble ones came by supernatural powers to the Bodhisattva, who was about to attain awakening. At the same time, a single grass cutter called Svastika came by his own volition to the Bodhisattva's right side with clean grass. This grass was soft and pliant, like the neck of a peacock, like kācilindika clothes.² Holding incense, he circumambulated him to the right, step by step. Thereupon, the grass cutter held up that grass and offered it up to present to the Bodhisattva. He then aroused the most profound and highest aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Further, Śāntamati, the grass cutter Svastika had a stored vow, which he profoundly and firmly gave rise in the distant past, when he said:

I vow that for all bodhisattvas who will achieve perfect awakening, and at all great bodhimaṇḍas, I shall spread out clean grass.

Why? Śāntamati, I recall that in the past ninety-one kalpas before this Bhadra Kalpa, a buddha was about to appear in the world called

¹ T312.728b10.

² Although the transliteration corresponds to kācalina, kācilindika is the more common term as it occurs in the *Lalitavistarasūtra*. This refers to very soft clothing. Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 175.

Vipaśyin,¹ the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Completely and Perfectly Awakened One, Perfect in Wisdom and Conduct, the Sugata, Knower of the World, the Unsurpassed Tamer of Humans, the Teacher of Devas and Humans, the Buddha, the Bhagavān. In that Buddha's Dharma assembly, a thousand great multitudes of bodhisattvas perfected their pure conduct. That Bhagavān, for all those many great bodhisattvas in that good kalpa,² gave predictions of their attainment of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

At that time, there was one householder called Prajñāvan³ in that great assembly, who, having heard that Bhagavān give predictions of awakening to many bodhisattvas, gave rise to the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Thereupon, that householder arose and uttered this vow:

I vow that for all Buddha Tathāgatas in this good kalpa,⁴ at their bodhimaṇḍas, I shall spread out, for them all, their lion throne by giving them some clean grass.

Śāntamati, you should understand that the householder Prajñāvan of that time was none other than he who presented clean grass to the Śākya Bodhisattva at the time of his perfect awakening, the grass cutter Svastika. For this reason, you now know that this grass cutter Svastika, following the power of his stored vow, offers some clean grass before all the buddhas, and with it, spreads out an exquisite lion throne. In this way, all sentient beings' various faiths, knowledges, and powers are the maturation of their wholesome roots.

¹ The last Buddha of the Alaṅkāra Kalpa, who lived for ninety-one kalpas, was born into a kṣatriya family, and had a total of six million nine hundred and eighty thousand disciples who were taught in three assemblies. TW Rhys Davids, "The Successive Bodhisats in the Times of the Previous Buddhas," in *Buddhist Birth-Stories (Jataka Tales): The Commentarial Introduction Entitled Nidāna-Kathā, the Story of the Lineage*, George Routledge & Sons Ltd.: London, 1878, 115–44.

² While this is apparently a reference to the Bhadra Kalpa, since Vipaśyin belongs to a prior kalpa as the text already stated, I did not translate this "good" is a nominal. He does come to seem to mean *the* Bhadra Kalpa, as he continues to lay out grass for Buddhas in the Bhadra Kalpa. Precisely how this is to be understood is not clear, but it seems like the intention is to understand the Bhadra Kalpa as being more expansive than was understood in prior accounts of the past buddhas.

³ Or Dhīmat.

⁴ See above note on "good kalpa."

6. The Offerings and Praises of the Devīs of the Bodhi Tree

¹Further, Śāntamati, when the Bodhisattva reached the bodhi tree, the ten thousand devīs of the bodhi tree came before the Bodhisattva to offer many of the most excellent flowers, unguents, fragrances, and so forth. Each, holding many marvellous kinds of incense and flowers, scattered them to make offerings, and each bowed their heads at the feet of the Bodhisattva. With different mouths but unified voice, they uttered this gāthā:

We take refuge in the great fearless one with powers and merits,
Who, being perfectly tranquil and well trained, dispels all evil,
Is without error and is brave with great prestige,
And who is a pure guide without defilement;

Who can save, and who lacks the basis for any suffering,
The only honoured one who offers all kinds of bliss,
Who can remove the disease of afflictions from the world,
And who, as the great king of doctors, can broadly cure all diseases.

We take refuge in the pure and incredibly renowned one,
And from the heavens, joyfully scatter flowers like rain.
Decidedly, he will now quickly realise awakening,
And give rise to the mind of great compassion which subsumes all.

Going to and reaching the king of trees, he ascends the best seat,
He will conquer all māras who will withdraw,
He will awaken to quiescence and realise awakening,
As was thus realised by previous buddhas.

For koṭis of kalpas, he practised pure practices,
Doing what is difficult for the sake of the world.
The Mahāmuni's intentions are already completed,
And he peacefully sits beneath the king of trees to achieve perfect awakening.

¹ T312.728c5.

7. The Bodhisattva Ascends the Vajrāsana

Further, Śāntamati, at that time, the Bodhisattva reached the bodhimaṇḍa with the clean grass. Having arrived at the vajrāsana,¹ he spread the grass upon it. To respect and pay homage to the king of bodhi trees, he circumambulated it seven times, keeping it to his right. Then, after the bodhisattva spread the grass, eighty-four thousand devaputras, holding eighty-four thousand exquisitely decorated lion thrones, presented them to the Bodhisattva. Those high and broad, neat, and excellent seats were distinguished, elegant, adorned with many jewels, and covered with jewelled nets adorned with pearls. The Bodhisattva, at that time, manifested his body as peacefully sitting upon each of those eighty-four thousand lion thrones. Each of those devaputras did not see each other's seats; they all thought that the bodhisattva was on the lion throne that they offered. The Bodhisattva, having sat, accomplished the fruit of anuttarasamyak-saṃbodhi. Thus all the devaputras gave rise to bliss and a mind of purity, and all became non-retrogressing from anuttarasamyak-saṃbodhi.

¹ Diamond or adamantine throne. The *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* presents a number of theories about why the throne on which the Bodhisattva attains awakening is called the vajrāsana (310c-311a), but also notes, commenting upon a corresponding passage in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, that everywhere the Buddha walks, stands, sits, or lies down will change into diamond after his awakening.

The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (1.12-14) suggests that while Jambudvīpa rests on gold, the vajrāsana is the only place that is able to support the Bodhisattva's samādhi when he attains awakening.

Chapter 13. The Defeat of Māra

1. The Summoning of Māras

¹Further, Śāntamati, the Bodhisattva, reposing at the great bodhimaṇḍa, having sat on the lion throne, released a ray of light from his white uṣṇīṣa which pervaded universally. That light was called ‘Warning Illumination for all Māras.’ Thereupon, it shone upon the hundred koṭis of the armies of Māra² in the trichiliocosm. Each, even while still in their own palaces, with the hairs on their body standing on end, gave rise to a mind of vexation. That light cast Māra’s palace in darkness. ³Then, those māras thought the following thoughts:

What is the cause and condition for our lofty palace to be entirely cast in darkness? Could it be that the Śākya Bodhisattva, sat at the bodhimaṇḍa, is about to accomplish the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi?

Those armies of Māra at once saw the Bodhisattva seated at the great bodhimaṇḍa, and all the māras each hid within the palace. Each of those māras had immeasurable and countless hundreds of thousands of koṭis of niyutas of yakṣa guards, with various kinds of characteristics, various kinds of appearances, various kinds of physical bodies, and they ran back and forward in agitation and fear. They had various heads and faces, various weapons, were completely surrounded by various flags and banners, and gave rise to great, evil voices, which roared and wailed. Depending upon the power of Māra, they gave rise to evil supernormal powers. All the māras’ heads reached broadly, in length and breadth, twenty thousand yojanas, and the followers of the māras’ armies also reached eighty-four thousand yojanas. By the Bodhisattva’s power to gather and transform, they all drew near to him beneath the bodhi tree.

Śāntamati, you should know that all those armies of Māra, having arrived, at once, through the power of their evil karma, manifested various despicable evil characteristics and gave rise to many kinds of unimaginable sounds. Those oppressive, savage roars reverberated

¹ T312.729a12f11; T310.63c9f11.

² In the Chinese, the distinctions between Māra as the Lord of the Desire Realm, and his followers, māras, is not always clear. Thus, I have made some interpretative choices. Where I think it is the former, I have translated with a capital M, and where the latter, a lowercase m.

³ This reflection is not found in T310.

and shook out of their desire to check, destroy, and harm the Bodhisattva. At that time in the assembly, many sentient beings had not yet attained freedom from desire and having heard those evil voices, they gave rise to great terror and died. Some did not die but experienced great suffering. Because of the Bodhisattva's supernatural power, those unwholesome voices quickly ceased. The Bodhisattva, having given rise to a mind of great compassion, out of kindness for those who were oppressed, immediately put an end to all those evil sounds and did not allow them to disturb any sentient being. Śāntamati, you should know that in this way, the Bodhisattva has the most excellent skilful means in the world. At that time, the Bodhisattva, hearing those various extremely evil sounds, did not give rise to alarm or fear. Why? A Bodhisattva hears many sounds, whether beautiful or evil, all as like an echo.¹

2. The Devatās' Rebuke of the Māras

²Further, Śāntamati, when all those armies of Māra were trying to harass the Bodhisattva with many evil appearances, there were crowds of devatās³ protecting the great bodhimaṇḍa where awakening activity is cultivated. Using sixteen kinds of expressions, they rebuked the māras, saying:

Evil ones! You must stop! Stop! Do not create evil appearances of opposition to try to create disturbances for the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva. Why?

(1) Now, while you māras wish to ruin the Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva's power is the greatest and the best, and can destroy all of you, just like weak beings competing with a being of great power.

¹ There are a few levels on which this could be understood. On the one hand, an echo emerges from one, and then returns to one without being identical to the sound that one produced. In this way it can be understood as a product of one's mind, but not constitutive of the self or possessed by the self. Sounds, like visual experiences, can thus be understood as products of the mind but not owned or possessed by the mind.

² T312.729b9.

³ Usually this term (賢聖) would simply mean noble ones, but Hirakawa gives devatā as a Sanskrit equivalent. This would correspond to the Sanskrit quoted by Ikuma. Ikuma, "Lalitavistara と『如来秘密経』の仏伝の対応関係。" The Chinese here is clearer in using the plural for māras, whereas the Sanskrit is singular.

(2) Also, you māras want to be superior to the Bodhisattva, but the Bodhisattva's power is superior to all yours. Thus, your inferior army is waging war against a great hero.

(3) Also, you māras want to surpass the Bodhisattva, but the Bodhisattva's power exceeds that of all of you, just like the stars and constellations compared with the light of the sun and the moon.

(4) Also, you māras want to rout the Bodhisattva, but the Bodhisattva can rout all of you, just like a strong wind blowing against chaff and grain.

(5) Also, you māras want to break down the Bodhisattva, but the Bodhisattva can break down all of you, just like cutting a great tree at its roots.

(6) Also, you māras want to terrify the Bodhisattva, but the Bodhisattva can terrify all of you, just like any flock of animals encountering a great lion.

(7) Also, you māras want to dry up the land where the Bodhisattva is, but the bodhisattva can dry all of you up, just as the fire of the sun drying water in ox-tracks.

(8) Also, you māras want to hinder the Bodhisattva, but the Bodhisattva can hinder all of you, just like a small provincial country at war with a great country.

(9) Also, you māras want to spy on the Bodhisattva, but the Bodhisattva can spy on all of you, just like an evil person who has taken a life.¹

(10) Also, you māras want to trouble the Bodhisattva, but the Bodhisattva can trouble all of you, just like a tradesman whose broadly accumulated wealth and possessions are consumed in fire.

(11) Also, you māras want to cause the Bodhisattva great misery, but the Bodhisattva can cause all of you great misery, just like an unrighteous king who loses his kingship.

(12) Also, you māras want to make the bodhisattva have angry and evil thoughts, but the bodhisattva's power restrains your malice, just like breaking the wings of an old wild goose.

(13) Also, you māras want to kill the Bodhisattva, but the Bodhisattva's power restrains your intention to kill, just like a person wandering through a wasteland or destroying their wealth amidst hardship.

¹ I.e., government authorities will spy on such a person.

(14) Also, you māras want to make the Bodhisattva run away, but the Bodhisattva can make all of you run in fear, just like a ship being destroyed while crossing the great sea.

(15) Also, you māras want to cause the bodhisattva to be worn out, but the bodhisattva can wear out all of you, just like the kalpa-ending conflagration comes out and sets fire to grasses and trees.

(16) Also, you māras want to cut off the Bodhisattva, but the Bodhisattva can cut off all of you, just like a great diamond can cut any small stone.¹

²Śāntamati, those crowds of devatās protecting the great bodhi-maṇḍa, who cultivated activities for awakening, rebuked the māras and praised the Bodhisattva with these sixteen kinds of expressions. Still, those māras did not yet retreat and were not subdued.

3. The Defeat of Māra's Armies

Up until that time, for a hundred thousand koṭis of niyutas of incalculably long kalpas, the Bodhisattva accumulated good practices, namely, giving, morality, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom,³ loving-kindness compassion, joy, and equanimity,⁴ the [four] establishments of mindfulness, the [four] right efforts, the [four bases of] spiritual powers, the [five] faculties, the [five] strengths, the [seven factors of] awakening, and the [noble eightfold] path,⁵ śamatha, vipaśyanā, the light of liberation by wisdom and other such dharmas. Having done these outstanding deeds, he extended his excellent, flexible, and pliant golden coloured right arm and touched Māra's head. And having placed it on his whole body, he calmed down.

Having given rise to a thought of great loving-kindness, the vision of the eyes of compassion, and the deep mind which liberates all beings, all the buddha bhagavāns from all worlds appeared before him to witness his right mindfulness and right knowledge. The Bodhisattva at once touched the earth. After the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva

¹ The wording of this quote appears slightly more elaborate in T310, but otherwise is the same. T312 is closer to the Sanskrit quoted by Ikuma.

² T312.729c9.

³ The six pāramitās.

⁴ The four brahmavihāras.

⁵ The thirty-seven factors of awakening.

touched the earth with his hand, the great earth immediately ¹quaked in six ways that is to say, (1) it trembled, trembled much, trembled completely; (2) it moved, moved much, moved completely; (3) it quaked, quaked much, quaked completely; (4) it rattled, rattled much, rattled completely; (5) it shook, shook much, shook completely; (6) it roared; roared much, and roared completely. It [also] rose in the east and sunk in the west, it rose in the west and sunk in the east, it rose in the north and sunk in the south, it rose in the south and sunk in the north, it rose at the edges and sank in the middle, it rose in the middle and sank at the edges. In this way, the six kinds of earthquake gave rise to eighteen transformations,² and the great extensive earth trembled everywhere.

At that very moment, many different manifestations appeared. Then, the armies of Māra opposed this with a savage roar and shook and hit [their weapons], wishing to encourage their fellow evil beings who had done evil deeds. But having seen those manifestations, they were afraid. Then, by the Bodhisattva's supernormal power, a voice was heard in the air uttering the following gāthā:

You should take refuge in the honoured Mahāsattva,
The greatest muni among all munis,
Who broadly endows fearlessness and great compassion,
And broadly protects all kinds of sentient beings.

³Śāntamati, those māras then heard that voice. In the army of Māra, eight million koṭis of niyutas of evil yakṣas collapsed to the earth and together uttered:

Save us from suffering! Save us from suffering! O save us
Mahāsattva!

¹ On the quaking of the earth as a Buddhist motif, see Eugen Ciurtin, “The Buddha’s Earthquakes [I]. On Water: Earthquakes and Sequakes in Buddhist Cosmology and Mediation with an Appendix on Buddhist Art,” in *Studia Asiatica* 10, nos. 1 & 2 (2009): 59–124, and Eugen Ciurtin, “‘Thus Have I Quaked’: The *Tempo* of the Buddha’s Vita and the Earliest Buddhist Fabric of Timelessness (The Buddha’s Earthquakes II)” in *Figurations of Time in Asia* edited by Dietrich Boschung and Corinna Wessels-Mevissen, 21–54, Wilhelm Fink Verlag: München, 2012.

² This is referring to the three variations on each of the first set of the six kinds of earthquakes, i.e., the kind of quake, it happening much, and it happening completely. The second set of six is additional.

³ T312.730a2.

The remaining māras wanted to run away together. Still, even after exhausting all their māra powers, they could not move forward. Then, because the Bodhisattva had great compassion, he emitted light from all over his body. When those māras encountered that light, they separated out of fear and returned to their palace.

Śāntamati! When the Bodhisattva made manifestations by his supernatural powers for the sake of those māras, those eight million koṭis of niyutas of evil yakṣas all gave rise to the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. In that assembly, there were also nine million, nine hundred thousand koṭis of niyutas of humans who gave rise to the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi and eighty-four thousand devaputras who, by the power of their stored good, all attained patience.

Chapter 14. Turning the Wheel of Dharma

1. The Various Characteristics Manifested by the Bodhisattva

¹Further, Śāntamati, some devas and humans knew that the Bodhisattva had subdued the armies of Māra. Other devas and humans understood that all the evil māras had not reached the Bodhisattva. Some devas and humans first knew that the Bodhisattva's seat of awakening was the cushion of Svastika's grass. Other devas and humans saw that the Śākya Bodhisattva sat upon a lion throne decorated with many jewelled lotuses. Still, other devas and humans saw the Bodhisattva was sitting upon the earth.

Some saw the Bodhisattva sitting steadfastly under an aśvattha tree. Others saw the Bodhisattva under a pārjātaka tree, some a kovidāra tree, and some beneath a bodhi tree. Still, others saw the Bodhisattva sitting beneath a bodhi tree made of many jewels. Some devas and humans saw the bodhi tree as tall as one tāla tree, and some devas and humans saw the lion throne as tall as one tāla tree. Other devas and humans saw the bodhi tree as tall as seven tāla trees, and some devas and humans saw the lion throne as tall as half a tāla tree. Still, others saw the bodhi tree as taller than eighty-four thousand yojanas, and some saw the lion throne as tall as forty-two thousand yojanas.

Some devas and humans saw the Bodhisattva subduing the armies of Māra. Other devas and humans saw one army of Māra. Still, other devas and humans saw many evil armies of Māra. Some saw the Bodhisattva overcome the armies of Māra by his sporting in the supernatural powers.

Some saw the Bodhisattva in the sky. Others saw the Bodhisattva on a lion throne in the sky. Still, others saw the Bodhisattva staying on a jewelled seat beneath a bodhi tree attaining the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Śāntamati, you should understand that the bodhisattvas who attain the immeasurably highest purity of the sense objects, and all bodhisattvas who go to dwell at the highest and best great bodhimaṇḍa, are all endowed with these immeasurable merits and manifest these superior characteristics.

¹ T312.730a14f11; T310.64b9f11. The narrative is similar but wording and ordering quite different in T310.

2. The Exaltation of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas

¹Further, Śāntamati, after the Bodhisattva defeated the armies of Māra at the highest and best great bodhimaṇḍa, all the bodhisattvas who practised the highest and best conduct in accord with the path for a long time in incalculably many worlds in the ten directions came there. They together gave rise to voices of pure fearlessness and others. Those are the voice of goodness, the voice of ease, the voice of joy, the voice of quickness, the voice of intelligence, the voice of excellence, the voice of non-emptiness, the voice of bravery, the voice of confidence, the voice of non-retrogression, the voice of profitability, the voice of auspiciousness, the voice of non-affliction, the voice of great compassion, the voice of ancient intention, the unfailing voice, the gladdening voice, the solid and unified voice, the voice of the sport of a mahāsattva, the voice of the greatest benefit, the voice of instantaneous conformity, the voice of omniscience, and the voice of the attainment of perfect awakening. The bodhisattvas give rise to all these kinds of pure voices.

At that time, all the bodhisattvas who had gathered at the highest and best bodhimaṇḍa from assemblies in worlds in the ten directions, with these koṭis of niyutas of hundreds of thousands of beautiful voices widely created comfort. They presented many kinds of wonderful offerings and gave many types of the greatest praise. Thereupon, by the stored good of past practices of those bodhisattvas who had assembled, many great bodhisattvas² came to that assembly at the best bodhimaṇḍa from worlds in the ten directions and thus presented refreshing offerings and praise. Moreover, even though the Śākya Bodhisattva had subdued the armies of Māra, he did not agree or disagree with those armies. Why? Because the Bodhisattva had already departed from the dharmas of agreeableness and disagreeableness. The Bodhisattva can respond with great wisdom in a mind-moment, know something, see something, apprehend something, or realise something, and thus he accomplishes all things.

Further, Śāntamati, after the Tathāgata attained the fruit and the path, at once all buddha tathāgatas from immeasurable and incalculable worlds in the ten directions together stretched out their right hands, touched the Bodhisattva's body, and comforted him, inquiring:

¹ T312.730b5.

² While previously they were bodhisattvas, here they are "great" bodhisattvas, i.e., mahāsattvas.

Son of the buddhas! Are not your body and limbs tired? Do you engage in contact with that which is pleasurable?¹ Have you realised the accomplishment of self-arisen knowledge?² Have you realised the accomplishment of a mind free from obstructions? Have you realised the accomplishment of knowledge of equality? Do you practice without embellishment? Do you gird yourself with the armour of great compassion? Is your seed of the Triple Gem unbroken? Have you attained freedom regarding all dharmas?

Śāntamati, you should know that at that time his wholesome roots were fully matured, and that to approach the great bodhimaṇḍa one must have superior knowledge. One whose roots are not yet ripe cannot have that knowledge.

3. The Exaltations of Devaputras and the Four Great Kings' Gift of the Alms Bowl

³Further, Śāntamati, after the Tathāgata attained the fruit and the path, he enjoyed the contemplation of the true and real Dharma for seven nights. Then he observed the great bodhi tree without blinking. At that time, a hundred thousand devaputras prostrated, offered, praised, and paid homage to him. There were also a hundred thousand devīs who each revered, paid homage, and praised him. All these devas and devīs observed his excellent deportment. All gave rise to the intention to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Further, Śāntamati, after the Tathāgata attained the fruit and the path, each of the four great kings came to where the Buddha was with jewelled alms bowls, prostrated, and offered them. As for the four great kings, they are Dhṛtarāṣṭra of the eastern direction, Virūḍhaka of the southern direction, Virūpākṣa of the western direction, and Vaiśravaṇa of the northern direction. Thus, after the four great kings of the four great continents [of this world] came to where the Buddha was, the others were similar: they were a hundred koṭis of four celestial kings from a hundred koṭis of four great continents,⁴ each holding

¹ Skt. *sukhasaṃsparśa*.

² Skt. *svayaṃbhujñāna*. Knowledge which does not arise in dependence upon saṃsāric phenomenon.

³ T312.730c5.

⁴ From other worlds.

jewelled alms bowls. Having together come to where the Buddha was, they also prostrated and offered them.

At that time, the Tathāgata, having received four hundred koṭis of jewelled alms bowls, put them together as one alms bowl with his supernatural powers. The following thought occurred to each of the four great kings:

The Tathāgata has received my donation of an alms bowl, and in my alms bowl, he shall also receive food.

Each gave rise to the greatest mind of pure joy and became non-retrogressing from anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

4. The Offerings of Trapuṣa and Bhallika

¹Further, Śāntamati, after the Tathāgata attained the fruit and the path, there were two chief merchants—one was called Trapuṣa, and the other was called Bhallika—who together with an additional sixty thousand devaputras came to where the Buddha was and first presented him with food and drink. These chief merchants, since the distant past, both gave rise to the vow:

I vow that I shall be the first to offer the Tathāgata pure food and drink. I vow that after the Tathāgata has accepted my donation, giving rise to the mind of joy, all shall attain the stage of non-retrogression from anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

5. The Exhortation of Brahmā King Śikhin

²Further, Śāntamati, when the Bodhisattva started to ascend the highest and best great bodhimaṇḍa his omniscience was not yet complete. But now, having attained the fruit and the path, he is complete in knowledge and wisdom. Thus, he had not yet turned the vast and great wheel of the Dharma, which creates great benefit for all sentient beings. Why? The Bodhisattva, from his first arousal of the thought, up until the present when he sits at the bodhimaṇḍa and attains perfect awakening, wished to bring benefit to sentient beings. Śāntamati,

¹ At this point, T310 notes that the various merchants' horses and carts got stuck as they passed by and heard a voice from the sky declaring that the Buddha had attained awakening. After this, they go to pay homage as narrated here.

² T310.65a6f12.

for this reason, you should now understand that it is after all bodhisattvas attain the fruit of awakening that they each equally work to bring benefit for the sake of incalculable sentient beings.¹

²Further, Śāntamati, after the Tathāgata attained the fruit and the path, there was a brahmā king called Śikhin, who was respected and surrounded by six million, eight hundred thousand brahmā devaputras in his brahmā realm. He immediately came before the Buddha, bowed his head to the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him seven times, keeping him to the right. Joining his palms, with sincerity, he implored the Bhagavān to turn the wheel of the True Dharma, speaking thus:

I wish, O Bhagavān, I implore, O Sugata, that you extensively turn the wheel of the True Dharma for the sake of sentient beings. Within this assembly [of brahmā devaputras], some are suitable vessels of the Dharma,³ and they can understand the Dharma taught by the Buddha. Such as the deva king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who long ago vowed:

I vow that after all the buddha tathāgatas have attained the fruit and the path in the Bhadra Kalpa, I shall implore them all to turn the wheel of the True Dharma.

Further, Śāntamati, not only did Brahmā King Śikhin implore the Tathāgata to turn the wheel of the True Dharma, but after Brahmā King Śikhin first implored him, next ten koṭis of devas of the brahmā king's heaven, ten koṭis of devas of the Śakra, Lord of the Devas', heaven, and ten koṭis of great bodhisattvas, all implored the Tathāgata to turn the wheel of the True Dharma.

6. The Tathāgata Proceeds to Ṛṣipātana

At that time, Brahmā King Śikhin knew that the Buddha Bhagavān had accepted his request with silence. At once, at the deer park Ṛṣipātana in Vārāṇasī, he laid out a glorious lion throne for the Buddha Bhagavān, forty-two thousand yojanas tall, which was extraordi-

¹ That is to say, the bodhisattva always wishes to benefit all sentient beings, but it is only after he has attained the fruit of awakening that he can turn the wheel of the Dharma.

² T312.731a7.

³ I.e., beings who are suitable to be taught the Dharma.

narily wonderful, gloriously adorned, endowed with the best characteristics, beautiful, and peacefully left on the earth. After Śikhin Brahmā had first set up that glorious lion throne, ten koṭis of devas of the brahmā king's heaven, ten koṭis of devas of Śakra, Lord of the Devas', heaven, and ten koṭis of great bodhisattvas, all set up exquisite lion thrones for the Buddha Bhagavān, which were extraordinarily wonderful, gloriously adorned, endowed with the best characteristics, and beautiful.

¹Thereupon, the Bhagavān immediately went to the deer park R̥ṣipatana in Vārāṇasī, and having arrived, he manifested himself sitting on each of those many lion thrones. At that time, King Brahmā, Indra, and all the great bodhisattvas each saw the Tathāgata seated on the seat that they had donated and turning the great wheel of the Dharma sitting on that seat. Thus, all those who were there gave rise to a mind of pure joy, and all attained non-retrogression from anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. At that time, after the Bhagavān was peacefully sitting upon the supreme lion throne, at once, unlimited worlds in the ten directions all shook,² and a great light pervaded universally.

At that time, the Bhagavān directly entered the samādhi of boundless boundaries. After entering this samādhi, the ground of the great earth of each of the trichiliocosms became flat and level like the palm of one's hand. Moreover, all the sentient beings in the trichiliocosms, whether they were hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, devas—beings of all realms—all kinds of beings attained comfort. Not one sentient being was disturbed by greed, anger, ignorance, or any affliction. They gave rise to compassion for one another, like a mother or father [towards their child].

Moreover, when the Bhagavān entered this samādhi of boundless boundaries, numberless and incalculable bodhisattvas from the ten directions gathered in assembly to hear and receive the True Dharma. At that time, all the powerful beings, devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kiṃnaras, mahoragas, humans and non-humans, that there were in this trichiliocosm, came to the Buddha's assembly to hear and receive the True Dharma. Śāntamati, you should know that when the Bhagavān was about to teach the Dharma, and there was an extensive assembly of all humans and de-

¹ T312.731b9f12.

² T310: in six ways.

vas from all regions in the trichiliocosms, they all came and assembled, filling, and surrounding everywhere. There was no gap, not even a single hair, and all for the sake of hearing and receiving the Bhagavān's teaching of the True Dharma.

7. Turning the Wheel of the True Dharma

¹At that time, the Bhagavān, knowing that all those humans and devas had assembled in that great crowd, quietly arose from his samādhi. He universally observed the entire assembly, giving rise to a mind of great compassion with the Tathāgata's pure eye of compassion. He turned the wheel of the True Dharma. The Dharma was the same for all, whether śramaṇa or brāhmaṇa.

Further, Śāntamati, the reason the Tathāgata turns the wheel of the Dharma is to give rise to joy in the minds of all sentient beings and to cause all sentient beings in the assembly to realise the Dharma taught by the Buddha entirely. Following the Buddha Bhagavān's agreement to turn the wheel of the Dharma, the prior numberless and incalculable bodhisattvas from the ten directions came to the assembly to hear and receive the True Dharma. At the same time, a hundred thousand koṭis of niyutas of devaputras of the desire realm and devaputras of the form realm also came to the assembly to hear and receive the True Dharma.

At that time, the Bhagavān uttered these words:

O noble ones! The eyes are not a permanent dharma. Why? If one is suited to be taught with words about suffering, they should hear the explanation that the eye is suffering. If one is suited to be taught with words about no self, they should hear the explanation that the eye is not-self. If one is suited to be taught with words about emptiness, they should hear that the eye is empty. If one is suited to be taught with words about tranquillity, they should hear that the eye is tranquil. If one is suited to be taught with words about separateness, they should hear that the eye is a separate dharma. If one is suited to be taught with words about impermanence, they should hear that the eye is impermanent. If one is suited to be taught with words about no refuge, they should hear that the eye is not a refuge. If one is suited to be taught with words about illusion, they should hear that the eye is illusory. If one is suited to be taught

¹ T312.731c2.

with words about dreams, they should hear that the eye is dreamlike. If one is suited to be taught with words about the moon's reflection in the water, they should hear that the eye is like the reflection of the moon in the water. If one is suited to be taught with words about projections [of the consciousness], they should hear that the eye is a projection [of consciousness]. If one is suited to be taught with words about the sound of an echo, they should hear that the eye is like the sound of an echo. If one is suited to be taught with words about emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, uncreatedness, non-birth, and non-arising, they should hear that the eye is thus empty, signless, wishless, uncreated, without birth, and without arising. If one is suited to be taught with words about dependent origination, they should hear that the eye is dependently originated. Speaking about the eye in this way, the ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are also like this. Even up to if one is suited to be taught with words of dependent origination, they should hear that consciousness is dependently originated. Form, sound, smell, taste, touch, mental dharmas, and their objects are also like this.

Some hear words about emptiness, some hear words about the impermanence of the five aggregates, some hear words about the impermanence of the eighteen realms, and some hear words about the impermanence of the twelve sense spheres. Some hear words about suffering, some hear words about the cause, some hear words about cessation, and some hear words about the path. Some hear words about the four foundations of mindfulness, some hear words about the four kinds of right abandonment, some hear words about the four bases of supernatural powers, some hear words about the five faculties, some hear words about the five powers, some hear words about the seven factors of awakening, and some hear words about the noble eightfold path. Some hear words about śamatha, and some hear words about vipaśyanā. Some hear words about the Dharma of dependent origination. Some hear words about the Dharma associated with the śrāvakas, some hear words about the Dharma associated with the pratyekabuddhas, and some hear about the Dharma of the Mahāyāna.

¹Further, Śāntamati, the wheel of the Dharma that the Tathāgata turns is turned for the sake of giving rise to joy in the minds of all sentient beings. Furthermore, the wheel of the Dharma turned by the Tathāgata extensively brings great benefit to all sentient beings. Even if someone has wisdom equal to Śāriputra, and they want to measure the limit of this Dharma, even if they pass a hundred kalpas, they would still not find the limit—how much more so any other being? Śāntamati, you should know that from the time when the Tathāgata first went to the bodhimaṇḍa, subdued the armies of Māra, and with superior adornments, earthquakes, and the lion throne, he sported in the supernormal powers and turned the great wheel of the Dharma, that it was a time of the most excellent benefit. Eighty-four thousand humans gave rise to the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, and countless sentient beings were established on the three vehicles.

¹ T312.732a10.

Chapter 15. Sense Objects

1. Understanding Stems from the Wisdom of the Tathāgatas within all Beings' Bodies

¹At that time, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! When the Buddha Bhagavān was teaching the Dharma in this way, was there not something contrary to what the Tathāgata taught to me? Did some follow [those contrary teachings]?² What the Tathāgata teaches is extraordinarily profound and vast; what the Tathāgata teaches is extraordinarily profound and secret. It is difficult for all people to believe, understand, and penetrate its core.

Bhagavān! The mind of all Tathāgatas is decidedly true and real. I understand the profound Dharma that the Tathāgata taught me because the superior wisdom of all the Tathāgatas dwells in my body—this is not in my power as a human being.

The Buddha said:

Lord of Mysteries! It is just as you have said, it is just as you have said. Why? You should now understand that the Tathāgata explains all Dharma teachings by setting up similes and that the superior wisdom possessed by all Tathāgatas dwells in the bodies of all sentient beings. Why? Lord of Mysteries! It would not be possible otherwise for all sentient beings abiding anywhere to accord with the secrets that the Tathāgata teaches if they did not contain the Tathāgata's power of assistance and accord with the Tathāgata's Dharma nature. Furthermore, if one hears, if one speaks, and if one has an understanding about the profound Dharma of the secrets taught by the Tathāgata, then that is all by virtue of the power of the Tathāgata's assistance.

³Moreover, Lord of Mysteries, when the Tathāgata speaks, it is with the right words. One should know that the nature of the Tathāgata's Dharma is thus true, that the nature of his Dharma is real and permanent. Furthermore, what the Tathāgata does is true.

¹ T312.732a20f12; T310.65c16f12.

² I.e., the Tathāgata's various teachings when he turned the wheel of the Dharma were suited to sentient beings of various different capacities—Vajrapāṇi is eliciting the Buddha to teach on why there are such differences.

³ T312.732b4.

What he does is real and permanent. Therefore, the Tathāgata teaches the True Dharma with the right words.

Further, Lord of Mysteries, all Buddha Bhagavāns of the past, present, and future, transmit the teachings and attract beings extensively for the sake of elucidation using the True Dharma of anuttarasamyak-saṃbodhi, which is difficult to believe and difficult to understand. If, in this way, sentient beings have heard the extremely profound True Dharma, which is difficult to believe and difficult to understand, and if they can give rise to belief and understanding, then you should know that such beings have already been in the presence of and served not one buddha, or ten buddhas, but you should know that they have already been in the presence of and served vast koṭis of niyutas of hundreds of thousands of buddhas. You should know that such a person is a bodhisattva¹ who has intensively practised virtuous conduct.

Further, Lord of Mysteries, even if Sumeru, the king of mountains, were to collapse and fall, there may exist someone who can bear it on their head and shoulders. Thus, it is impossible that there is not a sentient being with various wholesome roots who, in this way, can give rise to a single thought of pure faith and understanding regarding this incredibly profound True Dharma, how much more so one who can uphold, recite, and practice it accordingly. Further, Lord of Mysteries, if there is a sentient being who, having heard the True Dharma of the Mahāyāna, can believe and understand it, you should know that this person has already been in the presence of and served not one buddha, but have already been in the presence of and served many buddhas and that they have intensively practised superior practices in the Dharma of the Mahāyāna and planted wholesome roots and seeds.

2. Tranquilising Views of Physical Existence

At that time, Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

Bhagavān! The Buddha Bhagavān thus teaches a Dharma of tranquillity. For what reason is it called tranquillity? From whence comes one who is tranquil?

¹ Skt. *satpuruṣa*. Chinese translators use this term (正士) as a translation for bodhisattva but means excellent or good person.

The Buddha said:

Son of good family! When one speaks of a tranquil person, that is a designation for one who has tranquilised the defilements. That tranquilising of the defilements is a designation for tranquilising the fabrications of discriminative thinking. That tranquilising the fabrications of discriminative thinking is a designation for tranquilising perception and attention.¹ That tranquilising of perception and attention is a designation for tranquilising distortions. That tranquilising of distortions is a designation for tranquilising the cause of the sense objects. That tranquilising of the sense objects is a designation for tranquilising ignorance and desire for existence.² That tranquilising of ignorance and desire for existence is a designation for tranquilising I and mine. That tranquilising of I and mine is a designation for tranquilising name and form. That tranquilising of name and form is a designation for tranquilising the views of nihilism and eternalism. That tranquilising of the views of nihilism and eternalism is a designation for tranquilising views of physical existence.³

Śāntamati, you should know that if one is bound to views caused by the sense objects, one is still being carried along entirely by afflictions, which causes one to follow views of physical existence. If one can tranquilise views of physical existence, then one calms all views. If one tranquilises views of physical existence, all desires also cease. If one tranquilises views of physical existence, all afflictions also cease.

Śāntamati! Just as when one cuts a great tree at the roots, all the branches, leaves, and the trunk of the tree all wither. These views of physical existence are the same as this: if they are tranquilised, all afflictions are also tranquilised. Śāntamati, you should know that as all sentient beings from the outset cannot fully awaken to [the falsity of] views of physical existence, they all give rise to and chase after many afflictions. If one can fully awaken to [the falsity of] views of physical existence, then one will not again give rise to many afflictions and will also not be harmed.⁴

¹ Skt. *saṃjñā-manasikāra*.

² Skt. *bhavaṭṭṣṇā*.

³ Skt. *satkāya-dṛṣṭi*. Views of the existence of a body, but more precisely means views regarding the physical existence of oneself in the world, as opposed to viewing the world as the consequence of mental obscurations.

⁴ I.e., the lack of views of physical existence will not harm one, by, for instance, making one incapable of functioning.

¹Śāntamati Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān, how can one fully awaken to [the falsity of] views of physical existence?

The Buddha said:

Śāntamati, if one does not give rise to views of a self, a person, a sentient being, or life, then one can fully awaken to [the falsity of] views of physical existence.

Further, Śāntamati, views of physical existence do not abide internally, do not abide externally, and do not abide in any location. Since there is no abiding, the view has no place to abide. Śāntamati, this knowledge of non-abiding thus fully awakens one to the [falsity of] views of physical existence. Moreover, Śāntamati, you should know that “views of physical existence” is a designation for emptiness. If one can accord with patience regarding knowledge of emptiness, then one sees that there is nothing to be apprehended,² and this fully awakens one to the [falsity of] views of physical existence. Also, views of physical existence are without marks, aspiration, creation, arising, ceasing, and other views. Thus they are views in which nothing is apprehended. In this way, one fully awakens to the [falsity of] views of physical existence.

Further, Śāntamati, you should know that views of physical existence are without physicality, without separation, without joining, and are all thus false discriminations. Consequently, these false discriminations are free from discrimination and not different from discrimination.³ Because they are both free from discrimination and not different from discrimination, they are unobtainable, unobstructed, and non-arising. Since they are non-arising, they are unconditioned. Due to being unconditioned, this teaching is designated “tranquillity.”

3. Calming and Sense Objects

Śāntamati Bodhisattva said:

¹ T312.732c12.

² I.e., no object to perceive, and thus nothing to which one can grasp and attach.

³ I.e., that is, as phenomena themselves they are not identical to discriminatory and false views, but in their content to those who hold those views, they are discriminatory and false views.

To what does calming refer?¹

The Buddha said:

a. Calming is the Absence of Sense Objects

Śāntamati, if there are sense objects, the mind is like a fire burning with torment. If there are no sense objects, there is no activity and no burning with torment. Mental phenomena without burning with torment are termed “calm.” The burning fire of the mind with sense objects is like a great fire that burns with firewood but is extinguished without firewood. If there are no sense objects, the fire of the mind automatically ceases.

b. Pure Sense Objects should not be Abandoned

Śāntamati, you should know that bodhisattvas endowed with skilful means, amidst the dharmas of the pure sense objects of the *prajñā pāramitā*, fully realise equality so that the wholesome roots and superior dharmas among sense objects do not decrease, and that the afflictions and defiled dharmas among sense objects are restrained and not made to arise.² Thus, they will always make the superior dharmas of the *pāramitās* increase and develop. They will forever cut off and put an end to evil karma, afflictions, and defiled dharmas among sense objects. [However], the factors of awakening are pure dharmas among sense objects which should not be abandoned. Śrāvakas and *pratyekabuddhas* intend to be unattached to sense objects, but the mind of omniscience, the highest sense object, should not be abandoned. Examining the truth in the sense object of emptiness, give rise to the profound intention which is the sense object of great compassion for all sentient beings.

Śāntamati, you should understand that bodhisattvas endowed with skilful means, who have attained self-mastery among the dharmas of the pure sense objects of the *prajñā pāramitā*, do not give rise to sense-objects that think or decide. Rather, peaceful and unified, they give rise to sense objects that are dispassionate. Also, they are involved with uncreated sense objects. They open and illuminate all

¹ Skt., *upaśānta/upaśama*.

² That is to say, there are sense objects that are useful for a bodhisattva on the path, despite their ultimate non-reality. Sense objects of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, for instance, would involve the sound and appearance of teachings on the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Thus they are “pure sense objects.”

sense objects permanently of actions endowed with wholesome roots. They also critically analyse sense objects that are without marks. They never distance themselves from sense objects of bodhicitta. They correctly observe with wisdom sense objects that are without intentions. They do not give rise to distancing from the sense objects that are the triple world.¹

c. How a Bodhisattva Manifests Amid Sense Objects

A bodhisattva with skilful means and wisdom naturally manifests amid the dharmas of all these unarisen sense objects. If they see impure sense objects, then they abide in the pure mind and body of the Tathāgata; if impermanent sense objects, then they abide in a mind that is not fatigued amidst birth and death;² if sense objects of suffering, then to bring joy to all sentient beings, they abide in a mind that peacefully abides in the equanimity of nirvāṇa; if sense objects of no self, they abide in a mind of great compassion for all sentient beings.³

If [they see] sense objects of desire, they abide in the mind that illuminates and reveals the great medicine of purity for all sentient beings of a greedy temperament; if sense objects of anger, they abide in the mind that illumines and reveals the great medicine of kindness for all beings of an angry temperament; if sense objects of ignorance, they abide in the mind that illumines and reveals the great medicine of dependent origination for all sentient beings of a dull temperament.⁴

If [they see] sense objects of possession,⁵ then they abide in the mind that illumines and reveals the great medicine of impermanence of ideation for all sentient beings who act according to possession.

⁶If [they see] sense objects of freedom from desire, then they abide in a mind that guides towards the Śrāvaka Dharma; if sense objects of freedom from anger, then they abide in a mind that guides towards the Dharma of awakening based on contemplation of dependent

¹ This last point might be because they need to work within the triple world in order to help liberate beings.

² So that they can continue to aid beings in saṃsāra, despite the impermanence of all things there.

³ The four virtues (catvāraḥ guṇa) are cultivated, which are the opposites are the four Dharma seals.

⁴ The three poisons and their antidotes.

⁵ I.e., the idea that something has a quality, or possesses something else.

⁶ The three vehicles.

origination;¹ if sense objects of freedom from ignorance, then they abide in a mind that guides towards the Bodhisattva Dharma.

If [they see] sense objects of form, they abide in a mind of the superior characteristics of the form attained by the Tathāgata; if sense objects of sound, they abide in a mind of the exquisite sound attained by the Tathāgata; if sense objects of scent, they abide in a mind of the purity of the perfume of morality attained by the Tathāgata; if sense objects of taste, they abide in a mind of the purity of the superior characteristics of a mahāsattva, which has the best of all tastes, and which is attained by the Tathāgata; if sense objects of touch, they abide in a mind of the exquisite touch of the soft and tender hands and feet attained by the Tathāgata; if sense objects of mental dharmas,² they abide in a mind of certainty regarding all dharmas attained by the Tathāgata.³

If [they see] sense objects of generosity, they abide in a mind of the superior characteristics attained by the Tathāgata; if sense objects of morality, they abide in a mind of the purity of the buddha-fields; if sense objects of patience, they abide in a mind of the purity of an exquisite golden body with the melodious voice attained by Brahmā; if sense objects of diligence, they abide in a mind of saving and liberating all sentient beings; if sense objects of meditation, they abide in a mind of the marvellous function attained by the supernormal powers; if sense objects of wisdom, they abide in a mind of the continuous vision of the elimination of all the afflictions of all sentient beings.⁴

If [they see] sense objects of loving kindness, they abide in a mind that frees all sentient beings from obscurations; if sense objects of compassion, they abide in a mind that upholds the True Dharma; if sense objects of joy, they abide in a mind that rejoices in the arising of the teaching of the Dharma; if sense objects of equanimity, they abide in a mind of the action of attaining the cutting off of all agreeableness and disagreeableness of all sentient beings.⁵ If [they see] sense objects of the four means of conversion, they abide in a mind that ripens [the wholesome roots] of all sentient beings.

¹ Strictly speaking, this is the pratyekabuddha Dharma, but in this case it has the more specific connotation of those who are awakened by contemplation of dependent origination.

² I.e., thoughts.

³ The six sense bases.

⁴ The six perfections.

⁵ The four brahmavihārās.

d. How a Bodhisattva Counteracts the Sense Objects

¹Further, Śāntamati, if bodhisattvas want to counteract the dharma of the sense object of the fault of stinginess, they should dwell in a mind that gives rise to indifference regarding possessions. If they want to counteract the sense object of the fault of transgressing the precepts, they should dwell in a mind that gives rise to observation of the precepts. If they want to counteract the sense-object of the fault of anger, they should give rise to a mind that gives rise to firm and hard patience and endurance. If they want to counteract the sense object of the fault of laziness, they should give rise to a mind that gives rise to the superior strength of the Tathāgata's achievement of diligence. If they want to counteract the sense object of the fault of distraction, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to the attainment of the dhyāna of the Tathāgata. If they want to counteract the sense object of the fault of polluted wisdom, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to complete unimpeded cognition.

²If the sense object of a śrāvaka's attention,³ they should abide in the mind that gives rise to the accumulations⁴ of the Mahāyāna.⁵ If the sense objects of renunciation,⁶ they should abide in the mind that does not give rise to any faults. If the sense objects of the evil realms,⁷ they should abide in the mind that gives rise to saving and uplifting all those beings in the evil realms instantly. If the sense objects of the mental attention of the heavenly realms, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to [awareness of] the final limit of the evolution and devolution [of the world].⁸ If the sense objects of the mental attention of the human realm, then they should abide in the mind that gives rise to [awareness of] insubstantiality.

If the sense objects of the mental awareness of mindfulness of the Buddha, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to holding and

¹ T312.733b26f13.

The following six countermeasures correspond to the six perfections.

² The following five pertain to the various realms and bodhisattva activity.

³ I.e., a focus on attaining nirvāṇa for one's own benefit, rather than attaining Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

⁴ I.e., the accumulations of skilful means and wisdom.

⁵ The sentences from here, onwards, are abbreviated, but the implication is still the same as the preceding sentences: if they want to counteract the sense object of the fault of X, they should Y.

⁶ Rejection and disillusionment with the world of sensuality.

⁷ The lower realms of the hells, ghosts, and animals.

⁸ I.e., the expansion and contraction of the world system upon which even heavens disappear.

receiving all buddhas. If the sense objects of the mental awareness of the mindfulness of the Dharma, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to the Dharma of non-stinginess. If the sense objects of the mental awareness of mindfulness of the Saṅgha, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to attaining the state of non-retrogression and turning the wheel of the Dharma.

If the sense objects of the mental awareness of mindfulness of generosity, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to indifference to all things. If the sense objects of the mental awareness of mindfulness of morality, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to the fulfilment of the aspiration of the factors of the awakening of superior concentration. If the sense objects of the mental awareness of mindfulness of the devas, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to all devas' praise of the Buddha's knowledge and assistance. If the sense objects of the mental awareness of one's own body, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to the attainment of a buddha's body of purity. If the sense objects of the mental awareness of speech, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to the attainment of all the Buddha's words of purity. If the sense objects of the mental awareness of the mind, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to the attainment of the Buddha's equal mind of purity. If the sense objects of conditioned dharmas, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to the fulfilment of the heart of the Tathāgata's knowledge.¹ If the sense objects of unconditioned dharmas, they should abide in the mind that gives rise to the fulfilment of the Buddha's knowledge.

e. Bodhisattvas Use all Sense Objects at the Service of Awakening

²Śāntamati, you should understand that by these kinds of sense objects, all bodhisattvas are not without abiding in the Dharma gate that makes knowledge of omniscience apparent.³ Moreover, all bodhisattvas, amidst all these sense objects, dedicate them all to the attainment of awakening, which is called "The bodhisattva's full un-

¹ Skt. *tathāgatajñānahṛdaya*.

² T312.733c21.

³ This is a convoluted sentence, but it seems to mean that all bodhisattvas, by using the sense objects in the way outlined in the previous section, bodhisattvas always have a way to access knowledge of omniscience.

derstanding of skilful means which can incisively observe all dharmas.”¹ Śāntamati! It is, for instance, as all the great lands which arise in the trichiliocosms, which are the places experienced by all sentient beings. All the bodhisattvas are also the same as that: with the bodhisattva’s skilful means, the parts of the path to awakening are experienced and ripen into the dharmas of the path to awakening.² It is also like the dharmas of form, all constituted by the four great elements. The skilful means of the bodhisattva are also like that: if there are sense objects, they all assemble and join³ to the superior characteristics of awakening.

f. How Bodhisattvas Adapt to Sentient Beings’ various Natures

⁴Further, Śāntamati, if there are sentient beings who give rise to the fault of stinginess, the bodhisattva will fulfil their desire with the giving pāramitā and the morality pāramitā. If there are sentient beings who give rise to aversion and practice with indolence, the bodhisattva will fulfil their desire with the patience pāramitā and the diligence pāramitā. If there are sentient beings who give rise to a scattered mind and practice with foolishness, the bodhisattva will fulfil their desire with the meditation pāramitā and the prajñā pāramitā.

If there are sentient beings who cannot be compassionate, the bodhisattva will be near them with the mind of non-harm. If there are sentient beings who cannot confer benefits, the bodhisattva will be near them with a mind that is not like that. If there are sentient beings who are always praising, the bodhisattva is near them with the mind that is not conceited. If there are sentient beings who are without praise, the bodhisattva is near them with the mind that is also not humble. If they see the suffering of all sentient beings, the bodhisattva gives rise to a mind of great compassion. If they see the joy of all sentient beings, the bodhisattva gives rise to the mind of joy. If they see the coarseness of all sentient beings, the bodhisattva gives rise to the mind of regulation.

¹ I.e., it is the skilful means to observe all dharmas in such a way as to dedicate any experience of the sense objects towards the attainment of awakening.

² This is also convoluted and is full of double negatives in the Chinese, but the essential meaning is that just as in the normal sense, the world that arises is that which is experienced by all beings, the skilful means of the bodhisattva allows all to be experienced as part of the path to awakening.

³ Tib. *‘dus pa sbyor ba*. Skt. *saṃnipātaḥprayoga*.

⁴ T312.734a3.

If they see the tameness of all sentient beings, the bodhisattva gives rise to the mind of affection. If they see sentient beings with the conditions of power, the bodhisattva gives rise to the mind that is guarded. If they see sentient beings with the causes of power, the bodhisattva gives rise to the mind of acceptance and transformation, and they accordingly transform them to teach them.¹ If they see sentient beings opening their eye of wisdom, the bodhisattva teaches them the incredibly profound Dharma. If they see sentient beings know what was explained in full, the bodhisattva teaches the extensive Dharma. If they see sentient beings with the truth, the bodhisattva teaches the Dharma in order. If they see sentient beings enjoying and being attached to textual explanations, the bodhisattva teaches the Dharma with few textual explanations.

If they see sentient beings delighting in *śamatha* as formerly taught, the bodhisattva teaches them *vipaśyanā*. If they see sentient beings delighting in *vipaśyanā* as formerly taught, the bodhisattva teaches them with an introduction to the dharmas of the *samādhis*. If they see sentient beings delighting in upholding the precepts, the bodhisattva first teaches them the Dharma of non-termination [of the precepts], and later teaches them about hells and so forth.² If they see sentient beings delighting in much learning, they teach them the Dharma of freedom from doubt. If they see sentient beings delighting in *samādhi*, they teach them with an introduction to the Dharma of wisdom. If they see sentient beings delighting in dwelling in the wilderness, they teach them the Dharma of mental quiescence. If they see sentient beings rejoicing in repeated ascetic practices, they teach them the Dharma of the faculty of wisdom.³

If they see sentient beings with dull faculties, they teach the Dharma according to their [ability to] listen. If they see sentient beings with rigid attachment to the [sense] passions, they teach them the Dharma of impurity [of the body, etc.]. If they see sentient beings with rigid attachment to aversion, they teach them the Dharma of the mind of compassion. If they see sentient beings with rigid attachment to delusions, they teach them the Dharma of dependent origination.

¹ I.e., the bodhisattva brings their causes of power (i.e. spiritual power) to maturity to teach them.

² I.e., hells and the other unwholesome consequences of evil karma from breaking the precepts.

³ Skt. *prajñendriya*. The fifth of the five faculties (*pañcendriya*). This is knowledge of the four noble truths and the characteristics of reality (e.g., impermanence, etc.).

If they see sentient beings with standard behaviour, then they teach them the Dharma in a middling way, that is to say, with the Dharmas of impurity, the mind of compassion, and dependent origination. If it is someone who follows all the Dharma and who should be disciplined,¹ the bodhisattva teaches them the Dharma of superior morality, the Dharma of superior mind, and the Dharma of superior compassion. If they see a sentient being who has the characteristics for attaining Buddhahood, who should be disciplined, they teach them the truth in accord with the factors of awakening. If they see a sentient being who has disdain, and who should be disciplined, they first teach them with the gate of stopping disdain, and later teach them the Dharma. If they see a sentient being who continues to joyfully observe the noble characteristics² of a bodhisattva, the bodhisattva will continue manifesting his body, and inasmuch as their roots are not yet mature, they will not teach the Dharma.³

If they see sentient beings who should be disciplined by a skilful and joyful exposition of the Dharma, they explain the Dharma using similes for dependent origination. If they see a sentient being who should be disciplined by the joyful and profound Dharma, they are taught the Dharma of dependent origination, no self, no person, and no sentient being. If they see a sentient being who is attached to views, they are taught the Dharma of emptiness. If they see a sentient being who gives rise to investigative practices,⁴ then they are taught the Dharma of no-characteristics. If they see sentient beings give rise to aspirations, then they are taught the Dharma of non-aspiration.

If they see sentient beings attached to the aggregates, then they are taught the Dharma of illusoriness. If they see sentient beings attached to the [sense] realms, then they teach them the Dharma of good and firm resolve. If they see sentient beings attached to locations, then they teach them the Dharma that things are like a dream. If they see sentient beings attached to the desire realm, then they teach them the Dharma of being disturbed. If sentient beings are attached to the

¹ Skt. *vainayika*. This can be literally ordination into the saṅgha, but also who should be disciplined, i.e. who should be taught.

² These are referring to the physical marks of a bodhisattva.

³ I.e., inasmuch as manifesting their body for observation helps those beings to continue maturing their roots in that way, they do not teach the Dharma in the conventional way with words until they have properly matured by this kind of noble sight. It is noteworthy that observing the bodhisattva's physical marks alone can mature certain beings.

⁴ 尋求 also implies discursive thought. This could imply discursive thought about practices or paths.

form realm, then they teach them the Dharma of the suffering of change.¹ If they see sentient beings attached to the formless realm, then they teach them the Dharma that all conditioned things are impermanent.

If they see sentient beings who should be disciplined, who delight in the Dharma of suffering, they should be taught in such a way as to give rise in them to the noble seed for experiencing delight in the Dharma. If they see a sentient being who delights in the enjoyment of the Dharma who should be disciplined, they teach them the Dharma of immeasurable dhyānas. If they see a sentient being who delights in the dharmas of the heavenly realms and should be disciplined, then they teach them purely the enjoyment of the Dharma. If they see a sentient being who delights in and is attached to all characteristics, who should be disciplined, then they teach them the Dharma of no self and non-grasping.

If they see a sentient being who delights in the śrāvaka Dharma, who should be disciplined, then they teach them the Dharma of realising what is to be taught. If they see sentient beings who rejoice in the pratyekabuddha Dharma, who should be disciplined, then they teach them the Dharma of the insignificance of objects. If they see sentient beings who delight in the Dharma of the first arousing of bodhicitta, who should be disciplined, then they are taught the Dharma of the profound thought of the arousing of great compassion. If they see sentient beings who delight in the Dharma of lengthy bodhisattva conduct, who should be disciplined, then they are taught the Dharma of tirelessness within saṃsāra. If they see sentient beings who delight in the Dharma of the non-retrogressing bodhisattva, who should be disciplined, then they are taught the Dharma of the glorious and pure buddha-fields. If they see sentient beings who delight in the Dharma of the bodhisattva being limited to one more birth [before buddhahood], who should be disciplined, then they are taught the Dharma of adorning the great bodhimaṇḍa. If they see sentient beings who delight in the Buddha's body, who should be disciplined, then they are taught the Dharma of the non-emptiness of the continuity of all the superior practices of bodhisattvas.

¹ This is particularly referring to change for the state of bliss experienced by devas in the heavens of the form realm, who, after many kalpas, will eventually die and be reborn in another, likely lower, realm.

Śāntamati, you should know that all great bodhisattvas have the wisdom and skilful means of all these kinds of Dharmas.¹ They obtain freedom regarding the dharmas² of these pure sense objects,³ and thus they can explain in detail the Dharma of non-emptiness [and so forth]. They explain these Dharmas for the sake of giving rise to joy in all sentient beings.

¹ Here this means teachings.

² This one is referring to phenomena that are being observed.

³ Skt. *viśuddhyālabana*.

Chapter 16. The Prediction of the Awakening of Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries

1. The Request for a Prediction of Vajrapāṇi's Awakening

¹At that time, all the bodhisattvas in the assembly together gave rise to this thought:

How long will it be before this Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, attains the fruit of anuttara-samyak-sambodhi? What is the name of the buddha-field in which he will abide? What will be his bodhisattva name upon becoming a buddha? How many followers will he have?

Then, the Bhagavān, having known the thoughts in the minds of all the bodhisattvas, immediately subtly smiled. According to rule, there must be a reason when any buddha manifests a subtle smile. Thereupon, a multi-coloured and extensive light emerged from the mouth of the Bhagavān; it was blue, yellow, red, white, scarlet, purple, jade, and green. That multi-coloured light universally pervaded limitless worlds up to the Brahmā world. The light circled and returned to the Buddha's location. Having circumambulated him three times to the right, it entered the crown of the Buddha Bhagavān's head.

Thereupon, Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, having approached the Buddha with palms joined together with sincere reverence, recited this wonderful gāthā to inquire [of him] extensively:

Like gold, this light is marvellous and stainless,
Quiescent as the motionless lunar surface,
Dispelling darkness as the supreme sunlight;
Why, now, does this sage among men² subtly smile?

Peacefully in meditation like a lotus flower,
With great compassion, your lion's roar reverberates and increases in
power,

¹ T312.734c22 f13; T310.67c11 f12. The two versions of this chapter are almost exactly identical, with a few minor differences in the verses.

² Skt. *ṛṣijña*. The Chinese is a less literal translation, the Sanskrit would translate to victor among seers.

You are perfumed with the marvellous incense of merit, wisdom, and mindfulness;

Why does this lotus flower, which is the Sugata, smile?

Your mindfulness is like a pure vessel, and your meditation is like oil,
Your compassion is like a wick: you are a blazing lamp that destroys
the three poisons.

The radiance of your marvellous wisdom puts an end to darkness:

Why does this light of wisdom, which is the Sugata, smile?

Observe with the light of wisdom his wheel of compassion,
It ends the three poisons and puts an end to all darkness,
It lucidly opens the eye of wisdom for the benefit of the world;
Why does this beautiful sunlight, which is the Buddha, smile?

The Buddha knows the thoughts of the world,¹ with its three kinds of
existence,²

He universally illuminates the minds of all devas and humans,

The great sage observes all sentient beings with the eye of compassion;

Why does the great sage now manifest a subtle smile?

³Śāntamati Bodhisattva then finished reciting his gāthā.

2. The Prediction of Vajrapāṇi's Awakening

Then, the Bhagavān addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying:

Now, in this Bhadra Kalpa, for all buddha, tathāgata, arhat, samyak-saṃbuddhas, this Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, has held the indestructible vajra mallet and done worship, and, with the intention of beneficence, he has protected the True Dharma. Now, in this secret Dharma of mine,⁴ he has engaged in great charity for the universal benefit of all uncountable sentient beings and has ripened the most excellent wholesome roots for awakening.

¹ Skt. *jāganmanas*

² Skt. *trībhava*. There are a few different explanations of this term, but here it is probably referring to the three realms (desire, form, and formless).

³ T312.735a11.

⁴ I.e., this sūtra on the Secret of the Tathāgata.

In the Dharma [assembly] of Rucika Tathāgata, at the end of this Bhadra Kalpa, he will disappear and be born in the buddha-field of Akṣobhya Tathāgata, the Land of Abhirati.¹ In that world, Akṣobhya Tathāgata teaches one hundred and eight secret mudrās² for all the bodhisattvas there. At that time, Vajrapāṇi bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, will hear those teachings, and without nominal designations,³ will apply them in practice. He will attain realisation of their meaning and accordingly practice that which is right and true.

After that, he will go into the presence of all the immeasurable and countless tathāgatas, and attending upon them, he will pay respect, honour, and make offerings to them. In the company of each buddha, he will cultivate pure conduct and uphold the True Dharma. For the sake of immeasurable koṭis of niyutas of hundreds of thousands of sentient beings, he will fully master the Dharma of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. After that, for more kalpas than the grains of sands in the Ganges, he will fulfil the factors of awakening. Then, he will be able to attain the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi and be called Vajrapada⁴ Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Samyak-saṃbuddha, who will appear in the world perfect in wisdom and conduct, the Sugata, the knower of the world, the unsurpassed tamer of humans, the teacher of gods and humans, the Buddha, the Bhagavān. His world will be called Saṃsuddha, and his kalpa will be called Paṇḍita. Śāntamati!

In the realm of that tathāgata, Vajrapada, the Saṃsuddha World, one will be able to observe that it is purely adorned, calm, tranquil, and prosperous. The devas and humans there will thrive, and the bodhisattvas will be many. It will be exquisitely decorated with the seven kinds of precious materials. Those seven kinds of precious materials are gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, cornelian, coral, amber, and ruby; they will extensively fill and adorn that world. The horizon will be as

¹ 極樂. This is a literal translation of Abhirati, i.e. extremely joyous, but is usually used as a translation for Sukhāvātī, the buddha-field of Amitābha. The more common translation of Abhirati is 妙喜, and it can be transliterated as 阿比羅提.

² This could either indicate the physical hand gestures which indicate teachings, or “seals,” i.e., stamps of approval, indicating aspects of the authentic Dharma.

³ I.e., the use of nominal terms, but could also indicate expedients and metaphors. That is to say, Vajrapāṇi is taught the truth directly without conceptuality. This might be a reason to suggest that the former use of “seal” is referring to a non-verbal form of teaching with ritual gestures.

⁴ As usual, these names and those that follow are reconstructions.

level as the palm of one's hand, and one will be able to measure [its height] with eight steps; it will be soft and flexible to the touch, like *kācilindika* grass. There will be marvellous hanging banners and intersecting jewelled ropes, with magnificent heavenly jewelled flowers suspended here and there, which will exude a variety of the most exquisite fragrances. Many kinds of music spontaneously will play forth from the sky. There will be no evil realms or difficulties for the beings there: it will be a place of the greatest enjoyment, just like Tuṣita Heaven.

Moreover, in that world, just according to one's thoughts, lofty palaces, dwellings, groves, and towers, food and drink, clothes, and many kinds of ornaments, will all be obtainable and will serve many types of uses in a manner not unlike the experience of devas. [Consequently], all the devas and humans there become endowed with great confidence and deep faith in that buddha's teachings. Moreover, in that world, one will not be able to hear the names of the two vehicles of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas; that Buddha's teachings will be solely the pure Dharma of great bodhisattvas.

In addition, that Tathāgata, Vajrapada, will have a vast retinue of one hundred thousand bodhisattvas. Also, that world will have no deterioration in [monastic] discipline, no decrease in lifespan, no violation of the precepts, no loss of correct views, and no one will go mad, deaf, mute, lame, be hunch-backed, or have a stutter. There will be no harsh and unwholesome disputes, arguments, or deficiencies in capacities for any beings there. All will attain the characteristics and adornments of the twenty-eight kinds of devas. That Buddha's lifespan will be eight medium-length kalpas, during which no devas or humans will die prematurely.

Śāntamati, you should know that Vajrapada Tathāgata will have these and immeasurably more extraordinary qualities. Whenever that buddha bhagavān teaches the Dharma, he will emit light. Having seen that light, all sentient beings will then know that the Tathāgata is teaching the True Dharma. If there are sentient beings who together consider [that light] carefully, they will wish to go in the presence of that buddha, revere him, and listen to the Dharma. With the assistance of the supernormal power of that buddha, they will immediately appear in the presence of that buddha. Some will appear in the presence of that buddha by their own supernormal powers. Directly a great crowd of devas and humans will come to his assembly. Thereupon, that buddha bhagavān will rise into the sky the height of a hundred thousand tāla trees, and everyone in the four

great continents will see the unique characteristics of the immense body of that tathāgata. All the worlds of the ten directions will hear the pure and excellent sound of that tathāgata's thunderous and reverberating teaching, and all sentient beings, having heard it, will be delighted. When that tathāgata is teaching the True Dharma for the sake of all bodhisattvas, not a single sentient being will have a mistaken understanding of the Dharma taught by that tathāgata because all those sentient beings will have sharp faculties and will have opened their eye of clear understanding. Moreover, there will not be a king in that world, as only the Buddha Bhagavān Vajrapada Tathāgata will be the supreme Dharma King. In addition, all sentient beings in that land will have no attachment to views of a self or personhood.

¹Moreover, Śāntamati, when any deva or human in the land of that Vajrapada Tathāgata wishes for him to go on an alms round,² whether it is a deva or a human, they will see the Tathāgata with a noble appearance standing before them holding an alms bowl. Then, having seen his noble appearance, all those devas and humans will each desire to present to the Tathāgata pure food and drink. According to their wishes, a bowl will be set in the desired location with food of a hundred flavours and provided with all kinds of adornments. That buddha will then know this and receive it as an offering. Having accepted this offering, that buddha will immediately leave that dwelling and return to the Tathāgata's lodging place in a monastery. Together with all the bodhisattva assemblies there, he will enter samādhi.

Śāntamati, you should know that the land in which that buddha tathāgata will dwell will have these, and immeasurably more extraordinary qualities. Therefore it is called the Saṃsuddha World.

3. The Rejoicing at the Prediction of Vajrapāṇi's Awakening

³At the time that the Bhagavān gave Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, his prediction of awakening, twenty thousand humans within the assembly gave rise to the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, all vowing to be born in the land of Vajrapada Tathāgata, the Saṃsuddha World.

¹ T312.735c3.

² I.e., if they wish to give to him for merit or to practice charity.

³ T312.735c27f14.

Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, having heard the Buddha Bhagavān give him his prediction, was enraptured, danced with joy, and then threw his vajra mallet into the sky. When he heaved his vajra mallet, the trichiliocosm quaked in six ways, flowers rained down from the sky, and drums issued forth music. Everyone in the assembly spontaneously had the greatest marvellous multicoloured garlands appear in their right hands.¹

²Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, went before the Buddha, joined his palms, and recited, with sincerity, this gāthā:

The immensely great Dharma King,
The inexhaustible treasury of the True Dharma,
Who desires the benefit of the world,
Skilfully discriminates all dharmas.

Regarding all dharmas,
Having set aside thoughts of stinginess,
Following the Dharma and relying on the practice of the Dharma,
Being well-established, I go for refuge.

The Buddha is a pure great being,
With utterly pure conduct,
Renowned as the king of merits,
Who hears everywhere in the three realms.

He is able, in the three times,
To always uphold inexhaustible wisdom,
To equally perform good conduct:
I pay homage to he who is free from obscurations.

Like the sun and moon, he is entirely pure,
Pervasively pure, and clearly pure,
More radiant than sunlight,
His marvellous light is like a cluster of lights.

His pure voice is the most beautiful voice,

¹ T310 adds “flowers and incense and various kinds of banners, parasols, and other decorations.” The address of Vajrapāṇi, which follows, likewise features his presentation of these kinds of goods to the Buddha.

² T312.736a3.

His pure voice is deep and marvellously resonant.
To the tremendous golden light of the Triple Gem,
I now wish to pay homage.

Always manifesting a pure and wonderful body,
And not being bound to such a body,
He always teaches with beautiful words,
And yet is free from words and verbal distinctions.

Even though he is the great Dharma Master,
He does not give rise to thoughts of the Dharma.
Even though he liberates all sentient beings,
He also does not give rise to thoughts of sentient beings.

What can the world do
To be able to repay the Buddha's great kindness?
Among merits and benefits,
Only going forth from home¹ can repay him.

Having heard the Buddha's teachings,
It cannot change into any other Dharma.
Following in accord with the Dharma gate I received,
I shall genuinely cultivate and properly practice.

Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, together with everyone else in that great assembly, each holding those many marvellous flower garlands, scattered them upon the Buddha. Then, by the Buddha's supernormal power, those flower garlands which had been strewn immediately pervaded universally in the trichiliocosm. All sentient beings were then adorned with all those marvellous flower garlands. They also appeared and scattered everywhere, piling up eight feet² high.

¹ Skt. *pravrajyā*, to leave home to become a monastic.

² A pada (foot) as a measure of length is twelve to fifteen fingers' breadth.

Chapter 17. Nonduality and Ineffability

¹Thereupon, Śāntamati Bodhisattva went before Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, and said:

Lord of Mysteries! Has the Bhagavān Tathāgata given you a prediction?

Vajrapāṇi said:

O son of good family, the Buddha did give me a prediction, whose inherent existence² is like a dream.

Śāntamati said:

Now you have received a prediction, what have you obtained?

Vajrapāṇi said:

Since there is nothing to be obtained, I received a prediction.

Śāntamati said:

What dharma corresponds to ‘nothing to be obtained?’

Vajrapāṇi said:

Self, person, sentient being, and soul³ are all nothing to be obtained; the aggregates, sense bases, and realms of cognition⁴ are also nothing to be obtained; even up to wholesome and unwholesome, blame and blamelessness, contaminated and uncontaminated, the worldly and super-worldly, the conditioned and unconditioned, the defiled and pure, birth, death, and nirvāṇa: these are all nothing to be obtained.

Śāntamati said:

¹ T312.736b1 f14; T310.69a15 f12.

² Skt. *svabhāva*. The intrinsic nature of something.

³ Skt. *jīva*.

⁴ Skt. *skandhāyatanadhātu*.

If a dharma is nothing to be obtained, then how did you receive a prediction?

Vajrapāṇi said:

As there is nothing to be obtained, I received a prediction only due to my penetrating wisdom.

Śāntamati said:

How can wisdom observe¹ two things at the same time?

Vajrapāṇi said:

If two things can be observed, then one cannot obtain a prediction. Therefore, due to being able to see not-two, all bodhisattvas thus receive a prediction in the wisdom of non-duality.

Śāntamati said:

If wisdom can observe non-duality, how can one give or receive a prediction?

Vajrapāṇi said:

Since giving a prediction and receiving a prediction are equal in nature, in this non-duality, there is nothing to be obtained.

Śāntamati said:

Lord of Mysteries! How can there be a prediction in non-duality?

Vajrapāṇi said:

If the non-dual state is just like this, then one can receive a prediction in such a state.

Śāntamati said:

¹ Or know, contemplate.

What is such a state called? And where does one receive a prediction?

Vajrapāṇi said:

The state and place where I received a prediction. I received a prediction in the state and place of a sentient being, the state and place of a soul, the state and place of a person.¹

Śāntamati said:

As for “my state and place,” where is that?

Vajrapāṇi said:

My state and place is the state and place of the Tathāgata’s liberation.

Śāntamati said:

And where is the state and place of the Tathāgata’s liberation?

Vajrapāṇi said:

The state and place of the Tathāgata’s liberation is the state and place of ignorance and attachment to existence.

Śāntamati said:

And where is the state and place of ignorance and attachment to existence?

Vajrapāṇi said:

It is the state and place of absolute non-arising and non-origination.

Śāntamati said:

¹ Vajrapāṇi is trying to explain how, in wisdom, we can at the same time speak of the location of receiving a prediction as non-dual at the same as identifying it as conventional reality.

And where is the state and place of absolute non-arising and non-origination?

Vajrapāṇi said:

In the place that which is inexpressible.¹

Śāntamati said:

If there is no expression, how is there elucidation?

Vajrapāṇi said:

If there is elucidation, then there is no non-expression.

Śāntamati said:

Why is there no elucidation?

Vajrapāṇi said:

Nothing that is elucidated is expressed.

Śāntamati said:

If there is no elucidation, then how can there be instruction?

²Vajrapāṇi said:

If there is instruction, then there is no elucidation; if there is no elucidation, then there is no instruction.

Śāntamati said:

How then does one obtain instruction?

Vajrapāṇi said:

¹ Skt. *vijñapti*. Also, representation or declaration. The idea here is the supposition of words that correspond to things in the world, or dharmas.

² T312.736c1.

Even if there were expression, [instruction] could not be obtained.

Śāntamati said:

Why is there expression, and yet [instruction] is not obtained?

Vajrapāṇi said:

If there is non-attachment to words, then [instruction] is not obtained.

Śāntamati said:

What is non-attachment to words?

Vajrapāṇi said:

It refers to meaning that follows in conformity.¹

Śāntamati said:

What, then, does “meaning that follows in conformity” mean?

Vajrapāṇi said:

This expresses that there is meaning, and yet nothing is seen.²

Śāntamati said:

Why is there meaning, and yet nothing is seen?

Vajrapāṇi said:

If meaning were non-meaning, then all here would be sought but not obtainable.

Śāntamati said:

¹ Skt. *ānugūnyārtha*. Can also be translated as “the meaning of homogeneity.”

² I.e., there is a meaning, but it is a mere designation from the ultimate perspective.

If meaning were non-meaning, and that sought would be unobtainable, then what is [really] sought?

Vajrapāṇi said:

It follows from meaning being non-meaning, that the sought is unobtainable, that no dharma can be sought.¹

Śāntamati said:

If no dharma can be sought, then all is entirely unseekable?

Vajrapāṇi said:

In this case, there is not the slightest dharma that can be sought. Why? Since no dharma can be sought, then dharmas are non-dharmas.

Śāntamati said:

In this case, what does ‘dharma’ mean?

Vajrapāṇi said:

Even if the word ‘dharma’ could not be obtained, then what are existent phenomena here? O son of good family, you should know that if one speaks of ‘dharmas’ in this way, it is to speak in words without attachment and without action. Therefore, it is said that all dharmas are without words and ineffable. O son of good family, if someone says that something has been said, that is the same as it not being said. By not being said, it is neither a dharma nor the truth.

¹ This seems to be implying that in the case in which meaning is non-meaning (which does not preclude it not corresponding to something seen) that if the sought cannot be obtained, then dharmas (which would be the object of seeking) could not be sought even outside of this hypothetical. If meaning is meaning, such that the sought can be obtained then a dharma cannot be sought (due to the typical arguments against inherent existence, *svabhāva*, such as emptiness, dependent origination, and so forth). Rather, if words correspond to dharmas, then dharmas could not be sought because they would have an inherent existence and would be unchangeable. There are a few ways to interpret this, but this might be one way to take it.

Śāntamati said:

Lord of Mysteries, if that is the case, why are not all the Tathāgata's expositions of the Dharma not also unspoken?

Vajrapāṇi said:

Śāntamati, did I not already say to you that the Bhagavān Tathāgata did not utter a single word? Due to ineffability, the Tathāgata, by the supernormal power of his vows, manifests having words to accord with sentient beings.

Śāntamati said:

If I speak, is that a fault?

Vajrapāṇi said:

If you spoke, it is a fault of verbal action.

Śāntamati said:

What is the fault of that verbal action?

Vajrapāṇi said:

The fault is in attaching to thoughts about words.

Śāntamati said:

How can we avoid this fault?

Vajrapāṇi said:

In all dharmas, whether one speaks or does not speak, there is not a single dharma that can be expressed.¹ If nothing is expressed, one

¹ Here, the meaning of "expression" as vijñapti is clearer. It is indicating a representation of dharmas in the world in the essence of words.

avoids fault. Moreover, if nothing is declared regarding the self, there is also the avoidance of fault.

Śāntamati said:

What can be regarded as the root of this fault?

Vajrapāṇi said:

Cognitive apprehension is regarded as the root of that fault.

¹Śāntamati said:

What is the root of cognitive apprehension?

Vajrapāṇi said:

Attachment is the root.

Śāntamati said:

What is the root of attachment?

Vajrapāṇi said:

False discrimination is the root.

Śāntamati said:

What is the root of false discrimination?

Vajrapāṇi said:

Overwhelming object-perception² is the root.

Śāntamati said:

What is the root of overwhelming object-perception?

¹ T312.737a1.

² Skt. *adhyālabhāna*.

Vajrapāṇi said:

The root of overwhelming object-perception is sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental dharmas.

Śāntamati said:

Why is it not objects of perception?¹

Vajrapāṇi said:

If there is no continuity with desire, then there are no objects of perception. Śāntamati, you should know that the Tathāgata has said that among all dharmas, there are no objects of perception if one cuts off desire.²

When Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, spoke this teaching, five hundred bhikṣus in the assembly attained mental liberation,³ and two hundred bodhisattvas attained patience.

¹ Skt. *ālambana*.

² This is to emphasise that objects of perception are themselves co-arising with cognition. If they are not cognized (by a mind that has a conditional continuity with desire, no less), they cannot be perceptual objects.

³ This corresponds to freedom from afflictions and removal of the afflictive hindrances (greed, anger, and ignorance), in contrast with liberation by wisdom which removes the cognitive hindrances (penetration into the emptiness of dharmas).

Chapter 18. Entry into the Great City in the Wilderness for Alms

1. Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva's Invitation

¹At that time, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, having examined the prediction he had received, was comforted at heart, was enraptured, and danced for joy. He went before the Buddha and said:

Bhagavān, I now wish to invite the Bhagavān to stay in my Palace of Mysteries and receive a few alms in that place for seven days together with all the bodhisattvas and a great crowd of śrāvakas. I wish that the Buddha compassionately accepts my invitation. Why? Bhagavān! In that great city in the wilderness there dwell many yakṣas, rākṣasas, kumbhāṇḍas, piśācas, gandharvas, mahoragas, and many other kinds of beings. If such beings can see the Buddha, they will all attain benefit and comfort in the long night [of saṃsāra]; they will cease their many crimes, hostilities, and the evils of their minds. In addition, it will allow the four great kings and their many retainers to all obtain great benefit abide in comfort in the long night [of saṃsāra]. If the Buddha Bhagavān has compassion for me and comes to my palace, the bodhisattvas, together with the śrāvakas, will receive modest alms and cause incalculably many sentient beings to increase their wholesome roots, and allow me to fulfil my intentions.

The Buddha then accepted the invitation with silence.

Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, knowing that the Buddha Bhagavān had accepted his invitation with silence, was enraptured, and danced for joy. He immediately bowed his head to the feet of the Buddha. He circumambulated him seven times to the right and then quickly left the Buddha's assembly and returned to his dwelling in the great city in the wilderness.

2. Vajrapāṇi Prepares for the Offering

Then, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, having returned to his palace, gave rise to the thought:

How should I now prepare the offerings? Also, what kind of perceptual objects should I use for glorious adornment to give rise to longing [for the Dharma], and so that all the many devaputras of the form

¹ T312.737a12f14; T310.69c18f13. These two versions only differ slightly.

realm give rise to a rare state of mind, and so that all the great bodhisattva assemblies who have gathered from worlds in the ten directions will give rise to joy, and so that I also may perform an act of extensive charity and make a marvellous offering to the Buddha?

Having thought like this, he at once recalled:

Long ago, at one time during the night, the Buddha entered a samādhi called “The Extensive Inconceivable Conduct of Tranquility.” I, along with the Buddha, directly entered that samādhi. Having gone past buddha-fields as numerous as the sands of the Ganges in the eastern direction, we reached one world called Anantagunaratanavyūha,¹ whose tathāgata was called Vyūharāja.² In that buddha-field, that master of transformation Bhagavān, for ten thousand bodhisattvas, gave predictions of awakening. At that time, I saw that buddha-field, its humans, devas, and adornments, which surpassed all other marvellous adornments. I should make offerings for the Bhagavān based on that world’s adornments of limitless treasures of merit and the characteristics with which it is gloriously adorned.

³Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, directly entered the samādhi of great Vyūharāja. In that samādhi, he correctly investigated the limitless treasures of merit that adorned that world and its various kinds of beautiful adornments. Having observed it, using his supernormal power, he transported and set up those adornments in that great city in the wilderness without the slightest difference with that world’s adornments of limitless treasures of merit. In the east, west, south, and north, both lengthwise and breadthwise, the ground was blue lapis lazuli for a full sixty-four yojanas. A fence inlaid with sapphire ran along the circumference; it was gloriously adorned with many jewels, such as hanging pearls, flowers, and gemstones. Lotus flowers were adorned with particles of gold from the Jambū River, and many strings of jewels and gems were suspended from many jewelled branches and leaves. There were also countless divine garments, gloriously adorned with numerous pearl ornaments, countless extraordinarily wonderful, coloured silk cloths, and countless wonderful, jewelled garlands were suspended from them, and in many

¹ Jeweled Array of Limitless Merits.

² King of the Array.

³ T312.737b13.

extraordinary, jewelled vessels were burning incense and aromatic powders.

Moreover, there were countless multicoloured flowers everywhere, and people who saw them gave rise to extraordinarily excellent satisfaction. Their bodies and minds were equally joyful. There manifested numerous collections of treasures of merit, and there also appeared uncountable decorations with the marks of materiality. Moreover, there were many hundreds of thousands of adorned lion thrones and jewelled footstools with legs decorated with intersecting jewelled ropes, from which were suspended precious flower adornments and nets of pearls, and which had eight layers. Also, countless divine garments were spread, and in the sky, there were also jewelled nets as a canopy. In this way, there were many beautiful adornments, which had never yet been seen or heard elsewhere in the vast world since antiquity. Furthermore, it was decorated with hundreds of refined, rare, and most excellent meals and drinks. Moreover, the rows of hundreds of thousands of adorned lion thrones were floating in the sky. Excellent, jewelled canopies spontaneously covered, one by one, the lion thrones in the sky. Each canopy was exquisitely decorated with many characteristics.

¹At that time, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, while in meditation, arranged these extraordinary superior characteristics in this way. Having set up those adorned lion thrones, he arose from meditation. Letting night pass into the morning, he set up the best pure food. With a deep and pure mind, he wished to make offerings to the Bhagavān Tathāgata and the great assembly of bodhisattvas.

3. Vajrapāṇi Instructs Donors

²Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, when the night had passed, went to address the four great kings, saying:

Good sirs! You should know that I invited the Buddha together with the great bodhisattvas and the entire assembly of śrāvakas to come to my lodging, the Palace of Mysteries, where I shall spread out offerings for a full seven days, and that the Buddha Bhagavān compassionately has accepted my invitation. You should each, with your supernatural powers, together with your vast retinues, for seven days and nights, not give rise to negligence, not give rise to unsettled minds, and refrain from all other deeds: you should exclusively endeavour to make offerings to the Buddha.

¹ T312.737c5.

² T312.737c19f15.

Also, I shall command all the yakṣas, rākṣasas, kumbhāṇḍas, piśācas, gandharvas, mahoragas, and many other kinds of sentient beings in my lodging in the great city in the wilderness, saying:

You should all know that Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva has invited the Buddha Bhagavān to this great city in the wilderness and will make offerings and do worship for a full seven days. You should restrain all your anger and evil and give rise to a pure mind and give rise to thoughts of immense joy. Prepare to offer to the Bhagavān and to listen and receive the True Dharma!

¹Then, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, addressed his eldest son, Vajrasena, saying:

Wise man! You should now, by your supernormal power, go to the Brahmā realm, and yourself, from the devas of the assembly of Brahmā to Akaniṣṭha Heaven,² go to each of the devas and inform them, saying:

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, has invited the Buddha to come to his Palace of Mysteries in the great city in the wilderness. For a full seven days, he will make offerings and do worship. All of you devas who wish to see the Buddha should immediately come there!

Thereupon, the Lord of Mysteries eldest son, Vajrasena, having received his father's instructions, at once did as commanded.

At that time, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, addressed his second son, Subāhu, saying:

Wise man! You should now, by your supernormal power, go to the devas of the earth up to the devas of the sky,³ and say to the devas of the assembly of the four great kings,⁴ the devas of Trāyastriṃśa, the devas of Suyāma, the devas of Tuṣita, the devas of Nirmāṇarati, and

¹ T312.738a3.

² I.e., from the lowest to the highest Brahmā realms.

³ I.e., from Indra's heaven, which is "on the earth" in the sense in that it is on top of Mount Sumeru, to the heaven of form devas in the sky above Indra's heaven.

⁴ This must be the assembly, because as related above, Vajrapāṇi has already invited the kings themselves.

the devas of Paranirmitavaśavarti, and going to each of the devas, inform them, saying:

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, has invited the Buddha to come to his Palace of Mysteries in the great city in the wilderness. For a full seven days, he will make offerings and do worship. All of you devas who wish to see the Buddha should immediately come there!

Thereupon, his second son, Subāhu, having received his father's instruction, at once did as commanded.

Then, in the span of an instant, there were many hundreds of thousands of devaputras of the desire realm and devaputras of the form realm who surrounded everywhere with a circumference of a hundred thousand yojanas, filling up the sky.

4. Vajrapāṇi Invites the Buddha to Enter

Then, when the night had passed, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, set up a gloriously adorned couch for the Bhagavān. Touching his right knee to the ground, joining his palms, with earnest sincerity, he faced the direction of the Buddha Bhagavān, and recited this marvellous gāthā to issue forth an invitation:

Welcome, O best and most revered among humans!
 Welcome, O unsurpassed one among humans!
 Excellent aspirations will increase among humans, when descends
 The Buddha; when the great sage has arrived!

Welcome, O best among bipeds!
 Welcome, O most honoured among bipeds!
 Excellent aspirations will increase among bipeds, when descends
 The Buddha; when the great sage has arrived!

The Buddha gives rise to the lotus-like precepts of purity,
 Constantly arising from the waters with samādhi born of diligence;
 Just as a bee alights upon many flowers and then returns,
 I wish for the quiescent lotus flower to come and descend!

First establishing the four noble truths,
 Observing everywhere with the eye of compassion,
 He is always able to reverberate with the sound of no-self,

I wish for the Buddha, of the great lion's roar, to come and descend!

With precepts as his root and mindfulness as the stalk,
The factors of awakening as the flower, which is always lush,
With his wisdom of liberation as the ripe fruit;
I wish for the Buddha, the great king of trees, to come and descend!

With marvellous wisdom, deep and profound,
And the tranquil deep and placid waters of samādhi,
He is the great guide who has fully illuminated myriad practices;
I wish for the Buddha, the ocean of merit, to come and descend!

Having accomplished great wisdom, with a body of auspicious marks,
Whose radiance of great wisdom broadly adorns and
Awakens the lotus flowers of all beings who take refuge;
I wish for the Buddha, the sunlight, to come and descend!

With the quaking of right speech, he subdues all views of the tīrthikas,
His liberation is the medicinal tree that saves those sunk in sickness,
He opens the eyes of all herds of deer, who are those with lesser faculties,¹
I wish for the Buddha, the great king of mountains, to come and descend!

5. The Buddha and the Saṅgha Travel to the Palace

²Thereupon, the Bhagavān, having received the sincere and diligent invitation of Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, knew that the time had arrived and addressed the assembly of bhikṣus, saying:

You should all don your robes and take up your bowls and proceed to Vajrapāṇi, who has invited us to stay for a full seven days to make offerings and do worship. His conduct is excellent indeed! Now is the right time!

Addressing those who were keeping and protecting the monastery:

Those bodhisattvas and śrāvakas now in the crowd who have already attained the supernormal powers should each use their supernormal

¹ I.e., those with a mind not yet fit for the Mahāyāna.

² T312.738b11.

powers to travel through the sky and go there. As for those who do not yet have supernormal powers, you should enter the Tathāgata's soft and great halo of light, within which you will travel through the sky and go there.

Thereupon, the Bhagavān on Mount Gr̥dhakūṭa, at Rājagṛha, made his body invisible, and the bodhisattvas and śrāvakas were paying homage and circumambulating whereupon a great light emerged and pervaded universally. Devas and devīs guiding from the front and behind sang songs of praise.¹ They proclaimed a hundred thousand diverse kinds of koṭīs of niyutas of songs and music, which shook the great earth. The heavens rained down many diverse types of multicoloured divine flowers. The width of the buddha-field manifested many kinds of the Buddha's great authority, the Buddha's great supernormal powers, the Buddha's excellent conduct, the Buddha's great manifestations, the Buddha's great auspiciousness, the Buddha's great luminosity, the Buddha's excellent noble deportment, and the characteristics of the Buddha's great sporting. They spontaneously moved through the sky and went towards the great city in the wilderness.

At that time, the Bhagavān appeared in the sky just like a king of geese, and the [entire saṅgha] was moving naturally and with ease. All the crowds of devaputras from the desire realm and form realm distantly saw the Bhagavān high up in the sky just like a king of geese, moving spontaneously and effortlessly, and they together gave rise to joy, pleasure, and felicity. He was also as lovely as the sun first peacefully emerging, and just like a full moon with a clear and pure radiance surrounded by a flock of stars. Thus he was surrounded by the assembly of Śakra, Lord of the Gods, and the brahmā assembly of the king of the Brahmā heaven. When multitudes of devas saw this, they at once gave rise to an exceedingly rare state of mind, and each carried many kinds of marvellous incense and flowers as offerings for the Buddha. That is to say, divine utpala lotuses, kumuda lotuses, puṇḍarika lotuses, mandārava flowers, mahāmandārava flowers, paricitra flowers, mahāparicitra flowers, mañjūṣaka flowers, mahāmañjūṣaka flowers, lovely flowers, great pleasing flowers, great wheel-like flowers, all kinds of flowers that grow on land, as well as all other extraordinary and superior kinds of incense and flowers with hundreds of petals and thousands of petals, as well as flowers which have brilliant lights, flowers with beams of light, flowers with universally pervading scent, flowers with permanent fragrance, flowers

¹ This is represented by a verse in T310 and is almost identical to the description that follows. It seems like what is understood as description in T312 is seen as a quotation of the devas' song in T310.

that are always open, flowers that are pleasing to the eye. [They took] incalculable other kinds of the most excellent types of wonderful incense and flowers and scattered them all over the buddha. Moreover, they hung extraordinarily wonderful banners and made proclamations with hundreds of thousands of kinds of exceptionally beautiful songs.

¹At that time, the Bhagavān manifested many kinds of extraordinarily wonderful superior appearances, incense, flowers, banners, and canopies. A drum proclaimed his glory with music for the multitudes. At that moment, they entered the great city in the wilderness headed by the assembly of King Vaiśravaṇa's palace. Then the Buddha, together with the bodhisattvas and his great assembly of śrāvakas, descended from the sky and entered the palace.

At that moment, the great earth universally quaked. It became soft and extraordinarily pleasing, and all sentient beings were without any vexation.

6. Vajrapāṇi and the Assembled Beings make Offerings to the Buddha and Saṅgha

Thereupon, the four great kings, knowing that the Buddha Bhagavān had arrived at the great city in the wilderness, each protected their respective directions together with the members of their retinues. Holding many kinds of extraordinarily wonderful incense and flowers, they followed the Buddha. The four great kings having arrived, they bowed their heads to the feet of the Buddha, scattered extraordinarily fine smelling flowers upon the Buddha as an offering, joined their palms with sincerity, and went to one side. All the members of their retinues also, with sincerity, bowed their heads to the feet of the Buddha, joined their palms, and followed. The Buddha briefly explained the essentials of the Dharma to the four great kings and their assemblies of retainers.

Then, the ten thousand yakṣas, rākṣasas, nāgas, gandharvas, kumbhāṇḍas, and so forth, who were in that assembly, having seen the Buddha's superior characteristics all aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Then assemblies of the palaces of the four great kings, their maidens, and retainers together with ten thousand devīs, aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Then, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, together with his retinue, each member of which was holding extraordinarily beautiful flowers in the world's most excellent arrays of qualities, together with

¹ T312.738c12.

unguents, aromatic powders, jewelled banners, and parasols, and all making music with drums, quickly reached the Buddha Bhagavān amongst the throng of the assembly of the palace of King Vaiśravaṇa. Having arrived, he bowed his head to the feet of the Buddha, circumambulated him to the right seven times, and, holding divine flowers, incense, and so forth, made offerings to the Buddha with utter and complete sincerity. His kinsmen and so forth, creating divine music, making offerings respectfully, and prostrating in homage, entered the palace to meet the guide, the Bhagavān, together with all the bodhisattvas and his great assembly of śrāvakas. Having arrived, they each respectfully took their seats.

¹Thereupon, the Bhagavān, on an extraordinarily wonderful, multicoloured, and adorned lion throne, together with all the bodhisattvas and his great assembly of śrāvakas, sat down.

Then, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, addressed Indra, Lord Brahmā, all the world protectors together with all the devaputras, and said:

You should each strive and endeavour, with appropriate joy, to accomplish the adornment and offering to the Bhagavān. This will allow you all to accumulate merit.

At that time, all the devaputras, having seen the greatest objects of perception and the extraordinarily wonderfully adorned lion throne, all gave rise to a rare state of mind and together declared:

What power caused these superior appearances? Was it by the supernatural power of the Buddha Bhagavān? Was it by the supernatural power of Vajrapāṇi, the Great Lord of Mysteries?

They then heard a voice from the sky proclaim:

Sons of good family! This was caused by the supernatural power of the Great Lord of Mysteries! In the eastern direction, past buddha-fields as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges, there is a world called Anantaḡaṇaratnavyūha. Its Buddha's name is Vyūharāja. Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, saw that world's various extraordinarily divine adornments. By the Lord of Mysteries' supernatural power, he caused this palace to have the same superior adornments as that world.

¹ T312.739a8.

At that time the Bhagavān was abiding upon that most excellent lion throne, in that dwelling in the great city in the wilderness, together with its yakṣas, rakṣasas, nāgas, gandharvas, kumbhāṇḍas, and so forth. They each came to the Buddha Bhagavān, prostrated with their heads to the ground, bowed their heads to the feet of the Buddha, joined palms in reverence, and all stood to one side.

Then, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, once more addressed the four great kings together with the entire assembly, and said:

You should all together come and join me, having given rise to perfect sincerity, in arranging the pure and extraordinarily excellent food and drink as an offering to the Bhagavān so that you can all accumulate great merit.

¹Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, together with all those retinues in the assembly, having purified their hands, arranged the most excellent dishes with a hundred flavours, for the bodhisattvas and for the pure Tathāgata of the deep mind, who is worthy of offerings. They all gave rise to a supreme state of mind and presented the dishes to the Bhagavān together with all the bodhisattvas and the great assembly. They caused them all to be fully sated. When they had finished their meal, they presented pure fragrant water to wash their faces and hands and clean their bowls. Then, before the Buddha, they returned to their seats to listen to the Dharma.

At that time, in that dwelling in the great city in the wilderness, all the yakṣas, rākṣasas, piśācas, and so forth each with sincere reverence for the Bhagavān, joined their palms in reverence and prostrated in homage.

¹ T312.739b2.

Chapter 19. The World Protectors

1. Vajrapāṇi's Request for a Teaching

¹At that time, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, beseeched the Bhagavān to expound the True Dharma, saying:

I wish, Bhagavān, for the sake of those who have not yet aroused the aspiration to attain bodhi, that you teach the Dharma as is suitable for sentient beings, causing them to understand the principles of the Dharma, so that they may arouse the great aspiration to attain bodhi and dwell in non-retrogression. Moreover, for the many yakṣas, rākṣasas, piśācas, gandharvas, mystery spirits, and mahoragas in this assembly, cause them to have benefit and comfort in the long night [of saṃsāra] and to practice virtuous deeds, and that in the benefit which they obtain, through your best and highest explanation, they will not lose out in their share of the good Dharma.

Thereupon, the Bhagavān addressed Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, and everyone in the assembly, saying:

Good sirs! Listen carefully and pay attention! I shall now teach so that you will all understand the principles of the Dharma and practise virtuous deeds. I shall, O sons of good family and daughters of good family, cause you all to obtain the best and highest explanation, so you will not lose out in your share of the good Dharma.

Accordingly, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, together with the whole assembly, single-mindedly listened well.

2. The Buddha's Teaching for the Assembly

²The Buddha addressed the great assembly:

a. Arousing Bodhicitta

Good sirs! If a son of good family or daughter of good family has profoundly aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, they can be endowed with faith and vast purity. They will desire to see all the noble ones, delight in listening to the True Dharma,

¹ T312.739b19f16; T310.71c1f13.

² T312.739c3.

skilfully donate without stinginess: from their hands will emerge inexhaustible virtue and ease through their accumulations of meritorious actions. They will have a mind of detachment. In their joyful acts of giving equally, their minds will be free from obscurations and defilements. They will have faith in the effects of karma and will be cut off from being discouraged by discriminations, doubts, and perplexities about the fruition of good and evil karma.

b. Cultivating Morality

Having understood this, regarding conditionality and restraint, they know what one should not do, and do not do it, namely: they will abstain from taking life, abstain from stealing, abstain from sexual misconduct, abstain from false speech, abstain from frivolous speech, abstain from divisive speech, abstain from harsh speech, abstain from greed, abstain from anger, and abstain from ignorance. They will firmly maintain and cultivate these ten paths of wholesome conduct and abandon and abstain from acting on the ten ways of unwholesome conduct. Thus, they broadly practice with pure faith, and together with śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas, they uphold precepts, and being virtuous, they together practice pure conduct on the path of the True Dharma.

They extensively learn and practice many virtuous Dharmas, they deeply and firmly take refuge in virtuous thoughts and deeds, through tranquillity they self-regulate, always speaking loving words, subdue tīrthika views through the cultivation of good and abstention from evil, do not elevate, denigrate, embarrass, or flatter, give rise to a mind that abides in right mindfulness, close the gates to the three [lower] realms, remove all diseases, eliminate all heavy burdens, leap beyond doubts and mental disturbances and renounce all kinds of existence.

c. Associating with Good Friends and the Good Friends' Teachings

Being thus known, as is suitable, they become familiar, respected, honoured, and revered by all buddhas and śrāvakas, as well as śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas with whom they are a good and virtuous friend. Having heard and received the True Dharma, these good and virtuous friends will point it out, teach it, and bring benefit and joy.

[These good friends] will explain that in giving one receives the recompense of great wealth, in upholding the precepts one attains birth as a deva, listening extensively brings great wisdom, and pure

contemplation brings non-disturbance; if one practices giving, one receives giving, if one practices stinginess, one receives stinginess; if one practices upholding the precepts, one receives upholding the precepts, if one practices violation of the precepts, one receives violation of the precepts; if one practices patience, one receives patience, if one practices aversion, one receives aversion; if one practices diligence, one receives diligence, if one practices indolence, one receives indolence; if one practices dhyāna, one receives dhyāna, if one practices distraction, one receives distraction; if one practices wisdom, one receives wisdom, if one practices ignorance, one receives ignorance; if one practices skilful bodily conduct, one receives skilful bodily conduct, if one practices unskilful bodily conduct, one receives unskilful bodily conduct; if one practices skilful speech, one receives skilful speech, if one practices unskilful speech, one receives unskilful speech; if one practices skilful thoughts, one receives skilful thoughts, if one practices unskilful thoughts, one receives unskilful thoughts.

[Those good friends teach:] this is skilful, this is unskilful; you should do this, you should not do this; having done this deed one obtains benefit in the long night [of saṃsāra]; one should practice skilful deeds; having done this deed one does not obtain benefit in the long night [of saṃsāra], but suffering; one should not practice unskilful deeds. With these kinds of Dharma teachings, these good and virtuous friends, having heard and received the True Dharma, point it out, teach it, and bring benefit and joy.

Moreover, they can spot and know that someone is a vessel for the Dharma, by their teaching the incredibly profound Dharma, such as teaching the Dharma of the practice of emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness and so forth.

They will also teach that there is no birth, no arising, no self, no person, no being, no soul, and the incredibly profound Dharma of dependent origination, that: this dharma exists, therefore that is obtained; this dharma does not exist, therefore that is not obtained; if this dharma exists, that arises; if this dharma does not exist, that ceases. In this way, with ignorance as a condition, formations arise; with formations as a condition, consciousness arises; with consciousness as a condition, name and form arises; with name and form as a condition, the six sense spheres arise; with the six sense spheres as a condition, contact arises; with contact as a condition, feeling arises; with feeling as a condition, desire arises; with desire as a condition, attachment arises; with attachment as a condition, becoming arises; with becoming as a condition, birth arises; with birth as a condition,

old age, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, and distress, in short, the entire mass of suffering arises.

[They will teach:] if this dharma does not exist, then that is not obtained; thus is the cessation of dharmas; they say, with the cessation of ignorance, formations cease; with the cessation of formations, consciousness ceases; with the cessation of consciousness, name and form ceases; with the cessation of name and form, the six sense spheres cease; with the cessation of the six sense spheres, contact ceases; with the cessation of contact, feeling ceases; with the cessation of feeling, desire ceases; with the cessation of desire, attachment ceases; with the cessation of attachment, becoming ceases; with the cessation of becoming, birth ceases; with the cessation of birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, and distress cease, in short, the entire mass of suffering ceases.

[They will teach:] whether any of these dharmas arise or cease, in ultimate truth, not the slightest dharma can be obtained. Why? Because all dharmas arise due to conditions, they have no master, no doer, and no experiencer, but come forth due to causes and conditions. Thus, in this manner, either a dharma can come forth or cannot come forth, and there are no other dharmas.¹ Following from their coming forth, the triple world is established and unified. There is only establishment due to the coming forth from afflicted karma. While the foolish person considers unreal dharmas to be real, the wise should know that there is not the slightest dharma or doer that can be obtained. Because no doer can be obtained, a non-dharma can come forth or cannot come forth.

d. Not Having Doubt in the Explanation of the Dharma

If having heard this incredibly profound Dharma explained in this way, one does not give rise to doubt, then that person directly enters the nature of the non-obstruction of all dharmas; they do not cling to form, feeling, perception, formations, or consciousness; they do not cling to eyes and forms, ears and sounds, nose and smells, tongue and tastes, body and contact, mind and mental dharmas; eye-consciousness up to mind-consciousness; they believe that all dharmas are by

¹ In other words, dharmas can only come forth or not come forth due to causes and conditions. There are no dharmas that arise apart from causes and conditions.

their inherent nature originally empty; they believe that all dharmas are by their inherent nature originally separate.¹

²Good sirs! A bodhisattva who is non-retrogressing from that faith, from believing in this Dharma, does not diminish or lose his vision of the Buddha, hearing of the Dharma, or honouring of the pure Saṅgha. Anywhere he arises, he can always see the Buddha, hear and receive the True Dharma, and honour the pure Saṅgha, and is always born during a buddha-age.³ Having thus been born, he will arouse diligence in seeking the True Dharma.

e. Going forth from Home; Hearing, Practicing, and Teaching the Dharma

Because of his diligence, in the home of a white-robed layperson, with pointless matters, he will say to his wife and children, boys and girls, male and female servants and retainers, that to do his duty, he will abandon everything, that youth, entertainments, and music. [He will tell them] not to give rise to attachment in him, that he has aroused the mind of a noble man and desires to go forth from home out of true faith into the pure teachings of the Buddha Bhagavān. Having successfully gone forth from home, in the presence of a good and virtuous friend, he will, together with his good and virtuous friend, progress on the good path and be able to fulfil all his good intentions.

Having heard the good Dharma, he practices with sincerity according to what he heard. Without speaking, he will adorn [himself], becoming endowed with superior wisdom, and having aroused diligence, he will strive for extensive listening. According with the Dharma he has heard, he will explain it in detail to others without longing for any reward. Having acquired fame and benefit, he will not have a mind of attachment but will teach the Dharma for others with true words, and [himself] also accord with what he has heard. Sincerely explaining the Dharma for others, his pupils will acquire great loving-kindness and give rise to a mind of great compassion for all sentient beings. He will also be dispassionate regarding his extensive listening. In his conditions for bodily sustenance, he will have few desires and be satisfied and possess tranquillity, increasing his practice of good, delighting in [dwelling in] the wilderness. He will examine closely the meaning of the Dharma that he has heard, and he will

¹ They do not share their nature with anything else, such as conceptualization.

² T312.740b1.

³ I.e., a time when a buddha is alive in the world.

not diverge from any of the meanings that it contains. Not being attached to words, he tends towards the definitive meaning, and universally for all devas and humans, not only for himself, will he put it into application and practice. Regarding all sentient beings, he strives to [provide them with] unsurpassable knowledge, causing all other sentient beings, in buddha-knowledge, to attain freedom from negligence.

f. Freedom from Negligence

What, moreover, does it mean to say, “freedom from negligence?” It means, firstly, to cultivate regarding all one’s faculties, such as sight, the eye, forms, and so forth,¹ non-attachment to characteristics, non-grasping to good characteristics, and by understanding as they truly are, the defilement and distinctions in all material forms, always to seek renunciation. This is referred to as “freedom from negligence.”

Moreover, one who is free from negligence, having subdued and well trained their own mind, also, as the situation demands, restrains, and protects others’ minds, and skilfully calms down their afflictions and defiled desires. One brings them into alignment with desire for the Dharma, a desire to investigate aversion, investigate anger, investigate śamatha, the non-doing [of evil], and the non-doing of all with unwholesome roots in greed, anger, ignorance and so forth. He can also restrain the actions of body, speech, and mind of those who do bad deeds, those without deep and firm aspiration, and those who do not give rise to attention. In short, the complete elimination of all crimes and unwholesome dharmas is referred to as “freedom from negligence.”

²Good sirs! The bodhisattva who practices the Dharma of freedom from negligence in this way directly attains pure faith and non-negligence. Great Lord of Mysteries, you should know that the one Dharma of faith is vast and pure, and through it, one can always seek only the Good Dharma. If a person³ has faith, they will be free from fear of evil realms between worlds, will not fall into any regret,⁴ and will always receive the praise of all noble beings.

Moreover, Lord of Mysteries, the practitioner abiding in the Dharma can attain the True Dharma in the fortunate realms, always

¹ I.e., each of the sense bases, organs, and objects.

² T312.740c1.

³ 補特伽羅. The transliteration for pudgala.

⁴ Skt. *kaukrtya*. This can also be understood as mental disturbance, remorse, or evil deeds.

delight in seeing the Buddha, peacefully abide on the Noble Path, and attain great freedom. Having attained freedom, they also cause others to fulfil the Dharma of freedom universally, abide in bodhicitta, and attain the Tathāgata's knowledge. Further, Lord of Mysteries, if someone wants to attain the most sublime bliss, they should continually and correctly practice the true practice of the Dharma of Nirvāṇa. Great Lord of Mysteries, all who are now gathered in this assembly have done so by the power of having received stored roots of good [from past lives]; skilfully practising right conduct, all their roots of good will not diminish or be lost.

Why do their roots of good not diminish or get lost? Because of practising freedom from negligence. Therefore, whether they are a deva or human, none of the roots of good that they possess will diminish or be lost. Why? Because the mind of freedom from negligence skilfully guards all objects of perception, avoids all passion and taints of desire, desires to be close to the Dharma, can restrain desire, aversion, anger, and discursive thought. It can also cease attention which is not deep and firm, [cut off] all unwholesome dharmas, and cut off greed, anger, and ignorance. It can also put an end to all hindrances of body, speech, and mind; further, all their good dharmas do not at all approach diminishment or loss, not even in part. This is referred to as “freedom from negligence.”

If someone has faith and understanding in the Dharma of freedom from negligence, they can accord with all undertakings of diligence. Due to diligence and freedom from negligence, this person can accumulate and cultivate the merits of pure faith. Through practising the Dharma of diligence and freedom from negligence faithfully, they can practice right mindfulness and right knowledge. Through right mindfulness and right knowledge, there is also no diminishment or loss in all the factors of awakening. If one has faith, freedom from negligence, diligence, right mindfulness and right knowledge, one can practice the profound and firm Dharma.

g. Being and Non-Being

Great Lord of Mysteries, if the bodhisattva has attained liberation in the profound and firm Dharma, then he can truly know being and non-being.

Among these, what is being and what is non-being? The right practice of the Dharma of noble liberation, that is “being.” The wrong practice of the Dharma of noble liberation, that is “non-being.” If there is action and there is retribution, that is “being.” If there

is non-action and non-retribution, that is “non-being.” If eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are in conventional truth, that is “being.” If eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are in ultimate truth, that is “non-being.” If the bodhisattva arouses diligence regarding great bodhi, that is “being.” If they are negligent regarding great bodhi, that is “non-being.”

Erroneously producing the five aggregates, that is “being.” A dharma produced by a non-cause, that is “non-being.” Impermanent form, that is suffering, that is a dharma subject to destruction, that is “being.” Permanent form that is firm and stable, continuous, and not subject to destruction is a dharma that abides in tranquillity, that is “non-being.” Feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness that are impermanent, that are suffering, that are dharmas subject to destruction, that is “being.” Feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness that are permanent, that are firm and stable, that are continuous, that are not subject to destruction, that are dharmas which abide in tranquillity, that is “non-being.”

Formations conditioned by ignorance, that is “being.” The non-reality of ignorance and formations, that is “non-being.” Consciousness conditioned by formations, that is “being.” The non-reality of formations and consciousness, that is “non-being.” Name and form conditioned by consciousness, that is “being.” The non-reality of consciousness and name and form, that is “non-being.” The six sense spheres conditioned by name and form, that is “being.” The non-reality of name and form and the six sense spheres, that is “non-being.” Contact conditioned by the six sense spheres, that is “being.” The non-reality of the six sense spheres and contact, that is “non-being.” Feeling conditioned by contact, that is “being.” The non-reality of contact and feeling, that is “non-being.” Desire conditioned by feeling, that is “being.” The non-reality of feeling and desire, that is “non-being.” Attachment conditioned by desire, that is “being.” The non-reality of desire and attachment, that is “non-being.” Becoming conditioned by attachment, that is “being.” The non-reality of attachment and becoming, that is “non-being.” Birth conditioned by becoming, that is “being.” The non-reality of becoming and birth, that is “non-being.” Old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, and despair conditioned by birth, that is “being.” The non-reality of birth and old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, and despair, that is “non-being.”

Being endowed with great wisdom from extensive listening, that is “being.” To attain defiled wisdom from extensive listening, that is “non-being.” Undistracted dhyāna, that is “being.” Distracted

dhyāna, that is “non-being.” Through deep and firm focus, not giving rise to afflictions, that is “being.” Through deep and firm focus, giving rise to afflictions, that is “non-being.” Not giving rise to conceit or pride, one attains nirvāṇa in the human realm, that is “being.” Being conceited and proud, and receiving a prediction of one’s attainment of buddhahood, that is “non-being.” Entering emptiness everywhere, that is “being.” Internally being attached to a self, that is “non-being.” Striving to attain liberation through wisdom, that is “being.” One who should renounce characteristics of conceit, that is “non-being.” Moreover, if someone seeks for real dharmas in a self, person, being, soul, or in the unreal five aggregates, that is “non-being.”

¹Further, Great Lord of Mysteries, the bodhisattva who strives free from negligence and with deep and firm attention will fully realise the truth of being and non-being and be anointed by all the wise ones in the world. Having realised the truth, even if they practice in being, they will not be attached, and even if they practice in non-being, they will also not be attached. Thus they will be able to penetrate the true meaning of what was taught by all the buddha bhagavāns.

h. The Four Dharma Seals

²Moreover, Great Lord of Mysteries, regarding all compounded dharmas, the Tathāgata teaches that there are four Dharma seals. What are the four? The first is that all conditioned things are impermanent: for all brāhmaṇas and śramaṇas, up to long-lived devas, he always explains the refutation of ideas of permanence. The second is that all conditioned things are suffering: for all devas and humans who falsely imagine³ ideas of bliss, he refutes ideas of bliss. The third is that all conditioned things are without self: for those attached to a self and those on non-Buddhist paths, he refutes their ideas of a self. The fourth is that nirvāṇa is tranquillity: for all who are proud of their superiority, he seeks to refute their pride of superiority.

This is impermanence, namely, the designation that there is absolutely no constancy in dharmas. This is suffering, namely, the designation for being separated from what one desires or seeks. This is no self, namely, the designation that characteristics are empty. This is

¹ T312.741a25.

² T312.741b10f17.

³ Skt. *parikalpita*.

nirvāṇa, namely, the designation for directly experiencing the signless.

Great Lord of Mysteries, if all bodhisattvas deeply and firmly believe and understand this, strive, and cultivate, then their good dharmas will not diminish or be lost, and they will quickly fulfil the factors of awakening.

3. The Buddha Teaches the Four Great Kings how to Protect the World

At that time, the world protectors, the four great kings, went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

Bhagavān! We four kings are called world protectors. By what Dharma can we protect the world?

The Buddha addressed the four great kings, saying:

Good sirs! You can protect the world by practising according to the True Dharma, that is, by ten good [deeds]. What are the ten? The first is to abstain from killing; the second is to be entirely satisfied with one's wealth or lack thereof; the third is not to defile another's wife or home; the fourth is not to disrupt others; the fifth is not to utter false words; the sixth is to speak the truth; the seventh is speak without embellishment; the eighth is to not to seek for any of the prosperity of others; the ninth is to put an end to aversion; the tenth is to have pure right view. Good sirs! You can protect the world with these ten good Dharmas.

¹Further, there are eight Dharmas by which you can also protect the world. What are the eight? The first is to act as you speak; the second is to respect teachers everywhere; the third is to follow the right path; the fourth is to have a mind that is honest and sincere; the fifth is to have a mind that is always gentle and flexible; the sixth is to always give rise to a compassionate mind regarding all sentient beings; the seventh is not to commit any offences; the eighth is to accumulate many wholesome roots. You can protect the world with these eight good Dharmas.

Further, there are six Dharmas by which you can also protect the world. What are the six? The first is to practice kind actions: towards

¹ T312.741c1.

teachers, good and virtuous friends, one's fellow practitioners of noble conduct, up to all sentient beings, and giving rise to thoughts that incline towards respect for all: one thus conforms to the first, bodily activity. The second is to practice kind speech: towards teachers, good and virtuous friends, one's fellow practitioners of noble conduct, up to all sentient beings, and giving rise to thoughts that incline towards respect for all: one thus conforms to the second, verbal activity. The third is to practice kind thoughts: towards teachers, good and virtuous friends, one's fellow practitioners of noble conduct, up to all sentient beings, and giving rise to thoughts that incline towards respect for all: one thus conforms to the third, mental activity. The fourth is to have little grasping regarding all that is gained to acquire support for [teaching] the Dharma, even regarding the food in one's alms-bowl, and to have this knowledge alike with fellow practitioners of noble conduct, feeling equanimous towards all, and having thoughts that incline towards respect: one thus conforms to the fourth, regarding benefits. The fifth is to be utterly unpolluted regarding faultlessly and uninterruptedly practising the Dharma and the precepts: one should experience no-arising of desire [while practising] and know that being cut off from all blame and disparagement is praised, and with this kind of Dharma of pure precepts, to practice in common with fellow practitioners of noble conduct, and have thoughts that incline towards respect: one thus conforms to the fifth, practising pure precepts. The sixth is right view in the Dharma of renunciation, reaching superior penetrating insight: one practices the right practices in accord with what is Dharma, and one should thus practice in common with fellow practitioners of noble conduct and have thoughts that incline towards respect: one thus conforms to the sixth, respectful harmony in views. Good sirs! You can protect the world with these six ways of conforming with the Dharma.¹

Further, there are two Dharmas by which you can also protect the world. What are the two? The first is to have conscience, the second

¹ Here, T310 adds the following:

Further, there are four Dharmas by which you can also protect the world. What are the four? The first is to never have greed or envy in one's demeanour and behaviour; the second is not to harbour anger and aversion or harm people; the third is to not use naïve ignorance to conceal or add to one's inadequacy; the fourth is not to cherish fear in one's practice anywhere. These are the four.

is to have shame of one's faults. You can protect the world with these two Dharmas.

Further, there is one Dharma by which you can protect the world. What is the one? The practice of truth. You can protect the world with truth: by both good words and without deceit. This one Dharma is entirely able to protect the world. ¹

¹ The last, one Dharma, is not found in T310 which, instead, has the questions found in Chapter 20 of T312, the section on "The Questions of Vajrasena," but puts them into the voice of Vajrapāṇi. It is likely that this was the original location of these questions, as they fit better with the flow of this chapter. Since it differs in many respects, I will provide a translation here as follows:

At that time, Vajrapāṇi, the Lord of Mysteries, veiled the Buddha with conjured-up jewels as an offering, and addressed the Buddha, saying:

How does the bodhisattva come to anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi by the Dharma of freedom from anger?

The Buddha said:

Son of good family! By ten things, the bodhisattva practices the Dharma of freedom from anger to come to anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. What are the ten? The first is to always practice compassion and non-harm. The second is to be unwearied amid many difficulties and to always practice great compassion. The third is to, in the tasks that are undertaken, always strive with diligence and be distinguished. The fourth is to always accept the practice of emptiness and attain samādhis. The fifth is to awaken the wisdom that emerges from observing causes and conditions. The sixth is to broadly accord with all by skilful means. The seventh is to thoroughly understand the three times and purify the past, future, and present. The eighth is to have unimpeded vision by virtue of ultimate truth. The ninth is to reverently follow the practices of the path, entering all kinds of dharmas. The tenth is knowing that all dharmas return to emptiness. These are the ten.

Vajrapāṇi, the Lord of Mysteries, addressed the Buddha, saying:

Since there are many Dharmas, in listening to the Buddha's inconceivable Dharma, won't they give rise to fear?

The Buddha said:

Son of good family! There are eight Dharmas of a bodhisattva, by which, in listening to the Buddha's inconceivable [Dharma] their minds do not give rise to fear. What are the eight? The first is always being able to consummate the merits that he has created. The second is to penetrate perplexities through single-minded dhyāna. The third is to associate with the good friend [i.e., the Dharma teacher] and go along with them. The fourth is a mind that is always profoundly faithful and joyful regarding the True Dharma. The fifth is to understand all dharmas as being

illusions. The sixth is to awaken to all dharmas that are inconceivable. The seventh is to understand all dharmas that cannot be obtained as being equal to space. The eighth is to realise that all dharmas are illusory and the phenomena of unbridled projection. These are the eight.

Vajrapāṇi, the Lord of Mysteries, addressed the Buddha, saying:

How does the bodhisattva attain freedom in all the deeds of the Dharma of the bodhisattva?

The Buddha said:

The bodhisattva attains freedom by four Dharmas. What are the four? The first is that by cultivating the As-Illusion Samādhi (māyopamasamādhi), they penetrate all Dharmas, attain the five supernormal powers, and transcend the world. The second is that by the three gates of liberation (emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, they pass beyond the four dhyānas. the third is that by the prajñā pāramitā, they practice the four Brahmā viharas without limit. The fourth is that by carrying out skilful means, they attain the six perfections. These are the four.

Vajrapāṇi, the Lord of Mysteries, addressed the Buddha, saying:

By how many Dharmas does a bodhisattva enter the Dharma gates?

The Buddha said:

Son of good family! The bodhisattva enters the Dharma gates by four Dharmas, What are the four? The first is entry by the gate of dhyāna, becoming endowed with the roots for awakening all sentient beings. The second is entry by the gate of wisdom, discriminating all the meanings and principles in the words [of the sūtras], and explaining them for beings. The third is entry by the gate of dhāraṇīs, always and everywhere remembering and not forgetting [the Dharma]; the fourth is entry by the gate of eloquence, being able to gratify the minds of sentient beings. These are the four.

Vajrapāṇi, the Lord of Mysteries, addressed the Buddha, saying:

How many kinds of powers does the bodhisattva have that allow him to undertake bodhisattva conduct? Also, will he be able to overcome the māras, who would not be able to withstand that power?

The Buddha said:

Son of good family! The bodhisattva has eight powers by which he can overcome the māras. What are the eight? The first is the power of bodhicitta, whose nature is pure conduct. The second is the power of diligence, which is non-retrogression. The third is the power of the extensive practice of listening, which bestows upon

Good sirs! With these kinds of Dharmas, you should strive to protect the world. Having made yourselves able to protect, you also enable other people to protect the world.

them limitless wisdom. The fourth is the power of patience, which protects all sentient beings. The fifth is the power of non-arising, by which they do not cherish aversion. The sixth is the power of non-falsehood, by which they are endowed with liberation. The seventh is the power of the path of meditation, which provides them with all wisdom. The eighth is the power of great compassion, which edifies sentient beings. These are the eight.

When the Buddha taught this Dharma teaching, Vajrapāṇi, the Lord of Mysteries, and his five hundred sons all attained patience regarding the non-origination of all dharmas. After gaining patience towards dharmas, they went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

Sādhu! The mahāmuni has had great kindness upon us by bestowing upon the world these eight Dharmas, which are essential points of this sūtra. This palace of mysteries (the guhyaka spirits over whom Vajrapāṇi is the lord) will naturally expand, and by these roots of merit, the light [of this teaching] will universally pervade; when the Tathāgata has entered parinirvāṇa, we will cause it to spread everywhere, so that it will not disappear.

Chapter 20. Departure

1. The Vidyā of Apalāla

¹At that time, this thought occurred to the Bhagavān:

For the sake of this assembly, I should now proclaim a great secret vidyā,² which will allow beings in this assembly to gain wholesome roots and allow the great Buddha-Dharma to remain in the world for a long time.

Having thought in this way, he addressed Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, saying:

Earlier, in the palace of the nāga king Apalāla, when I had just perfected awakening at the great bodhimaṇḍa, I benefited the world with a mind of beneficence. At that time, I uttered a great vidyā.³ Can you remember it?

¹ T312.742a7f17; T310.73c22f13.

² A mahāvidyā, or great vidyā, is a passage similar in effect to a mantra or dhāraṇī. The term is more commonly associated with a goddess.

³ This is evidently a reference to the story which is narrated by Lamotte as follows:

The brahmin [Gāṅgī] subdued ... a dragon named Sundara which destroyed the crops in ... Magadha ... by means [of] his magic and the population rewarded him with gifts, but when the Buddha was about to establish Rajāgrha [in the Dharma], his beneficent activity sufficed to repress the activity of the dragon and the people stopped offering gifts to the brahmin. Irritated, he vowed to become a dragon along with his wife and two children; to be assured of the realization of this vow, he acquired the merit of offering a meal to the Buddha's four great disciples. Then he took the place of the dragon Sundara and began to ravage the crops, of which he left only the straw, hence his name, [a-]Palāla 'without straw'... King Ajātaśatru asked the Buddha for help; aided by Vajrapāṇi, who split the mountain with his thunderbolt, the Buddha subjugated the dragon, his wife and children, and all the dragons and demonic creators of illnesses were saved in the neighbouring kingdom of Vaiśālī. ... [He was] converted along with his wife and children. [In accord with a northern tradition,] Hsuan-tsang locates in a pool near the Śubhavastu (Swāt) the place where the Buddha, with the aid of Vajrapāṇi's thunderbolt, tamed the dragon ... However in order to assure his livelihood, the Buddha permitted him to raise a storm every twelve years."

Evidently, at that time, this version of the sūtra implies that the nāga was subdued with this mantra. Lamotte, Étienne. "Appendix 8 - Apalāla (king of the nāgas) and Alāla (protector of Magadha)," in *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*, translated by Karma Migme Chödrön. Retrieved December 13, 2021, from <https://www.wisdomlib.org/buddhism/book/maha-prajnaparamita-sastra/d/doc225054.html>.

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva replied to the Buddha, saying:

I can remember it, Bhagavān!

The Buddha said:

Lord of Mysteries! Proclaim that great vidyā now!

Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, arose from his seat, went before the Buddha, kneeled, joined his palms, bowed his head to the feet of the Buddha, and then uttered the great secret vidyā, saying:

¹ Tadyathā:₁ hahorā₂ horavatī₃ hoharaṇā₄ sakuṇā₅ cacacacaca₆
nipuṇā₇ kṣutakṣatā₈ kṣayakṣayā₉ tākṣayasamā₁₀ śamanikarā₁₁ halo₁₂
halovati₁₃ śilavati₁₄ kinābhiśiyati₁₅ nisaraṇī₁₆ jaja₁₇ jajamati₁₈ avaṭā₁₉
nivaṭā₂₀ vartānusārīṇī₂₁ bhūtānusmṛti₂₂ ho devatānusmṛti₂₃ ho
nāgānām₂₄ yakṣānām₂₅ gandharvānām₂₆ mahorāgānām₂₇ svastir
bhavatu sarvasattvānām₂₈ mekaratu mahāparvatā₂₉ samitathā
dharaṇī₃₀ garjātu samudravega iti₃₁!

²When Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, uttered this secret vidyā, all the palaces of māras shook, the great earth quaked, the great sea welled up, and everyone in the assembly was afraid and reached towards the Buddha. They bowed, seeking protection. At that time, the Bhagavān touched one foot to the ground, and the trichiliocosm trembled. Then, everyone in the assembly faced the Buddha and uttered:

Save us, Bhagavān! Save us, Sugata! We are all terrified, afraid, anxious, and grieved!

This first vidyā is not present in T310, which instead at this point, jumps to section 3 of this chapter, the vidyā for the longevity of the Dharma.

¹ The following is not intended to be a reconstruction of a Sanskrit or Prakrit original but is a representation of the most likely pronunciation indicated by the characters as given. The same principle applies with the next dhāraṇī. The numbering is as is found in the Tripiṭaka Koreana woodblock prints. These separate what was thought to be breaks between words. I have largely conformed to this model, but in some more obvious places I chose to separate words.

² T312.742b2.

The Buddha said:

Have no fear! Have no fear! These objects of perception stem from the supernormal power of the great vidyā of all buddhas, which can make the great earth shake, the great sea well up, and even makes the sun abiding in space tremble.

At that time, the Bhagavān briefly explained the essentials of the Dharma as was appropriate to Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva and the entire assembly. Then, in that assembly, eighty-thousand people aroused the aspiration to reach great bodhi, and innumerable people dwelt on the stage of the learners.¹

2. The Questions of Vajrasena

Thereupon, Vajrasena, the son of Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, was holding an excellent jewelled net. He put it on top of the Buddha, and he addressed him, saying:

Bhagavān! How can a bodhisattva attain the stage of non-retrogression from anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi?

The Buddha said:

Son of good family! If the bodhisattva can concurrently practice ten Dharmas, he will reach non-retrogression from anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. What are the ten? The first is to practice unobstructed great kindness continuously. The second is to give rise to unwearying great compassion constantly. The third is to engage in all actions diligently. The fourth is to practice the samādhi of emptiness correctly. The fifth is to penetrate superior wisdom directly. The sixth is to penetrate everywhere skilfully. The seventh is to purify the triple world using sublime wisdom. The eighth is to observe the fruition of karmic retribution using unobstructed skilful means. The ninth is to plant all roots of virtue even while fully realizing emptiness. The tenth is to

¹ Skt. *śaikṣabhūmi*. The stage of those who still have more to learn in the disciplines of morality, concentration, and wisdom. Those who are beyond that stage are those who have no more to learn (*aśaikṣa*) and they have attained arhatship.

skilfully enter the noble path with inherent purity,¹ just as was taught. If the bodhisattva is endowed with these ten Dharmas, he will reach non-retrogression from anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

Then, Vajrasena again addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! What Dharma should the bodhisattva practice so that, having heard the inconceivable [Dharma] Gate of the Buddha, he is calm and does not give rise to terror and fear?

The Buddha said:

Son of good family! The bodhisattva should practice eight Dharmas so that, having heard the inconceivable [Dharma] Gate of the Buddha, he is calm and does not give rise to terror and fear. What are the eight? The first is to increase superior wisdom. The second is to increase excellent wisdom. The third is always to be accepted by the good friend. The fourth is to be endowed with great faith and understanding. The fifth is to attain the non-arising of illusory dharmas skilfully. The sixth is to have faith and understanding in the Dharma of impermanence. The seventh is to have mental activity that is equanimous, just like space. The eighth is to understand the characteristics of obstructions that have arisen among all dharmas skilfully. If the bodhisattva is endowed with these eight Dharmas, having heard the inconceivable [Dharma] Gate of the Buddha, he will be calm and not give rise to terror and fear.

²Vajrasena again addressed the Buddha, saying:

What Dharma should the bodhisattva practice to attain freedom in all his actions?

The Buddha said:

Son of good family! The bodhisattva should practice four Dharmas to attain freedom in all his actions. What are the four? The first is to practice the unceasing Dharma directly with the five supernormal

¹ Skt. *prakṛtipariśuddhatva*. This is referring to the purity if thusness, of dharmas, and of the mind.

² T312.742c4.

powers skilfully. The second is to observe the superior gate of liberation with the four dhyānas skilfully. The third is to surpass the Brahmā world with the four brahmavihāras.¹ The fourth is to practice non-arising everywhere using skilful means and wisdom skilfully. If the bodhisattva is endowed with these four Dharmas, he can attain freedom in all his actions.

Vajrasena again addressed the Buddha, saying:

How many kinds of Dharma Gates does the bodhisattva possess?

The Buddha said:

Son of good family! The bodhisattva possesses four kinds of Dharma Gates. What are the four? The first is the gate of knowledge: skilfully understanding the inclinations of all sentient beings. The second is the gate of wisdom: skilfully discriminate the phrases and meanings in what is taught. The third is the gate of dhāraṇīs: skilfully understanding all words and sounds that are retained.² The fourth is the gate of unobstructed understanding: skilfully explaining all inexhaustible Dharmas. These are the four kinds of Dharma Gates of the bodhisattva.

Vajrasena again addressed the Buddha, saying:

How many kinds of power does the bodhisattva possess?

The Buddha said:

Son of good family! The bodhisattva possesses nine kinds of power. What are the nine? The first is the power of dhyāna, which arises due to great compassion. The second is the power of diligence, which is due to non-retrogression. The third is the power of extensive listening, which arises due to superior wisdom. The fourth is the power of faith and understanding, which arises due to perfect liberation. The fifth is the power of cultivation, which is due to detachment from distraction. The sixth is the power of patience, which arises due to skil-

¹ Loving kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity.

² 總持. Skt. *Dhāraṇa*, or upheld (*saṃgrhīta*).

fully protecting all sentient beings. The seventh is the power of bodhicitta, which is due to the vanquishing of all māras. The eighth is the power of great compassion, which is due to the maturation of sentient beings. The ninth is the power of patience regarding the non-arising [of all dharmas], which is due to the perfection of the ten powers.¹ These are what are referred to as the bodhisattva's nine powers.

3. The Vidyā for the Longevity of the Dharma

When the Buddha Bhagavān was teaching this Dharma, that eldest son, Vajrasena, attained patience regarding the non-arising [of all dharmas]. Realizing that he had attained that patience, he again addressed the Buddha, saying:

I wish that the Bhagavān, by his power, will cause this True Dharma to remain for a long time in this palace of Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, so that those sentient beings who are vessels for this Dharma attain wisdom through hearing that illumines phenomena brightly, and so that after the Tathāgata's parinirvāṇa, it will be caused to spread broadly within Jambudvīpa and so that it will not disappear.

²Thereupon, the Bhagavān, having received Vajrasena's encouragement, addressed Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, saying:

Lord of Mysteries! You should now proclaim! When I first attained the path at the great bodhimaṇḍa, the bodhisattvas were protected and Māra's armies were vanquished using the words of a great secret vidyā, which established higher protection and caused the True Dharma to remain in the world for a long time, and restrained all māras and other, external, dharmas.³

¹ These are a different set of power, the daśabala, which are the supernormal knowledges.

² T312.743a1.

³ T310 words this as follows:

[Lord of] Mysteries, you firmly bore many verses. When I was beneath the bodhi tree, you were together with the bodhisattvas. When Māra's armies came, you, by your power, firmly protected me so that I could vanquish Māra's armies. Immediately, a passage was recalled and recited and brought about benefit [(the subject is unclear: it is either the Buddha or Vajrapāṇi)]. Now, again, it should [be recited to] protect future generations, cause the Dharma to flow throughout Jambudvīpa

Thereupon, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, having received the Buddha's instructions, arose from his seat, bore his right shoulder, touched his right knee to the ground, joined his palms in homage to the Bhagavān, and uttered this great vidyā, saying:

Tadyathā:¹ hulu² hulā³ huli⁴ dhīre⁵ hārīti⁶ akuśalakṣaye⁷ cale⁸ calavati⁹ sāre¹⁰ kṣure¹¹ kṣāntimali¹² kṣeme¹³ śāntikare¹⁴ kṣame¹⁵ śame¹⁶ śātikare¹⁷ huho¹⁸ ali¹⁹ khikhire²⁰ kare²¹ āviṣaṇi²² rasa²³ rasani²⁴ jaye²⁵ jayavati²⁶ tri²⁷ āvarti²⁸ vivarti²⁹ avartani³⁰ maitribhūtānān saṃgraho³¹ nami³² damasampanne³³ tīrṇatāraye³⁴ bhūsvaya svasti devībhyo³⁵ nāgebhyo³⁶ yakṣebhyo³⁷ gandharvebhyo³⁸ rākṣasebhyo³⁹¹ manuṣyāmanuṣyebhyo⁴⁰ svastir bhavatu sadāsukham⁴¹!

When he uttered this great vidyā, all the kings of mountains shook, the great earth quaked, the great ocean welled up, all the followers of wrong tīrthika teachings were restrained and returned to the words of the True Dharma and skilfully protected all the storehouses of the treasures of the True Dharma. All the groups of devas together were elated and uttered this gāthā, saying:

The great secret vidyā having been uttered,
The True Dharma is made to remain in the world for a long time,
The three worlds all quake,
Desiring the most revered among humans to save and protect them.

The Great Teacher well expounded the words of truth,
He broadly bestowed fearlessness on the assembly.
Establishing this Dharma Gate by his power,
The True Dharma has been made to remain in the world for a long time.

²Then, the Bhagavān stayed in the palace of Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva for seven days. He widely produced benefit for all the innumerable sentient beings. All kinds of beings in a wide area around that great city in the wilderness received innumerable benefits.

and all throughout the ten directions, cause this dispensation of the Dharma to exist for a long time, and, especially, to suppress all teachings of the tīrthikas.

¹ This reads closer to *yakṣasebhyo*.

² T312.743b2.

4. The Return of the Buddha and Saṅgha to Gṛdhrakūṭa

Having departed from the palace, he returned to the sky surrounded by great crowds of reverential śrāvakas, humans and devas, as well as several hundred thousand yakṣas, rākṣasas, asuras, garuḍas, and so forth, both in front and behind. Lord Brahmā, Indra, the world protectors and so forth, spread a great net of radiance, played wonderful music, and rained down many flowers. At that time, many lands all quaked because of the Buddha's supernormal power, the strength of his supernormal knowledges, empowerments, manifestations, and deportment—he sported freely just like the king of geese. Gradually wafting, they returned to Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa. Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, by the Buddha's power, followed the Buddha.

Chapter 21. The Past Deeds of Śūrabala Bodhisattva

1. Ajātaśatru's Inquiry

¹At that time, the Bhagavān, together with the bodhisattvas and the great assembly of śrāvakas, arrived at Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa. When the afternoon had finished, they were in their original location, and he taught the Dharma for the sake of the great assembly.

Then, King Ajātaśatru, learning that the Buddha Bhagavān had returned to the mountain, together with his wife, retainers, and sixty-thousand people in Rājagṛha, each took up many kinds of the most excellent incense and flowers, unguents, aromatic powders, and many such offerings. Departing Rājagṛha, they went to the Buddha Bhagavān on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa. Having arrived, they bowed their heads to the Buddha's feet, and each stood to one side. Then King Ajātaśatru went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

O Bhagavān, we are obliged! We [hope] you deign to dwell comfortably! My son came and said to [me,] his father the king:

You should know that the Bhagavān, the great teacher, who was invited to the palace of Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, has finished [his stay]. Now, having returned, he is again at Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa.

I then thought how truly rare you are, O Bhagavān. The Buddha has given rise to great compassion for the sake of all sentient beings. The Tathāgata Bhagavān has not given rise to weariness for a single sentient being among all sentient beings. Having gone to the palace of Vajrapāṇi in the great city in the wilderness, he received offerings and returned to come here. You widely bring about the ripening of the merits of sentient beings.

O Bhagavān, that Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, is exceedingly rare and has great power. He can skilfully explain the Tathāgata's Dharma and Vinaya, giving rise to immense joy [in beings]. Incidentally, in the past, before which Buddha, Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha did Vajrapāṇi plant his roots of merit, and fully accomplish his rhetorical skill like this?

¹ T312.743b21f18; T310.74a27f13.

¹The Buddha addressed King Ajātaśatru, saying:

Great king! You should know that sentient beings lacking various wholesome roots have extreme difficulty arousing faith and understanding about matters such as these. Still, those who decidedly have diverse wholesome roots can arouse faith and belief in them.

Great king! Even though the worlds in the ten directions are as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges, still, they are calculable, and their limit can be known. However, it is even impossible for all the buddha bhagavāns to reckon the number of the buddha bhagavāns with whom Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, became familiar and to whom he made offerings,² and before whom he performed many pure practices and accomplished his rhetorical skill. For this reason, great king, you should understand their ancient causes and conditions.

2. Śūrabala Bodhisattva and a Bodhisattva's Objects of Perception

I recall, past incalculably many asaṃkhyas of kalpas and again past the immeasurably vast inconceivable kalpas before that, there was a Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha who appeared in the world, called Bahuśruta, the perfected in wisdom and conduct, the Sugata, the knower of the world, the unsurpassed being, supreme trainer, the teacher of devas and humans, the Buddha, the Bhagavān. His world was called Ativyūha.³ At that time, that Bhagavān, for his pure assembly of great bodhisattvas, taught the True Dharma. That Buddha spoke, saying:

Sons of good family! You should know that if a bodhisattva can arouse great diligence, he will abandon his body and life entirely.

At that time, in that assembly, there was a bodhisattva called Śūrabala. He went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

¹ T312.743c8.

² T310 enumerates several name of these past buddhas.

³ There are many potential Sanskrit equivalents for this term, but it means best array or adornment.

Thus it is, Bhagavān! Thus it is, Sugata! As the Buddha has explained, if a bodhisattva arouses diligence, they will entirely abandon their body and life. I understand what the Buddha has taught in this way: if a bodhisattva gives rise to negligence, how can they quickly attain the fruit of anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi? However, bodhisattvas who can arouse diligence do not give rise to thoughts of weariness in saṃsāra, and that bodhisattva should always be praised in saṃsāra; they do not delight in nirvāṇa¹ only so that they can bring all sentient beings to maturity.

Bhagavān! The bodhisattva strives for the maturity of sentient beings, endowed with diligence, faith, and understanding. They delight in their own attainments within birth and death and do not delight in the joy of nirvāṇa. Why? Since the bodhisattva works to benefit sentient beings, his practice is entirely suited to that end, and he obtains the joy appropriate for all. But if he abides in nirvāṇa, how is he able to act? Therefore, all bodhisattvas delight in their own attainments within the objects of perception of birth and death. They do not grasp the objects of perception of nirvāṇa.

Bhagavān! The joy obtained within the objects of perception of birth and death for the bodhisattva refers to striving to benefit sentient beings, always obtaining vision of incalculable buddhas, and continually hearing the incalculably pure True Dharma, and always being able to mature incalculable sentient beings. By abiding in the objects of perception of birth and death, the bodhisattva can accord with and enter the objects of perception of sentient beings, and they are not attached to the objects of perception of nirvāṇa and practice indifference towards it.

The bodhisattva who abides in the objects of perception of birth and death is wary of falling into improper objects of perception. Why? One cannot again work for the benefit of sentient beings in improper objects of perception, and one cannot peacefully abide in the objects of perception of the Tathāgata. Because of not being able to abide in the objects of perception of the Tathāgata peacefully, one cannot nurture all sentient beings.

¹ I.e., they do not enter nirvāṇa as might an arhat, enjoying their own cessation from suffering without the first focus being the awakening of others.

What is being referred to here by the term improper object of perception? This means the stage of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. If one is satisfied to abide there, one will abandon sentient beings and cannot mature them. Why? The objects of perception of a śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha are improper objects of perception for a bodhisattva since the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha fear birth and death. Since only the pure great bodhisattva can undergo incalculable births and deaths, the bodhisattva can abide in the objects of perception of birth and death in this way.

¹Great king! You should know that at that time that Bahuśruta Tathāgata praised Śūrabala Bodhisattva, saying:

Excellent, O good man! You have spoken these words well. Again, skilfully respect the objects of perception of the bodhisattva in performing all actions so that you do not again fall into improper objects of perception.

Śūrabala Bodhisattva replied to that buddha, saying:

What are the bodhisattva's own objects of perception?

That buddha answered:

O son of good family! The bodhisattva's own objects of perception are the undertaking of incalculable births and deaths without giving rise to fear, praising the extensive superior practices of the bodhisattva, and not being satisfied to abide on the level of the śrāvaka or pratyekabuddha. By unimpeded cognition unified with the triple world, whether agreeable or disagreeable, they can skilfully increase all wholesome roots. By increasing knowledge, they attain all the roots of merit. By the knowledge of the eradication [of afflictions], they can achieve inexhaustible meritorious practices.

Even though they see that there is no birth, they skilfully achieve the dharma of taking birth. Even though they know there are no beings, they skilfully mature all sentient beings. Even though they see all dharmas are without essence, they

¹ T312.744a17.

skilfully take hold of the True Dharma. Even though they know that the inherent existence of all buddha-fields is like space, they adorn and purify buddha-fields with excellent wisdom. Even though they see the dharma-bodies of all buddhas are without characteristics, they skilfully strive for the extraordinarily excellent primary and secondary marks possessed by a tathāgata. Even though they see that all dharmas are originally uncreated, they diligently create many roots of virtue with extraordinary wisdom. Even though they see that conditioned dharmas are unreal, in all their actions, they have few wants and few creations, and they can also skilfully establish explanations to teach in accord with all sentient beings. Even though they see body and mind without attachment, they untiringly teach the Dharma using excellent wisdom. Even though they are detached from the hubbub, having arisen from dhyāna, they are not attached to the taste of dhyāna. Also, even though they understand the incredible profundity of the Dharma, using superior wisdom in accord with all sentient beings, with many practices and transformations, they skilfully explain the essentials of the Dharma. Even though knowledge does not arise, with wholesome thoughts of wisdom, they fully encompass the three realms. Even though, with wisdom, they know that all dharmas are empty, they skilfully protect the fruit of what they have attained. Even though they see the objects of perception of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, they skilfully seek the pliant Dharma of the Tathāgata's liberation. Even though they do not weary or abandon any bodhisattva practices, they always skilfully observe the objects of perception of all buddhas. O son of good family! This is the [Dharma] gate of the bodhisattva's own objects of perception.

¹Further, O great king, at that time Śūrabala Bodhisattva, in the presence of Bahuśruta Tathāgata, having heard the Dharma of the pure objects of perception in this manner, gave rise to a rare state of mind. He addressed that buddha, saying:

It is truly rare, O Bhagavān, that one can skilfully expound the pure True Dharma on the gate of all the great bodhisattvas' own objects of perception.

¹ T312.744b11.

As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has taught, it is that bodhisattvas endowed with skilful means enter all dharmas by the gate of their own objects of perception. Just as emptiness universally illuminates all perceptual objects of colours and shapes without attachment, and is also unobstructed by all colours and shapes, and is also unobstructed by the perceptual object of space. The bodhisattva endowed with skilful means is just like that because they directly and fully understand all dharmas by their own objects of perception.

It is also like how space universally illuminates all perceptual objects of colours and shapes and is unobstructed. All that exists—poison trees, medicinal trees, trees with thorns, aromatic trees with flowers and fruits—arises within emptiness. Yet space is neither defiled nor purified, neither contrary nor in accord. The bodhisattva endowed with skilful means is just like that: all dharmas of their own objects of perception emerge from their wisdom—namely, the dharma of an ordinary person, the dharma of one still learning, the dharma of one with no more to learn, the dharma of a pratyekabuddha, the dharma of a bodhisattva, the dharma of a tathāgata, and so forth. Why? Because all dharmas are present before their eyes.¹

It is also like how grass, trees, and forests in the world, in catching fire, cannot be protected. Why? If a fire goes up and burns them all, they will all be ablaze. The bodhisattva is just like that; in their own objects of perception, all dharmas are illuminated by the light of their wisdom and are all ablaze. It is just like a body which is as hard as a vajra; fire cannot burn it, a sword cannot cut it, it cannot be poisoned, and the power of another cannot subdue it. The bodhisattva is just like that, they are not able to be defiled by the habits of a śrāvaka, nor the habits of a pratyekabuddha, nor the habits of all the afflictions of all sentient beings; the bodhisattva accords with all who are afflicted, and for all, using diligence and the power of superior wisdom he develops the awareness² of each and every one.

It is also like how a maṇi jewel purifies water because it can clear all muddy waters. The bodhisattva is also like that; by the treasure of their wisdom, they can broadly purify all stains of afflictions.

¹ 現所證. Skt. *pratyakṣa*.

² 開曉. Literally, opens and awakens.

It is also like the medicine called “Poison Removal,” which can remove all poisons without being mixed with anything toxic. The bodhisattva is just like that because being endowed with the power of skilful means and wisdom, even without sharing the afflictions of all sentient beings with their own afflictions, they can bring the poison of the afflictions of all sentient beings to cessation.

All these are the gate of their own objects of perception of all dharmas.

¹Great king! You should know that when Śūrabala Bodhisattva spoke this Dharma, eight thousand people aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, and two thousand bodhisattvas attained patience regarding the non-arising of all dharmas. Great king! You should know that at that time, Śūrabala Bodhisattva in the Dharma [assembly] of Bahuśruta Tathāgata was none other than Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, who is in this assembly. That mahāsattva was able, at that time, to don the armour of firm diligence, and in becoming familiar with many buddhas and respecting them, he planted deep wholesome roots.

¹ T312.744c11.

Chapter 22. The Questions of King Ajātaśatru

1. Vajrapāṇi's Vajra Mallet

¹At that time, King Ajātaśatru gave rise to the following thought:

How heavy or light is the great vajra mallet that this Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, holds in his right hand? It seems the Lord of Mysteries can skilfully grasp it using his great power.

Then, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, knowing what he thought, addressed King Ajātaśatru, saying:

Great king! You should know that this vajra mallet is both light and heavy.

The King asked:

Why is it both light and heavy?

Vajrapāṇi said:

In order to discipline all proud and haughty sentient beings, this mallet is heavy; in order to show all beings that pridelessness is correct, this mallet is light.

Then Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva cast the great vajra mallet that he was holding on the ground. When it hit the ground, the trichiliocosms quaked in six ways by its supernormal power. Then he addressed King Ajātaśatru, saying:

Great king! You now must yourself notice that the great vajra mallet is on the ground.

Then, King Ajātaśatru immediately tried to lift the mallet out of his firm heroic power. Still, he exhausted his energy and could not move even the breadth of a hair tip. He immediately gave rise to a mind of rare reverence

¹ T312.744c18f18; T310.75b3f13.

This first section is the same in content in T310, but expanded in this version.

and went before the Buddha, joined his palms, and addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! Long ago, on the battlefield, I grasped a giant elephant wearing battle armour and, with one hand, raised it and threw it far away. This vajra mallet is tiny, but now I have exhausted my power and could not move it; how much more so raise it! What caused it to be like this?

¹The Buddha said:

Great king! Do not worry yourself. That vajra mallet is extremely heavy.

Then, King Ajātaśatru turned to Śakra, Lord of the Devas, and addressed him saying:

Kauśika! Now raise this great vajra mallet which is on the ground!

Then, Śakra, Lord of the Devas, immediately tried to lift the mallet by his own brave and ardent supernormal power. Still, he exhausted and spent his power and could not move it. He immediately gave rise to a mind of rare reverence and went before the Buddha, and addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! When I face the king of the asuras in battle, my power is hard, I have superior resilience, and I am unmatched. With my right hand, I grasp the great cart owned by Vimalacitra, King of the Asuras, which is seven hundred yojanas in width. At that time, I catch it while it is moving as fast as the wind. But this vajra mallet exhausts my power, and I cannot move it. Is the Bhagavān holding it down with his great supernormal power?

The Buddha said:

Kauśika! I am not holding it down by my supernormal power. It is only that this vajra mallet is extremely heavy. O Kauśika, what do you think? Is Sumeru, King of Mountains, extremely heavy?

¹ T312.745a6.

The Lord of the Devas addressed the Buddha, saying:

Sumeru, King of Mountains, is so extremely heavy that an analogy cannot describe it.

¹The Buddha said to the Lord of Devas:

This vajra mallet is made of adamantine. Its weight is greater than that of Sumeru, King of Mountains. But Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva is can, by throwing this mallet, pulverise all the encircling mountains [around Sumeru] just like chaff. That is the incredible power of its adamantine.

Then, Śakra, Lord of the Devas, turned to the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, and addressed him, saying:

The Buddha has declared that you, O venerable one, are the foremost in the attainment of supernormal powers in the śrāvaka saṅgha. I now wish for you, O venerable one, to raise this great vajra mallet from the ground.

Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana then thought to himself:

How can I be proud of myself if I cannot move this vajra mallet before this great assembly of humans and devas?

Having thought this, moving by his supernormal powers, he tried to lift the vajra mallet that was before him. Then, the trichiliocosms quaked in six ways, the waters of the seas welled up, and all who were on the great earth trembled in fear, but the vajra mallet neither moved nor shook. Then, Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana went before the Buddha, bowed his head to the feet of the Buddha, and addressed him thus:

The Buddha has declared that I am foremost in the attainment of supernormal powers in the śrāvaka saṅgha. Equipped with great supernormal power, I am famous for my power. I can place the waters of the four great oceans in the palm of my hand. I can spin the trichiliocosm just like someone spinning a coin with his finger. I can also

¹ T310.75c09f14.

make the sun and moon stop in the middle of the sky, and I can suppress its light, not allowing it to come forth. I can also grasp Sumeru, King of Mountains, and throw it past the Brahmā world. I can also tame Nanda and Upananda, the two great nāga kings. I can also make an illusory person go around the world on an alms round. This vajra mallet is tiny, but I still can neither move nor shake it! Bhagavān! Why has my supernormal power now diminished?

¹The Buddha said:

Mahāmaudgalyāyana! It is not that your supernormal power has diminished. It is only that it takes the assistance of the power of a bodhisattva. All the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas cannot move it, how much more so other sentient beings. Also, Maudgalyāyana, even if all buddha-fields as numerous as the sands of the Ganges with Sumerus, Kings of Mountains, were to shake, only the land on which this vajra mallet is placed would neither move nor shake.

Maudgalyāyana addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva possesses great power and can easily throw this vajra mallet. Isn't that exceedingly rare?

The Buddha said:

Mahāmaudgalyāyana! Even if all the Sumerus, Kings of Mountains, in the trichiliocosms were united into one Mount Sumeru, they could all be moved and shaken. But this vajra mallet cannot be moved.

Thereupon, Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana gave rise to a rare state of mind, went before the Buddha, and addressed him, saying:

It is truly rare, O Bhagavān! This Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, possesses great power and can skilfully hold that great vajra mallet. Did this Lord of Mysteries receive this power from his father and mother when he was born, or is it supernormal power?

The Buddha said:

¹ T312.745b10.

Mahāmaudgalyāyana! The power which enters one's faculties from one's father and mother are all measurable, but all the supernormal powers of a bodhisattva are inexhaustible and infinite. If I were to elucidate this matter, then the devas and humans in the world would all be perplexed.

At that time, the Bhagavān, having observed everyone in that assembly, addressed Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, saying:

You should now, yourself, lift the great vajra mallet which has been placed on the ground.

Then Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, by his supernormal powers, having shaken the trichiliocosm, picked up that mallet with his left hand and easily threw it into the air. It spun seven times in the air and then landed in his right hand. Everyone in the assembly gave rise to a rare state of mind, joined their palms, and paid homage to the Great Lord of Mysteries, saying together:

It is exceedingly rare, O Lord of Mysteries! You can, just like that, with your vast great power, skilfully hold the best of great vajra mallets. We wish that all sentient beings could attain this kind of superior power.

2. King Ajātaśatru's Questions

¹Thereupon, King Ajātaśatru addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! How much Dharma does a bodhisattva need to practice to attain such superior power?

The Buddha said:

Great King! If a bodhisattva practices ten Dharmas, they can attain such superior power. What are the ten? First, the bodhisattva abandons their body and life, but to the end, they do not discard the unexcelled True Dharma. Second, they cultivate humility before all sentient beings, not increasing their pride. Third, towards inferior and weak sentient beings, they give rise to thoughts of pity and do not give rise to aggression. Fourth, they provide excellent food and drink

¹ T312.745c7.

when they see hungry and thirsty sentient beings. Fifth, they give fearlessness when they see fearful sentient beings. Sixth, they give medicine to cure diseases when they see sick sentient beings. Seventh, they fulfil the needs of poor sentient beings. Eighth, when they see Buddha stūpas and images, they wash them, decorate them, and completely purify them. Ninth, they utter words of joy and respite to all sentient beings. Tenth, when they see a sentient being tired and suffering from a heavy burden, they remove their heavy burden. If bodhisattvas are endowed with these ten Dharmas, they can attain the greatest power.

¹Further, King Ajātaśatru addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! How many Dharmas should a bodhisattva practice to obtain the freedom to proceed towards the Dharma of freedom?

The Buddha said:

Great King! A bodhisattva should practice eight Dharmas to obtain the freedom to proceed towards the Dharma of freedom. What are the eight? First, they should speak fine and kind words with an honest mind. Second, their mind should always be pliant. Third, their mind should be skilled at being pleasing. Fourth, their mind should always be impartial. The fifth is non-trickery. The sixth is non-deception. The seventh is non-jealousy. Eighth, they should tame and master their minds. If a bodhisattva is endowed with these eight Dharmas, they will obtain the freedom to proceed towards the Dharma of freedom.

²Then, King Ajātaśatru addressed the Buddha, saying:

How many Dharmas should a bodhisattva practice to be able to abide in freedom?

The Buddha said:

Great King! The Bodhisattva should practice four Dharmas to be able to abide in freedom. What are the four? First, if they are born as a human, they will wish to become a wheel-turning king and meet a

¹ T312.745c28f19.

² T312.746a5.

Buddha appearing in the world. Second, if they are Indra, they will wish to meet a Buddha appearing in the world. Third, if they are Brahmā, King of the Devas and Lord of the Sahā World, they will wish to meet a Buddha appearing in the world. Fourth, if they are a strong and superior householder, they will wish to meet a Buddha appearing in the world. If a bodhisattva is endowed with these four Dharmas, they will be able to abide in freedom.

¹King Ajātaśatru addressed the Buddha, asking:

Bhagavān! What is the end of pure faith?²

The Buddha said:

Great King! The good and virtuous friend is its end.

The King asked

What is the end of listening extensively?

The Buddha said:

Wisdom is the end of listening extensively.

The King asked:

What is the end of giving?

The Buddha said:

Great riches are the end of giving.

The King asked:

What is the end of morality?

¹ The following sets of question vary in many respects in T310, but primarily in incorporating many ideas, which here are given in different sets of questions, into one answer given by the Buddha.

² 畢竟. *niṣṭhāgamana*: the “going to the end.” Other possibilities are simply *anta*, end; *avaśyam*, necessary [result]; *parisamāpti*, that which is obtained at the end or conclusion. I.e., after attaining faith, what is the result?

The Buddha said:

Being able to be born in a good realm is the end of morality.

The King asked:

What is the end of patience?

The Buddha said:

The safeguarding of all sentient beings is the end of patience.

The King asked:

What is the end of diligence?

The Buddha said:

Being able to fulfil all the Buddha-dharmas skilfully is the end of diligence.

The King asked:

What is the end of dhyāna?

The Buddha said:

Tranquillity is the end of dhyāna.

The King asked:

What is the end of wisdom?

The Buddha said:

The pacification of all afflictions is the end of wisdom.

The King asked:

What is the end of listening to the Dharma?

The Buddha said:

Eliminating all doubts is the end of listening to the Dharma.

The King asked:

What is the end of inquiring about the Dharma?

The Buddha said:

Refuting all the various theories is the end of inquiring about the Dharma.

The King asked:

What is the end of abiding in a quiet place?

The Buddha said:

Attaining the supernormal powers of the dhyānas is the end of abiding in a quiet place.

The King asked:

What is the end of contemplation?

The Buddha said:

Cutting off thought is the end of contemplation.

The King asked:

What is the end of the teaching on impermanence?

The Buddha said:

Cutting off all attachments is the end of the teaching on impermanence.

The King asked:

What is the end of the teaching on suffering?

The Buddha said:

Non-attachment is the end of the teaching on suffering.

The King asked:

What is the end of the teaching on no-self?

The Buddha said:

To put an end to I and mine is the end of teaching on no-self.

¹The King asked:

What is the end of the teaching on tranquillity?

The Buddha said:

To accord with cessation is the end of the teaching on tranquillity.

The King asked:

What is the end of deep and firm focused attention?

The Buddha said:

Giving rise to right view is the end of deep and firm focused attention.

The King asked:

If one detaches from body and mind, what is the end?

The Buddha said:

Giving rise to the supernormal powers of the dhyānas is the end of detaching from body and mind.

¹ T312.746b1.

The King asked:

What is the end of the noble path?

The Buddha said:

Directly realising the fruit of samādhi is the end of the noble path.

The King asked:

What is the end of faith and understanding?

The Buddha said:

Complete liberation is the end of faith and understanding.

The King asked:

What is the end of all the buddhas' appearances in the world?

The Buddha said:

The fulfilment of all the factors of awakening is the end of all the buddhas' appearances in the world.

The King asked:

How does a buddha appear in the world?

The Buddha said:

Great King! Following the arousal of bodhicitta, a buddha appears in the world.

The King asked:

What is arousing bodhicitta?

The Buddha said:

It is giving rise to great compassion.

The King asked:

What is giving rise to great compassion?

The Buddha said:

It is arousing pure faith.

The King asked:

What is arousing pure faith?

The Buddha said:

If one arouses the aspiration to attain bodhi, that is arousing pure faith.

The King asked:

What is arousing that aspiration to attain bodhi?

The Buddha said:

The deep mind, which is non-retrogressing, is arousing the aspiration to attain bodhi.

The King asked:

What is the deep mind which is non-retrogressing?

The Buddha said:

It is that produced by great compassion.

The King asked:

What is arousing great compassion?

The Buddha said:

The mind which does not weary regarding all sentient beings in birth and death is great compassion.

The King asked:

What is being able to not weary regarding all sentient beings?

The Buddha said:

That is not attaching to self-enjoyment.

The King asked:

What is not attaching to self-enjoyment?

The Buddha said:

That is never rejecting the Triple Gem.

The King asked:

How can one never reject the Triple Gem?

The Buddha said:

If one removes all afflictions, one will never reject the Triple Gem.

Thereupon, King Ajātaśatru again respectfully went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

It is exceedingly rare, O Bhagavān! It is exceedingly rare, O Sugata! Well has the Tathāgata expounded the pure Dharma and Vinaya. The Tathāgata was able to establish the training rules skilfully. Being able to accord with the True Dharma spoken by all Buddha Bhagavāns, without negating cause and effect, he is far detached from nihilism and eternalism. In accord with what he has taught, he has attained what should be done. The fruit of good and evil are both without decay or loss and separate from all deception: thus the Buddha has taught. Who would dare to dispute this greatest, most extensive

pure teaching? And who would dispute it or slander it? Only those who lack various wholesome roots and who have great evil karma.

Bhagavān! In the past, I did not have many deep wholesome roots and did not respect the Buddha. I cannot repay the profound compassion of the Buddha even with my own flesh and blood. I pray that the Buddha may now cause all my afflictions and evil karma to be entirely eliminated by his power and protection.

O Bhagavān! ¹This youth, the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, is a good and virtuous friend. He obtained benefit and joy in the long night [of saṃsāra], and he made me cease my evil actions. The light of the Dharma illuminated me, and I could also not repay his profound compassion. O Bhagavān, my kind, excellent and virtuous friend, you can exhaustively explain for me the pure practices of the most wondrous True Dharma.

¹ The following is a reference to the *Sūtra on the Dispelling of the Evil Deeds of Ajātasatru* (*Ajātasatrukauṣṭhyavinodanasūtra*), of which multiple versions exist: T626–9.

Chapter 23. Devaputra Bhadrarāja

1. The Maintenance of the Dharma through Non-Conceptualisation

¹At that time, Śāntamati Bodhisattva Mahāsattva went before Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, and addressed him, saying:

Just as the Buddha Bhagavān manifests manifestations, can you, O Lord of Mysteries, create manifestations?

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva said:

Now the buddhas appear directly before me, and I know them clearly. There are as many manifestations of all buddha tathāgatas, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges. I can also act just as those buddhas, sporting in the supernormal powers with many external manifestations—but that is only due to the purity of my mind from prior lives.

Thereupon Śāntamati Bodhisattva again addressed Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, saying:

I now implore you, O Great Lord of Mysteries, to maintain this True Dharma using your supernormal powers, so that it may be proclaimed widely and circulate for the last five hundred years in the latter part of the latter age so that all mahāsattvas will know this True Dharma, and so that they will carry this True Dharma in their hands.

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva said:

O son of good family! All buddha tathāgatas have already together empowered this True Dharma. Why? This True Dharma is composed of words. Those words are unarisen, inexhaustible, and unobscured. So, by these words, one can obtain the meaning of what has been taught, and it cannot be hidden. Even the tathāgatas cannot conceal this teaching of the extremely profound True Dharma. Why? No Dharma has arisen. If no Dharma has arisen, then no Dharma can cease.

¹ T312.746c7f19; T310.76c14f14.

Therefore you should know, just as the Buddha has said: whether a buddha appears in the world or does not appear in the world, the True Dharma permanently abides, that is to say, Dharma-nature, Dharma-realm, Dharma-abiding, the tranquil reality limit: the Dharma thus is like this. As has been explained: all dharmas arise by conditions and are without contradiction. If dharmas arise by conditions and are without contradiction, that is the True Dharma. Because it is the True Dharma, it is unobscured. That which is explained in this manner is called the True Dharma.

Śāntamati Bodhisattva asked:

O Lord of Mysteries! How can I don the armour of diligence to maintain and protect the True Dharma?

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva said:

If regarding all dharmas, there is no contradiction, then one can don the armour of diligence to maintain and protect the True Dharma. Why? Because it is the True Dharma that all dharmas are without contradiction.

¹Śāntamati Bodhisattva asked:

Which dharmas contradict?

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva said:

Since words contradict, they are dharmas that contradict, and they do not permit the arising of contradicting dharmas. If [dharmas] do not contradict, then by them, one can maintain and protect the True Dharma.

Śāntamati Bodhisattva asked:

Is not that which maintains and protects the True Dharma not at odds with all the world?²

¹ T312.747a1.

² I.e., all common-sense.

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva said:

Yes, O son of good family! Why? Because if, in the world with sentient beings who are attached to views, there is someone attached to the word “emptiness,” then they are at odds with the world. Similarly, those of the world say there is permanence, bliss, self, and purity, but if there is one who says there is impermanence, suffering, no self, and impurity, then they are at odds with the world.

Also, as sentient beings of the world go along with the flow of birth and death and against the True Dharma, that person [who goes with the True Dharma] is at odds with the world. Also, as sentient beings of the world honour a Dharma of the present life,¹ one who protects the True Dharma and honours the Dharma of other lives is at odds with the world. Also, as sentient beings of the world are attached to the aggregates, fields, and realms, someone who protects the True Dharma and speaks of non-attachment to all dharmas is at odds with the world. Śāntamati, for this reason, you should know that one who protects the True Dharma is at odds with the world.

Śāntamati Bodhisattva requested:

O Great Lord of Mysteries! You should explain how one can maintain and protect the True Dharma.

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva said:

As for how I maintain and protect, it is by no-self, no-being, and no-dharma. Thus do I maintain and protect.

Śāntamati Bodhisattva asked:

But what does that mean?

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva said:

It means being separate from self, separate from a being, separate from a dharma, and yet not being separate from self, beings, or dharmas. It means being separate from the past, being separate from the

¹ I.e., “this-worldly” Dharma.

future, and being separate from the present, and yet not being separate from the past, future, and present. It means being separate from the three realms yet not being separate from them. It means being separate from all buddhas and yet not being separate from all buddhas. It means being separate from all fields and yet not being separate from all fields. It means being separate from the Dharma and yet not being separate from the Dharma. If one can penetrate the Dharma like this, one can maintain and protect the True Dharma.

At that time, the Bhagavān praised Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, saying:

Excellent, excellent! O mahāsattva! You well maintain and protect the True Dharma. If there is no grasping and no attachment to any dharmas, one can maintain and uphold the True Dharma. If there is no grasping and no attachment to conceptualisations about the characteristics of all dharmas, and if there is no discrimination regarding all discriminative fabrications, then one can maintain and protect the True Dharma.

2. The Eloquence of Non-Eloquence

At that time, in the assembly, there was a devaputra called Bhadrarāja. He went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

O Bhagavān! The Buddha has spoken the words tranquil and quiescent. If, as has been explained, all objects of perception are entirely pacified, and there is nothing observed, then that which is quiescent would not again unify and give rise to any dharma. Even though dharmas are still and entirely peacefully pacified, there is still the maintenance of the Tathāgata's True Dharma, and it is not abandoned. Moreover, even though it is maintained, there is nothing that is maintained and nothing abandoned among all dharmas.

When this devaputra had spoken this Dharma, a thousand bhikṣus in the assembly attained mental liberation, and a thousand devaputras attained the pure Dharma-eye.

¹Thereupon, Śāntamati Bodhisattva addressed the devaputra, saying:

How did you obtain this eloquence?

¹ T312.747b5.

The devaputra answered:

Due to cutting off all habitual tendencies, freed from the path of language, and with nothing to be explained, I obtained this eloquence in the ultimate truth that there is no Dharma to be grasped.

Śāntamati Bodhisattva asked:

O devaputra! How does your eloquence arise?

The devaputra said:

Due to there being no eloquence and due to being free from eloquence. What is that? No eloquence means that there is no unification of meanings. Freedom from eloquence means being free from the conceptualisation of meanings. Further, O son of good family, as has thus been explained, how could there be any eloquence obtained? If one expresses for others knowledge that is untransformed, and if one expresses knowledge that does not abide, then, in this way, one obtains eloquence.

Also, if one expresses ideas about all objects of perception as also being free from obscurations and that there is no place to abide in Dharma-nature, then one obtains eloquence. Also, if one knows that there is nothing transformed among all dharmas and that there is not the slightest dharma that can be known and understood, then one obtains eloquence. Also, [if one knows that] among all dharmas, there is no arising, and yet arising, no cessation, and yet cessation, then one obtains eloquence.

Thereupon, Śāntamati Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha, saying:

It is rare, O Bhagavān! This devaputra Bhadrarāja is endowed with great eloquence.

The Buddha said:

Śāntamati! This devaputra Bhadrarāja is from Akṣobhya Buddha's land, the world Abhirata.¹ He has come here desiring to listen to Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, expound this True Dharma² of the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*. Moreover, this devaputra has already attained entry into the characteristics of all dharmas by a dhāraṇī, and for a hundred kalpas he has had no desire. He has naturally attained unimpeded eloquence, and accordingly, he teaches with unobstructed eloquence.

¹ The Chinese just translates this as "Ultimate Bliss," usually used as a translation of Sukhāvātī, the land of Amitābha.

² I.e., this sūtra.

Chapter 24. Inexhaustible Similes Extoling the Merits of the Dhāraṇī

1. The Dhāraṇī Door of the Entry into the Characteristics of Dharmas: The Letter A

¹At that time, Śāntamati Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān, what is the name of the dhāraṇī by which one attains entry into the characteristics of all dharmas?

The Buddha said:

Śāntamati! Entry into the characteristics of dharmas is knowledge of entry which in words is inexhaustible. Therefore, it is said that the letter A enters all dharmas.² Moreover, the letter A is the gate by which all dharmas arise; the letter A is the firstborn and the successor of all dharmas; the letter A achieves all actions everywhere, it accords with the arising of verbal action, there is nothing it knows and nothing it does not know. Therefore, the letter A enters all dharmas. This teaching is called the “Dhāraṇī Door of the Entry into the Characteristics of Dharmas.”

³Further, Śāntamati, when I say “entry,” there is not the slightest dharma anywhere, not even an atom, that can exit or enter anywhere. Since there are no words [that can express entry into the characteristics of all dharmas], from where does one come, to where does one go, and in what does one abide? Since in words there is no abiding, there is also nowhere from which to emerge. Moreover, because words have no aggregation,⁴ there are no words that can express anything; they are also not non-expression⁵ and have neither increase nor decrease. Because there are no words [that can express it], there is no dharma [corresponding to it], and it cannot be distinguished from a non-dharma. Because there are no words [that can express it], there is no dharma that can arise, no dharma that can cease, no dharma that can be created, and no dharma that can be destroyed.

¹ T312.747b26f18; T310.77b21f14.

² Since, in Sanskrit, this is the prefix of negation. This letter is the extent of this dhāraṇī.

³ T312.747c5.

⁴ Or combination/unity, they do not make up a phenomenon which can be considered a thing or a location.

⁵ As a distinct thing or dharma.

Śāntamati, you should know that the enumeration of the words [that can express it] is equal to the enumeration of the mind. The enumeration of the mind is equal to the enumeration of all dharmas. The enumeration of all dharmas is innumerable. Why? Because dharmas cannot be enumerated. Since innumerable dharmas cannot be enumerated, one cannot enumerate any dharmas. In this way, one can enter the characteristics of dharmas. Thus, one fundamentally enters non-production; if one enters non-production, one also [enters] non-arising. Since not the slightest dharma can be entered [in this way], all dharmas thus are entered without entry.

Śāntamati! If one can thus enter the enumeration of all, then one's eloquence will not be cut off. Why? Because Dharma-nature is not cut off. If you can penetrate in this way, you can explain the Dharma for others as the situation demands, and according with what is said, those before you will directly understand it. By entering the characteristics of all dharmas in this way, one can enter according with the characteristics of sentient beings. Because one enters according with the characteristics of sentient beings, one will thus have faith and understanding in all the Dharma that has been well expounded.

O Śāntamati, the bodhisattva who attains dhāraṇīs has an undefiled mind, pure intention, and right practice that is immaculate. Their thoughts are exalted, they are well established in their practice, and their marvellous wisdom is superior. They also attain the super-normal powers, which are firm and complete. The armies of māras cannot defeat them, they refute tīrthika teachings, restrain all afflictions, and sever the bonds of hatred. They possess power and a mind that is unfatigued, their eloquence is inexhaustible, and their explanations of the Dharma are unbounded and well-expounded without limits. Their superior knowledge is unobstructed, they possess profound and marvellous wisdom, they skilfully expound the deep Dharma, and their listening is as extensive as the ocean; they dwell in samādhi like Mount Sumeru. Having gathered assemblies like a king of lions, their worldly-dharmas are pure as a lotus flower. Nurturing sentient beings like the great earth, they pacify the afflictions and desire like great water, and they mature sentient beings just like a great fire.¹

Giving rise to a mind of equality regarding all beings is just like the wondrous moon and giving repelling the darkness of afflictions is like the great sun. Removing the affliction of enmity is like a brave and

¹ Maturing (*paripac*) has the dual meaning of maturing or ripening and cooking.

powerful person, skilfully training and regulating the mind is like a great nāga, and the lofty reverberation of the sound of the Dharma is like the thundering of a great cloud. Universally offering the Dharma-rain is like the great rain, curing all the afflictions of sentient beings is like a great king of physicians, becoming a great Dharma king is like the sovereignty of a king. Skilfully protecting the Dharma in the world is like the world protector devas; skilfully observing devas and humans is like Śakra, Lord of the Devas, a mind that has attained freedom and is possessed of superior power is like King Brahmā. Not being bound to any object is like a flying bird, fear of the din and bustle is just like monkeys and deer. Patience regarding all sentient beings and subduing all evils is just like a loving mother, teaching arts to open the gates of all learning is like a loving father, and bestowing on all the Dharma treasure in inexhaustible flow is just like King Vaiśravaṇa.

Obtaining the adornments of merit and all the primary and secondary marks, pleasant to the sight of humans, those who see them will rejoice, and possessing the wealth of the seven treasures, they are without the suffering of craving. Taking care of all who are ignorant and praising those who are wise, they possess wisdom and thus are free from errors. Well-protected by all devas, well-protected by all nāgas, up to yakṣas, they teach the Dharma freely with supernormal powers that are unobstructed. Fully knowing the intentions of all sentient beings, they enter according to the faculties and nature of all sentient beings. Listening to the Dharma without wearying, they do not seek any fame or profit, and are not stingy in teaching the Dharma; not being defiled, they have pure morality; as they are free from harm, the power of their patience is pure; as they are skilfully able to accomplish all deeds, their diligence is pure; as they have attained freedom, their dhyāna is pure; as they have pristine knowledge, their wisdom is pure. As they are superior in noble conduct, they possess the four immeasurables. Correctly practising, appearing in the world, and possessing samādhis and so forth, they attain the Noble Path of Highest Bodhi.

Being endowed with all these characteristics and merits, they will attain the highest consecration as a Dharma King. O Śāntamati, you should know that the bodhisattva who possesses this dhāraṇī receives these kinds of immeasurable merits. Even if the supernormal power of the Tathāgata assists them, all the merit of the work that is performed is that of the bodhisattva with this dhāraṇī. Even if one were

to praise it using similes for a hundred thousand years, one would still not exhaust them.

¹ At that time, Śāntamati Bodhisattva addressed the devaputra Bhadrarāja, saying:

Good sir! Enjoy the good benefits you have obtained. You can now well-praise the Tathāgata's immeasurable and limitless merits.

2. Analogies for the Ineffable Dharma

Then the devaputra Bhadrarāja addressed Śāntamati Bodhisattva, saying:

O son of good family! In ultimate truth there is not the slightest dharma that can be praised. Why? Because the Dharma has no characteristics, it has no form or colour. Therefore, praise of its merits cannot reach its limits. If it had form, colour, and definite characteristics, one could speak praises of it with words.

²At that time, the devaputra Bhadrarāja addressed the Buddha, saying:

O Bhagavān! All dharmas have no possession, no self, no grasping, no increase, and no cessation. Thus, using skilful means, teachings are created to accord with [beings'] capacities. By correct skilful means, all who practise diligently obtain the Dharma directly.

O Bhagavān! Just as expansive water accumulates under the earth, if someone strong should, acting diligently, make a hole and dig a well, then by the power of that diligence, they will find water. But if there is no hole or well, how will they obtain water? One who diligently practices skilful means is also like this: by the power of diligence, all obtain superior penetrating insight. If one has no strength of diligence, how will one obtain wisdom? Therefore, one seeking bodhi should constantly strive in skilful means and arouse diligence; they will directly attain the Noble Dharma.

Just as an ordinary person who is blind from birth cannot see colours and shapes that arise, sentient beings in the darkness of afflictions are also like that: they cannot see the Dharma. Also, just as a worldly person with the eye of a human in deep darkness cannot see any colours or shapes without a torch or lamp, one with the divine-

¹ T312.748a26.

² T312.748b14f20.

eye [achieved through] practice is just like that: if they do not have a good and virtuous friend who explains the Dharma and guides them, they cannot give rise to faith and understanding in the Dharma. Also, just as someone who is already equipped with the pure divine eye, they do not depend upon worldly light to see; a bodhisattva is just like that: having accomplished what is to be done, they do not depend upon other people for the sake of guidance. Also, just as an ordinary human in the womb, they cannot see anything and cannot see any increase, the bodhisattva who arouses diligence is also like this, even if they repeatedly practice the Buddha-Dharma, they also do not see bodhi undergo any increase. Also, just as the great King of the Himalaya Mountains, many trees depend on it to live, and many trees without it would break down and become scorched and withered; the bodhisattva is also like this: striving to perform skilful means and practising all the True Dharma, they are born [as bodhisattvas] relying on its wisdom, and therein they also do not break down or degenerate.

Also, just as when a wheel-turning king emerges in the world, the seven treasures emerge, namely, the wheel-treasure, the elephant-treasure, the horse-treasure, the jewel-treasure, the woman-treasure, the divine prime minister-treasure, and the divine general-treasure, the bodhisattva is also like that: if they arouse the intention to attain bodhi, seven treasures also emerge, namely, giving, morality, patience, diligence, dhyāna, wisdom, and skilful means. Also, just as the wheel-turning monarch brings under his sway the four continents of the world and has a mind of love, equality, and non-discrimination for all beings, the bodhisattva is like this: by the four means of conversion, they widely gather sentient beings without discrimination; those four means are, giving, kind words, beneficial deeds, and a common goal. Also, just as the wheel-turning monarch engages in teaching the Dharma as a king, and all [under him] have no disputes, fights, or lawsuits, the bodhisattva is also like this: they quietly abide teaching the Dharma, and not even one of all the māras or non-Buddhists argue or dispute with them.

Also, just as how the trichiliocosm first consisted of great Mount Sumeru and the great ocean, the bodhisattva is like that: they first arouse the aspiration to attain bodhi, and then they establish it using deep and firm great compassion. Also, just as in the world, when the light of the sun first emerges, it illuminates a high mountain, the bodhisattva is like that: they first arouse the illumination of great wisdom and then cause all sentient beings to give rise to wholesome roots

and attain the illumination of wisdom. Also, just as the great earth receives many kinds of seeds and all the grasses, trees, and forests which cover the earth and live equally nourish well, the bodhisattva who obtains the dhāraṇī is like that: with a mind of non-attachment and equality towards all beings, they impart the Dharma and do not abandon it.

3. The Merits of Bodhisattvas who Obtain the Dhāraṇī

¹At that time, the Bhagavān praised the devaputra Bhadrarāja, saying:

Excellent, excellent! O devaputra, you have now skilfully taught the Dharma to all bodhisattvas using analogies. O devaputra, you should know that all grasses, trees, and forests, for instance, are gathered together by name and form;² those dharmas as a whole are referred to as material forms, and they enter into the minds of all sentient beings; each one is discriminated by name and form and all sentient beings extensively investigate them, even up to what they eat, drink and experience. All this is a simile for praising the merits obtained by the bodhisattva who obtains the dhāraṇī: they are inexhaustible. O devaputra! There is not the slightest thing said by the bodhisattva who obtained the dhāraṇī that is different from the words of the Buddha.

Moreover, the light of all characteristics of form and the light of sound, smell, taste, touch, and thoughts do not appear before them.³ As for those whose acquired eloquence does not accord with others' listening, and who have fetters, and who do not see the marks of others and that which is said, they all, according with [the bodhisattva] turn and penetrate that which is inexhaustible and limitless. Without using force, their power enters all. Their body is without debilitation, their mind is unconditioned, they can have a hundred thousand buddhas manifest before them to preach the Dharma, and they will be unafflicted and unattached. As the bodhisattva has been established by the supernormal power of all those buddhas, they obtain the dhāraṇī, wisdom, and eloquence. They teach the Dharma with no affliction, no attachment, and without retrogressing.

¹ T312.748c23.

² I.e., by the five aggregates (Form = form. Feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness = name).

³ I.e., worldly dharmas are done away with.

O devaputra, you should know that such a bodhisattva has three Dharmas of non-attachment. What are the three? The first is non-attachment to a self, the second is non-attachment to a being, and the third is non-attachment to dharmas. There are also three kinds of penetrating purity. What are the three? The first is the purity of the Dharma-realm, the second is the purity of thusness, and the third is the purity of the reality-limit. There are also three kinds of penetrating inexhaustible things. What are the three? The first is inexhaustible Dharma, the second is inexhaustible words, and the third is inexhaustible teachings. There are also three kinds of penetrating powers of assistance. What are the three? The first is assistance by eloquence, the second is assistance by the meaning of the Dharma, and the third is assistance by entry into the Dharma. There are also three kinds of achievements of joy. What are the three? The first is the joy of wisdom, the second is the joy of knowledge, and the third is the joy of eliminating doubt. There are also three kinds of Dharmas of speed. What are the three? The first is the speed of mindfulness, the second is the speed of wisdom, and the third is the speed of practice.

¹When the Buddha was teaching this Dharma of the merits of the dhāraṇī, and extolling the teaching of inexhaustible similes, eight hundred² bodhisattvas in the assembly entered the dhāraṇī door.

¹ T312.749a20.

² T310 has eight thousand.

Chapter 25. The Entrustment of the True Dharma

1. The Vidyā for the Longevity of this True Dharma

¹At that time, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, addressed the Buddha, saying:

I pray that the Bhagavān, by the assistance of his supernormal powers, will cause this True Dharma² to be proclaimed widely and circulate in Jambudvīpa for the last five hundred years of the latter part of the latter age.

³The Buddha said:

O Lord of Mysteries! I have a great secret vidyā that guards this True Dharma, do you remember it? I heard it long ago when I was listening to the Dharma in the presence of Ratnacandra Tathāgata.

Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! I also remember it.

The Buddha said:

O Lord of Mysteries! You should now, for this assembly, recite the words of that great ancient vidyā to guard this True Dharma and cause it to abide in the world for a long time.

⁴At that time, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, joined his palms and paid homage to all the buddhas in the ten directions and then recited the words of this great vidyā:

¹ T312.749a23; T310.79a28.

² When this term refers to this sūtra, it is written “this True Dharma,” and when it refers to the Dharma as a whole, it is written “the True Dharma.”

³ T310 lacks the rest of this section, but has a variation on the gāthās that appear, fully resuming at section 4. Ratnacandra Tathāgata.

⁴ T312.749b2.

¹Tadyathā:₁ jaya₂ jayamati₃ jayaśakra₄ male₅² amale₆ aluḍite₇ name
nāmasandhi₈ ³ utte₉ uttamati₁₀ ⁴ uttarāṇi₁₁ āre₁₂ āramaṇi₁₃
ariśamaṇi₁₄ āmule₁₅ mūlāvarite₁₆ mūlānugate₁₇ aṅge₁₈ maṅge₁₉
maṅgite₂₀ āḍi₂₁ māḍi₂₂ mānite₂₃⁵ khuru₂₄⁶ khurusandhi₂₅ dharmānu-
gate₂₆ dharmataḥse₂₇ dharmapraveśe₂₈ sare₂₉ sarasare₃₀ abhede₃₁
bhedasandhi₃₂ ehi₃₃ ehani₃₄ enad agami₃₅ ⁷ nigraho mārāṇām₃₆
nirghāṭane⁸ tīrthyānām₃₇ mohanam dharmānveṣinām₃₈⁹ vidhama-
nam kleśānām₃₉ ujjvālanam dharmānetrīnām₄₀ āraḥsādhar-
makarṣitānām₄₁ ¹⁰ āveśanam nirvāṇasya₄₂ pragragho bodhipari-
cārakānām₄₃ ¹¹ pariśamsthāpanā parśadaḥ₄₄ kāyānupradānām₄₅
dharmaśravaṇikānām₄₆ samanvāharatvaṃ₄₇ samyaggaṭānām₄₈ ava-
lokanam₄₉ samyakpratipannānām₅₀ āmukhībhāvatvaṃ₅₁ mantra-
padānam¹² mā praṇaśyantu₅₂ mantra santi ajāna¹³ udāharaṇa-₅₃-
jñānam akṣūṇatā₅₄ anavamṛdyatā deśanā svabhāvatvaṃ₅₅!

¹⁴After Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, uttered the words of this great vidyā, these trichiliocosms quaked. All the māras, together with their retinues, in these trichiliocosms then approached the Buddha Bhagavān. They bent their bodies in reverence, joined their palms, and together addressed the Buddha, saying:

Bhagavān! If all Dharma teachers can utter the words of this great vidyā, we māras will all approach, honour, and respect them. We will cause the power of this great vidyā to be strong so that no devas or humans will be able to destroy it. We will always protect this *Secret* [of the *Tathāgata Sūtra*] so that other demons will not take it away.

¹ See Gergely Hidas, *Powers of Protection: The Buddhist Tradition of Spells in the Dhāraṇīsamgraha Collections*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021, 83. The mantra differs at various places from that which is represented in Chinese.

² *Dhāraṇīsamgraha* (DS): āle.

³ DS: name namayatai nāmasaṃdhi.

⁴ DS adds: uttaramati.

⁵ DS: ādimāḍite.

⁶ DS: khuru khuru.

⁷ DS: enanugate.

⁸ DS: nirghātanam.

⁹ DS: dharmavidveṣinām.

¹⁰ DS: āraḥsākarṣitānām.

¹¹ DS: bodhisattvapariśamsthāpanam.

¹² The Chinese reads mantrapāṇānam, but the DS reading is preferable here.

¹³ DS: ajānanatvaṃ.

¹⁴ T312.749c2.

2. The Vidyā for the Protection of the Treasury of the Dharma

At that time, the Bhagavān, having looked over the entire assembly, uttered the words of this great secret vidyā:

Jaye durjaye¹ jayamati² same³ śatrunirghātani⁴ amūle⁵ mūlapa-
ricchinne⁶ mārasainyavitrāsani⁷ mukte⁸ muktamati⁹¹ śuddhe¹⁰ ab-
hede¹¹ bhaye mohani¹² bhārohani¹³ nante ² vidya-14-vidye
prakrame¹⁵³!

He then uttered this gāthā:

This True Dharma restrains the words of others,
By those well possessing the words of this True Dharma;
To protect and maintain the treasury of the Dharma,
The Tathāgata has uttered this great vidyā.

3. Vidyās for the Invitation of Devas, and the Restraint of Māras

He uttered another great vidyā:

Ame¹ mame²⁴ marmacchede³ arthe⁴ ar[tha]nistaraṇe⁵.

The words of this great vidyā were uttered for the four great kings.

He uttered another great vidyā:

Dhīre¹⁵ dhīramati²⁶ gupte³ śubhe⁴ śubhavatī-5-same⁶.

The words of this great vidyā were uttered for Śakra, Lord of the Devas.

He then uttered this gāthā:

Endowed with kindness, gentleness, and the power of great patience,
And for those who are compassionate, this great vidyā was uttered;

¹ DS: mati.

² DS: vante.

³ DS: balottame.

⁴ DS: ame.

⁵ DS: vīre.

⁶ DS: vīramati.

Being perfect in the two dharmas of joy and giving,
Brahmā and Indra are invited!

¹He uttered another great vidyā:

Araṇe¹ varaṇe² khakha³ amūle⁴ mūlaśodhani⁵.

The words of this great vidyā were uttered for the restraint of māras.

He then uttered this gāthā:

Now the words of this great secret vidyā,
Subdue all māras and make them tremble;
Established by the power of the Lord of Humans,
This well-spoken sūtra will be expounded and circulated broadly.

This True Dharma spoken by the Tathāgata
Will be known in the latter period [of the Dharma];
By the secret power of the words of this vidyā that has been uttered,
[The māras] will tremble again as they do today.

At that time, the māras gathered in the assembly and uttered this gāthā:

We māras will protect
Those greatly learned Dharma teachers;
In the latter age [of the Dharma], we will cause
This True Dharma to fall into their hands.

4. Ratnacandra Tathāgata

Thereupon, the Bhagavān addressed Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, saying:

You should know, as the supernormal power of the Tathāgata has now established this True Dharma, no one can disturb this True Dharma. Why? I recall that in the ancient past, a Buddha appeared in the world called Ratnacandra Tathāgata, the worthy one, the com-

¹ T312.750a3.

² DS: arade.

³ DS: varade.

pletely and perfectly awakened one, perfect in knowledge and conduct, the well-gone one, the unsurpassed knower of the world, the charioteer and tamer of humans, the teacher of devas and humans, the Buddha, the Bhagavān. His world was called Anindā,¹ and his kalpa was also called Anindā.

In that Buddha's Dharma assembly, there were two Dharma teachers; they possessed great virtue and were famous for their power. One was called Jñānottara, and the other was called Satyadāna. When those two Dharma teachers were in the presence of Ratnacandra Tathāgata, they listened well, upheld, and bore the words of this great vidyā. For a full half-kalpa, they followed that Tathāgata as he turned the wheel of the True Dharma. At that time, in that trichiliocosm, there were a hundred koṭis of māras, all of whom were caused to ripen bodhi by the Noble Dharma.

Śāntamati Bodhisattva went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

Bhagavān! Does that Ratnacandra Tathāgata currently teach the Dharma, or has he passed into nirvāṇa?

The Buddha said:

In the eastern direction, past a million koṭis of buddha-fields from here, there is a buddha-field called Anindā, whose Buddha is called Ratnacandra, and he currently teaches the Dharma. That Buddha's lifespan is ten thousand koṭis. All the māras in that buddha-field were wicked and difficult to tame, but when that Buddha spoke the words of this great vidyā, they were all tamed. After they were tamed, they all wholly ripened in the Noble Dharma towards bodhi.

O Lord of Mysteries! You should now understand that I was also in the Dharma assembly of Ratnacandra Tathāgata, and I purified and cultivated through pure conduct and achieved bodhi in the Noble Dharma. At that time, I was the Dharma teacher Jñānottara. At that time, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva was the Dharma teacher Satyadāna. Śāntamati, you should know that at that time I diligently strived together with Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, and my mind was not negligent. I honoured, respected, and made many vast offerings to that Buddha Bhagavān. I listened well and received the words of the

¹ I.e., Non-blame.

great secret vidyā which that Buddha uttered, and I tamed all māras into protecting this True Dharma.

5. Vows for Upholding this True Dharma

¹At that time, the Bhagavān, having looked over the entire congregation, broadly addressed the assembly, saying:

Good sirs! After the Buddha Tathāgata has entered nirvāṇa, who is fit to take up, bear, guard, and protect, this highest True Dharma, which I cultivated in my superior practices towards bodhi, and which I accumulated for asaṃkhyas of kalpas, not allowing it to disappear?

Thereupon, in that assembly, there were twelve thousand bodhisattvas who, to guard the Dharma, arose from their seats, joined their palms, paid homage to the Buddha Bhagavān, and uttered a gāthā, saying:

If someone forsakes their body and life,
And do not seek any reward for so forsaking,
That is only for the sake of upholding and bearing what the Buddha
has declared:
This highest and purest True Dharma.

Then five thousand devaputras, among whom were wise [deva] kings, who joined their palms, paid homage, and went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

Bhagavān, we together wish to uphold and bear the Noble Dharma of the bodhi of the Tathāgatas.

Then those devaputras uttered a gāthā, saying:

Widely for the sake of all sentient beings
You have aroused the great firm mind of compassion;
We will take up and bear this Dharma Gate,
The highest and deepest teaching of the Buddha.

Thereupon, Śakra, Lord of the Devas, Śikhin, the Brahmā King, and King Vaiśravaṇa uttered a gāthā, saying:

¹ T312.750b9.

Now, this True Dharma is like an excellent medicine,
 It can cure the diseases of all sentient beings;
 We shall all protect and maintain it in the future,
 And wish that the Buddha knows our minds.

At that time, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, went before the Buddha and addressed him, saying:

Bhagavān! I shall take up and bear this Noble Dharma, which the Tathāgata accumulated for asaṃkhyas of kalpas on the path towards highest and perfect full awakening in bodhi.

He then uttered a gāthā, saying:

All Dharmas are originally without words,
 In this absence, words are uttered as designations;
 Since the Noble One has compassion, it has been uttered;
 I shall take it up and bear it so that it will be expounded and circulate.

6. The Buddha's Instructions to Śikhin, the Brahmā King

¹At that time, the Bhagavān addressed Śikhin, the Brahmā King, saying:

O Brahmā King, you should know that there are three kinds of supreme offerings and veneration of a bodhisattva. The Tathāgata, using these supreme offerings and veneration, obtained immeasurable merits.

What are the three? The first is to arouse the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. The second is to maintain the True Dharma of all buddhas. The third is to practice the Dharma sincerely according to what has been heard. O Great Brahmā! These are the three kinds of supreme offerings and veneration. Even if the Tathāgata abides for a kalpa, or up to the end of this age, or if his lifespan is infinite, if the advantages and merits obtained by these offerings were explained in detail, there would be no end. ²If you wish to make the supreme offering to all Tathāgatas, you should cultivate these three kinds of supreme, extensive, and pure Dharma offerings.

¹ T312.750c2.

² The text has "Why?" at this point, but the following sentence does not appear to be an explanation.

Further, O Great Brahmā, even if a person took up and bore a single four-line gāthā from this True Dharma uttered by the Tathāgata, that act would maintain and protect the Noble Dharma of the bodhi of all past, future, and present buddha bhagavāns. Why? Because the bodhi of all buddhas comes forth from the Dharma. Therefore, an offering of the Dharma surpasses the offering of the world's wealth. Offerings of the Dharma are best of the best, the foremost, and the most supreme.

Great Brahmā! I recall that in the past, there was a prince in the family of King Jvalana¹ called Prajñāvan. He suddenly had a dream one night, in which he directly heard two gāthās. Having listened to them, he recalled them after waking and considered:

I have now obtained a great precious treasury.

He immediately went up to a high place and shouted:

I have now obtained a great precious treasury!

Then the king and queen came to their son and questioned him, and the prince immediately described in detail what had happened. Then for the sake of his father and mother, he uttered the two gāthās, saying:

The jewels and wealth of the world, having been gathered, then scatter;

The water and fire maintained by the King's ministers are stolen by thieves;

But the treasure of widely listening to the wonderful Dharma of all buddhas

Cannot be lost, even for many koṭis of kalpas.

The nectar-like Dharma is always free from negligence,
It benefits sentient beings who arouse the aspiration to attain bodhi;

The deep and firm tranquil mind is also like this,
With nothing to cling to, it is the root of all bliss.

¹ Radiance.

O Great Brahmā! When that prince recited the two gāthās that he heard in his dream for his mother and father, eight thousand people ripened good roots of bodhi, and forty-two thousand sentient beings were all born as devas. As a result of this, he had extensive listening and was rich in the pure Dharma and endeavoured to cultivate the supports of the Dharma. Due to practising the True Dharma, he was able to help others.

¹Further, O Great Brahmā, there are two kinds of Dharma which can act for [the benefit of] many. What are the two? The first is not to harm any living being. The second is to seek extensive listening [in the Dharma] without being sated. If there is anyone who can practice these two Dharmas, they will not be deprived of the eye of the True Dharma.

O Great Brahmā! You beseeched all Tathāgatas in this Bhadra Kalpa to teach the Dharma, and you guarded well the True Dharma. However, in this Bhadra Kalpa, all buddha tathāgatas will only appear in the world if there are pure sentient beings. Still, you should not thereby be inattentive [at other times]. Why? O Great Brahmā! In the age of turbidity and evil,² if someone can uphold and bear this True Dharma for even one day and night, they will maintain more merits than those who uphold this True Dharma for a hundred thousand kalpas in a pure buddha-field. Therefore, O Great Brahmā, you should arouse extensive and abundant diligence in that age of turbidity and evil and firmly protect and maintain the Tathāgata's True Dharma.

7. Entrustment to Ānanda and the Rejoicing of the Assembly

At that time, the Bhagavān addressed the Venerable Ānanda, saying:

You should now firmly take up and bear this Jñāna Dhāraṇī Gate in this section on Vajrapāṇi,³ the *Secrets of the Tathāgata*, which was spoken by the Tathāgata so that it will broadly be spoken for others in the latter age [of the Dharma]. I now entrust this True Dharma to you. In the future, you should not utter this True Dharma Gate to those who have less faith and understanding in case they may be led

¹ T312.751a2.

² I.e., when there is no Buddha in the world, when evil flourishes.

³ This appears to be a reference to the presence of this sūtra within the larger Ratnakūṭa collection.

astray. Why? Because this True Dharma is difficult to penetrate clearly from the very start. But if someone has attained mastery regarding this True Dharma, who has already skilfully performed many practices, and who is a vessel for the Dharma, then one should utter this True Dharma Gate to such a person. Having heard it, they will not give rise to fear. Why? Because it came forth from the True Dharma.

Then the Venerable Ānanda addressed the Buddha, saying:

I have now taken up and shall bear this Dharma by the power of the Buddha. I shall circulate it and expound it widely in accord with my power.

The Buddha asked:

Ānanda, have you now seen this Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Mahāsattva, diligently protect and maintain this True Dharma of the Buddha?

Ānanda addressed the Buddha, saying:

Yes, I have so seen.

The Buddha said:

You should now do likewise. You should teach this True Dharma according to beings' needs to aid them, firmly protecting and maintaining it, and explaining it as is suitable.

Ānanda addressed the Buddha, saying:

What is this sūtra to be called? How should we take it up and bear it?

The Buddha said:

O Ānanda! This sūtra is called *The Section on Vajrapāṇi*, or *The Teaching of the Secrets of the Tathāgata*, or *The Inconceivable Buddha-Dharma*, or *The Heap of Immeasurable Merits*. It is called these names; you should take it up and bear it!

¹Further, Ānanda, you should now know that if there is someone on the Bodhisattvayāna, who sees with the Buddha-eye, and if they accumulate many treasures and fill all the buddha-fields, and fill all the land up to the highest realm of existence,² and they give that all as an offering, not expecting any reward, and if there were a person who, not using material wealth, who does good with their mind, and who expounds this True Dharma for others, that latter one would have greater merit. This teaching is called *The Heap of Immeasurable Merits of the Secrets of the Tathāgata*.

When the Buddha had spoken this entrustment of this section of the True Dharma, a thousand koṭis of humans in the assembly aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi; ninety-six thousand bodhisattvas attained patience [at the non-origination of all dharmas]; eighty-thousand humans attained the pure eye of the Dharma; one thousand six hundred bhikṣus attained mental liberation; one thousand six hundred bhikṣuṇīs also attained mental liberation. All the buddha-fields of the ten directions quaked. Hundreds of thousands of devas and humans played drums in the air and performed heavenly music. They rained down divine flowers, and having prostrated and made offerings, they all spoke thus:

We pray that this True Dharma abides in the world for a long time and that it is proclaimed widely and circulates in Jambudvīpa.

When the Buddha had finished teaching this sūtra, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Lord of Mysteries, along with Śāntamati and all the bodhisattvas, Bhadrarāja and all the devaputras, King Ajātaśatru and all the great kings, together with the other bodhisattvas, Ānanda and all the great śrāvakas, along with all the devas of the world, humans, asuras, gandharvas, and so forth, having heard what the Buddha had taught, all greatly rejoiced, had faith, upheld it, and practised it with sincerity.

¹ T312.751b1.

² I.e., up to Akaniṣṭha heaven.

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