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12 The Thus Come One answers.  
 11 He promises to speak; they wish to listen.

SUTRA:

AT THAT TIME, THE WORLD HONORED ONE PRAISED  
 ANANDA IN FRONT OF THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY, SAYING,

"GOOD INDEED! HOW GOOD IT IS THAT YOU HAVE ASKED  
 HOW TO ESTABLISH A BODHIMANDA AND TO RESCUE AND  
 PROTECT LIVING BEINGS WHO ARE SUNK IN THE MORASS  
 OF THE FINAL AGE. LISTEN WELL, NOW, AND I WILL  
 TELL YOU."

ANANDA AND THE GREAT ASSEMBLY AGREED TO  
 UPHOLD THE TEACHING.

COMMENTARY:

Ananda said he wanted beings of the final age not to retreat from the resolve for Bodhi. He wanted them to have decisive faith, to vow to protect and uphold the Buddhadharma, to study and practice the Buddhadharma, and never to go back on their resolve. But how could he get them to be that way? When Shakyamuni Buddha heard Ananda ask that question, he was delighted. The Buddha is in a state of unmoving suchness, but when someone wants to protect the Buddhadharma and help people become Buddhas, it nonetheless makes him happy. *At that time, the World Honored One praised Ananda in front of the whole assembly, saying, "Good indeed!"* The Buddha was pleased. "You're really fine, Ananda. How good it is"--he praises him twice--"that you have asked how to establish a Bodhimanda and to rescue and protect living beings who are sunk in the morass of the final age. You want to help beings in the Dharma-ending Age who are being drowned in the water and consumed by the fire. Listen well, now, and I will tell you."

Ananda and the great assembly agreed to uphold the teaching. When they heard the Buddha agree to speak the Dharma, their joy was even greater. The Buddha probably said, "Do you want to listen to this?"

Everyone undoubtedly answered, "We want to. We want to."

When deviant teachers explain their methods, their sole topic is sexual desire. The things they say are unprincipled. This should be distinguished clearly. Sometimes Bodhisattvas also use compassion, kind words, and a protective heart to teach living beings, because they know that all living beings are steeped in desire. Every living being has thoughts of sexual desire. So he does not expect

them to cut off their love and desire immediately, but he uses all kinds of expedient means to get them to see through and renounce sexual desire. Then they can put a stop to it themselves. This is the state of a Bodhisattva, totally different from that of the deviant teachers of externalist ways.

Once, Kuan Yin Bodhisattva transformed into a fishmonger. She was an exquisite woman who went about the village with her fish-basket. No one in the village believed in the Buddha. But when the young men of the village caught sight of this maiden, they desired her. The village wasn't large, but there were at least a hundred young men there, and every one of them wanted to marry her. Kuan Yin with the fish basket said, "There are so many of you! I can't marry a hundred men, but I've thought of a method to choose a husband. I will marry whichever of the hundred of you is the first to be able to learn to recite by heart the 'Universal Door Chapter' of the *Lotus Sutra*. Go back home and I'll give you three days."

But, at the end of three days, there were forty or fifty who could recite it from memory. The woman with the fish basket said, "But there are still too many of you. Even though you have met the requirements, I can't have fifty husbands. This time go back and within five days memorize the *Vajra Sutra*. I'll marry whoever does that."

So the fifty who'd made it to the first level went back and began to practice the *Vajra Sutra*. At the end of five days there were some twenty who could recite it by heart. The fish monger said, "There are still too many of you. It's impossible for me to marry you all. I have one more task. Anyone who can memorize the *Lotus Sutra* in seven days will be my husband. I believe whoever can do that will be worthy."

The twenty began to recite the *Lotus Sutra*, and at the end of seven days there was one man who could recite it from memory. He was named Ma, and came from a wealthy family. So there was a large wedding and everyone was invited. That evening, after the festivities, they retired, but who would have guessed that the bride would have a heart attack and die instantly? And the bridegroom had gone to so much effort! He'd memorized the "Universal Door Chapter," the *Vajra Sutra*, and the *Lotus Sutra*, and still he had no bride. Shortly thereafter, the funeral took place, and a monk in purple robes appeared on the scene. "What's going on?" he asked.

"Our new daughter-in-law passed away suddenly, and we are burying her."

"No," said the monk. "There's nothing in that coffin at all! Who are you mourning for? Open it and take a look."

Indeed, the coffin was empty. They were all amazed. "Where's she gone? After her! Bring her back!"

The monk told them, "That was Kuan Yin Bodhisattva. You people in this village didn't believe in the Buddha, so she manifested the appearance of a beautiful woman in order to get you young men who are so fond of forms to study the Buddhadharmas. Then she left."

When the bridegroom, Ma, heard that, he renounced all worldly things and left the home-life. After that, he was certified to the fruition of a sage. That really happened in China.

J2 He brings up the three studies in general.

SUTRA:

THE BUDDHA TOLD ANANDA, "YOU CONSTANTLY HEAR ME EXPLAIN IN THE VINAYA THAT THERE ARE THREE UNALTERABLE ASPECTS TO CULTIVATION. THAT IS, COLLECTING ONE'S THOUGHTS CONSTITUTES THE PRECEPTS; FROM THE PRECEPTS COMES SAMADHI; AND OUT OF SAMADHI ARISES WISDOM. SAMADHI ARISES FROM PRECEPTS, AND WISDOM IS REVEALED OUT OF SAMADHI. THESE ARE CALLED THE 'THREE NON-OUTFLOW STUDIES.'

COMMENTARY:

When everyone in the assembly had agreed to uphold the teaching, the Buddha told Ananda, "You constantly hear me explain in the Vinaya that there are three unalterable aspects to cultivation." The Vinaya includes the rules for both the greater and lesser vehicles. It discusses the precepts. These three fixed aspects are unalterable. "That is, collecting one's thoughts constitutes the precepts." These three are precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. You collect and maintain your thoughts, just as a magnet collects iron filings. This refers especially to our thoughts that "climb on conditions"--that take advantage of situations. When these thoughts take control, one is always paying attention to other people. One is continually thinking up ways to

draw near to wealthy people or people in positions of authority. Such thoughts go on and on all day long. That's called "climbing on conditions;" it means that one has not collected one's thoughts. Collect those thoughts. Don't let them take advantage of situations. Don't let them run out at random. But our mind is such that it runs away with us, even if we don't want it to. We may forbid it to have false thinking, but in the next moment another false thought comes up. One ceases and the next one begins. The first thought dissolves, but the next one is already on its way. And before that one is completely gone, the next one has arisen. The mind that climbs on conditions never ceases. What you must do is to collect and maintain your thoughts. Bring your mind back to one point. The whole reason we can't become Buddhas, can't become enlightened, can't awaken to the Way, is that we do not have control of our mind. If you get your thoughts together, there is nothing you cannot do. You'll be successful at everything. The precepts, then, are designed to collect your thoughts. Precepts put a stop to evil and prevent further transgressions.

"Samadhi arises from precepts." Holding precepts is like holding a bottle of muddy water still, until the silt settles and the water becomes clear. Samadhi means "not moving." "And wisdom is revealed out of samadhi." As Manjushri Bodhisattva's verse said:

When stillness is ultimate, the light penetrates.

You become enlightened. Within samadhi, your own genuine wisdom arises. "These are called the 'Three Non-outflow Studies.'" Guard the precepts, and from the precepts will come samadhi. Out of samadhi will arise wisdom.

- J3 He specifically lists the Three Studies.
- K1 He lists the importance of the precepts first.
- L1 He teaches him to hold precepts.
- M1 He gathers in first and then gives evidence.
- M2 Instruction in four aspects.
- N1 One must cut off lust.
- O1 Distinguishes the characteristic harm and benefit.
- P1 First he explains the benefit or harm of holding or violating.
- Q1 Holding it, then one certainly can get out of birth and death.

SUTRA:

"ANANDA, WHY DO I CALL COLLECTING ONE'S THOUGHTS THE PRECEPTS? IF LIVING BEINGS IN THE SIX PATHS OF ANY MUNDANE WORLD HAD NO THOUGHTS OF LUST, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE TO FOLLOW A CONTINUAL SUCCESSION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS.

COMMENTARY:

"Ananda, why do I call collecting one's thoughts the precepts? Now I will tell you. If living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of lust": The six paths include gods, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and beings in the hells. If they were free of thoughts of sexual desire, "They would not have to follow a continual succession of births and deaths." They could cut off birth and death.

Q2 Violating it, one certainly will fall into demonic paths.

SUTRA:

"YOUR BASIC PURPOSE IN CULTIVATING IS TO TRANSCEND THE WEARISOME DEFILEMENTS. BUT IF YOU DON'T RENOUNCE YOUR LUSTFUL THOUGHTS, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET OUT OF THE DUST.

COMMENTARY:

The Buddha is speaking to Ananda here when he says, "Your basic purpose in cultivating is to transcend the wearisome defilements." You want to get out of birth and death. But if you don't renounce your lustful thoughts, you will not be able to get out of the dust." If you do not cut off sexual desire, it will be impossible to get out of the mundane defilements of the world. That's because thoughts of sexual desire are themselves defiling. They themselves are the wearisome dust. Not to speak of engaging in lustful practices, even the presence of such thoughts

is unclean. If you don't renounce sexual desire, it's entirely unreasonable to hope to become enlightened and accomplish Buddhahood. To hold on to sexual desire on the one hand and expect to become enlightened on the other is the stupidest kind of thinking. People who think that way are impossible to teach. Even if Shakyamuni Buddha himself appeared in the world right now, he would have no way to bring such people to attainment of fruition. Such people are the most dull-witted of all.

SUTRA:

"EVEN THOUGH ONE MAY HAVE SOME WISDOM AND THE MANIFESTATION OF CH'AN SAMADHI, ONE IS CERTAIN TO ENTER DEMONIC PATHS IF ONE DOES NOT CUT OFF LUST. AT BEST, ONE WILL BE A DEMON KING; ON THE AVERAGE, ONE WILL BE IN THE RETINUE OF DEMONS; AT THE LOWEST LEVEL, ONE WILL BE A FEMALE DEMON.

COMMENTARY:

"Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Ch'an samadhi, one is certain to enter demonic paths if one does not cut off lust." You may be wise, and when you sit down to meditation you may experience light ease and feel extremely comfortable--that is, you can enter Ch'an samadhi. You think you're wise, then? If you don't put a stop to lust, you'll end up a demon! "At best, one will be a demon king in the Sixth Desire Heaven. On the average, one will be in the retinue of demons. One will become an ordinary demon. At the lowest level, one will be a female demon." They are beautiful, but extremely coarse. People with wisdom should be careful. Smart people should take careful note of this passage. Don't let your intelligence go back on you so that you make a mistake in the end. Don't have the attitude: "You don't understand, but I do. You're not clear, but I am." That's petty intelligence, petty wisdom. Don't let a promising future go to ruin.

SUTRA:

"THESE DEMONS HAVE THEIR GROUPS OF DISCIPLES. EACH SAYS OF HIMSELF THAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED THE UNSURPASSED WAY.

COMMENTARY:

These people with a little wisdom who do not cut off their lust are always talking about love and desire. "I love you, you love me," and they love back and forth until they become demonic. Then what happens? "These demons have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself that he has accomplished the unsurpassed way." They, too, will have disciples and protectors. Totally without shame, they will loudly pronounce that they have achieved the highest path. "I'm a Buddha! We are all supreme and unsurpassed!" Basically such people are demons, but they don't admit to it; they profess instead to be Buddhas. You see, there are even phony Buddhas. But they don't see themselves as phony; they think they are for real. They believe:

In heaven above, on earth below  
I alone am honored.

P2 He discusses the behavior of demons within Buddhism.  
Q1 Greed for lust turns the world.

SUTRA:

"AFTER MY EXTINCTION, IN THE DHARMA-ENDING AGE, THESE HORDES OF DEMONS WILL ABOUND, SPREADING LIKE WILDFIRE AS THEY OPENLY PRACTICE GREED AND LUST. CLAIMING TO BE GOOD KNOWING ADVISORS, THEY WILL CAUSE LIVING BEINGS TO FALL INTO THE PIT OF LOVE AND VIEWS AND LOSE THE WAY TO BODHI.

COMMENTARY:

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "While I'm in the world, such demons will not dare to show themselves, but after my ex-

inction, in the Dharma-ending Age, these hordes of demons will abound." It is just our present age that is being referred to here, when the Dharma is about to die out. There are simply too many of these demons around, going about everywhere discussing sexual desire. And they themselves revel in lust, be they men or women. At the same time, they think that they are enlightened and have become Buddhas. How is it that I recognize such people as these, such as the one who says he's a Buddha--we won't mention any names. He said he was a Buddha, and I said he was a demon.

"Who's a demon?!" he said.  
 "You are," I replied. How did I know? He's just like what's described here. He's always talking about emotion and love. "Love, love. I love everybody!" It's really shameless. What right do you have to be in love with every one? These demons abound, "spreading like wildfire as they openly practice greed and lust." They'll be all the rage in the world. Ignorant people will be taken in by them, thinking what they have to say makes sense. It will especially agree with young people's way of thinking. As the saying goes, "persons of similar (atrocious) tastes get together. They praise one another as they go down this road. If they didn't agree with each other's ideas, they wouldn't do that. If people's paths are not in agreement, they won't collaborate with one another. But if their thinking is the same, then the blind can lead the blind. How pitiful! I'm not scolding people here, but

If one who is dazed transmits the delusion to another,  
 When all is said and done, neither one  
 understands.

The teacher falls into the hells,  
 And the disciples burrow in after him.

The teacher winds up in the hells, and when his disciples show up there as well, he is surprised. "How did you get here? This is a terrible place!"  
 "You came first, and you're our teacher, so of course we would follow you," they reply.

"Claiming to be good knowing advisors": they boast, "I give lectures all over the place to lots of people." Ridiculous! "They will cause living beings to fall into the pit of love and views and lose the way to Bodhi. They cause all they come in contact with to fall into the pit of sexual desire. They forfeit Bodhi and end up in the hells."

One Must Cut Off Lust

Q2 Teaching people to cut off lust is the Buddha's instruction.

SUTRA:

"WHEN YOU TEACH PEOPLE IN THE WORLD TO CULTIVATE SAMADHI, THEY MUST FIRST OF ALL SEVER THE MIND OF LUST. THIS IS THE FIRST: CLEAR AND UNALTERABLE INSTRUCTION ON PURITY GIVEN BY THE THUS COME ONES AND THE BUDDHAS OF THE PAST, WORLD HONORED ONES.

COMMENTARY:

Demon kings advocate love. The difference between that and the teaching of a Bodhisattva is ever so slight--like the flip of a hand. In what way is it different? Bodhisattvas also love people, but their love is a compassionate and protective kind, devoid of sexual desire. But there is a current of lust that runs through everything a demon king says. He openly advocates it, to the point that he says that the heavier one's sexual desire, the higher the level of enlightenment one can reach. This kind of deviant doctrine harms people. Bodhisattvas have no lust; they do not make distinctions between living beings and themselves. Demons have motives; they are greedy for things. Bodhisattvas have no ulterior motives and are not greedy. In regard to this, the Buddha's teaching explains the twelve causal conditions.

"When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must first of all sever the mind of lust. Teach them to cut off their thoughts of sexual desire. This is the first clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the Past, World Honored Ones." This is the method of teaching used by the Thus Come Ones. It is the resolution of all the Buddhas of the past. This is clear instruction that teaches people how to be pure. One must cut off lust. This is a fixed principle. It is not the least bit flexible. It's not to say that one can have lust or not have it. One must get rid of it. If you want to be enlightened and also hold on to your thoughts of lust, then you certainly will join the retinue of demons.

P3 Decides if the Bodhimanda can be accomplished.  
 Q1 An analogy shows that if one doesn't cut off lust, Bodhi can't be obtained.

SUTRA:

"THEREFORE, ANANDA, IF CULTIVATORS OF CH'AN SAMADHI DO NOT CUT OFF LUST, THEY WILL BE LIKE SOMEONE WHO COOKS SAND IN THE HOPE OF GETTING RICE. AFTER HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF AEONS, IT WILL STILL BE JUST HOT SAND. WHY? IT WASN'T RICE TO BEGIN WITH; IT WAS ONLY SAND.

COMMENTARY:

You see, now he brings up an analogy. He tells Ananda, "You don't believe it, so I'll explain the principle for you. Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Ch'an samadhi do not cut off lust, they will be like someone who cooks sand in the hope of getting rice." If one does not sever sexual desire and yet cultivates and meditates every day, then one will cultivate on the one hand, and have outflows on the other. Everything one gains will be dissipated. Whatever one gains in cultivation will be lost tenfold in outflows; if one cultivates ten times as much, one will lose a hundred times as much in outflows. Unable to renounce sexual desire, one still sits in meditation with the hope of getting enlightened, with the aim of getting a little upside-down bliss. This is just like cooking sand in the hope of getting rice. "After hundreds of thousands of aeons, it will still be just hot sand. It's useless. Why? It wasn't rice to begin with; it was only sand. You expect to become enlightened without giving up sexual desire? It's the same as expecting to get rice from sand."

There's something else to be said here. If you can sever sexual desire, then even if you are together with the opposite sex all day long, there will be no problem. There won't be any sexual desire, any appearance of male or female, any appearance of people, of self, of living beings, or of a lifespan. Some people know no shame and say, "That's the way I am." To just say you're that way isn't enough. There's no proof. How do you know you're that

way? If you were that way, you basically wouldn't recognize that you were. You couldn't have the idea that you didn't have any sexual desire. If you don't, you simply don't. You wouldn't go around advertising it. That just shows that you really aren't that way. If you really don't have any sexual desire, then

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

No matter how pleasing a sound the ear picks up, your mind is unaware of it. Then you've got a little going for you. And then if you can reach the point that you can walk, sit, and lie down together with someone of the opposite sex without there being any incident--any arising of thoughts of sexual desire--and really have there be none--that will count. It's not to say that your mind still races but you grit your teeth and say firmly, "I can take it." That doesn't count. It has to be that not one thought arises--the mind does not move, that there basically is no trace of lust in your heart. That's genuine. If you occasionally are still aware of what women are all about, then you've failed the test.

Once there was someone who got enlightened and went to seek certification from his teacher. "What enlightenment have you opened?" his teacher asked.

His reply was, "Oh, before I never realized it, but now I know that bhikshunis are women." His teacher checked him out with the Buddha Eye and saw that indeed he was enlightened. "You're all right," he said in certification.

"Who doesn't know that?" you say.

If you weren't enlightened, you wouldn't even say that much. It was because he had awakened that he voiced that observation. This is not something you can cheat people with--especially since his teacher had the Buddha Eye open. He looked at him and knew that he had realized the first fruition of Arhatship.

SUTRA:

"IF YOU SEEK THE BUDDHA'S WONDERFUL FRUITION AND STILL HAVE PHYSICAL LUST, THEN EVEN IF YOU ATTAIN A WONDERFUL AWAKENING, IT WILL BE BASED

IN LUST. WITH LUST AT THE SOURCE, YOU WILL REVOLVE IN THE THREE PATHS AND NOT BE ABLE TO GET OUT. WHICH ROAD WILL YOU TAKE TO CULTIVATE AND BE CERTIFIED TO THE THUS COME ONE'S NIRVANA?

## COMMENTARY:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Your fondness for Matangi's daughter not only involved thoughts of lust; you still had physical lust, as well. *If you seek the Buddha's wonderful fruition and still have physical lust, then even if you attain a wonderful awakening, it will be based in lust.* Although you may attain the subtle principles at the heart of it, you still have not gotten rid of the roots of lust. *With lust at the source, you will revolve in the Three Paths and not be able to get out.* In the future you will certainly fall into the hells. The "Three Paths" are those of animals, hungry ghosts, and beings in the hells. And you will just revolve in these three and be unable to leave them. *Which road will you take to cultivate and be certified to the Thus Come One's Nirvana? Which of these paths will lead you to that fruition?*

Q2 Diligently and profoundly cutting off lust can bring accomplishment.

## SUTRA:

"YOU MUST CUT OFF THE LUST WHICH IS INTRINSIC IN BOTH BODY AND MIND. THEN GET RID OF EVEN THE ASPECT OF CUTTING IT OFF. AT THAT POINT YOU HAVE SOME HOPE OF ATTAINING THE BUDDHA'S BODHI.

## COMMENTARY:

*"You must cut off the lust which is intrinsic in both body and mind. You definitely must get rid of the most subtle and fine, the most infinitesimal single thought of lust. That just means that ignorance itself must go. It must be done both physically and mentally. Then get rid of even the aspect of cutting it off. You cannot even be aware of having cut it off. At that point you have some hope of attaining the Buddha's Bodhi.*

Q2 He speaks of the divisions of deviant and proper.

## SUTRA:

"WHAT I HAVE SAID HERE IS THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING. ANY EXPLANATION COUNTER TO IT IS THE TEACHING OF PAPIYAN.

## COMMENTARY:

*"What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. This is the way the Buddhas explain the Dharma. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan, methods taught by a demon king. "Papiyan" is a Sanskrit term that means "evil one" and refers to Mara, the demon king.*

People who come to listen to the Sutras must certainly be able to see. The blind cannot come to hear the Sutras, nor can the deaf or dumb. The more the people come to hear, the smarter they get. Everyone should open his eye of genuine wisdom and truly turn the organ of the ear back to the self-nature. Do not seek outside.

N2 One must cut off killing.

O1 He distinguishes the characteristic harm and benefit.

P1 First he explains the benefit or harm of holding or violating.

Q1 Holding it, then one certainly can get out of birth and death.

## SUTRA:

"FURTHER, ANANDA, IF LIVING BEINGS IN THE SIX PATHS OF ANY MUNDANE WORLD HAD NO THOUGHTS OF KILLING, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE TO FOLLOW A CONTINUAL SUCCESSION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS.

## COMMENTARY:

*"Further, Ananda, if living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of killing, they would not have to follow a continual succession of births and deaths. If gods, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts,*

and hell-dwellers did not harbor thoughts of killing, but instead ceased killing and liberated the living, they could get out of birth and death. Here the reference is to mere thoughts of killing, not to mention acts of killing. If one ceases killing, one does not have to undergo rebirth in the six paths and be subject to the karma that accompanies the process of birth and death.

Q2 Violating it, one certainly will fall into the path of spirits.

SUTRA:

"YOUR BASIC PURPOSE IN CULTIVATING SAMADHI IS TO TRANSCEND THE WEARISOME DEFILEMENTS. BUT IF YOU DO NOT RENOUNCE YOUR THOUGHTS OF KILLING, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET OUT OF THE DUST.

COMMENTARY:

"Ananda, you want to cultivate samadhi power. Your basic purpose in cultivating samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. Your hope from the beginning has been to get out of the mundane dust. But if you do not renounce your thoughts of killing, you will not be able to get out of the dust." How can one get rid of thoughts of killing? Cease killing and liberate the living. Above, the text says, "If you do not renounce your lustful thoughts, you cannot get out of the dust." You must sever thoughts of sexual desire in order to be free of defilements. That's the only way you can transcend the cycle of rebirth in the six paths. But if you dispense with your thoughts of lust and still harbor thoughts of killing, you still cannot get out of the mundane world. You cannot transcend rebirth.

SUTRA:

"EVEN THOUGH ONE MAY HAVE SOME WISDOM AND THE MANIFESTATION OF CH'AN SAMADHI, ONE IS CERTAIN TO ENTER THE PATH OF SPIRITS IF ONE DOES NOT CEASE KILLING. AT BEST, A PERSON WILL BECOME A MIGHTY

GHOST; ON THE AVERAGE, ONE WILL BECOME A FLYING YAKSHA, A GHOST LEADER, OR THE LIKE; AT THE LOWEST LEVEL, ONE WILL BECOME AN EARTH-BOUND RAKSHASA.

COMMENTARY:

"Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Ch'an samadhi, one is certain to enter the path of spirits if one does not cease killing." "Wisdom" here refers to worldly intelligence and skill in debate, not to transcendental wisdom. It is an ordinary kind of wisdom that enables one to have a certain amount of eloquence. And even if you have cultivated to the point that you have kung fu in Ch'an--you've had some responses--still, if you don't get rid of thoughts of killing, you'll fall into the realm of spirits. This means you might become a ruling god in the heavens. "At best, a person will become a mighty ghost, that is, a powerful heavenly general. On the average, one will become a flying yaksha." The mighty ghosts are heaven-traveling yakshas; the flying yakshas travel in space. Or one will become "a ghost leader, or the like. One will be a ghost who commands other ghosts. At the lowest level, one will be an earth-bound rakshasa."

SUTRA:

"THESE GHOSTS AND SPIRITS HAVE THEIR GROUPS OF DISCIPLES. EACH SAYS OF HIMSELF THAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED THE UNSURPASSED WAY.

COMMENTARY:

"These ghosts and spirits have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself that he has accomplished the unsurpassed way." The ruling gods, the mighty ghosts in the heavens, the yakshas and rakshasas in the human realm, and the ghosts in the hells also have a lot of followers. There are rich ghosts, ghosts with a little wealth, and poor ghosts. There are tens of thousands of varieties of ghosts. Kuan Ti Kung in China is an example of a wealthy ghost. But after he took refuge with the Buddha, he came to be known as Ch'ieh Lan Bodhisattva, a Dharma-protecting spirit. In the Buddha's assembly he must stand; he has no

seat assignment. However, the ghosts referred to here claim to have attained the Supreme Way.

He discusses the behavior of demons within Buddhism. Eating flesh turns the world into a teaching by ghosts.

SUTRA:

"AFTER MY EXTINCTION, IN THE DHARMA-ENDING AGE, THESE HORDES OF GHOSTS AND SPIRITS WILL ABOUND, SPREADING LIKE WILDFIRE AS THEY ARGUE THAT EATING MEAT WILL BRING ONE TO THE BODHI WAY.

COMMENTARY:

*"After my extinction, in the Dharma-ending Age, these hordes of ghosts and spirits will abound."* That's the present time he's talking about--the age that you and I live in. There are innumerable ghosts and spirits in this Dharma-ending Age, all because in former lives they could not stop killing. They practiced cultivation, but could not cease killing, and so they fell into the path of the spirits. In the Dharma-ending Age, these beings will be *"spreading like wildfire as they argue that eating meat will bring one to the Bodhi Way."* They say, "I eat meat and I've become a Buddha just the same. I didn't have to stop killing or eat vegetarian food, but I'm enlightened and have attained the Bodhi Way, that is, I am a Buddha." This is like a certain person who claims to be enlightened but who eats meat, drinks alcohol, smokes cigarettes, and has a group of young followers that he teaches to smoke marijuana and take L.S.D. Who ever heard of someone enlightened behaving like that? When the Buddha himself became enlightened, he did not use such dope. Now you take pills that poison your system, upset your energy balance, and bring you to the brink of death, and you still insist you are enlightened. Is that upside down or not? I ask you.

SUTRA:

"ANANDA, I PERMIT THE BHIKSHUS TO EAT FIVE KINDS OF PURE MEAT. THIS MEAT IS ACTUALLY A

TRANSFORMATION BROUGHT INTO BEING BY MY SPIRITUAL POWERS. IT BASICALLY HAS NO LIFE-FORCE. YOU BRAHMANS LIVE IN A CLIMATE SO HOT AND HUMID, AND ON SUCH SANDY AND ROCKY LAND, THAT VEGETABLES WILL NOT GROW; THEREFORE, I HAVE HAD TO ASSIST YOU WITH SPIRITUAL POWERS AND COMPASSION. BECAUSE OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THIS KINDNESS AND COMPASSION, WHAT YOU EAT THAT TASTES LIKE MEAT IS MERELY SAID TO BE MEAT; IN FACT, HOWEVER, IT IS NOT. AFTER MY EXTINCTION, HOW CAN THOSE WHO EAT THE FLESH OF LIVING BEINGS BE CALLED THE DISCIPLES OF SHAKYA?

COMMENTARY:

*"Ananda, I permit the Bhikshus to eat five kinds of pure meat."* The Buddha's teaching allows these five kinds:

- 1) Flesh of an animal that I did not see killed.
- 2) Flesh of an animal that I did not hear killed.
- 3) Flesh of an animal that I am sure was not killed for my sake.
- 4) Flesh of an animal that died by itself.
- 5) Flesh that is the leavings of an animal after birds have scavenged.

*"This meat is actually a transformation brought into being by my spiritual powers. It basically has no life-force."* The Buddha created these kinds of flesh; they are not from living creatures. They have no life-force; that is, no consciousness, no temperature, and no breath. *"You Brahmans live in a climate so hot and humid, and on such sandy and rocky land, that vegetables will not grow. You who practice pure conduct live in a land full of sand and dampness. Therefore, I have had to assist you with spiritual powers and compassion. Because of the magnitude of this kindness and*

compassion, what you eat that tastes like meat is merely said to be meat; in fact, however, it is not. That's what you are really eating. I allow you to eat this kind of meat at present. But, after my extinction, how can those who eat the flesh of living beings be called the disciples of Shakyas? They are not eating the five kinds of pure meat; they are just eating the flesh of living beings outright. Are they to be known as disciples of the Buddha? They cannot be referred to as disciples of Shakyas, that is, people who left the home life.

SUTRA:

"YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT THESE PEOPLE WHO EAT MEAT MAY GAIN SOME AWARENESS AND MAY SEEM TO BE IN SAMADHI, BUT THEY ARE ALL GREAT RAKSHASAS. WHEN THEIR RETRIBUTION ENDS, THEY ARE BOUND TO SINK INTO THE BITTER SEA OF BIRTH AND DEATH. THEY ARE NOT DISCIPLES OF THE BUDDHA. SUCH PEOPLE AS THESE KILL AND EAT ONE ANOTHER IN A NEVER-ENDING CYCLE. HOW CAN SUCH PEOPLE TRANSCEND THE TRIPLE REALM?"

COMMENTARY:

"You should know that these people who eat meat may gain some awareness and may seem to be in samadhi, but they are all great rakshasas. They pay no attention to what kind of flesh they are eating. They don't care whether it is one of the three kinds of pure meat or the five kinds of pure meat; if it's meat, they'll eat it. Ananda, you should realize that after my extinction such beings will pretend to be disciples of the Buddha and will consume both alcohol and meat. They'll be completely uninhibited, saying that everyone is free to do as he or she pleases. Although they may attain a small state of awakening or gain a little wisdom, they will only appear to be in samadhi." Actually they are not. They are like the person who came here and claimed he was the same as the Six Patriarch.

"What evidence do you have that you are the same?" I asked him.

He replied, "I don't have any evidence that I'm not the same." He thought that was a wise answer. Actually, he was in a class with the beings described in this passage. Such people may seem to have a little samadhi power, but in fact they are great rakshasas--big demons, big ghosts.

"When their retribution ends, they are bound to sink into the bitter sea of birth and death. They are not disciples of the Buddha. Although such people wear the Buddha's clothes and eat the Buddha's food, they are not disciples of the Buddha. Such people as these kill and eat one another in a never-ending cycle. They take life and eat meat and do not prohibit either one. They keep eating one another; you eat me, and I eat you; kill and eat, be killed and eaten. How can such people transcend the triple realm?" Behavior like this sets up an endless cycle. In this life, you eat my flesh; and in the next life, I eat yours. In the life after that, it's your turn to eat me again, and it goes on and on. How can such beings get out of the Desire Realm, the Form Realm, and the Formless Realm?"

Q2 Teaching people to cut off killing is the Buddha's instruction.

SUTRA:

"WHEN YOU TEACH PEOPLE IN THE WORLD TO CULTIVATE SAMADHI, THEY MUST ALSO CUT OFF KILLING. THIS IS THE SECOND CLEAR AND UNALTERABLE INSTRUCTION ON PURITY GIVEN BY THE THUS COME ONES AND THE BUDDHAS OF THE PAST, WORLD HONORED ONES."

COMMENTARY:

"When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must also cut off killing. First, they must cut off sexual desire; they must also sever their thoughts of killing. This is the second clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones." This is the teaching advocated by the Buddha. Both the Buddhas of the past and the Buddhas of the present teach this second clear and fixed

instruction on purity. You must certainly revere it. If you don't, you won't be able to get out of the triple realm.

P3 He decides if liberation can be obtained.  
Q1 An analogy makes clear, if one doesn't cut off killing it is difficult to get free.

SUTRA:

"THEREFORE, ANANDA, IF CULTIVATORS OF CH'AN SAMADHI DO NOT CUT OFF KILLING, THEY ARE LIKE ONE WHO STOPS UP HIS EARS AND CALLS OUT IN A LOUD VOICE, EXPECTING NO ONE TO HEAR HIM. IT IS TO WISH TO HIDE WHAT IS COMPLETELY EVIDENT.

COMMENTARY:

"Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Ch'an samadhi do not cut off killing, they sever their compassionate seeds. Once they have lost their sense of compassion, they are like one who stops up his ears and calls out in a loud voice, expecting no one to hear him." This is known as plugging up one's ears while one steals a bell; one supposes that if one can't hear oneself, no one else can either. "It is to wish to hide what is completely evident." The more one wishes to cover up one's conduct, the more it is revealed. In the same way, someone who practices samadhi but does not stop killing will find it impossible to realize his expectations.

SUTRA:

"BODHISATTVAS AND BHIKSHUS WHO PRACTICE PURITY WILL NOT EVEN STEP ON GRASS IN THE PATHWAY; EVEN LESS WILL THEY PULL IT UP WITH THEIR HAND. HOW CAN ONE WITH GREAT COMPASSION PICK UP THE FLESH AND BLOOD OF LIVING BEINGS AND PROCEED TO EAT HIS FILL?

COMMENTARY:

"Bodhisattvas and bhikshus who practice purity until their conduct is extremely pure and lofty, will not even step on grass in the pathway." At a place where several paths come together there is usually grass growing in the walkway. A pure bhikshu or Bodhisattva will not walk on growing grass. It could kill the grass. "Even less will they pull it up with their hand. They don't do any weeding. How can one with great compassion pick up the flesh and blood of living beings and proceed to eat his fill?" That is not permissible.

Q2 If one diligently and profoundly cuts off killing, one can get free.

SUTRA:

"BHIKSHUS WHO DO NOT WEAR SILK, LEATHER BOOTS, FURS, OR DOWN FROM THIS COUNTRY OR CONSUME MILK, CREAM, OR BUTTER CAN TRULY TRANSCEND THIS WORLD. WHEN THEY HAVE PAID BACK THEIR PAST DEBTS, THEY WILL NOT HAVE TO RE-ENTER THE TRIPLE REALM.

COMMENTARY:

"Bhikshus who do not wear silk, leather boots, furs, or down from this country, or consume milk, cream, or butter can truly transcend the world." Silk, leather, furs, and down come from living creatures. The life of the creature must be taken in order to make these things. Ordinary cotton is not included here. Therefore, they don't wear leather shoes or carry leather bags. Nor do they use milk products. "When they have paid back their past debts, they will not have to re-enter the triple realm." It says here that milk and milk products should not be ingested, but in the precepts of the greater and lesser vehicles it does not state that one must certainly refrain from these things. This passage of Sutra text is describing those who hold precepts with a maximum of purity. They thoroughly uphold the precept against killing. They do not use anything that has

any connection with living creatures. They don't wear silk because a lot of silkworms' lives must be spent in the process of obtaining the silk. They don't eat honey, because it is made from bees. But in the Vinaya proper this is an open question. There is room for flexibility. The precepts do not specifically forbid these things. For you to avoid using them is to be extremely pure. It is very good.

SUTRA:

"WHY? IT IS BECAUSE WHEN ONE WEARS SOMETHING

TAKEN FROM A LIVING CREATURE, ONE CREATES CONDI-  
TIONS WITH IT, JUST AS WHEN PEOPLE EAT THE HUN-  
DRED GRAINS, THEIR FEET CANNOT LEAVE THE EARTH.

BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY ONE MUST AVOID THE  
BODIES AND THE BY-PRODUCTS OF LIVING BEINGS, BY  
NEITHER WEARING THEM NOR EATING THEM. I SAY THAT  
SUCH PEOPLE HAVE TRUE LIBERATION.

COMMENTARY:

*"Why? It is because when one wears something taken from a living creature, one creates conditions with it."* For example, when you wear silk, you have a connection with the worms that made it. If you don't want to be that kind of creature, you should sever connections with it. It is *"just as when people eat the hundred grains, their feet cannot leave the earth."* The first people on earth were actually heavenly beings that came down from the Great Brahma Heaven. This happened in the past when the fire of the kalpa raged over the earth until it had destroyed all signs of people. Afterward there began a barren period which extended for one knows not how long. And then, one day some heavenly beings flew down from the Brahma Heaven and alighted on earth. By this time, the earth was covered with a special something that looked quite good. They picked some and found it to be fragrant as well. So they ate it. Once they ate this "fat of the land," they could no longer fly. They couldn't mount the clouds and drive the fog. No longer mobile, they stood on earth and called out to their brothers

and sisters who happened by in space. These heavenly beings landed and also partook of the "fat of the land," and so they too became earth-bound. They couldn't go back to the heavens; and that's how the human race came to be on earth. Some people hold that we came from monkeys. But if that's the case, what keeps us from turning back into monkeys? In fact, it all started when the heavenly beings came down to earth. As the number of people increased, the fat of the land was entirely consumed, and that whole species of plant died out. Then they had to eat "the hundred grains." They are:

1. twenty varieties of rice,
2. twenty varieties of millet,
3. twenty varieties of beans,
4. twenty varieties of vegetables,
5. twenty varieties of melons.

There were more or less twenty kinds of each, making a hundred varieties in all. Once they ate them, "their feet couldn't leave the earth." We ascribe it to gravity, but the reason behind it is that people consume this kind of food.

*"Both physically and mentally one must avoid the bodies and by-products of living beings, by neither wearing them nor eating them."* We people want to keep our bodies and minds free from karma created in connection with the bodies of other living creatures or with anything that comes from them. One cannot physically take life, nor can one do so mentally. One should not wear anything connected with the life of another being or eat the flesh of their bodies. *"I say that such people have true liberation."* They have really become free.

02 He speaks of the division into deviant and proper.

SUTRA:

"WHAT I HAVE SAID HERE IS THE BUDDHA'S  
TEACHING. ANY EXPLANATION COUNTER TO IT IS THE  
TEACHING OF PAPIYAN.

COMMENTARY:

*"What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. My explanation is the Dharma spoken by the Buddhas of the ten*

directions and the three periods of time. *Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.* Any doctrine that agrees with my principle is Dharma that the Buddhas speak. Any theory that disagrees with the principles I have explained here is the talk of a demon king.

Now that you are hearing the *Shurangama Sutra*, you can use it as a freak-spotting mirror. If someone is pretending to be a person and you shine the mirror on him, he will be revealed in his true form--a weirdo. Perhaps he's a pig-spirit or a cow-spirit or a horse-spirit or a mountain-essence or water-monster. Maybe it's a ghost king. Whatever it might be, the mirror will show it up. Now that you've heard the *Shurangama Sutra*, you will be able to know whether someone is speaking the Dharma correctly by comparing it to what is told in this Sutra. So it is like a freak-spotting mirror. That's why I said earlier that the blind, deaf, and dumb have no chance to hear my explanation of the Sutra. The deaf basically can't hear it, but here I'm not referring to people who are physically deaf, but to people who hear the Dharma and yet are deaf to it. Mutes also miss the point when I lecture. I hope that all of you who are able to hear the *Shurangama Sutra* will become Good Knowing Advisors in the future; that you will come to genuinely understand the Buddhadharma. Then you can teach the blind, deaf, and mute. When you lecture, you can use an amplifying system, and then even though they are outside, they will be able to hear and will no longer be deaf or mute. People who don't understand the Buddhadharma are most pitiful. So, when you have mastered the Buddhadharma, you should go teach it to others. That means that at this stage you should pay special attention as you study.

N3 One must cut off stealing.

O1 He distinguishes the characteristic harm and benefit.

P1 First he discusses the benefit or harm of holding or violating.

Q1 Holding it, one then certainly can get out of birth and death.

SUTRA:

"FURTHER, ANANDA, IF LIVING BEINGS IN THE SIX PATHS OF ANY MUNDANE WORLD HAD NO THOUGHTS OF STEALING, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE TO FOLLOW A CONTINUOUS SUCCESSION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS.

COMMENTARY:

The Buddha again calls out to Ananda, "*Further, Ananda, if living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of stealing, they would not have to follow a continuous succession of births and deaths.*" The gods, people, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-dwellers would not steal, even in their minds. They wouldn't steal anything whatsoever, be it visible or invisible, valuable or worthless. Not only not actually taking it, but not even having the thought of taking it arises in one's mind: that is what is meant by not stealing. If they could refrain from stealing as well as from lust and killing, they wouldn't get involved in the continuity of birth and death, and they would also be free of the continuity of karmic retribution and from the continuity of the world.

Q2 Violating it, one certainly will fall into deviant paths.

SUTRA:

"YOUR BASIC PURPOSE IN CULTIVATING SAMADHI IS TO TRANSCEND THE WEARISOME DEFILEMENTS. BUT IF YOU DO NOT RENOUNCE YOUR THOUGHTS OF STEALING, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET OUT OF THE DUST.

COMMENTARY:

"*Your basic purpose in cultivating samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements.* You want to develop proper concentration. Your original reason for this was to get out of the cycle of rebirths in the mundane world. But, if you still have ideas about stealing things, *but if you do not renounce your thoughts of stealing, you will not be able to get out of the dust.*" "Dust" refers to the burning house of the Triple Realm.

SUTRA:

"EVEN THOUGH ONE MAY HAVE SOME WISDOM AND THE MANIFESTATION OF CH'AN SAMADHI, ONE IS CERTAIN TO ENTER A DEVIUS PATH IF ONE DOES NOT CEASE STEALING. AT BEST, ONE WILL BE AN APPARITION;

ON THE AVERAGE, ONE WILL BECOME A PHANTOM; AT THE  
LOWEST LEVEL, ONE WILL BE A DEVIUS PERSON WHO IS  
POSSESSED BY A MEI GHOST.

## COMMENTARY:

"Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Ch'an samadhi, one is certain to enter a devious path if one does not cease stealing." Basically, this kind of person has no genuine wisdom, for if he did, he would not steal, nor would he lust, nor would he kill. It's just because he lacks genuine wisdom that he does these things. But let us allow that someone like this has a little wisdom and is just a trifle smarter than the average person, and when he sits he slips into an oblivion that's more or less like samāhi. Yet, this person thinks that he has achieved some incredible state which no one else has ever come close to. He feels he has skill which surpasses everyone else's. His views are arrogant, and if he doesn't stop stealing, he will fall into a devious path. Even with a little wisdom and a little samadhi, one will fall into an improper state of being because of stealing. On this devious path, one will teach others ways which are dark and incorrect. One will teach people deviant knowledge and deviant views. "At best, one will be an apparition." When you see such a being, he appears to be extremely intelligent; but, in fact, he is false. In the Chinese text *The Nature of Medicine*, there is mention of herbs endowed with this essence, but, in fact, the essence is not real. "On the average, one will become a phantom," a strange being who possesses spiritual powers and can harm people. "At the lowest level, one will be a devious person who is possessed by a mei ghost." You remember that the kumbhanda was a mei ghost who could cause paralysis in a person during sleep. The kind of ghost mentioned here takes over a person who is awake and manipulates his body, mouth, and mind for its own purposes. It speaks through the person and can gain complete control of him. These people are what are known as mediums, or they can sometimes become sorcerers or exorcists. In America, I encountered a person like this, an American who said he was Jesus. A minute later he would announce that God had come upon him to speak. Then, after a time he would announce that Jesus had come and wanted to talk to him. It was about five years ago when he came to see me. I scolded him. I said, "You don't even recognize yourself. You are a demonic ghost through and through, and you are up to no

good." He didn't like the phrase "demonic ghost," so he left. He came to discuss doctrine with me, but he never returned after I scolded him. And I thought to myself, "I don't know how to talk to people. Why did I scare away that 'Jesus-God?'" Anyway, that's an example of this kind of devious person. Why do they have that kind of karmic retribution? It is because in former lives they stole things, and so they are bound to fall into one of these three categories.

Sometimes in China these mediums were pretty spectacular. They could stick a knife in the crown of their heads and yet not die. The spirit possessing them would remove the blade by the use of a mantra in such a way that the person didn't even bleed. Some would pound nails into their shoulders, and from the nails they would hang several swords weighing more than ten pounds each. They could hang four of them and then spin them. It was awesome to watch. People were terrified. Sometimes they were really talented. I've seen a lot of these devious demons and adherents of externalist ways. When you look into the *Shurangama Sutra*, you realize that long ago the Buddha described all the different kinds of beings in the world very clearly. Therefore, having heard the *Shurangama Sutra*, you should be able to recognize whatever you come up against.

This section is called the "Four Clear and Unalterable Instructions on Purity," and it is an extremely important passage of this Sutra. So pay close attention.

If one can't stop stealing, one will find it impossible to become a Buddha, however much one hopes to become one. Now that we understand this doctrine, people who do steal should change. Those who don't should not let thoughts of stealing arise. That is how to be most in accord with the Way.

## SUTRA:

"THESE DEVIUS HORDES HAVE THEIR GROUPS OF  
DISCIPLES. EACH SAYS OF HIMSELF THAT HE HAS AC-  
COMPLISHED THE UNSURPASSED WAY.

## COMMENTARY:

"These devious hordes are phantoms, demons, ghosts, and weird beings, and the *li*, *mei*, and *wang liang* ghosts that harm people. They all "have their groups of disciples." In this world, every category of being has its followers.

As it says,

The good gather together;  
The bad form gangs;  
People find people who are like themselves.

So, even these devious ghosts and demons mass together and have their devotees. "Each says of himself that he has accomplished the unsurpassed Way." They do not recognize what is truly supreme, but instead contend that their way of doing things is the best. They say they have attained the highest way possible, even to the point that they take the Buddha's name in vain and say that's what they are. "Just take a look at the magnitude of my spiritual powers," they argue. But, in fact, they are phantoms, demons, ghosts, and weird beings. They are thoroughly improper in their conduct.

P2 He discusses the behavior of weird beings within Buddhism.  
Q1 Hidden influences are the teachings of weird beings.

SUTRA:

"AFTER MY EXTINCTION, IN THE DHARMA-ENDING AGE, THESE PHANTOMS AND APPARITIONS WILL ABOUND, SPREADING LIKE WILDFIRE AS THEY SURREPTITIOUSLY CHEAT OTHERS. CALLING THEMSELVES GOOD KNOWING ADVISORS, THEY WILL EACH SAY THAT THEY HAVE ATTAINED THE SUPERHUMAN DHARMAS. ENTICING AND DECEIVING THE IGNORANT, OR FRIGHTENING THEM OUT OF THEIR WITS, THEY DISRUPT AND LAY WASTE TO HOUSEHOLDS WHEREVER THEY GO.

COMMENTARY:

I've met very many of these demonic ghosts. Westerners may not be too familiar with these strange things, but it's not just that they come to be because Chinese people believe in ghosts and spirits. It's just that, as time goes

One Must Cut Off Stealing

on, the strange phenomena that appear in the world become more numerous.

"After my extinction, in the Dharma-ending Age, these phantoms and apparitions will abound." Shakyamuni Buddha is telling us here that the age we live in will be plagued with such deviant creatures. We people shouldn't have to see things for ourselves to believe they exist. There are simply too many things in the world which one will never see. If we had to wait until we had seen each and every one of them with our own eyes, we wouldn't be done looking in this lifetime. There are some things you just have to take others' word for. "They spread like wildfire as they surreptitiously cheat others." They will be like a fire that literally burns people up. People who don't recognize these devious beings will fall in with them and it will be just as if they had stepped into a raging fire. The person will be burned. "Secret and hidden" means they will go about cheating others.

"Calling themselves good knowing advisors, they will each say that they have attained the superhuman dharmas." They will speak of themselves as Bright-eyed Good Knowing Advisors. "Superhuman" refers to a Bodhisattva. In other words, they will say they are Bodhisattvas. In Buddhism, even though you are a Bodhisattva, or even a Buddha who has come again, you cannot say that you are a Buddha or a Bodhisattva. You must keep silent about it so long as you live, down to your last breath. "I'm a Buddha!" "I'm a Bodhisattva!" "I'm an Arhat!" You cannot speak like that. Anyone who speaks like that is a demonic ghost, just like the ones being described here. When can you let it be known? After you die. Then people ought to know. But you cannot let people know who you are before you die. What meaning would there be in your announcing that you are a Buddha? What meaning? You say you are a Bodhisattva? Why? What is your meaning in saying so? There could be no other reason than to get people to believe in you. And why would you want people to believe in you? So they will give you money. You do it to take advantage of situations and climb on conditions. If that's not your intent, then why would you be telling people you are a living Buddha? If you are a Bodhisattva, fine, you're a Bodhisattva; what would you be doing telling people so?

That reminds me of something that happened once in China. An official once went to Kuo Ch'ing Monastery on T'ien T'ai Mountain to ask questions of the Abbot Feng Kan. The official and the Abbot chatted. What was the official's name, you wonder? Don't ask me; I've forgotten. Perhaps

it was you, or perhaps it was me; it's not for certain. The official said to the Abbot, "In the past, there used to be a lot of Bodhisattvas who came into the world, but there aren't any in this day and age. I'd like to meet a genuine Bodhisattva, but I can't find one."

Abbot Feng Kan said, "Oh, you want to see a Bodhisattva? We have two here. I'll introduce you to them, and you can go see them."

The official was duly surprised, "Two Bodhisattvas, right here? You mean ones made of clay, or carved wooden ones?"

"No," replied the Abbot. "These two are flesh-body Bodhisattvas. They are living Bodhisattvas."

"No kidding?" asked the official.

"I'm the Abbot here. Would I joke with you about a thing like that?"

"Who are they?"

"One is the cook and the other boils the water. One is named Han Shan and the other is named Shih Te. One is a transformation of Manjushri Bodhisattva, and the other is a transformation of Universal Worthy (Samantabhadra) Bodhisattva. They practice ascetic practices in this temple, doing menial tasks. They do the things that no one else likes to do. If you want to see them, it's quite simple. Just go to the kitchen and you'll find them there."

The official asked the Guest Prefect to take him to the kitchen. There they found two grimy, tattered monks with long hair and beards, dirty faces, and a generally disreputable appearance. But the Abbot had said these two were Bodhisattvas, and so he dared not look down on them. Instead, he bowed to them.

"What are you doing?" the two demanded. "Why are you bowing to us?"

"Abbot Feng Kan said you were transformations of Manjushri and Universal Worthy Bodhisattvas, so of course I'm bowing to you."

"Fen Kan's flapped his tongue"--by which they meant he was a busybody. "He's said too much this time." So, as the official bowed, they backed up and backed up, one knows not how great a distance--probably several hundred steps from the kitchen to the rock cliff at the base of the mountain. Then they said, "Feng Kan has flapped his tongue. You didn't even bow to Amitabha. What are you doing bowing to us?"

"Who's Amitabha?" asked the official.

"The Abbot is. He's Amitabha Buddha come again. Go bow to him. Leave us alone."

As the official stood there in amazement, the two grimy monks took one last step backwards and disappeared into the rock cliff. That place is now known as Moonlight Cliff on T'ien T'ai Mountain--the spot where Han Shan and Shih Te disappeared.

The official hurried back into Kuo Ch'ing Monastery to bow to the Abbot Feng Kan--Amitabha Buddha. But when he arrived inside, he found that the Abbot had sat down and entered the stillness. He'd entered nirvana. The official now knew that the Abbot had been Amitabha Buddha come again, but it was too late. He'd failed to see what was right before his eyes. Amitabha Buddha was already gone.

Why don't Buddhas and Bodhisattvas let people know who they are when they come? If everyone knew, everyone would be bowing all day long one after another to the point that it would be pretty annoying. There would be no time left to cultivate. So they don't want to let on who they are.

That's the way it is in Buddhism. One would never say, "Look! I'm enlightened!" "I'm a Buddha!" People like that are no different from the ones being discussed in this section of the Sutra. I've never met anyone who admitted he was enlightened. Neither Elder Master Hsü Yün, nor any of the other enlightened monks in China ever said a word about being enlightened, even if asked directly. There's no such thing in Buddhism, except perhaps in "New Buddhism."

The beings discussed here claim to be superior people. "Do you know who I am? I'm Maitreya Bodhisattva." "Do you know who I am? I'm Kuan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. Now that you know, you should not miss out on this opportunity. Bow to me as your teacher. If you don't want to bow to me, you can bow to my teacher. I'll give you a certificate and for sixty-five dollars I'll transmit a Dharma to you." They go about "enticing and deceiving the ignorant." They confuse unsuspecting people. I've met so many people like this. Their line is, "I have Dharma Treasures. I'll sell you one for only three hundred dollars. It's only because I like you so much that I've saved it for you. If I were not fond of you, I wouldn't offer it to you."

So the disciple gives the teacher three hundred dollars in exchange for a treasure. Some hit you up for a thousand dollars. Soon the old teacher's wallet is fat. When he moves his stash from safe to safe, he has to use a train! Most people fall for this kind of thing. If you speak true Dharma for them, such as "Don't kill," they don't believe it. "Don't steal." They don't believe that, either. "Don't be lustful." They don't believe that, either. But if you tell them you've got something that

will be to their advantage, they'll pay you for it. "Or frightening them out of their wits": they make you lose whatever wisdom you had. They make you confused. "They disrupt and lay waste to households wherever they go." They are really filthy rich, but everywhere they go they keep amassing more wealth, stripping householders of their goods, lock, stock, and barrel.

SUTRA:

"I TEACH THE BHIKSHUS TO BEG FOR THEIR FOOD  
IN AN ASSIGNED PLACE, IN ORDER TO HELP THEM RE-  
NOUNCE GREED AND ACCOMPLISH THE BODHI WAY. THE  
BHIKSHUS DO NOT PREPARE THEIR OWN FOOD, SO THAT,  
AT THE END OF THIS LIFE OF TRANSITORY EXISTENCE  
IN THE TRIPLE REALM, THEY CAN SHOW THEMSELVES TO  
BE ONCE-RETURNERS WHO GO AND DO NOT COME BACK.

COMMENTARY:

"I teach the bhikshus to beg for their food in an assigned place, in order to help them renounce greed." When it was time to beg for food, each bhikshu headed in a certain direction and made his rounds in a certain locale. Carrying their bowls, the bhikshus went out to receive alms. Why did the Buddha teach them to beg for food? First, when laypeople give food to people who have left the home-life, they can ensure the reward of blessings and put an end to their suffering and distress. Second, when bhikshus go out for alms, they eat whatever they are given. If it's good, they eat it; if it's bad, they eat it just the same. In this way, they get rid of their greed. If you cook for yourself, you'll think, "What I made today wasn't so good; tomorrow, though, I'll make something delicious. The day after that I'll make something even better, and the day after that I'll make something simply spectacular." There's no end to it. When one goes out begging, there is no chance for selection. One does not make distinctions about which food and drink is good and which is not. One cannot say, "The food I've gotten today is really tasty," and then eat with great gusto. And then the next day, if the food one gets is not good, one does not even eat it. That kind of

conduct is impermissible. One eats the good and the bad; the general idea is to eat one's fill and forget about it. That gets rid of greed.

"In this way they can accomplish the Bodhi Way." That is because, as it's said:

The superior person is concerned about  
the Way, not about food.

People who come to investigate the Buddhadharma should not get hung up on food.

"The bhikshus do not prepare their own food, so that, at the end of this life of transitory existence in the Triple Realm, they can show themselves to be once-returners who go and do not come back." They only want to eat enough to sustain their bodies. Our life in this world, whether we dwell on land or in water, is like a stay in a hotel--transitory and soon over. Don't be attached to it. The bhikshus put an end to greed, so that when this life in the Triple Realm is over, they won't have to come back. "This place is filthy. I'm not going to return here," is their thought. Even America, with its beautiful toilets and magnificent houses--it's enough to have been here once. Don't come back! Don't be greedy for toilets. To begin with, they smell bad; why would you be greedy for them? In fact, this whole world stinks. You should not think it is a clean place. This world is a toilet in itself.

SUTRA:

"HOW CAN THIEVES PUT ON MY ROBES AND SELL  
THE THUS COME ONE, SAYING THAT ALL MANNER OF  
KARMA ONE CREATES IS JUST THE BUDDHADHARMA? THEY  
SLANDER THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT THE HOME-LIFE AND  
REGARD BHIKSHUS WHO HAVE TAKEN COMPLETE PRECEPTS  
AS BELONGING TO THE PATH OF THE SMALL VEHICLE.  
BECAUSE OF SUCH DOUBTS AND MISJUDGMENTS, LIMIT-  
LESS LIVING BEINGS FALL INTO THE UNINTERMITTENT  
HELL.

## COMMENTARY:

"How can thieves put on my robes?" They don the clothes of a left-home person and tell people, "I am a Dharma Master who can lecture on the Sutras. You should all believe in me." "And they sell the Thus Come One." They barter with the Buddhadharmas. They do business with it. All they do is think of ways to get people to give them money. They say *"that all manner of karma one creates is just the Buddhadharmas."* They say, "Everything is the Buddhadharmas. Dancing is Buddhadharmas; drinking wine is Buddhadharmas; making music is Buddhadharmas. These are all part of the Buddha's eighty-four thousand Dharma-doors." They are really smooth talkers. "Smoking cigarettes is Buddhadharmas; gambling is Buddhadharmas; you can do anything you want." They are lax, even to the point that no matter what one might do, they say it's all right. *"They slander those who have left the home-life and regard bhikshus who have taken complete precepts as belonging to the path of the Small Vehicle."* If anyone calls them on it and asks, "Have you taken the complete precepts?" they don't even know what you are talking about. They don't even understand the five precepts, how much the less the eight, or the ten, or the ten major and forty-eight minor precepts. They themselves are not authentic left-home people. Their scope is very small and self-centered. *"Because of such doubts and mis-judgments, limitless living beings fall into the unintermittent hell."* They cause others to be confused, and they themselves basically do not understand. To begin with, the people who follow them had good intentions, but having become involved with such a messed-up teacher, they end up in the same situation as was mentioned earlier:

If one who is dazed transmits the delusion  
to another,  
When all is said and done, neither one  
understands.  
The teacher falls into the hells.  
And the disciples burrow in after him.

In the Unintermittent Hell there is no break in the suffering. One person fills the hell in the same way that many people fill it. With just one person in that hell, there would still be no space left over. And no matter how many people are in it, it's always just as full. One can never get out of this hell. So it's very dangerous to set up conditions for it.

- Q2 Teaching people to cut off stealing is the Buddha's instruction.  
R1 First he offers his own instructions.

R2 Then he explains it is the teaching of all former Buddhas.

SUTRA:

"WHEN YOU TEACH PEOPLE IN THE WORLD TO CULTIVATE SAMADHI, THEY MUST ALSO CEASE STEALING. THIS IS THE THIRD CLEAR AND UNALTERABLE INSTRUCTION ON PURITY GIVEN BY THE THUS COME ONE AND THE BUDDHAS OF THE PAST, WORLD HONORED ONES.

COMMENTARY:

*"When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must also cease stealing." Since they want to cultivate, they must get rid of their thoughts of stealing. "This is the third clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones." This is an unchanging instruction given by Shakyamuni Buddha and by all Buddhas of the past.*

P3 He decides if samadhi can be obtained.  
 Q1 An analogy makes clear that if stealing is not cut off, samadhi is hard to obtain.

SUTRA:

"THEREFORE, ANANDA, IF CULTIVATORS OF CH'AN SAMADHI DO NOT CEASE STEALING, THEY ARE LIKE SOMEONE WHO POURS WATER INTO A LEAKING CUP AND HOPES TO FILL IT. HE MAY CONTINUE FOR AS MANY AEONS AS THERE ARE FINE MOTES OF DUST, BUT IT STILL WILL NOT BE FULL IN THE END.

COMMENTARY:

"Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Ch'an samadhi do not cease stealing, they are like someone who pours water into a leaking cup and hopes to fill it. If you are trying to fill a cup with a hole in it, you may continue for as many aeons as there are fine motes of dust, but it still will not be full in the end."

Q2 Diligent and profound cutting off of stealing can bring samadhi.

SUTRA:

"IF BHIKSHUS DO NOT STORE AWAY ANYTHING BUT THEIR ROBES AND BOWLS; IF THEY GIVE WHAT IS LEFT OVER FROM THEIR FOOD-OFFERINGS TO HUNGRY LIVING BEINGS; IF THEY PUT THEIR PALMS TOGETHER AND MAKE OBEISANCE TO THE ENTIRE GREAT ASSEMBLY; IF WHEN PEOPLE SCOLD THEM THEY CAN TREAT IT AS PRAISE; IF THEY CAN SACRIFICE THEIR VERY BODIES AND MINDS, GIVING THEIR FLESH, BONES, AND BLOOD

One Must Cut Off Stealing

TO LIVING CREATURES; AND IF THEY DO NOT REPEAT THE NON-ULTIMATE TEACHINGS OF THE THUS COME ONE AS THOUGH THEY WERE THEIR OWN EXPLANATIONS, MISREPRESENTING THEM TO THOSE WHO HAVE JUST BEGUN TO STUDY, THEN THE BUDDHA GIVES THEM HIS SEAL AS HAVING ATTAINED TRUE SAMADHI.

COMMENTARY:

"If bhikshus do not store away anything but their robes and bowls": Bhikshus should have three robes, a bowl, and a sitting cloth. They don't need anything else. They do not accumulate possessions. "If they give what is left over from their food-offerings to hungry living beings": They give alms that they cannot eat to living beings who have nothing to eat. "If they put their palms together and make obeisance to the entire great assembly": They place their palms together and are respectful to any gathering of people. "If when people scold them they can treat it as praise": They regard scolding as being the same as praise, they do not react to the scolding. "If they can sacrifice their very bodies and minds, giving their flesh, bones, and blood to living creatures": Their minds harbor no arrogant thoughts and their bodies do not act in ways that display pride and self-satisfaction. When someone scolds you, you should act as if he is singing a song for you. If you yourself do not scold people and yet someone scolds you, you shouldn't even understand what he is saying. It shouldn't even make sense to you. It should be as if he is speaking some language you don't understand, such as Japanese, English, or Chinese, depending on which one you don't know. When someone is clearly scolding you, you just think, "Oh, he is saying such nice things about me." Look at it in the reverse. If someone hits you, just pretend you bumped into a wall. Suppose you were careless and ran smack into a wall and were left with a big lump on your head. If you then turned around and socked the wall with your fist, saying, "Why did you bump into me?" you'd only end up with a hurt hand to boot. When someone strikes you, if you view it as if you'd bumped into a wall, the whole affair will end right there. True bhikshus who have brought forth the resolve for Bodhi should even give up their flesh and blood to other beings if there are some who want to partake of it. Once when

Shakyamuni Buddha was on the cause-ground, he saw a starving tiger, and he gave up his body for the tiger to eat. The tiger is one of the world's most ferocious beasts, and yet the Buddha on the cause-ground could give up his own body to the tiger.

"If they do not repeat the non-ultimate teachings of the Thus Come One as though they were their own explanations, misrepresenting them to those who have just begun to study": They will not discuss the teachings of the Small Vehicle in such a way that they appear to be their own explanations. In other words, they won't plagiarize the Buddha, thereby misrepresenting themselves and confusing people who have first begun to study. If they do not do any of these things, "Then the Buddha gives them his seal as having attained true samadhi." The Buddha will give the seal of certification to people like this. They have genuine samadhi power.

SUTRA:

"WHAT I HAVE SAID HERE IS THE BUDDHAS' TEACHING. ANY EXPLANATION COUNTER TO IT IS THE TEACHING OF PAPIYAN.

COMMENTARY:

"What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan." This explanation is the way the Buddhas speak Dharma. Any other explanation is the dharma spoken by the kings of demons.

N4 One must cut off false speech.

O1 He discusses the intent of precepts or provisional dharmas.

P1 False speech is very harmful.

Q1 Traces false speech as a reason for becoming demonic.

SUTRA:

"ANANDA, THOUGH LIVING BEINGS IN THE SIX PATHS OF ANY MUNDANE WORLD MAY NOT KILL, STEAL, OR LUST EITHER PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY, THESE THREE ASPECTS OF THEIR CONDUCT THUS BEING PERFECT, YET IF THEY TELL LIES, THE SAMADHI THEY

ATTAIN WILL NOT BE PURE. THEY WILL BECOME DEMONS OF LOVE AND VIEWS AND WILL LOSE THE SEED OF THE THUS COME ONE.

COMMENTARY:

"Ananda, though living beings in the six paths of any mundane world may not kill, steal, or lust either physically or mentally": with their bodies they do not commit acts of killing, stealing, or lust. In their minds there are no thoughts of killing, stealing, or lust, "these three aspects of their conduct thus being perfect, yet if they tell lies, the samadhi they attain will not be pure." This means it is a habit with them: they are always telling big lies. Since they are not pure, "they will become demons of love and views and will lose the seed of the Thus Come One." They will become demons of love or demons of views. Why do they lose the seed of the Tathagata? It is because they lie excessively.

Q2 Points out the motives of false speech.

SUTRA:

"THEY SAY THAT THEY HAVE ATTAINED WHAT THEY HAVE NOT ATTAINED, AND THAT THEY HAVE BEEN CERTIFIED WHEN THEY HAVE NOT BEEN CERTIFIED. PERHAPS THEY SEEK TO BE FOREMOST IN THE WORLD, THE MOST VENERATED AND SUPERIOR PERSON. TO THEIR AUDIENCES THEY SAY THAT THEY HAVE ATTAINED THE FRUITION OF A SHROTAAPANNA, THE FRUITION OF A SAKRIDAGAMIN, THE FRUITION OF AN ANAGAMIN, THE FRUITION OF ARHATSHIP, THE PRATYKABUDDHA VEHICLE, OR THE VARIOUS LEVELS OF BODHISATTVAHOOD UP TO AND INCLUDING THE TEN GROUNDS, IN ORDER TO BE

REVERED BY OTHERS AND BECAUSE THEY ARE GREEDY  
FOR OFFERINGS.

COMMENTARY:

What kind of lies do they tell? Ordinary lies aside, "They say that they have attained what they have not attained." They have not attained the Way. Basically, they don't understand the least thing about cultivating. They don't know how to recite the Buddha's name; they don't know how to hold precepts; they don't know how to sit in Ch'an. They act like they know, but they don't. They hear someone explain some principle, and they interrupt with, "I understand that. I already knew that a long time ago." Or they say, "Hey, I've already got the Way. I'm enlightened. I'm a Buddha." They say "that they have been certified when they have not been certified." They have not reached the first stage of Arhatship, much less do they have an understanding of the levels above that, but they say, "Do you know what I am? I'm an Arhat." Or, "I'm a Buddha." Or, "I'm a Bodhisattva." Why do they say these things? "Perhaps they seek to be foremost in the world, the most venerated and superior person." It's as someone said recently to one of my disciples: "What sect are you? We're in this together. We should join ranks, and I'll be the leader. I'm the founder of American Buddhism. I'm the First Patriarch of American Buddhism." That's "seeking to be number one." "To their audiences they say that they have attained the fruition of a Shrotaapanna, the fruition of a Sakrida-gamin, the fruition of an Anagamin, the fruition of Arhatship." They start out telling those around them that they are first-stage Arhats. But soon that level is not lofty enough, so they say, "Oh, I just certified to the second fruition of Arhatship!" And then a second later they claim fruition to the fourth level. Still, fourth fruition is just Arhatship and not the highest position, so they are not satisfied. They claim to have "the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle, or the various levels of Bodhisattvahood up to and including the Ten Grounds. They start telling people they are Pratyekabuddhas, or they claim to be at any one of the stages of Bodhisattva practice, even the Ten Grounds!

Why do such people claim to be Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas? What it amounts to is that they are cheating people and telling big lies in order to get people to believe in them. If no one believes in them, they don't have an income. As soon as people believe, then the offerings start to pour in. And so intent are they "to be

revered by others, so greedy are they for their offerings, that they do not fear falling into the hell of pulling out tongues. If one is a liar, after one's death, one goes to this hell where an iron hook sinks into one's tongue, pulls it out, and a sword chops it off. That's the retribution for lying. And yet there are still people who dare to do it. We don't even have to look beyond this world: just take mutes, for instance. Why are they mute? They are undergoing a retribution for excessive lying. They get to be people, but they can't talk. "See how much lying you can do now!" is the message. Why can't they talk? They have had their tongues cut out. Although they have tongues, the essence in them is gone; their tongues have no nature.

Why are some people blind? It is because they looked down on other people. They always considered themselves to be better than everyone else. They were smarter and more talented in every way, and so in this life they can't see people. Now they must ask themselves whether they are really better than everyone else. The deaf also are undergoing a retribution for having eavesdropped on conversations. They used to put their ear to numerous keyholes to find out what was being said. Present-day spies with their myriad ways of overhearing people, of stealing private conversations, may well have to bear the same retribution and be deaf at some future point in time.

However, if once you understand the principle, you then refrain from lying, you can avoid being mute. If you no longer look down on people, you won't have to be blind. If you don't steal other's conversations, you won't have to be deaf. Being mute, hunchback, and blind are all retributions for having slandered the Triple Jewel.

Q3 Predicts the fall of those who harm the good.

SUTRA:

"THESE ICCHANTIKAS DESTROY THE SEEDS OF BUDDHAHOOD JUST AS SURELY AS A TALA TREE IS DESTROYED IF IT IS CHOPPED DOWN. THE BUDDHA PREDICTS THAT SUCH PEOPLE SEVER THEIR GOOD ROOTS FOREVER AND LOSE THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND VISION. IMMERSSED IN

THE SEA OF THE THREE SUFFERINGS, THEY CANNOT  
ATTAIN SAMADHI.

## COMMENTARY:

*"These icchantikas destroy the seeds of Buddhahood."*  
People who tell big lies, who say they have attained what they in fact have not attained, who say they have been certified to what they have not been certified to, and who say they understand things they do not understand--such people are "icchantikas" which means "those who have cut off their good roots." If you cut off your good roots, then of course your bad roots will multiply. People who tell big lies and cheat people in the world ruin their own Buddha seed, "just as surely as a tala tree is destroyed if it is chopped down." The tala tree, found in India, grows to great heights, but if it is chopped down, it will not grow again. These people sever their Buddha seed in the same way one might cut down a tala tree; neither will grow again. "The Buddha predicts that such people sever their good roots forever and lose their knowledge and vision." The Buddha's prediction for such people is that they ruin their own good roots and become bereft of any sense or insight. "Immersed in the sea of the Three Sufferings, they cannot attain samadhi."

- The Three Sufferings referred to here are:
- the suffering of knives, which refers to the hell of the mountain of knives;
  - the suffering of blood, which refers to the hell of bleeding, where one's entire body keeps bleeding and bleeding;
  - the suffering of fire, which refers to the hell of burning by fire.
- These people fall into these three terrible hells.

P2 He shows that he has clearly instructed against false speech.  
Q1 The Buddha instructs that holy transformations must be secret.

## SUTRA:

"I COMMAND THE BODHISATTVAS AND ARHATS TO  
APPEAR AFTER MY EXTINCTION IN RESPONSE-BODIES IN  
THE DHARMA-ENDING AGE, AND TO TAKE VARIOUS FORMS  
IN ORDER TO RESCUE THOSE IN THE CYCLE OF REBIRTH.

## One Must Cut Off False Speech

## COMMENTARY:

*"I command the Bodhisattvas and Arhats to appear after my extinction in response-bodies in the Dharma-ending Age."*  
They should use response bodies and transformation bodies to be born in this world where there is so much suffering and distress. During the Dharma-ending Age, they will take various forms, they will appear in various ways--perhaps as human beings, perhaps as animals, or in any one of a manner of forms. They will constantly accord with living beings "in order to rescue those in the cycle of rebirth." They will universally save living beings. Bodhisattvas come back as animals as well. You shouldn't think that it is disrespectful to say so, because they really do. In their practice of the Bodhisattva Way, they will go and teach animals, as when Shakyamuni Buddha in a past life was a deer king and rescued the deer.

## SUTRA:

"THEY SHOULD EITHER BECOME SHRAMANAS, WHITE-ROBED LAYPEOPLE, KINGS, MINISTERS OR OFFICIALS, VIRGIN YOUTHS OR MAIDENS, AND SO FORTH, EVEN PROSTITUTES, WIDOWS, PROFLIGATES, THIEVES, BUTCHERS, OR DEALERS IN CONTRABAND, DOING THE SAME THINGS AS THESE KINDS OF PEOPLE WHILE THEY PRAISE THE BUDDHA VEHICLE AND CAUSE THEM TO ENTER SAMADHI IN BODY AND MIND.

## COMMENTARY:

These Bodhisattvas and Arhats make transformation bodies and "become Shramanas, people who have left the home-life, either fully ordained or novices. Or they become white-robed laypeople." Laypeople do not leave the home-life, and they were referred to as "the white-robed" in India. They protect and uphold the Triple Jewel. This is because left-home people

Do not plow, but must eat,  
Do not sew, but must wear clothes.

So it is necessary for the laypeople to make offerings to them. "Or the Bodhisattvas become kings in the human realm, or ministers or officials. Or they become virgin youths or maidens, and so forth, even prostitutes or widows. Or they become profligates, thieves, butchers, or dealers in contraband. They even become people who force themselves on women, or who steal things, or kill animals, or deal in things like opium. The Bodhisattvas and Arhats do the same things as these kinds of people." Why do they turn into people like those? It is because they want to convert those kinds of people. In order to do this, they must use the Four Dharmas of Attraction:

1. giving;
2. kind words;
3. beneficial practice;
4. similar work.

First, they attract them by giving. There are three kinds of giving:

1. The giving of wealth;
2. the giving of Dharma;
3. the giving of fearlessness.

If one has money, one gives it. If one knows the Dharma, one speaks it for others, thereby giving. If someone is frightened or upset, one can protect them and comfort them, thereby dispelling their fears; that is the giving of fearlessness. But, in giving in these various ways, one should not be greedy and expect repayment of some kind. You should not think, "Ah, now I am giving in this way, and in the future I will gain various advantages." Do it and forget it. Let it go. Then "the substance of the three aspects is empty." The three aspects are the giver, the gift, and the receiver. You should practice giving with the attitude that it is something you should do, rather than that you are amassing all kinds of merit and virtue.

The giving of Dharma is the same way. When you speak Dharma for others, you should not be thinking, "My merit and virtue from speaking the Dharma is no doubt tremendous; you should all make offerings to me." The same is true of the giving of fearlessness. In general, when you give, you should not be reflecting upon how much benefit there is in it for you. Nor should you only be willing to give when you think it will be advantageous for you, while refusing to give when it won't.

Second, they attract them with kind words. For instance, the Buddha says to Ananda, "Good indeed, good indeed," and in the same way the Bodhisattvas praise beings, saying, "You are really a good boy! You are so intelligent! You really have good roots."

Third, they attract them with beneficial practices. This means doing things to help others, not to help yourself.

Fourth, they attract them through similar work. That is, whatever beings do, they do. Perhaps a Bodhisattva wants to save a prostitute who has good roots that have come to maturity; Matangi's daughter, mentioned in this Sutra, is an example. Matangi's daughter was a prostitute, but her time was right, and so when Ananda returned to the Jeta Grove, she followed along. As soon as the Buddha spoke Dharma for her, she was certified as having attained the third fruition of Arhatship. Eventually she attained the fourth fruition. And she was a prostitute to start with! So, in order to save prostitutes, Bodhisattvas may transform into prostitutes themselves, because if they are engaged in the same profession and are friends, what they say will be trusted by those they wish to save. For instance, a university student may say, "I believe in the Buddhadharmas; it's wonderful. I'm going to investigate such and such a Sutra right now." The students he is talking to say, "We'd like to go, too. We'd also like to look into that Sutra." So everyone comes to investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*. It's the same principle.

Therefore, you never know who might be a Bodhisattva or an Arhat. But, if you are one, don't tell anyone. You don't want to go around saying, "I'm a Bodhisattva. You should listen to what I have to say." Why can't you do that? Because the Buddha forbade it.

So the Bodhisattvas and Arhats do the same things as these kinds of people, but while doing it "they praise the Buddha Vehicle and cause them to enter samadhi in body and mind." They may indulge in the same activities, but they speak the Buddhadharmas at every chance they get. "The Buddhadharmas are so fine! It's beyond compare." And in this way, they cause those who listen to be enticed, just as if they were eating candy.

That reminds me of an historical record. In the past, in China, there lived a monk named Tu Hsun. He would sometimes lecture Sutras and speak Dharma. He also taught people how to sit and investigate Ch'an. Sometimes he taught people to be mindful of the Buddha. He used all kinds of methods to teach and transform living beings. He had a

disciple who left the home-life under him and followed him for more than ten years. Every day, the disciple was very attentive to the teacher's conduct and activities. He kept trying to figure out what his teacher was: that is, was he a Bodhisattva, or an Arhat, or perhaps a Buddha? Finally, after ten years, he came to the conclusion that his teacher, Dharma Master Tu Hsun, was absolutely ordinary, that there was nothing unusual about him. The teacher ate, as did other people. The teacher wore clothes, as did other people. The teacher slept, as did other people. He wasn't any different from anyone else. So the disciple decided he probably wasn't a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, or an Arhat. With that, he went to his teacher to bow out. He decided to leave. What were his plans? He was going to Wu T'ai Mountain to bow to Manjushri Bodhisattva. He intended to seek wisdom from Manjushri Bodhisattva with the hope of becoming enlightened. "Teacher," he said, "I've studied here for more than ten years, and I don't feel I've learned anything. I don't understand anything, and I'm really stupid, so I've decided to go bow to Manjushri Bodhisattva in the hope that I can realize some wisdom."

"Fine," said his teacher. "You want to go climb that mountain, so be it. Be on your way. But I have two letters I'd like you to take along for me and deliver on your way." One letter was for Old Mother Pig. The other letter was for Madam Green. When the disciple reached the address that was written on Madam Green's letter, she turned out to be a prostitute. The disciple was getting suspicious. "What's my teacher doing writing letters to a prostitute?" he wondered. "Is she his lover, and he's having me be the go-between?" But he delivered the letter saying, "My teacher, Tu Hsun, sent you a letter." Madam Green took the letter, read it, sat down, and said, "Good! He's leaving. I'm leaving, too." Then she died on the spot. She entered nirvana. The disciple found the whole event quite strange, and so he took the letter and read it. Then he found out that Madam Green was really Kuan Shih Yin Bodhisattva, for the letter said, "Kuan Yin, I've finished my business here and am going. You should come with me."

The disciple sighed with regret. "If I had known that was Kuan Yin Bodhisattva, I would have knelt before her, and until she'd entered Nirvana I would have never gotten up, so I could have sought for wisdom and enlightenment. That would have been great, but now I've missed the opportunity." That's just exactly what's meant by the saying:

Face to face with her, one fails to recognize Kuan Shih Yin!

He took up the other letter and headed for Old Mother Pig's place. But when he got to the address, no one had heard of her. As he was passing a pig sty, an old sow spoke to him. "Why are you looking for Old Mother Pig?"

The disciple was astonished and wondered what kind of freak he'd encountered. Impulsively he replied, "My teacher told me to deliver a letter to Old Mother Pig."

"Oh," said the sow. "Well, I'm Old Mother Pig. You can give me the letter." The sow took the letter and looked at it, though it was hard to know whether she could understand what it said. Nonetheless, when she finished looking at it, she sat down and said, "Oh, his business is finished; I'll go back, too," and she died.

When the disciple looked at the letter, it showed the old pig was a transformation body of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. "Is it really possible that Universal Worthy was that pig?" he wondered, still plagued with doubts. And he didn't have any idea what business it was that his teacher had finished.

He went on to Wu T'ai Mountain, and there he saw a very old monk, who asked him, "What are you doing here?"

"I came to bow to the greatly wise Manjushri Bodhisattva and to seek for wisdom and enlightenment."

"Ugh, you!" said the old monk. "You've come to bow to Manjushri Bodhisattva, but bowing to your own teacher is ten thousand times better."

"Why?" asked the disciple.

"Your teacher, the Venerable Tu Hsun, is Amitabha Buddha appearing in the world again. He's come to roam and play in the human realm to teach and transform living beings. You've been his disciple for more than ten years. How come you've never figured that out?"

"Oh? My teacher is Amitabha Buddha!" said the disciple. "He doesn't look like him!" And when he looked again, the old monk was gone. Then he saw a note there which said, "Manjushri Bodhisattva instructs you to immediately return to your teacher Tu Shun, who is Amitabha Buddha."

Finally, the disciple believed it. He had met Manjushri Bodhisattva in the flesh and been told to go back to his own teacher. So he rushed back only to find that the monk, Tu Hsun, had entered the stillness days before. Once again, he'd missed his chance. He'd been the disciple of Amitabha Buddha for a decade and never realized it. He renounced what was at hand to seek what was afar, only to find that he should return to his own teacher. Now who was there left to see?

SUTRA:

"BUT THEY SHOULD NEVER SAY OF THEMSELVES, 'I AM TRULY A BODHISATTVA'; OR 'I AM TRULY AN ARHAT,' OR LET THE BUDDHA'S SECRET CAUSE LEAK OUT BY SPEAKING CASUALLY TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET STUDIED.

COMMENTARY:

"But they should never say of themselves, 'I am truly a Bodhisattva.'" They might be Bodhisattvas, Arhats, or Buddhas who have come to this world. But even if it were Shakyamun' Buddha himself come again to this world, or Amitabha Buddha, or Medicine Master Buddha Who Dispells Calamities and Lengthens Life, or Production of Jewels Buddha, or Accomplishment Buddha, or any other Buddha, or any Bodhisattva or Arhat, not one would ever say, "I'm really a Bodhisattva. It's true, and you should believe me. I'm truly a Bodhisattva!" One cannot speak like that.

"If they say, 'I am truly an Arhat. Do you recognize me? Do you realize who I am? I'm an Arhat!'" then you know they are part of the retinue of the demon kings. If someone praises you by saying that you are a Bodhisattva or an Arhat, you should not admit it even if you are. You cannot let it out. You cannot "let the Buddha's secret cause leak out. You should not reveal the secret cause of the Buddha by speaking casually to those who have not yet studied." You can't just nonchalantly reveal your origin. What is acceptable, then? You can reveal it when you are about to die; don't do it before you are ready to go.

When you reveal it, then don't stay.  
As long as you are staying, don't reveal it.

As soon as you reveal your origins, for example, that you are a transformation body of such and such a Bodhisattva, then you should leave immediately. As long as the word is not out, you can stay here, but as soon as you let it be known, you'll wind up with a lot of trouble on your hands if you don't go.

Q2 Only at the end of their life is there a transmission.

SUTRA:

"HOW CAN PEOPLE WHO MAKE SUCH CLAIMS, OTHER THAN AT THE END OF THEIR LIVES AND THEN ONLY TO THOSE WHO INHERIT THE TEACHING, BE DOING ANYTHING BUT DELUDING AND CONFUSING LIVING BEINGS AND INDULGING IN A GROSS FALSE CLAIM?"

COMMENTARY:

"How can people who make such claims, other than at the end of their lives and then only to those who inherit the teaching, be doing anything but deluding and confusing living beings?" If you are a holy being, then at the end of your life you can tell people so. But even then you can't tell everyone. You reveal it to those closest to you, perhaps a room-entering disciple or two. People who do otherwise simply delude and confuse beings by "indulging in a gross false claim." If you have not attained the Way, and you claim you have, if you have not been certified to the fruition, and you say that you have, you are telling a huge lie.

During the Ch'ing Dynasty in China lived the high monk Elder Master Yin Kuang. The Master was from Shan Hsi. After he left the home-life, he made a pilgrimage to P'u T'ou Mountain, the Bodhimanda of Kuan Shih Yin Bodhisattva. He went into seclusion there. He locked himself in a room and read the Tripitaka. If one reads every day, it takes about three years to finish reading the Tripitaka. He repeated this three-year cycle of reading the Tripitaka over and over for eighteen years. During all those years, he never left the mountain. At the end of that period, a group of laypeople in Shanghai invited him to lecture on the Amitabha Sutra. He agreed, but not too many people came to the lecture series, perhaps because it was difficult for them to understand his Shanghai dialect.

But among those who did come was a high school student from Shanghai who had had a dream in which she was told to go listen to the Sutra. The dream said: "You should go to such and such a lay community and listen to the Amitabha Sutra being lectured there by Great Strength Bodhisattva." The next night, the student read in the newspaper that Dharma Master Yin Kuang was lecturing the Amitabha Sutra at that very place. "Why did my dream tell me that Dharma Master

Yin Kuang is Great Strength Bodhisattva?" she wondered.

That night, she attended the lecture, and after everyone had left she related her dream to the Elder Dharma Master. When she concluded that he must be Great Strength Bodhisattva, Dharma Master Yin Kuang was very displeased, and he warned her, "You cannot go around talking such nonsense!" So she never talked about the dream, but she took refuge with the Elder Dharma Master. Three years later the Master entered the stillness, and it was only then that she told about her dream. Everyone was upset that she had not told them sooner, so that they could have requested more Dharma from the Elder Master. But she told them she had been forbidden to speak of it by the Master himself. From this incident it is clear that Elder Master Yin Kuang was, in fact, a transformation of Great Strength Bodhisattva. When he was cremated, there were many sharira.

So, when one's life is about to end, some hints can be given. But still, one can't speak openly about such things. Perhaps in a dream, as in this case, a little indication can be made. But one cannot state anything flatly like, "I am Great Strength Bodhisattva." That's not the way it's done.

People these days go around claiming to be Buddhas. This is in direct opposition to the teachings of the *Shurangama Sutra*. Of course, all living beings are Buddhas, but you have to cultivate to become a Buddha. If you don't cultivate, you're more likely to be a horse, cow, pig, sheep, or chicken. You're likely to become a hungry ghost or fall into the hells; nothing is for certain.

P3 The clear instruction transmitted from former Buddhas.

SUTRA:

"WHEN YOU TEACH PEOPLE IN THE WORLD TO CULTIVATE SAMADHI, THEY MUST ALSO CEASE ALL LYING. THIS IS THE FOURTH CLEAR AND UNALTERABLE INSTRUCTION ON PURITY GIVEN BY THE THUS COME ONES AND THE BUDDHAS OF THE PAST, WORLD HONORED ONES.

COMMENTARY:

"Ananda, do you hear this? When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must also cease all lying." This means all kinds of exaggerations and boasts.

For goodness sake, don't say, "I'm enlightened," or "I've been certified to the fruition," or "I'm a Buddha," or "I'm a Bodhisattva," or "I'm an Arhat." That's just too cheap. "This is the fourth clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones." Don't teach others to lie and make false claims. This instruction is given by all Buddhas of the present and all Buddhas of the past.

P4 Deciding if Bodhi can be obtained.

Q1 An analogy shows that if one does not cut off false speech, it is difficult to obtain Bodhi.

SUTRA:

"THEREFORE, ANANDA, ONE WHO DOES NOT CUT OFF LYING IS LIKE A PERSON WHO CARVES A PIECE OF HUMAN EXCREMENT TO LOOK LIKE CHANDANA, HOPING TO MAKE IT FRAGRANT. HE IS ATTEMPTING THE IMPOSSIBLE.

COMMENTARY:

"I'll give you an example. Therefore, Ananda, you should realize that one who does not cut off lying is like a person who carves a piece of human excrement to look like chandana, hoping to make it fragrant." Someone who hopes to become pure without cutting off lying is like a person who tries to make a piece of incense out of a piece of shit. "He is attempting the impossible." He'll never get the excrement to smell like chandana incense. This means if you lie, it's as if you smell bad. If you cultivate Ch'an samadhi trying to become a Buddha and yet you continue to lie, you are just like a piece of excrement. For a liar to try and become a Buddha is like trying to get a piece of shit to be a sweet-smelling Buddha image. That's beyond reason.

SUTRA:

"I TEACH THE BHIKSHUS THAT THE STRAIGHT MIND IS THE BODHIMANDA AND THAT THEY SHOULD PRACTICE THE FOUR AWESOME DEPARTMENTS IN ALL THEIR ACTIVITIES. SINCE THEY SHOULD BE DEVOID OF ALL FALSE-

NESS, HOW CAN THEY CLAIM TO HAVE THEMSELVES ATTAINED THE DHARMAS OF A SUPERIOR PERSON?

## COMMENTARY:

"I teach the bhikshus that the straight mind is the Bodhimanda." Here the reference to "bhikshus" includes all four assemblies. You can't say at this point, "I'm a layperson, and so the Buddha isn't referring to me." You have to be straight in what you think and say. Don't be roundabout. Don't be deceptive. Not having a straight mind is also like trying to get incense out of excrement.

"I tell them that they should practice the Four Awesome Departments in all their activities." These were discussed in detail earlier. There are 250 aspects to each of the departments of standing, sitting, walking, and lying down. You should always do things truly, and actually cultivate. "Since they should be devoid of all falseness, how can they claim to have themselves attained the Dharmas of a superior person?" How can one say of oneself that one has been certified to the fruition of a Bodhisattva or of an Arhat? One may not speak that way. Before one has heard the Sutras, one may be quite casual in what one says. But, now that you have heard this Sutra, you know that you cannot say you have attained certain levels of fruition. To do so is to speak a great lie. The retribution for it is to fall into the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. In the future, your tongue will be hooked with an iron hook and pulled out by the root. Afterwards you will have no opportunity to lie, for in the future, you will be mute.

## SUTRA:

"THAT WOULD BE LIKE A POOR PERSON FALSELY CALLING HIMSELF AN EMPEROR; FOR THAT, HE WOULD BE TAKEN AND EXECUTED. MUCH LESS SHOULD ONE ATTEMPT TO USURP THE TITLE OF DHARMA KING. WHEN THE CAUSE-GROUND IS NOT TRUE, THE EFFECTS WILL BE DISTORTED. ONE WHO SEEKS THE BUDDHA'S BODHI IN

THIS WAY IS LIKE A PERSON WHO TRIES TO BITE HIS OWN NAVEL. WHO COULD POSSIBLY SUCCEED?

## COMMENTARY:

"That would be like a poor person falsely calling himself an emperor. 'Did you realize,' he would say, 'that I am the ruler of this land?' For saying that, he would be taken and executed." The emperor would immediately have him arrested, and his whole family would be wiped out. All his friends and relatives would die in the process. Then where would the "emperor" have gone? To claim that you have attained the fruition when you have not is to be like a poor person who calls himself emperor. He'll be exterminated for it. And if one can't casually call oneself emperor on the worldly plane, "much less should one attempt to usurp the title of Dharma King. How could one try to usurp the position of Buddhahood? When the cause-ground is not true, the effects will be distorted." On the cause-ground, when you are cultivating the Way, if you do not cultivate truly, the effects you reap in the future will be crooked. There will be a lot of wrinkles. You will not be able to accomplish the fruition directly. If you cultivate in this way, you may do so for countless great aeons, but you will still be unsuccessful. "One who seeks the Buddha's Bodhi in this way is like a person who tries to bite his own navel. If you conduct yourself in this fashion--continually indulging in lies and boasts and yet are seeking the Bodhi of the Buddhas, you are like a person trying to bite his own navel. Who could possibly succeed?" You could never bite your own navel, because your mouth won't reach it.

Q2 He promises if one can cut off false speech, one will certainly accomplish Bodhi.

## SUTRA:

"IF BHIKSHUS' MINDS ARE AS STRAIGHT AS LUTE-STRINGS, TRUE AND REAL IN EVERYTHING THEY DO, THEN THEY CAN ENTER SAMADHI AND NEVER BE INVOLVED IN THE DEEDS OF DEMONS. I CERTIFY THAT SUCH PEO-

PLE WILL ACCOMPLISH THE BODHISATTVAS' UNSURPASSED  
KNOWLEDGE AND ENLIGHTENMENT.

## COMMENTARY:

"If bhikshus' and laypeoples' minds are as straight as lute-strings, true and real in everything they do, then they can enter samadhi and never be involved in the deeds of demons." One's mind should be straight like a lute-string, not curved and crooked like the body of the lute. One should be truthful in all matters and never lie. Lying is a case of,

Being off by a hair in the beginning,  
One will be off by a thousand miles  
in the end.

If you tell one lie now, it sets back your accomplishment of Buddhahood by several million great aeons. Take a good look and see who's taking the loss.

If one can be straight and truthful, one can enter samadhi, and no demonic obstacles will ever arise. "I certify that such people will accomplish the Bodhisattvas' unsurpassed knowledge and enlightenment." Anyone who has a mind as straight and true as a lute-string can become a Bodhisattva. They can accomplish the unsurpassed wisdom and enlightenment of a Bodhisattva.

02 He speaks of the division into deviant and proper.

## SUTRA:

"WHAT I HAVE SAID HERE IS THE BUDDHA'S  
TEACHING. ANY EXPLANATION COUNTER TO IT IS THE  
TEACHING OF PAPIYAN.

## COMMENTARY:

"What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. If you explain as I have explained here, it will be the doctrine spoken by the Buddhas. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan." Anyone who does not express this doctrine, but pronounces theories that oppose it, is just a demon-king talking." "Papiyan" refers to the Demon King.

M3 General conclusion: stay distant from demons.

## SUTRA:

"ANANDA, YOU ASKED ABOUT COLLECTING ONE'S  
THOUGHTS; I HAVE NOW BEGUN TO EXPLAIN THE WONDERFUL  
METHOD OF CULTIVATION FOR ENTRANCE INTO SAMADHI.  
THOSE WHO SEEK THE BODHISATTVA WAY MUST FIRST BE  
AS PURE AS GLISTENING FROST IN KEEPING THESE FOUR  
RULES OF DEPARTMENT. IF ONE IS ABLE TO NEVER GIVE  
RISE TO ANYTHING SUPERFLUOUS, THEN THE THREE EVILS  
OF THE MIND AND THE FOUR OF THE MOUTH WILL HAVE  
NO CAUSE TO COME FORTH.

## COMMENTARY:

"Ananda, you asked about collecting one's thoughts; I have now begun to explain the wonderful method of cultivation for entrance into samadhi." The "wonderful method" is the perfect penetration of the organ of the ear, the returning of the hearing to hear the self-nature, so that one's nature accomplishes the unsurpassed Way. "Those who seek the Bodhisattva Way must first be as pure as glistening frost in keeping these four rules of department." The first thing you must do is cultivate these four rules of department; not taking life, not stealing, not committing acts of sexual misconduct, and not lying. The prohibition against sexual misconduct refers not only to lust with the body, but to lust within the mind. You must get rid of both in order to transcend the wearisome dust. If you don't get rid of your thoughts of lust, you cannot get out of the dust. The same goes for killing, stealing, and lying. These four rules of department are extremely important. You should become as glistening white as frost. You should be completely white, without the least bit of defilement--with not one black fleck in the white. If one can be like that, then quite naturally, "one is able to never give rise to anything superfluous." Spontaneously, you will attain the source. "Then the three evils of the mind and the four of the mouth will

have no cause to come forth." The greed, hatred, and stupidity born of the mind will cease to arise. And the four mistakes of the mouth--loose speech, harsh speech, lies, and gossip will not arise. There will be no causes and conditions to allow them to arise, because you hold the precepts and truly cultivate the four clear and unalterable instructions on purity.

SUTRA:

"ANANDA, IF ONE DOES NOT NEGLECT THESE FOUR MATTERS, AND, FURTHER, IF ONE DOES NOT PURSUE FORMS, FRAGRANCES, TASTES, OR OBJECTS OF TOUCH, THEN HOW CAN ANY DEMONIC DEEDS ARISE?"

COMMENTARY:

"Ananda, if one does not neglect these four matters, if one does not lose sight of or forget about these four clear and fixed instructions on purity regarding killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying, and, further, if one does not pursue forms, fragrances, tastes, or objects of touch, then how can any demonic deeds arise? If you don't get caught up in the defiling states of forms, sounds, smells, and objects of touch, if you don't climb on these conditions, then demonic deeds will spontaneously disappear. Once they are gone, they cannot arise.

L2 Aided by the power of the mantra.  
M1 Supreme praise for diligently holding it.

SUTRA:

"IF THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO CANNOT PUT AN END TO THEIR HABITS FROM THE PAST, YOU SHOULD TEACH THEM TO SINGLEMINDEDLY RECITE MY 'LIGHT ATOP THE BUDDHA'S SUMMIT' UNSURPASSED SPIRITUAL MANTRA,  
MWO HE SA DAN DWO BWO DA LA .

COMMENTARY:

"If there are people who cannot put an end to their habits from the past, you should teach them to singlemindedly recite my 'Light Atop the Buddha's Summit' unsurpassed spiritual mantra, Mwo He Sa Dan Dwo Bwo Da La. If there are living beings who cannot get rid of their bad habits from past lives, you should teach them to recite singlemindedly. The important point here is to be singleminded. Don't have a divided mind such that on the one hand you recite the mantra, but on other you doubt its function. You don't want to be reciting and thinking, "Namo, Namo, Namo what?" You recite the mantra on the one hand, and on the other you don't really want to be saying "Namo," at the same time that you are saying it. That's just a case of being caught between belief and doubt. You are basically one person, but you end up with two minds. One mind thinks that perhaps there is some usefulness to the recitation, while the other mind says, "What am I doing reciting things that I don't even understand?" That kind of division is to be feared. You must recite singlemindedly.

"Mwo He" means Great. "Sa Dan Dwo Bwo Da La" refers to the "Great White Canopy." When you recite San Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, a Great White Canopy manifests in the emptiness where you are. The size of the canopy depends on the amount of your skill. If your skill is great and lofty, then when you recite this phrase of the canopy, there will be no disasters for thousands of miles around. If your skill is small, then the canopy will cover your own head and protect you alone. If one has virtue in the Way, if one is a great and virtuous high Sanghan, then when one recites this line of mantra, the entire country can benefit from it. The entire area will be free from calamities; great disasters will turn into small ones, and small disasters won't even happen.

Now we are having the Shurangama Lecture Dharma Assembly, and a lot of people are cultivating the secret Dharma of the Buddha, so I believe that all of America is benefiting from it. Americans may not be aware of it, but we are saving their lives. It is all done invisibly, and they never have any idea of who has saved them or even that they have been saved. Nor do we wish them to know. This is a case of there being no giver and no receiver. The three-wheeled substance of the giver, the gift, and the receiver is empty. When we save people, it is not necessary to get them to thank us. This is where the wonder lies.