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**REBIRTH VIEWS
IN THE
ŚŪRAṄGAMA SŪTRA**

(Fifth Edition)

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FOREWORD

by the Most Venerable Như Điển

Rebirth Views in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra

I have had the good fortune to read many books. These books play the role of my teachers. They are as close as my siblings, family, or friends. I can meet with the books any time and anywhere in the morning, afternoon, evening, or midnight. With the moonlight shining through the windows of the meditation room, the books are available in front of me and I can read delightedly. If there is a question, I just open the book; there is the right answer. The book plays the role of informing readers of right and wrong.

From reading scriptures and books, I became interested in translating and writing. Venerable Bhikkhunī Giói Hương asked me to write an introduction to this book entitled *Rebirth Views in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, which is her ninth work. It was first published in 2008 and so far, has been reprinted four times in nine years, and each publication was not less than 2,000 copies. Most readers are in Vietnam, USA, and other parts of the world. This time, I tried to read it for two days, six hours per day. Usually with a book as large as this one, I only need three to four hours to read, but because she wanted me to look carefully, as well as fix some spelling mistakes, it took some of my time. There are no faults worth complaining about, but because the content of the scripture is so deep, it took more time to experience and reflect on it.

In 1984 and 1985 Venerable Giới Hương learned this sutra from her master, the Late Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Hải Triều Âm. After that, she studied four years in the bachelor's program for Buddhist Studies at Vạn Hạnh Institute. She then spent more than ten years obtaining a PhD in Buddhist Philosophy in India. She studied for another ten years at the University of California, Riverside in the United States. Today she is a lecturer at the Vietnamese Buddhist University, HCM City, Vietnam, and shares her knowledge and experiences over the past thirty years with her young monk and nun students. What miraculous merit! She also has begun writing and translating books in English to serve the needs of modern times. That is why the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* is published in the English language now. This is one of the first achievements of the Vietnamese Buddhist nun Saṅgha, followed by the holy way of the Late Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Trí Hải. I am very happy to write this introduction.

To enter into the contents of fifteen chapters, we should first pay attention to the form. The bold text is the translated words from Chinese to Vietnamese of Dr. Tâm Minh, Lê Đình Thám who took the original text from Sanskrit to Chinese of Prammiti Master (Bát Lạt Mật Đê). Doctor Tâm Minh interpreted it into two parts of ten volumes, but here Venerable Giới Hương only focuses on the parts of questions on the mind, the six sense organs, the six sense objects, and the six forms of consciousness, as well as precept-meditation-wisdom. Next, she talks about twelve species of beings from past, present, and

future which is worthy of reading. Because she has learned Nikāya and Mahāyāna sūtras, her stories penetrate these philosophical and realistic meanings profoundly and include scientific and logical evidence. The equivalent Sanskrit and Pāli terminologies are put in parentheses. Italics are used to annotate for clarification. There are also footnotes for the references. This is the research methodology which scholars often use to teach or write academic books. In the preface, she expresses that her book mentions only a small part of the rebirth views from the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. Other perspectives on this scripture will be included in other future volumes to convey all deep thoughts in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

The contents present evidence of mind and nature. The nature of the mind is wonderful, while its function is bright. The minds of beings are ignorant from defilements while the essence of the mind is completely pure. If beings are focused on *śamatha* to win *samāpatti*, the Buddha and beings will be one, but nothing else. This is like waves and water. Wave is not water, water is not waves, but both have a wet nature in common. With that wetness, the Buddha has been a Buddha for a long time, while beings are still in the circle of birth and death, because we have not recognized our wetness. Each time we chant, we recite, “The minds of the Buddha and creature beings are inherently pure and quiet, calm, and clear without defilements.” The Buddha is not different from beings, only beings differ from the Buddha. By karma, the creature subjects and their environmental objects appear. Their bodies are a result of merit or not, which is related to the absence of ignorance in order to return to the Buddha’s essence. In the first part, the Buddha asks Ānanda seven times the location of

his mind, so that he can clear the true or false mind. After Ānanda realized the spiritual home of the six sense organs, but did not know how to open the door, he begged the Buddha to kindly expound the Dharma for the sake of many.

The six sense organs are birth and death, which is also the tranquil *Nibbāna*. If living beings attain samāpatti, they can transform the three gradual progress steps. The author also was careful to mention the Tien-tai Master who divided the twelve scriptural categories¹ into five sections of the Buddha's doctrine. If readers gradually penetrate this book, they will recognize the Mahāyāna perspectives highlighted in this *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. In addition, the Pure Land method of reciting the name of Amitābha Buddha is also addressed by the author.

The chapter on the inner section explains that the inner aspect is the emotion, while the external is the virtue which are practiced. This helps readers easily capture the sense of the scripture. Whoever is more emotional, the less ideal, after death he will go down. Whoever is more ideal, with less emotion, after death he will go up. Whoever has the balance between the emotional and ideal level, he will be reborn as a human being.

In the next chapter, she mentions retribution in hell. There are ten causes and six results for this bad consequence.

¹ The twelve scriptural categories: 1. Expositions on themes of practice, 2. Melodic verses, 3. Revelatory accounts, 4. Metered verses, 5. Special verses, 6. Ethical narratives, 7. Illustrative accounts, 8. Ancient narratives, 9. Past-life accounts, 10. Epic presentations, 11. Fabulous accounts, and 12. Decisive explications.

Next is the remaining retribution of beings from many previous lives. The author also focuses on the stories of Bhikkhunī Valuable Lotus Fragrance who broke the sexual precept, Mighty Crystal King and Bhikhu Good Stars who wrongly declared that all dharmas are empty (without cause-effect, see more in the *Parinibbāna Sūtra*, Vol. 2) and all is just a combination of illusory thoughts. By this, the Buddha taught śamatha and also emphasized the practice of giving thanks to the Buddha, who compassionately shows the way from his own experience that this illusory thing can be eliminated.

Chapter XIV speaks of the heaven and asura worlds. The author compares the desire heavenly realms (*kāmasugati-bhūmi*) to the material heavenly realms (*rūpāvācāra-bhūmi*) of four *jhānas*, and the five without-returning-heavenly beings (*suddhāvāsa*) to the immaterial heavenly realms (*arūpāvācāra-bhūmi*) of the four empty states. And lastly, the heavenly *asura* beings are explained as beings who still have angry minds. In Chapter XV, she sums up all seven species of beings (heaven, immortal, asura, human, ghost, animal, and hell) and those who do not possess a sense of enlightenment, due to the practice of śamatha. If they can restrain themselves from three ignorances (killing, stealing, and sexual intercourse), they will realize and see the Buddha's essence. Finally, she concludes that *Rebirth Views in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra* teaches how to overcome the mind and body committing “killing, stealing, and sexual intercourse” to win awakening.

This is a worthy commentary composed by a scholar-nun. Readers should be familiar with this book before reading the 2,685-page *Convergence Śūraṅgama* (首楞嚴宗通經), two volumes (interpreted by Thubten Osall Lama) or the

Interpretation of the Śūraṅgama Mantra, two volumes, explained by Most Venerable Hsuan Hua at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas Monastery and translated by Venerable Minh Định into Vietnamese. I was based at the popular Buddhist Studies program (Phật Học Phổ Thông) of Most Venerable Thiện Hoa. I have lectured for many years—at least over forty lectures. At the same time, you can also refer to the *Pointing-Out Śūraṅgama Commentary* (首楞嚴直指, of Hanshi Master that is translated into a 1,000-page book and published in Vietnam in 2008 by Venerable Bhikkhunī Thê Dung. You can also search at the Buddhist websites to see, hear, and add what you need to understand.

I am very happy to read this work of Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, which is the most precious spiritual gift. There is a saying, "If you have money, you can buy some books, but you cannot buy your understanding." We would like to introduce this valuable book to readers throughout the world.

The Most Venerable Như Điển
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*An autumn morning at Viên Đức Monastery, Ravensburg in
southern Germany, October 14, 2017*

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This revised and enlarged edition of *Rebirth Views in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra* was first published ten years ago (2008). The second, third, and fourth editions were reprinted in 2012, 2014, and 2016 at Phương Đông Publishing. This current edition (2018) will be printed at Hồng Đức Publishing, HCM City, Việt Nam. In presenting this edition, I have maintained the contents written in the first edition, however, for the sake of greater clarity, a few changes have been made, errors have been corrected, the Pāli and Sanskrit terms are included, and a summary, as well as discussion questions, have been added at the end of each chapter.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge with special thanks Bhikkhunī Viên Ngộ, Bhikkhunī Diệu Giác, Bhikkhunī Viên Quang, and Pamela C. Kirby (English editor) who worked as my assistants for English translating, proofreading, book design, and publication of this book.

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Spring, March 01, 2018

Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương

PREFACE

One night, the Buddha stood contemplating quietly at the bank of a glistening river. Venerable Śāriputra, who was behind, looked down the moonlight shimmering on the water and suddenly lamented, "Blessed One! It is pitiful! There are people who drowned by jumping into the deep water to look for the moon."

The Buddha replied, "Yes! It's pitiful! But even more pitiful, there are those who never believe there is a moon in the world."

Some people search for the moon at the water bottom. They who have seen the moonlight shimmering on the water's surface dive into the water looking for the moon and risk drowning. They are not aware that it is very simple; all they have to do is raise their heads up, and the moon is always there in the sky. Then there are other people who believe that the world is without the moon although the full moon is radiating light covering the entire world. *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* called these miserable people human (*manussa*) beings who are trapped in the cycle of birth and death.

In the third paragraph of Chapter I, there is mention of the root of ignorance (*avijjā*) and enlightenment (*Nibbāna*, *prajñā*) as the Buddha told Venerable Ānanda, "Since beginningless time onward, all living beings have had many upside-down ways and have created karma seeds which are naturally grouped as the *aksha* cluster.

Those who cultivate cannot accomplish the unsurpassed bodhi, but instead reach the level of voice-hearer (*śrāvakas*), pratyeka Buddhas, heretics, heavenly beings (*devas*), demons (*maras*), or relatives of ghosts (*pittivisaya*), because they have not yet recognized the two fundamental roots. They have cultivated wrongly and confusedly, as if trying to cook sand in the hope of creating rice. They may pass through countless eons as molecules of dust, and they will obtain nothing of what they want.

What are two fundamental roots? “Ānanda, first of all, the root of beginningless birth and death is the illusory consciousness (*samohaṃ*) that you and all living beings now make use of and consider it as your self-nature.

“Secondly, the purified origin of beginningless bodhi Nirvana, the bright original reality of the seeing essence, can create all conditions and is disregarded. Living beings have ignored the original awakening; therefore, though they use it to the end of their days, they are still unaware of their enlightenment, and then they regrettably enter the six realms.” *Rebirth Views in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra* examines the profound philosophical ideology contained in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. It points to the mind of illusion that leads to reincarnation and suffering and shows us how to escape.

Just as a gardener selects the most beautiful flowers that she knows will please the recipient, contents of this book mention only rebirth views in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

I would like to prostrate devotedly toward Đại Ninh province, Vietnam, to Most Venerable Master Hải Triều Âm who wholeheartedly taught us the gardener's art from 1983, 1984, and 1985 and planted in us the good seeds of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. Today, these seeds are blooming. If we have gained any merit and virtue from this book, we respectfully offer it to our Master and all beings in the world.

With a full heart of dedication, but with the awakening and capacity weak, I hope that wise readers correct mistakes so that next editions of *Rebirth Views in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra* will be better.

With sincere gratitude,
Dr. Bhikkhūnī Giỏi Hương
August 30, 2008

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF BUDDHISM

Before entering into the contents of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, we should learn a little bit about the background of Buddhism where the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* appeared.

The Buddha is a great enlightened being and teacher of humans (manussa) and heavenly (deva) beings. His profound contribution for humans is the Tripitaka.² It is the path leading to ultimate happiness and liberation that he discovered through his own experience.

The Buddha's teachings during forty-nine years are systemic in a short poem by the Chinese patriarch of the Tiantai sect:

Firstly, the Buddha taught the Flower Adornment in twenty-one days.

Āgama occupied twelve years while the Vaipulya Sūtra was eight years.³

He expounded Prajñā for twenty-two years.

It took eight years for the Lotus and Nirvana Sūtras

² Tripitaka (Tipiṭaka), Three stores of Buddhism: Sutta, Vinaya, and Abhidhamma.

³ Nine Vaipulya Sūtras: Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, Vaipulya, Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, Prajñāpāramitā, Vajrayāna, Amitābha Sūtra, Ārya-saṃdhi-nirmocana Sūtra, Śūraṅgama-saṃdhi-sūtra.

After forty-nine days of meditating and enlightenment under the bodhi tree, the Buddha wanted to share his experience by revealing the true mind to everyone, so he explained the *Flower Adornment (Avataṃsaka) Sūtra* so suffering beings could realize that all creature beings have the ability to become Buddhas like him. However, after twenty-one days of guidance, no one seemed to understand this deep meaning. They were concerned only with property, beauty, fame, benefice, sleep, and food and were engaged in the poisons of greed (*abhijjhā, visamaḷobha*), hatred (*byāpāda, dosa*), and delusion (*samoḥaṃ*). Therefore, he did not hope to preach anymore before giving up this world to enter the Nirvana (Nibbāna) state forever.

At that time, from heaven, there were brahmas who descended to beg the Buddha, who was compassionate, not to enter Nirvana. They explained that despite some men being attracted by five fields of desires, there are other beings who hope to find the way of happiness and be freed from suffering in this mundane world. After hearing this, the Buddha agreed to stay on this earth. He started preached the *Āgama Sūtra* for twelve years, so that we have the five sets of Nikāyas—the Pāli collection of Buddhist writings of Theravāda Buddhism.⁴ Theravāda suttas, which mention the moral principles, are

⁴ The set of Five Canons: Dīgha Nikāya, Majjhima Nikāya, Saṃyutta Nikāya, Aṅguttara Nikāya, Khuddaka Nikāya.

aware of the false illusion of six sense bases,⁵ six worldly objects,⁶ six consciousnesses,⁷ greed, hatred, ignorance (*avijjā*), and how to be freed from the circle of birth and death. The *saṃsāra* circle, Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*), the ordination of bhikkhus (*bhikṣu*) and bhikkhunīs (*bhikṣuṇī*), the renunciation, and so on, belong to Theravāda suttas (i.e., the early period of Buddhism).

After twelve years of teaching Nikāya canons, the Buddha started to expound the Mahāyāna (the developing period of Buddhism). Mahāyāna was beginning to be established during the Vaipulya period, but it was the beginning form. The Vaipulya Sūtra⁸ belongs to what is called the first period of Mahayana Sutras. The Vaipulya Sūtra is called the first Mahāyāna sutra period

Phuong is a square shape (referring to the plumped shapes of squares and circles). *Đẳng* is equality, fullness or universe. That means it began to reveal something full and significant between the Buddha and sentient beings.

⁵ Six sense organs: eye-organ, ear-organ, nose-organ, tongue-organ, body-organ, and mental-organ.

⁶ Six objects : sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and objects of mind.

⁷ Six consciousnesses: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, skin-consciousness, mental-consciousness.

⁸ Nine Vaipulya Sūtras: Avatamsaka Sūtra, Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, Vaipulya, Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, Prajñāpāramitā, Vajrayāna, Amitābha Sūtra, Ārya-saṃdhi-nirmocana Sūtra, Sūraṃgama-samādhi Sūtra, Śūraṃgama-samādhi Sūtra.

From the Vaipulya period onwards, in the Mahāyāna time, Dharma is explained fully as a tree with roots, leaves, and fruit, while in the Theravāda time, Dharma is addressed as only the root. In Nikāya canons, recognizing and letting go of false illusions is the root of cultivation. First of all, we must awaken and detach from the delusion, such as the illusory body, mind, and landscape which is basic and necessary for beginners. This is called Theravāda, but in fact it is incomplete in the full meaning of Dharma which the Buddha wanted to teach.

If we want to get the full meaning of Dharma, we should go ahead up to the Mahāyāna time, up to the truth. It's the true Buddhism—the final ultimate goal of Buddha. Therefore, it is called Phuong. Phuong—the fullness.

Equality is the justice. Anybody can get in—fair, without distinction of high-low, rich-poor, dull-smart, regardless of position, skin, and sect. There is no distinction between the liberated voice-hearer (śrāvaka) and the defiled one, transcendent-secular, good-bad, loved-hated, birth-death, and so on.

Next is the Prajñā period. After having experienced that the external forms are illusory, and the internal reality is the absolute *śūnyatā* (*suññatā*), the *Prajñā Sūtra* explained that the true essence is the nature of all phenomena. This period reveals the true objects without attachment to forms. That would be truly our mind, but it only reveals the ultimate without declaring anything. The Buddha preached the *Prajñā Sūtra* in the twenty-two-year duration.

By the end of the Buddha's life, in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*) period, he sealed for the sound-hearers and women (the lowest caste in the ancient society of India). It says that all living beings can become awakened ones at the time of the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*), i.e., all young, old, men, women will promise to become Buddhas as the Buddhas do. Even if we are full of greed (*abhiḥjhā*, *visamalobha*), anger (*kodha*), have bad habits (*palāsa*, *anuttaram*) whenever we meet good conditions to be awakened, we can cultivate to become the holy ones, like the lotus blooming from the dirty mud. Our stream of mind is similar—once we are mindful to escape the mud of greed, hatred, and delusion, we can become pure as the beautiful lotus.

It took over forty years to be revealed. The Buddha's aim to be born in this world is to show the way for all beings to be Buddhas. Our capacities are quite lower, so he must use skillful means to teach slowly over the years. The *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*) was the official period to declare that all kinds of species have enough capacity to become Buddhas. In the period of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, the Buddha taught many cultivation methods for us to become enlightened and experience the Buddha nature. Later, in the Nirvana (Nibbāna) period, he discussed his *parinirvana* (Nibbāna), how to prepare a funeral for a saint, and who would be his successor to take care of the Saṅgha and living beings.

WHY IS IT CALLED THE TEMPORARY PRACTICALITY?

If at first it is declared that all human beings can become Buddhas, we immediately think that is distant, profound, difficult, and ambiguous. In contrast, if it is declared that we can become workers, businessmen, caretakers, farmers, or merchants to earn money to support our families, to bring immediate benefits to families, we realize this easily and fast. Now, if we announce that some people are cultivating to become Buddhas, they will feel embarrassed and find it difficult. The Buddha was afraid of this, so he set out the temporary practicalities for us to follow step by step.

For example, the main purpose of the Buddha in our life is not to ask us to shave our hair, ordain, practice the precepts, or wear yellow robes in the temple—these are just temporary practicalities to help us avoid cravings (*trishna*) and bonds from family.

We shave our hair to let go off the world's decoration. Then, we wear the simple brown robes, without the green or red, to cut off desires to decorate in life. So, the Buddha used the temporary, practical method to lead us to leave and renounce our parents and home. The real purpose of the Buddha is to wish us to become Buddhas.

The Buddha did not need to shave his hair, because he was neither lustful nor attached. We must use the temporary shaving, go forth at the temple to avoid pleasure, lust and

attachment, which we often insistently cling to. This is a part of the enlightened way.

That is why we must learn from this sūtra that keeping precepts, practicing doctrines, restraining the six sense bases, performing charitable acts, having patience, virtue and so on, are the temporary practicalities assisting us to reach the Mahāyāna, where the Buddha will reveal the main truth. The purpose of the Buddha's wish for us to be Buddhas means to withdraw the temporary practicalities or partial teachings to reveal the final ultimate truth.

In forty-nine years of preaching, the Buddha taught many sūtras until his passing away. He expounded the *Lotus Sūtra*, *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, and other Mahāyāna sūtras to finally reveal the truth.

It is well illustrated through the sample of a body structure. For example, the legs are Theravāda, the stomach is Vaipulya, and *Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, the top of the head is the Lotus, *Śūraṅgama*, and *Nirvana Sūtras*. Each part of this body is needed to reveal the Dharma body.

WHAT BUDDHIST VEHICLE DOES THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA SŪTRA BELONG TO?

The purpose of transportation is called *yāna* (vehicle). *Yāna* is the vehicle. Where is it going? The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* taught that the Bodhisattva-yāna is the big vehicle; however, it still emphasized the strict upholding of precepts, morality, and virtue of the voice-hearer vehicle. Śrāvakayāna, Theravāda vehicle, or small vehicle, describes both human (manussa) yāna

and heavenly (deva) yāna in seven realms too.⁹ So, the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* is really not only about the Bodhisattva, but also contains all five yānas as follows:

1. **Human vehicle** (*manussa-yāna*): teaches us how to keep five precepts, such as not killing, not stealing, not committing sexual misconduct, not lying, and not using intoxicants.

2. **Heavenly vehicle** (*deva-yāna*): teaches us how to keep the ten wholesomes of the three groups of body, speech, and mind: body does not kill, steal, and commit sexual misconduct; speech does not lie, use harsh words, slander, gossip; mind has no greed (*vītarāgam*), no hatred (*vītadosam*), no foolishness (*vijjā*). The practitioner also meditates on rebirth in the heavenly realm.

3. **Voice-hearer vehicle** (*śrāvaka-yāna*): teaches us to let go of the six sense organs, six external objects, and six consciousnesses because they are illusory.

4. **Bodhisattva vehicle** (*bodhisattva-yāna*): teaches us to practice Bodhisattva conduct for the sake of many and for attaining Buddhahood.

5. **Buddha vehicle** (*Buddha-yāna*): teaches us how to return to the Buddha nature.

⁹ Seven realms: heaven (*deva*), asura (*asurakāya*), immortal (human-half deva-half), human (*manussa*), hell (*niraya*), ghosts (*pittivisaya*), and animals (*tiracchānayani*).

The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* contains all five vehicles but is special for the Bodhisattva vehicle. It emphasizes the pure Bodhisattva-yāna; however, it obligates us to practice seriously the morality of śrāvaka, because from the primary step to full awakening, we must keep three gradual progress stages:

1. Removing the supporting causes of birth and death (do not eat five smelly spices, do not drink fresh milk, do not wear fur clothes).

2. Scraping the root of the mundane mind (i.e., keeping precepts).

3. Going opposite to present karma (upstream of birth and death).

Moreover, we must keep the *Śūraṅgama*'s precepts seriously, which means not only without killing, stealing, lusting, lying, but also thoughts of breaking precepts are avoided.

How difficult it is! That is the reason until the final period of his life, when the Buddha was about to pass away, he agreed to deliver the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. So, it is called the Great Head Peak of Buddha.

The first time the Buddha expounded *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* no one seemed to be interested. Thus, the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* guides the Bodhisattva-yāna and also requires restraint and following the śrāvakas' precepts strictly. Bodhisattvas not only are vegetarian, but also must not eat smelly spice plants, milk, or not use whatever has animal (tiracchāyoni) fur or parts.

Whatever belongs to animals is not allowed. Thus, the precepts in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* are much more strict and subtle.

The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* is the supreme, perfect doctrine about the permanent Buddha nature in the realms. Four faculties (five khandhas,¹⁰ six folds,¹¹ twelve sense bases,¹² eighteen realms¹³) and seven elements¹⁴ are all tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena). The Śrāvakasyāna or Theravāda has never had such a belief.

The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* belongs to five vehicles, the unitary doctrine unique vehicle, along with being the separate doctrine unique vehicle.

The single vehicle leads toward Buddhahood. The unitary doctrine gives all human beings abilities to achieve Buddhahood, and so the unitary doctrine unique vehicle is formed. The separate doctrine unique vehicle is the certain distinct teaching for certain capacities—not for all people who

¹⁰ Five aggregates (*pañca skandha*): matter (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), ideation (*sañjñā*), forces or drives (*samskāra*) and consciousness (*viññāna*).

¹¹ Six sense organs: eye-organ, ear-organ, nose-organ, tongue-organ, body-organ, and mental-organ.

¹² Twelve sense bases: Six sense organs (eye-organ, ear-organ, nose-organ, tongue-organ, body-organ, and mental-organ) and six objects (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and objects of mind).

¹³ Eighteen realms: Six sense organs (eye-organ, ear-organ, nose-organ, tongue-organ, body-organ, and mental-organ), six objects (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and objects of mind) and six consciousnesses (eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, skin-consciousness, mental-consciousness).

¹⁴ Seven elements: earth, water, fire, wind, space, perception, and consciousness.

also reach Buddhahood or our real nature. Those who learned this teaching will know the way to return to the unshakeable Buddha-nature. The purpose of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* is to take all beings, all abilities to Buddhahood. That is why it is called the unitary doctrine unique vehicle.

Since long ago, it has depended on the abilities of living beings to establish five groups or vehicles (yānas):

1. ***Mahāyāna***: It is the highest yāna which belongs to Bodhisattva's and Buddha's capacities. The whole mind learns the specialized bodhisattva-yāna to be a bodhisattva. In the future, he will be promised to be a Buddha, i.e., the capacity will develop so that it will later lead a bodhisattva to be a Buddha.

2. ***Middle-yāna***: Pratyeka (pacceka) contemplate the twelve chains of dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda, *paṭiccasamuppāda*).¹⁵ If one chain is broken, the rest of the

¹⁵ Dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda)

i. Avijja (*avidya*) ignorance, lack of wisdom, which is the root of all evils. Obscuration as to self of persons and self of phenomena.

ii. Sankhara (*Samskara*) Karma formations, compositional action, wholesome or unwholesome thoughts, speech and bodily deeds.

iii. Vinnana (*viññana*) Consciousness, normally six consciousnesses but is taken as eight in the Yogacara School.

iv. Nama-rupa, name and form, corporeality and mentality, mental and physical existence four mental aggregates and one physical body.

v. Ayatana (*shadayatana*) Six bases, six sense organs/spheres, eye, ear, nose, tongue, touch, and mental faculty.

vi. Phassa (sparsha) Sense impression, contact, a mental factor and period in which the objects, sense power/organ and consciousness come together, causing one to distinguish an object as pleasurable, painful, or neutral.

eleven chains will disappear. When being freed from the cycle of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), he will attain the Lonely Enlightened One. Pratyeka (*pacceka*) achieves only to pratyekabuddhahood/*paccekabuddha* (independent or silent or separate Buddha).

3. **Theravāda-yāna**: Monks or nuns who study the full precepts of *bhikkhus/bhikkhunis*¹⁶ cultivate four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)¹⁷ to transform four false views, are freed from *samsāra* to become arhats.

4. **Heaven-yāna**: The normal person who wishes to be born in heaven, must cultivate ten wholesomes, meditate, and make offerings. Without meditation, they fail to be born in the

vii. *Vedanā*, feeling, sensation. Posited as a mental factor that experiences pleasure, pain, and neutral feeling. Pleasure leads to a strong desire for more while pain generates an avoidance desire.

viii. *Tanha* (*trishna*) craving, attachment, a mental factor that increases desire but without any satisfaction.

ix. *Upadana*, clinging, grasping, a stronger degree of desire. Four basic varieties: desired objects, views of self, bad system of ethics and conduct, and other bad views.

x. *Bhava* (*bjava*) process of becoming, existence, a period lasting from the time of fully potentialized karma up to the beginning of the next lifetime.

xi. *Jati*, rebirth

xii. *Jara-marana* (*jaramaranam*) Ageing and death, decay and death

¹⁶ *Bhikkhu*: 250 precepts and *Bhikkhuni*: 348 precepts.

¹⁷ Four mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*): mindfulness of the body (*rūpa*), sensations (*vedanā*), consciousness (*citta*) and *dhammās*.

Four upside-down dharmas:

i. Impure body is considered as pure.

ii. Suffering is considered as happiness.

iii. Impermanent mind is considered as permanent.

iv. Non-self dharma is considered as selfness.

heavenly realms (devas). The immaterial heaven realms (arūpāvacara-bhūmi),¹⁸ the material realms (rūpāvācara-bhūmi,¹⁹ four jhānas), and the lowest heavens as desire realms (six desire heaven realms, kāmasugati-bhūmi)²⁰ still must be attained by meditating. Dwelling in meditation, there is still lust (*sarāgaṃ*) to be reborn in the desire realms. If the lust is cut off, and there is still the material (rūpā), one will be reborn in the material realm. If one is getting rid of desire (kāmasugati-bhūmi) and the material (rūpāvācara-bhūmi) realms, it will lead one to the immaterial realm (arūpāvacara-bhūmi).

¹⁸ The Immaterial Heavenly Realm (detaching their forms and desires) (arūpāvacara-bhūmi):

1. The state of infinite space, (*ākāsānañcāyatana-bhūmi*).
2. The state of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana-bhūmi*).
3. The state of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana-bhūmi*).
4. The state of neither-discrimination-nor-nondiscrimination (nevasañ-ñānāsaññāyatana-bhūmi).

¹⁹ The Material Heavenly Realms (Rūpāvācara-bhūmi): Clinging to material, the realms in four jhānas (see in detail the later chapter XIV, p. 499–509).

²⁰ The desire heavenly realms: Clinging to desire and enjoyment, the desire heaven (lust and form remain, Kāmasugati-bhūmi).

1. Four Heavenly Kings (catummahārājika).
2. The Trayastriṃsha Heavenly Beings (tāvatiṃsa, tettiṃsā).
3. The Suyama Heavenly Beings (yāmā).
4. The Tushita Heavenly Beings (tusita).
5. The Blissful Transformation Heavenly Beings (nimmānaratī).
6. The Transforming Heavenly Beings of the Comfort from Others (paranimmitavasavattī).

5. **Human-yāna**: strictly keeping five precepts²¹ is the main cause to be born as human (manussa) beings who stand straight on their two legs (different from animals).

These are the temporary expedients. Now setting up the true intentions of the Buddha: if the Buddha-yāna, the Buddha is for everyone become a Buddha (called Buddhayāna or the unique-yāna) it is a vehicle to lead all to the Buddha's realm.

Buddhahood is specific to a bodhisattva. Among people with other capacities, there is hardly any hope to become a Buddha. Even an arhat (*arahant*) does not hope to achieve this Buddhahood, much less female and mundane people. The fruition of the Buddha is the specific stage of a bodhisattva, so until this time, in the period of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, the Buddha revealed to living beings that all have the ability to become a Buddha. In the *Lotus Sūtra*, the Buddha predicted Sāriputta, Yasodharā, and even a female dragon to be Buddhas. In the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, we are surprised at the Buddha's declaration. He pointed out that four departments and seven elements are as tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena). Animate and inanimate, sentient and insentient beings are all the Buddhas. This is the absolute truth

²¹ Five precepts: All Buddhists live by the five moral precepts which are refraining from:

1. Harming living things.
2. Taking what is not given.
3. Sexual misconduct.
4. Lying or gossiping.
5. Taking intoxicating substances, e.g., drugs or drink.

that was announced by the Buddha.

The unique vehicle of Buddhahood is to erase the boundaries of the five yānas. It does not divide into five different things or paths, but that is the only path which has five steps. At the time of Mahāyāna, the Buddha declared that there is the only one path, not five.

Everyone takes a step. The first step is the human vehicle (manussa-yāna), the second step is heaven vehicle (deva-yāna), the third step is the *Hīnayāna* (Theravāda-yāna), the fourth is the Middle Vehicle (*pratyeka-yāna*), the fifth step is Mahāyāna (*Bodhisattva-yāna and Buddha-yāna*). Even if all steps are the Mahāyāna, one still needs to start with the first step, then the second and the third, and then up to become a Buddha. The long path we must overcome, so we still need to shave our hair, wear yellow robes, and step up from the low to the high way. We cannot climb the ladder by jumping over the step.

The unique vehicle means to erase three vehicles to establish the Buddha-yāna. The erasing does not mean to cut off the three or five vehicles. It only aims to break the attachment of discriminating the boundaries of the low or high five schools.

WHICH SECT DOES THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA SŪTRA BELONG TO?

The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* is drawn from the *Supreme Mystical Samādhi Mantra* that is one of five great sūtras of the Tantra school.

In the practice field, it belongs to the Tantra, but in theory, it is the revealing exoteric doctrine which is taught in detail by the Buddha. In this sūtra, the *Śūraṅgama*-samādhi mantra part is the Tantra; the other scripture is the exoteric teachings.

HOW IS THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA SŪTRA DIFFERENT FROM THE LOTUS SŪTRA?

In the *Lotus Sūtra*, the Buddha encouraged stabilizing the body and mind of listeners by saying they will gain merit, blessings, or Buddhahood as they wish, so that they will be delighted to practice. The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* preaches clearly the methods of cultivation and how to awaken the Buddha nature and get rid of saṃsāra. The Āgama belongs to the Hīnayāna school which teaches basic moral precepts to humans (manussa) and heavenly (devas) beings, and shows the way to enter samādhi to attain arhatship (arahant), the master of human and heavenly beings.

During forty-nine years of preaching, it took eight years to expound the *Vaipulya Sūtra* and twenty-two years to preach *prajñā-pāramitā*. It took a long time to develop the Mahāyāna and to transform it from the Hīnayāna (the first period of Buddhism) to the Mahāyāna (the developed period of Buddhism). *Vaipulya* and *Prajñā-pāramitā* are called the turning point of transformation from this state to that state.

THE SUBJECTS OF THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA SŪTRA

The listeners in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* are almost bodhisattvas, such as Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, standing up to address their own perfect penetrating nature, but the Buddha called the sound-hearers (śrāvakas) like Venerable Ānanda, Venerable Purna, Venerable Subhūti, Venerable Upali, Venerable Maha Kāśyapa, and so forth to be his subjects in the assembly. These śrāvakas praised the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, which the Buddha had never taught before.

WHERE DOES THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA SŪTRA BELONG IN THE TRIPITAKA?

The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* belongs to the Sūtra Pitaka which introduces meditation (śamatha, samapatti, and dhyāna are all samādhi). The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* is also part of the Vinaya Pitaka (śrāvakas must keep the precepts as pure as ice). The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* also belongs to the Treatise or Commentary Pitaka (the disciple must develop insight into the distinction between right and wrong, true or untrue).

THE ORIGIN OF THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA SŪTRA

This sūtra is considered to be a precious treasure in India. Zhezhi, the great master, paid homage to this sūtra for eighteen years, praying for it to be transmitted to China. We are indebted to the Patriarch Paramiti in the first year of Tang Dynasty, who crossed the border of China to India, wrote the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* on thin silk, cut his thigh to hide it inside,

and masked it as a wound to pass the tight controls at the border of central India.

We are indebted to General Fang Zhong for using chemicals to bleach the blood in the silk and for editing the sūtra translation.

We are grateful to Master Megha in ZhiZhe Pagoda who translated the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* from Sanskrit into Chinese.

We acknowledge with special thanks Most Venerable Chân-giám (1932) who translated the sūtra into Vietnamese; Most Venerable Trí Siêu (1945), upasaka Tâm Minh (1961), Tuệ Quang (1962), Most Venerable Duy lực (1990) and many other venerables who spent their precious time to translate this sūtra from the Chinese language into Vietnamese so that today we can read and understand.

DEFINITION

The full name of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* is the *Buddha Great Head Peak of Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, i.e., the highest great summit of the physical Buddha, which is similar to the last period of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. Chinese translates it as “the perfect samādhi or the original enlightened nature,” which is ever perfect and full without needing to cultivate to attain. Our own nature is ever mindful. The unsettled and unstabilized mind is our new habit. We must cut off these illusory habits to return to the perfect point, because its original luminous nature is the essence of all things.

The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* teaches that once we are mindful of the hearing nature, we will experience perfect meditation pervading over the realms until achieving enlightenment. The highest fruition is the final attaining of Buddhahood. The meditation fulfills the nature, without cultivation.

Perfection is the fulfilling of the whole, wherever it is not deficit of all the stable mindfulness or whenever there is no absence of tranquility. Its nature is complete because it is the substance of all phenomena called absolute perfection. From the high sky to the low earth, from shallow to deep, from short to long, from wide to narrow—all are the wonderful nature. The *Śūraṅgama Sutra* explains that four departments, seven elements are as tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena), because the tathāgatagarbha is the earth, water, wind, and fire—all are the tathāgatagarbha. So, finally there is only tathāgatagarbha.

The perfect concentration (samādhi) at the eye is the seeing, at the ear is the hearing, at the nose is the smelling, at the mouth is the tasting, at the body is the touching, at the brain is the knowing. We all, from day to night, see everything, the eye-consciousness arises and falls continuously. The eye is sometimes shortsighted, longsighted, strong, weak, or fails in the end. However, the seeing nature, from young to old, from this to the next life, is still the stable perfect samādhi in us.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER I

Chapter 1 introduces an overview of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* which belongs to Mahāyāna Buddhism, the developed period of Buddhism. It particularly serves for Bodhisattva-yāna, but in fact, also for five vehicles: keeping five precepts (the human-yāna), ten precepts (the heaven-yāna), keeping precepts of mind and form (śrāvaka-yāna), bodhisattvas cultivate to attain fifty-four fruits to benefit beings (the bodhisattva-yāna) and following ten essence views (perceiving reality) to return to the tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena, the Buddha-yāna).

The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* comes from the Summit Contemplation Treatise (*Quán Dīnh Churong Cú*), one of five great sūtras of the tantric sect. However, in the reasoned field, it is the exoteric doctrine because the Buddha explained it in detail. In the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, the mantra is tantric while the rest is the sūtra or exoteric doctrine.

The period of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* is brief from the Buddha Head Great Peak. Chinese translated it as the perfect samādhi nature which is our inherent original essence.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which period among the five periods does the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* belong to according to the verses of the Tiantai patriarch (China)?

2. Which yāna and sect does the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* belong to?
3. Please summarize the difference between the *Śūraṅgama* and the *Lotus Sūtras*.
4. Please describe the source of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.
5. What is the meaning of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*?



The Sambhoga kayas of Buddha proclaimed the spiritual mantra of Śūraṅgama Samādhī.

CHAPTER II

THE REASON FOR THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA SUTRA

“Then one day, on the the death anniversary of King Prasenajit’s father, King Prasenajit arranged a delicious vegetarian feast at his palace and invited the Buddha and his disciples. The king himself welcomed the Tathāgata and his Saṅgha to his royal kingdom. At that time in the city, elders and laypeople also prepared food to offer the Saṅgha. They stood waiting for the Buddha to come and receive offerings. The Buddha commanded Venerable Mañjuśrī to divide the bodhisattvas and arhats to receive offerings from the various vegetarian hosts.

“Only Venerable Ānanda, who had traveled far for a special invitation earlier, had not yet returned, and was late for King Prasenajit’s invitation. He was returning alone on the road without any senior monk or *acharya* with him. On that day, he had received no offerings. At the appropriate time (to avoid being late at noon), Venerable Ānanda took up his bowl to travel through the city.

“As he began almsround, he first thought that he needed a *danapati* to be his vegetarian host, and he would not question whether the donor was clean or unclean, rich or poor. That offering was opened-minded, so that all living

beings could achieve limitless merit and virtue. Venerable Ānanda already knew that the Tathāgata, the World-Honored One, had admonished Venerable Subhūti and Venerable Maha Kāśyapa for being arhats whose hearts were unfair. Therefore, with respect to the Tathāgata's valuable instructions on impartiality, Venerable Ānanda walked mindfully and slowly through the outer gates in the proper manner of the holy method to obtain food. In the begging process, Venerable Ānanda walked through a house of Ms. Matangi, a beautiful prostitute. By means of a mantra from the Kapila religion, formerly of the Brahma Heaven, Ms. Matangi pushed him into a room to licentiously touch him. He was on the verge of destroying the precept-substance. Knowing Ānanda was being taken advantage of by the indecent artifice mantra, after finishing the meal, the Buddha immediately began his return journey. The king, great officials, elders, and laypeople followed the Buddha, hoping to hear the essentials of Dharma. From the crown of the World-Honored One emitted a hundred rays of jeweled and fearless light. Within the light appeared a thousand-petalled precious lotus, upon which rested a transformation-body Buddha seated in full-lotus posture, who was proclaiming a spiritual mantra of the Śūraṅgama Samādhi.

“He commanded Venerable Mañjuśrī to take the mantra and go, providing protection, and when the evil

mantra was extinguished, Venerable Ānanda and Ms. Matangi returned to where the Buddha was.”²²

We are thankful to Venerable Ānanda that we have the good opportunity to listen to the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* which the Buddha expounded to save Ānanda.

Venerable Ānanda was the Buddha’s cousin. Prince Siddhartha’s father was King Suddhodana, and Ānanda’s father was Dronodana Raja. Devadatta was the brother of Ānanda. Having shaved his head, Ānanda was one of the ten elder pupils of the Buddha and his closest attendant. He was praised as the best learner. He could remember clearly every word of all the Buddha’s teachings. After the Buddha passed away, Venerable Ānanda helped to gather all of the principles, reciting hundreds of sermons that were preached by the Buddha in many places at different times. The lay Buddhists also liked to listen to the sermons that Ānanda preached because he was young, handsome, and talented. The ancestors composed a verse to praise Venerable Ānanda:

His figure is as beautiful as the full moon in autumn

His eyes are as pure as the white lotus

His Dharma lecture is as influent as the ocean

From his mind, many good things aspire.²³

²² The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, translated into Vietnamese by Tâm Minh, translated into English by Bhikkhunī Giỏi Hương, HCM City Publishing, 1999, pp. 31–33.

²³ *The Buddha’s Ten Great Disciples*, East West Printing, 1999, p. 98.

One day, Venerable Ānanda had not come back as a result of traveling to a faraway Buddhist event—the Buddha and Saṅgha went for offerings at King Prasenajit’s palace. To avoid being late, Venerable Ānanda took up his begging alone in the city.

First, he wished that he had a danapati who would be his vegetarian host. Venerable Ānanda would not question whether the donor was clean or unclean, rich or poor, as all living beings could achieve limitless merit and virtue. Whoever did not know about Buddhism, how to cultivate or gain merit, Venerable Ānanda wanted to guide her/him in the way of achieving merit by receiving a meal at her/his home.

He was honored in the proper manner of obtaining food. He walked slowly and mindfully through the outer gates, inside gates, city, and then downtown. His performance of the almsfood begging ritual was correct and proper.

The World-Honored One had admonished Venerable Subhūti and Venerable Maha Kāśyapa for being arhats whose hearts were not fair and equal: For example, Venerable Subhūti preferred to beg in the rich areas while Venerable Maha Kāśyapa favored begging in the poor areas. Venerable Maha Kāśyapa explained that his reason was people were poor because they were lacking merit, so they should be given a chance to make merit. The poor could develop their bodhi-mind by making offerings, that is, improving their poor karma and becoming rich. When a mind of regret or shame aspires to sell belongings to make offerings and earn more

merit, then a good result will come. That is why Venerable Maha Kāśyapa focused on begging in the poor areas of the city.

As a result of Venerable Subhūti's strong meditating power (samādhi) from contemplating emptiness (śūnyatā/suññatā), when he was born, his parents and relatives saw nothing in the room; it seemed to be empty and all physical properties disappeared. Venerable Sāriputta was powerful too.

His wisdom power was so strong that when he was in his mother's womb, she could give deep lectures and argue philosophy with other scholars in India. Prince Ajātaśatru had an evil mind so strong that the pregnant Queen Vaidehi during her morning sickness, wanted to drink her husband's blood. These examples are a result of the emanating samādhi power of the mind that affects the surrounding environment. Due to the power of contemplation on emptiness or the detached mind, Venerable Subhūti did not mind that he was gossiped about because he liked to beg only in the rich areas for the delicious food. He thought that the rich who made offerings were not affected by their daily feeding. Therefore, he did not care about the gossip that he preferred to eat delicious meals, chose the luxurious areas for alms, and begged in the wealthy neighborhoods.

Venerable Ānanda remembered that the World-Honored One had admonished both Venerable Subhūti and Maha Kāśyapa. The Tathāgatas or Buddhas all were fair and equal. They did not question whether donors were clean or unclean,

rich or poor. Anyone could make offerings. The Tathāgata preached the Dharma to repay, save, convert, and transform them.

Every day at dawn, the Buddha meditated and spread his compassion in the ten directions. With insight, he contemplated who he would meet that day and where should he go to teach his Dharma. Then he was calm, pure, and serene in his good manner and went to beg for alms in that direction.

After hearing the Buddha's instruction for Venerable Subhūti and Venerable Maha Kāśyapa, Ānanda begged in an area where people were selfish and stingy. He did not mind whether they were rich or poor or what social class they belonged to. He kept his mind balanced without disturbance. When he passed a house of prostitution, he was waylaid by a powerful magic. Ms. Matangi, formerly of the Brahma Heaven, by means of a mantra of the Kapila religion, drew him into a room to satisfy her sexual urges.

Venerable Ānanda was a quick learner with a powerful intellect, but he did not have enough samādhi strength to protect his virtue. That means Venerable Ānanda was incapable of self-control and this led to loss of his right mindfulness in front of the beautiful geisha.

At that time, the Buddha and Saṅgha were attending the vegetarian feast at King Prasenajit's palace. With the divine eye, the Buddha knew that his disciple, Ānanda, was being taken advantage of by Ms. Matangi and the indecent mantra and was on the verge of destroying the precept substance. So,

the Buddha commanded Venerable Mañjuśrī to take the *Śūraṅgama Mantra* to protect Venerable Ānanda. From the top head of the Buddha arose a reincarnation of the Buddha (sambhoga kaya) who was chanting the *Śūraṅgama Samādhi* mantra.

Sitting cross-legged in the meditation position, a sambhoga kaya of the Buddha proclaimed the mantra. Sambhoga kaya appeared from the Dharma kaya. This is the wonderful application from the body-Dharma that covers ten directions (east, west, south, north, southeast, southwest, northeast, northwest, above, and below) and throughout three times (past, present, and future). It means the mantra from the Sambhoga kaya and Dharma kaya is effective throughout all ten directions and three generations, not only in the present, from the mouth of the Shakyamuni Buddha.

If this mantra from Shakyamuni Buddha is chanted, it was feared that people might misunderstand and easily fall into traps (in King Prasenajit's palace). It means the mantra is experienced as useful only in India, suitable for the time twenty-six centuries ago, but now in 2018 and here (Vietnam or USA) it is not effective. Therefore, the mantra must be spoken from the body-Dharma to affect the three generations and ten directions. As such, the mantra makes more sense, is sacred, and inspires on a large scale.

“Just seeing the Buddha, Venerable Ānanda prostrated, cried sorrowfully, and regretted that from beginningless time he had been a quick learner with a

powerful intellect, but had not yet perfected his strength in virtue. He respectfully and repeatedly requested an explanation of the wonderful śamatha, samāpatti, and dhyāna, by means of which the Tathāgatas from ten directions achieved enlightenment. At that time bodhisattvas were as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Great arhats, pratyekas, and others from ten directions were pleased at the good opportunity to listen to Dharma, and kept silently in their seats to receive the sagely instruction.”²⁴

That was the reason the Buddha started to preach the wonderful śamatha, samapatti, and dhyāna that are contained in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

1. Śamatha (tranquility and reflection) is the contemplation. We should contemplate and discriminate which one is true or an illusion. All thoughts are illusory. All objects and bodies are delusion. From the energy of this reflection, the attachment to environment, consciousness, and the body soon disappears. We must understand this section on the theoretical field and distinguish between truth and illusion, the fundamental bodhi, and the root of birth and death.

2. Samāpatti (concentration) is the stopping. We stop to think things over, keep the calm manner, and experience tranquility as an autumn lake. We let falseness drop to the bottom of the lake. It means we return to the essence or the

²⁴ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 33.

fundamental bodhi.

3. Dhyāna (wisdom): We should apply truth to the illusion, the bodhi mind at the cycle of birth and death, because the true does not differ from the illusion. The illusion does not differ from the truth. The resulting wisdom will be revealed immediately after we achieve the basic wisdom. This is the transferring of the Dharma way of the Tathāgata: transforming afflictions into bodhi and transforming the birth and death into Nirvana (Nibbāna) of the Tathāgatas.

Śamatha is **the theory** that distinguishes between trueness and falseness.

Samāpatti is **the practice** of the truth, the fundamental bodhi or basic wisdom.

Dhyāna is **the application** of the resulting wisdom that all truth is falseness and all falseness is truth. The practitioner will attain the basic wisdom and the resulting insight.

Another way to explain: śamatha is stopping, samāpatti is contemplation, and dhyāna is meditation, explained by Zhiyo Master.²⁵

²⁵ *Zhiyi's Essentials for Practicing Serenity, Insight, and Dhyāna* (Xiuxi zhiguan zuo chan fa yao, Tu Tập Chí Quán Thiền Toát Yéu, 修習止觀坐禪法要).

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER II

Chapter II explains reasons for the appearance of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. Venerable Ānanda, who was the Buddha's cousin and attendant, returned late from a mission and failed to join the Saṅgha for lunch at King Prasenajit's kingdom. Venerable Ananda went on almsround alone and met Matangi, a pretty prostitute, who makes him almost break his precepts. The Buddha immediately sent Mañjuśrī to bring the *Śūraṅgama*-Samādhi mantra to save Ānanda. Ānanda kneels crying, asking the Buddha to teach śamatha, samāpatti, and dhyāna, which are the first cultivating means to transform from the cycle of rebirth into the enlightenment bodhi of the Tathāgatas in ten directions. For this reason, the Buddha preached the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Please explain why Ānanda encountered the incident with Matangi, and why did he not have enough energy to resist it?
2. What specific quality was Ānanda known for among the great disciples?
3. How did the Buddha reprimand Venerable Subhūti and Venerable Maha Kāśyapa for their unfair almsround practices?
4. Define these words: śamatha, samāpatti, and dhyāna.
5. What is the philosophical meaning of this sentence:

“There is a reincarnation of the Buddha sitting cross-legged in meditation, reading the *Śūraṅgama-Samādhi Mantra*.”



Aluvihara Temple in Matale Mountain, Sri Lanka

*The Buddhist scriptures were written on
ole leaves in the Buddha's time.*

CHAPTER III

ASKING ABOUT THE MIND

The Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda, "You and I are cousins in the same royal family. At the time you started to develop the bodhi mind, which characteristics did you admire in my religion that caused you to put away the deep cravings (trishna) in life?"

Ānanda replied to the Buddha, "I observed the Tathāgata's thirty-two marks of excellence, which were so marvelously transparent, as gems. I thought that these characteristics could not be born from craving. Why? Sexual intercourse, with the blend of pus and blood is too turbid and foul to generate such a brilliant, wonderful, pure golden body. Thus, I devotedly renounced to practice under the Buddha's guidance."

The Buddha replied, "Excellent! Ānanda, you must know that since beginningless time, all living beings have been subject to birth and death continuously, because they simply have not yet recognized the bright, pure reality of the permanent mind. Instead, they attach to the illusory consciousness that causes the cycle of life. Now you hope to learn the supreme bodhi to return to your real nature. You should use your straightforward mind to answer my questions. Tathāgatas of the ten directions also used the

straightforward mind to be freed from the birth and death cycle. Such a bright and unhindered mind would progress from the beginning to the middle to the end stages, and in the process never cheating.”

“Ānanda, now I ask you: ‘When you saw the Tathāgata's thirty-two marks of excellence and you aspired to develop a bodhi mind, what was it that made you prefer it?’ ”

Ānanda replied to the Buddha, “Tathāgata, the joy and gladness came from my mind and eyes, because when my eyes saw the Tathāgata's good characteristics, in my mind arose wonderful feelings. That is why I renounced to practice the way of getting out the birth and death cycle.”

The Buddha asked Ānanda, “When the experience of joy and gladness arose in your mind and eyes, where did it come from? If you do not know the place where your mind and eyes come from, you will fail to conquer them. For example, if a country is invaded and the king commands the troops to fight, the troops must know where the invaders are in order to expel them. Now as you are stuck in the cycle of life as a result of your mind and eyes, I must ask you: ‘Where are your mind and eyes now?’ ”²⁶

We can see the Buddha was very psychological and subtle in the way he comforted Ānanda, so he would not feel shamed, would have spiritual trust, rely on the Buddha, and

²⁶ Adapted from The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 35–37.

avoid fear and sadness about his faults. The Buddha reminded him that “**Ānanda and the Buddha are cousins in the same royal family. So, we love each other as real brothers.**” The Buddha showed his friendliness to stabilize Ānanda’s mind. Then, he began asking him some questions, so he could experience for himself why Ānanda willingly left the palace to become a monk.

Since beginningless time, all living beings have been born and have died continuously. In the book, *The Cycle of Life*,²⁷ name and form are well illustrated by the picture of a ferryman sailing on the river of birth and death. The ferryman is the mind, the boat is the body, and the river of birth and death receives countless bodies (boats) from this life to the next, since ancient time, without end. It is our mind, the ferryman, who instructs us to sail. So, the Buddha asked, which mind transformed Ānanda to become the sage and which mind rose up to attach to Matangi?

Tathāgatas in the ten directions used the straightforward mind to get out of the cycle of birth and death, because the equivocal response is a foolish way to try and attain enlightenment.

The Buddha descended into the *saha* world with the aim to show us the unique way to be freed from transmigration. Because metempsychosis exists, there are endless births and

²⁷ *The Cycle of Life*, by Dr. Bhikkhunī Giói Hương, NXB Phương Đông: Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc. 2008. 2nd–3rd–4th reprint: 2010, 2014 & 2016, pp. 88–89.

deaths. Today, if we make merit in order to be reborn in a heavenly realm (deva realm); tomorrow we may commit unwholesome acts which will force us into the hell realms (*niraya*), ghost realms (*pittivisaya*), or animal realms (*tiracchānayani*). The wholesome will go to the upper realms. In contrast, the unwholesome must always go to the lower lands. Both extremes make the wheel turn in life. The birth and death cycle is the root of all the oceans of suffering.

To get out of suffering, we must find the origin of suffering. For example, to defeat the enemy, we must know the shelter of the enemy; to gain stable happiness, we must plant the seed of permanent delight. Therefore, we must find the root or reason why we are subjected to the rebirth cycle and learn why the Buddha was able to avoid transmigration and attain permanent happiness.

Before leading Ānanda to enter Dharmas, the Buddha wanted him to realize and understand his thinking processes—rightly or wrongly. The Buddha asked several questions so Ānanda could realize his sickness and problems. As a result, Ānanda begged the Buddha to show the way of liberation.

What was it that turned Ānanda away from a life of ease as a prince? It changed him from enjoying the full credits of a human (*manussa*), entertained and waited on by servants, with delicious food, transported by carts or horses, living in the golden palaces with his beautiful wife and child, wearing expensive sandals, sitting on a silk throne, and sleeping in a golden bed, and other luxuries. But suddenly, he detached from

all things to become a homeless monk who walked barefoot, begged for alms every day (the normal view at that time, especially to the royal family, was that begging for alms was a shameful thing that Ānanda had done). At that time, Ānanda was in a movable process. The moving cycle means to rotate from one state to another state or from this form to that form. Therefore, he had to find the reasons for this movement.

And what was the next movement? Whether he would leave the monastic order to return to lay life as a result of attaching to Maganti? If there were not the great Dharani mantra, Ānanda would easily lose his right mindfulness. So, the Śūraṅgama-Samādhi mantra saved him and his precepts.

The first question the Buddha asked him was why he ordained as a monk. Venerable Ānanda answered directly, quickly, and explicitly that **“I observed the Tathāgata's thirty-two marks of excellence, which were so marvelously transparent, as gems. I thought those characteristics could not be born from craving (trishna). Why? Sexual intercourse, with the blend of pus and blood is too turbid and foul to generate such a brilliant, wonderful, pure golden body. Thus, I devotedly renounced lay life to practice under the Buddha's guidance.”**

Ānanda knew that objects arise naturally in an unstable mind. When he met the Buddha, the pure awakened one, he was converted to follow the wholesome way and left the royal palace for the holy life. When Ānanda encountered Maganti, a prostitute, she tempted him to follow lust of the flesh. Thus, he

seemed to lose his mindfulness and began to surrender to craving. Ānanda's answer made it clear that he knew the symptoms of an unstable mind. Guessing the correct cause or symptom of lack of mindfulness can cure the sickness of rebirth.

When we want to defeat an enemy, we must know where their lair is located. Realizing the reason for Ananda's shifts between good and evil, mundane and transmudane life, he realized that he must know where the mind was located. So, the Buddha asked Ānanda when he observed the Tathāgata's thirty-two characteristics and admiration arose in his mind, where were his mind and eyes? Similarly, when he saw the sexual beauty of Maganti and craving arose in his mind, where were the mind and the eyes then?

Ānanda tried seven times²⁸ to look for the mind in seven places as follows:

1. The mind is inside the body: Ānanda declared ten categories of living beings who recognize that the mind or heart are clearly inside the body.

The Buddha refused the idea that the mind understands everything in the universe and dwells inside the body. If it is located inside the body, it must be aware of Ānanda's heart, liver, spleen, and stomach inwardly before seeing the outside. If it fails to do that, we cannot conclude that it is inside. It is impossible to state that the mind is inside the body.

²⁸ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 16–27.

2. The mind is outside the body: Ānanda presented the idea that the mind is outside the body because it is not aware of the inside. For example, if a lamp is luminous outside, then the room inside must be dark. Likewise, if the mind dwells outside the body, then it will understand and know everything in the universe. It fails to be aware of the stomach, liver, and other organs inside the body, so that means it is not inside.

The Buddha argued that it is outside the body. Just as the body belongs to a person but the mind belongs to another person, if one person eats, does everyone get full? So, it is impossible to state that the mind is outside.

3. The mind is behind the eyes: Since the mind does not perceive the stomach, liver, and other organs inside, it does not dwell in the inward body, and it can be aware of the outside. So, the mind may be hidden behind the eyes as the eyes can see and discriminate.

The Buddha debated that if it is like that, the mind must see the eyes before seeing the landscape. Likewise, the eyes must see the membranes covering the eyes before the eyes can see outside. So, this statement is not acceptable.

4. Closing the eyes to see darkness—that is to see within the body. Ānanda thought: “The viscera are within the body; the organ openings are outside. The viscera are darkness, the organ openings are brightness, so I think that opening the eyes to see the brightness is to see outside. Conversely, closing the eyes to see the darkness is to see within the body. How is

this so? Please, World-Honored One, compassionately instruct us.”

The Buddha explained that when you close your eyes to see darkness, that is to see within the body. Thus, if the evening is without light, will the darkness in the room be Ānanda’s “three viscera”²⁹ and “six internal faculties?”³⁰ When you open your eyes to see the brightness of the light outside, why can't you see your own face before you see the outside objects? Thus, it is impossible to state that closing the eyes to see darkness is to see within the body.

5. Whatever the mind clings to, it exists in response: Ānanda said to the Buddha, "I have heard the Buddha instruct that because the mind arises, all Dharmas arise, and because Dharmas arise, the mind arises. So, I think that whatever the mind clings to, it exists in response.”

The Buddha rejected the idea that the mind has no substance to cling to anything. “If it has its substance, Ānanda,

²⁹ Three viscera:

- Upper part contains heart, liver, lungs
- Middle part contains stomach, spleen, small intestine.
- Lower part contains bladder, large intestine

(*Vietnamese Dictionary*, Trần văn Đức, Khai trí, 1970, p. 847).

³⁰ Six inward sections: trunk, stomach, liver, small intestine, and large intestine.

Three digestions are smooth to support maintenance and circulation. Six inward sections are responsible for collecting food, performing digestion, excretion, and have the ability to reproduce, maintain the normal state of the body, that is, the balance of yin and yang in order to have a healthy body.

(*Vietnamese Dictionary*, Trần văn Đức, Khai trí, 1970, p. 847).

when you pinch your head, does your mind perceive that it comes from the inside or outside? If it comes from the inside, then once again, it must be your internal organs (viscera) in your body. If it comes from the outside, it must see your face first. Furthermore, the Buddha said that if your mind, which is aware, understands and knows, is it a single substance or many substances? If the mind is a single substance, then when you pinch one limb with your fingers, the four limbs will be aware of it. If they all are aware of it, where is it that the pinch cannot be aware? If it is many substances, then you will be many people. Which substance will be Ānanda?”

6. The mind in the middle: Ānanda presented to the Buddha that “I also have heard the Buddha discuss true reality with the Dharma king’s sons like Mañjuśrī: the mind is neither inside nor outside, I think that it may be between the organs and objects.”

The Buddha argued that if it is in the middle, which is the middle? If there is no evidence of it, we cannot call it the middle. If there is evidence of it, the middle does not stay as it is. For example, we point a marker to indicate the middle. A person stays at the east and the marker will be to the west. If a person is at the south, it will be to the north.

If your mind is between faculties and objects, does the mind’s substance combine with the two or not? If it combines with the two, then the external objects and the mind substance will form a chaotic mixture—which is the mind? Are the external objects insentient without knowing; is the mind

sentient at what you take as the middle? Therefore, you should know that for the mind to be in the middle is impossible.

7. Clinging to nothing is the mind: “World-Honored One, I have seen the Buddha turn the Dharma wheel with the four great disciples: Maudgalyāna, Subhūti, Purna, and Śāriputra. The Buddha taught that the knowing nature of mind is at the place of neither inside nor outside, neither middle nor anywhere at all. That very nonattachment to anything is called the mind.”

The Buddha asked: “Does your unattached mind exist or not? If it does not exist, it is the same as hairs on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. How can you speak of nonattachment? If nonattachment exists, it has a location; how then can you call it unattached? Therefore, you should know to say Ānanda’s mind is at the place of nonattachment to anything is impossible.”

The Buddha rejected Ānanda seven times for looking for the mind in seven places. Ānanda and the assembly were frightened. If it is not the mind, then what is awakened? In fact, we are familiar with taking refuge. That taking refuge becomes our habitual karma. The mind does too. In fact, we are familiar with relying on something or someone. That leaning becomes our habitual karma. This happens in the mind too. We like to put our mind relying on something in order to know it exists and proclaims that it is our mind. However, the Buddha refused by declaring that it is not our mind. Ānanda and the assembly were so frightened that they prostrated to the Buddha to humbly receive his insight instruction to clear the ignorance.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER III

In Chapter III the Buddha asked why Ānanda ordained and encounters Matangi's accident. Ānanda answers that he admires the Buddha's thirty-two good marks and wants to ordain under the Buddha. Ānanda is almost seduced by Matangi's beauty. The Buddha refutes Ānanda's seven attempts to find the location of his mind. He concludes that the mind is illusory. Wanting to cure illness, we must know the cause. As a result of clinging to his mind, his life is turned around: from a prince to a monk, and from a monk about to break his precepts. Now, he has only one job: to transform from delusion to truth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What merits are the thirty-two good marks of the Buddha according to Ānanda's thinking?
2. Please describe the meaning of the sentence: "The Tathāgatas are freed from the rebirth cycle due to all using the straight mind."
3. Explain the seven attempts to search for the location of Ānanda's mind.
4. Why are Ānanda and the Saṅgha very frightened when they hear the Buddha declare that it's not his mind. It seems they do not possess minds as inanimate stone or wood?

5. The Buddha searches for the cause of illness to cure Ānanda's two-life turnings. Please explain.



*Author and Nun Novices in the Morning Chanting,
August 2016 at Shwedagon Golden Temple, Myanmar*

CHAPTER IV

THE TWO FUNDAMENTAL ROOTS

I. PERMANENCE AND MOVEMENT

From his seat, Ānanda, who opened his robe on the right shoulder, prostrated and addressed the Buddha: **“I am the Tathāgata's youngest cousin-brother, whom the Buddha loved very much. Even after I became a monk, I still relied on our close family relationship. As everyone knows, I am a quick learner, but I have not attained the outflows (*āsravas*). I failed at resisting Mangati’s seductive mantra because I did not know the way to the enlightened reality. Tathāgata, out of compassion, please instruct us in the śamatha (samādhi) to stop the transmigration karma from this to other lives.”**

At that time, the Buddha said to Ānanda: **“From beginningless time onward, all living beings, who have been many upside-down ways, have created karma seeds which are naturally grouped as the aksha cluster.**

“Those who cultivate cannot accomplish the unsurpassed bodhi, but instead reach the level of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddha, heretics, devas, maras, or relatives of ghosts. Because they have not yet recognized the two fundamental roots and cultivated wrongly and confusedly as one who cooks sand in the hope of creating rice, they

may pass through countless aeons as molecules of dust, but they will obtain nothing of what they want.”

“What are the two fundamental roots? Ānanda, first of all, the root of beginningless birth and death is the illusory consciousness that you and all living beings now make use of and consider as your self nature.

“Second, the purified origin of the beginningless bodhi Nirvana that is the bright, original reality of the seeing essence can create all conditions and is disregarded. Living beings have ignored the original awakening; therefore, though they use it to the end of their days, they are still unaware of their enlightenment and then they regrettably enter the six realms.”³¹

This part is the view of the śamatha way, that is, to discriminate between two fundamental roots: permanence and movement. The view is the seeing, the way is the path. Seeing the cultivating path means to transform from falseness to rightness.

Six sense faculties are conditioned or matchmade with six external objects, that is, his eye sees the Buddha’s wonderful characteristics and Mangati’s seductive figure. The movable mind root of Ānanda is the admired enemy (to Buddha’s figure) and the craving enemy (to Mangati’s beauty) that forced Ānanda to move about in the rebirth cycle. We

³² *Sūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 66–67.

follow our movable mind at the conditioned external things, which means we follow the mind of suffering, joyfulness, loving, and aversion that gather to be karma which leads us to rebirth. This is the content in the beginning section of *Rebirth Views in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. The Buddha praised Ānanda for what he correctly said, but that was only the superficial reason. It was the superficial reason because we consider our likes or dislikes to be our real mind. There is another fundamental root or deeper reason that Ānanda and all of us are unaware. The deeper reason is the second root, since beginningless time all living beings have been born and have died continually because they do not know *the permanent purified reality of the bodhi Nirvana*. Because living beings have disregarded the original awakening, though they use it in many lives until this life, they regretably are still unaware of it.

Illusion is the false thought that either suddenly arises or suddenly falls, is either suddenly happy or suddenly angry, either suddenly loving or suddenly hating as arising and falling bubbles. By living with these false thoughts, we are controlled by greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), and delusion (samohaṃ) all our days. We lose our own rightness, are subjected to delusion, while our real mind nature is permanent. So, we are suffering regretably and subjected to birth and death in the transmigrational series.

The Buddha descends into the saha world to instruct us to return to the root of the Buddha's nature and avoid control of false thoughts. Every time the six sense faculties contact with

six worldly objects, whenever the organs contact the objects, the six doors will open to receive unstable worldly objects. At that time, we must restrain and protect the six faculties, because they are the main roots that control and turn us.

The picture of the rebirth cycle and the mind is well demonstrated as a monkey swinging from branch to branch.³² It is busily jumping and passing from this tree to other trees ceaselessly. Likewise, from morning to evening, we attach to this or that form, from one sound to another sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought too. We solve one problem and then we continue to grasp others, nonstop. The conditional mind has dozens, hundreds of thoughts that it grasps and relies on. Taking refuge in or relying on and clinging to something outside becomes our habit and forms the karmic wheel.

We are turned upside-down by illusory thoughts that are hidden in our nerves.

We are turned upside-down by illusory thoughts that are hidden in the eye's nerves.

We are turned upside-down, uneasy, crying-laughing by the illusory nerves in our fleshy body. This is the discriminating reflection of *śamatha*.

Do we ever reflect back on our own life? There is nothing except the conditional mind chasing after external things. We should use insight as a flashlight to mirror it, and then we will experience and be enlightened in the process.

³² *The Cycle of Life*, tr. pp. 83–87.

Where do good and evil come from? They exist in the conditional mind chasing after external things. It causes hell (niraya), ghost (pittivisaya) and human (manussa) realms. Wherever the root exists in rebirth, it will turn out to be dogs, cats, birds (tiracchānayoṇi), humans, hells (niraya), and heaven (devas), which are sure not to be liberated.

Do we recognize the conditioned mind chasing after the external things as the illusion? When we are aware it is delusion (samohaṃ), we start to have insight and can be able to control our thoughts. The delusion is the hot sand—we cannot cook rice with sand. Wishing it to be rice or looking forward to becoming a Buddha, or returning to the great, perfect Śūraṅgama-samādhī, we must attain essence mind (the eighth consciousness, the alaiya nature) to experience the truth. Getting the sand is taking the distinct consciousness or the conditional mind chasing after impermanent, external things of earth, water, wind, fire to be permanent or real. How can it be! Using the illusory sand to cook, even after spending thousands of years cooking, it is still only hot sand. The sūtra confirmed clearly that **“Due to unawareness of the two fundamental roots, we are mistaken and confused in our cultivation. For example, a person cooks sand in the hope of creating rice. He may pass through numberless eons as motes of dust, but in the end, he will not obtain what he wants.”**³³

³³ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 35–37.

The white rice is the pure, primitive substance of bodhi Nirvana (Nibbāna). The pure nature of living beings is called tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena). It has two meanings: Firstly, it is the spiritual core and secondly, it still remains to tie the individual and community karmas. The eyes, hands or whole body are destroyed at death and then placed in the funeral home or crematory, but its fundamental nature or tathāgatagarbha does not fade away or remain tied to the body, because it is still permanent independently. This is the nice rice cause. After being cooked, it becomes the delicious rice.

USING VISION TO ASK THE MIND

The Buddha asked, "Ānanda, since now you want to know the śamatha way to get out of the birth and death cycle, I ask you more questions." The Tathāgata raised his golden hand, bent his five fingers, and asked Ānanda, "Do you see?"

Ānanda replied, "I see."

The Buddha asked, "What do you see?"

Ānanda replied, "I see the Tathāgata raising your hand and bending your fingers into a bright fist which shines on my mind and eyes."

The Buddha continued, "What do you use to see?"

Ānanda replied firmly, "The Saṅgha and I all use our eyes to see."

The Buddha said to Ānanda, "You said that the Tathāgata bends his fingers into a bright fist to shine on

your mind and eyes. Your eyes can see, but what is the mind that is shined on by my fist?”

Ānanda replied, “The Tathāgata questions where the mind’s location is? I use my thought to find what knowing and thinking is my mind.”

POINTING OUT THOUGHT IS NOT ITS NATURE

The Buddha refused, “Ānanda, that is not your mind.” Startled, Ānanda left his seat, stood, put his palms together, and presented to the Buddha, “What will it be if it's not my mind?”

The Buddha replied, “It is your perception of illusory, external objects that covers your true reality. Since beginningless time up to this life, you have regarded this enemy as your child, so that you lose your permanent essence to be subjected by the rebirth cycle.”

Ānanda expressed his thoughts, “World-Honored One, as the Buddha's cousin-brother, I so admired the Buddha that I left the kingdom to be a renunciate. Thanks to my mind, I not only have offered to numerous Tathāgatas, but also served all Buddhas and good Dharma friends and have done hard work in countless lives (*kalpas*) as the molecules of sand in the Ganga River. Even if I have defamed Dharma or withdrew from my good Buddhist base, it was done by my mind. As the Buddha said, if it is not my mind, then I am not of a mind, so I become the same as insentient soil or a tree. Without this knowing nature, I have nothing. Why does the Tathāgata declare that this is

not my mind? All members in the assembly and I are frightened and doubtful. Out of compassion, World-Honored One, please guide those who are not yet enlightened.”³⁴

Ānanda and the great assembly were frightened as the Tathāgata declared that all offerings or serving the wise advisors or Dharma friends, which are done from the conditional mind, was unreal.

Venerable Ānanda manifested correctly our psychology. For the sake of many, he represented all of us to ask many questions and let the Buddha answer the questions to point out clearly our ignorance (avijjā) and misconceptions. For a long time, we have perceived our existing minds, such as my heart or mind that I love, I bother, I meditate, I send an email, I phone, I drive, I lecture, I go to university, I compose the poems, I write books, I build the temple, and so forth. However, the Buddha refuted it with the statement that it is not mine, so what am I? We are often accustomed to lean on or cling to this or that thing to experience ourselves in existence.

At that time, the World-Honored One gave his insight instructions to Ānanda and the great assembly in order that they could enter the state of *anutpattika-dharmakshanti* (uncreated-Dharma patience). From the lion seat, the Buddha, who gently touched Ānanda’s head, told him, “The Tathāgata often expounded that all Dharmas are

³⁴ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 71–72.

arisen by the mind. All causes and effects, the worlds as much as molecules of dust, come into existence by the mind.

“Ānanda, we reflect that all phenomena in the world, such as grass, leaves, threads, knots, and so on, have their fundamental roots. Even space has its name and shapes, even more so the bright, wonderful, pure mind that is the reality of all phenomena?

“Ānanda, if you insisted that the knowing, as well as the distinguishing, is your mind, then it must own its self-nature after being apart from all external objects (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch). You are listening and discriminating my Dharma, thanks to the voice. Even if you can close all of your seeing, hearing, and knowing to maintain an introverted serenity, neither knowing nor thinking, then it is the stillness shadows of your discrimination to worldly Dharmas (in your brain). I do not require that you accept it as the mind, except that you must reflect carefully if it has its own discrimination or knowing, as it is far apart from the objects. That is your true mind.

“If it is without the external objects, the discrimination will disappear, and then it is discrimination of the external objects’ shadows.

“The external objects are not persistent and often arise and fall. If the mind clings to the objects, it will become nothing, just like fur on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. So, your Dharma-kaya (body) will end along with it

and who will attain anutpattika-dharmakshanti (uncreated-Dharma patience)?”³⁵

Consciousness is the false thoughts following the external conditions, which we wrongly consider as our mind. So when the shadows of the six objects show up, we catch; then another shows up, we give up this shadow to grasp another. The shadow is destroyed, another object appears. We are movable and attach to the rising-falling objects without direction.

Even if we cover all six faculties, closing our eyes and ears; **“Even if you can close all of seeing, hearing, and knowing to maintain an introverted serenity, neither knowing nor thinking, then in the stillness there are shadows of your discrimination of worldly Dharmas (in your brain).”** It means we will fall into the situation of either brightness or darkness (of the eye), either motion or stillness (of the ears), either a combination or separation (of the nose), either bland or taste (of the tongue), either touch or untouching (of the body), either arising or falling (of consciousness). If we detach the six active faces of six worldly objects, such as if we detach from the brightness (of the eye), motion (of the ears), combination (of the nose), bland (of the tongue), touch (of the body), arising (of consciousness), we will cling to the other side of six objects, such as darkness (of the eye), stillness (of

³⁵ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 71–72.

the ears), separation (of the nose), taste (of the tongue), lack of touch (of the body), falling (of consciousness). All these faces are conditional and illusory.

If we covered six active faces of six faculties, then in the tranquil state of the six stillnesses, the faces of six faculties appear. However, over all, it is also the mental consciousness that distinguishes the external scene, i.e., the false thinking or imagining of the illusory object shadows our true mind.

The habit of giving up this shadow to grasp another is still false thinking, the external scene, and it is not the true mind. We must be aware and live surely with the essence of bodhi on the seeing, listening, and knowing. That is the purpose of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

The meditation states, including first jhāna, second jhāna, third jhāna, and fourth jhāna are leading us to birth in the material heavenly realm (*rūpāvācara-bhūmi*). The four meditative states of nothingness are leading us to birth in the immaterial heavenly realms (*arūpāvācara-bhūmi*), where existent beings can live up to hundreds of thousands of years, and are subject to rebirth. This is a form of the feed consciousness or spiritual food.³⁶ The spiritual food is the eighth consciousness and preserves the body without fading away.

³⁶ The eating consciousness is one of four eatings. The rest are the portion consciousness, the touching consciousness, and the thinking consciousness.

Four saints and six worldly realms³⁷ have all the spiritual food, but there is a different delusion (from enlightenment). The awakened ones whose consciousness are perfectly enlightened purity are called tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena), because they contain and preserve all the outflows merit, such as neither existing nor nonexisting and neither dwelling nor nondwelling. This is the eating way to earn merit beyond the comprehensive level of human knowledge.

“The Buddha taught the assembly: Why do you who consider motion to be the body, taken motion to be the external environment since beginning to end, who continuously have this thought after that thought, arising and falling, upside-down crazy. You lose your true nature, take the motion as yourselves and accept the cycle of six realms.”³⁸

We wrongly recognize six faculties, six objects, and six consciousnesses as ourselves. We who take illusory thought as the mind hold the misleading view as to the external environment, and cling to earth, water, wind, and fire as our bodies. Is it forever that we establish our stable life on this movement? How are we peaceful as we live and focus on impermanent things? **We have considered motion to be the body and taken motion to be the external environment.**

³⁷ Four holy ones: Buddha, Bodhisattva, pratyek and śrāvaka
Six mundane worlds: heaven, asura, human, animal, ghost, and hell.

³⁸ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 86.

**How can we enjoy the state of samādhi and permanence?
We wrongly accept the wheel of saṃsāra and regrettably
lose our true nature.**

ONE OF THE TEN SEEING ESSENCES

In this section, the Buddha explains ten natures, such as motionless seeing, uncreated seeing, unextinguished seeing, true seeing, flexible with conditions but unchanging seeing, nondual seeing, transcendental seeing, and so on. The seeing nature is the core of seeing, hearing, and knowing; it is not the discrimination of the eye-consciousness or the ear-consciousness.

If we now rely on true permanence, we will enlighten the real substance to develop the application that is called “entering the Buddha’s knowledge.” It reveals the wonderful ability of thousand-eyes, thousand-hands. We must recognize and appreciate this significance, and then we will experience the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* to be greatly valuable. Now, if we are following the wrong functions of right-wrong, good-bad, that will force us to rotate on the wheel. We are living with a false body, mind, and landscape, of which we are so familiar that we are aware of six consciousnesses immediately, while we do not care about the seeing nature. The seeing natures of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* are too subtle to comprehend and we fail to reach understanding.

The Buddha nature or essential substance which still exists with or without the worldly objects deals with the objects without ignorance. In contrast, conditional thought, which

exists as it faces the objects, does not exist when it faces nothing. Honestly, we are clinging only to the shadows of phenomena (in our brain) .

The flesh body of the six organs, like the eye, nose, ears, body, and the brain are newly established by eating, drinking, breathing, being in the sunlight, and so on. While the seeing, hearing, and knowing natures have existed for a long time, they are permanently unshakeable, pervading all Dharma realms, and existing forever, before the birth of this body and after the fading away of this body. The seeing is always luminous, abiding everywhere throughout ten directions. For example, if one is conditioned to reborn as human or animal in Vietnam or the USA, it will have the seeing and the seeing nature in Vietnam or USA. The Buddha and Tathāgatas everywhere throughout ten directions are freed from the retribution of karmic eyes, so they can see everywhere without hindrances. Following their great vow to convert beings, their seeing natures seem to gather either in this place or that place according to their wishes for the sake of many.

THE PERMANENT SEEING NATURE

In this book, we only mention the representative first of ten seeing cores as the permanent seeing nature. Ānanda and the assembly were comprehensive about the significance of permanent seeing being neither production nor extinction, through the conversation between the Buddha and King Prasenajit:

“After hearing the Buddha's teachings, Ānanda and the assembly remembered that since beginningless time, they who had forgotten their original true mind took the illusory shadows of worldly objects as their minds. Today they enlightened their true essence as a lost infant who meets its mother after a long time. They joined their hands together to pay homage to the Buddha, the tathāgata who guided them to recognize the truth and falseness of their body and mind, and created the arising-falling and without-arising-falling reality.

Then King Prasenajit stood up and said that “In the past, when I had not yet heard the teachings of the Buddha, I met Katyayāna and Vairatiputra, who declared that after death the body is annihilated and that is Nirvana. Now, I meet the Buddha, but I still have doubts about it. He asked the Buddha to please show ways to realize the transcendent mind without arising-falling. At present in the assembly, members have the inflows, are thirsty to hear the teaching to awaken.”

The Buddha asked King Prasenajit, “Now I question you, is your body solid as vajra or changeable and subject to fading away?”

King Prasenajit replied, “World-Honored One, my body is changing and will disappear in the end.”

The Buddha asked, “Great king, you have not yet died. How do you know you will vanish?”

King Prasenajit replied, “World-Honored One, my changeable, impermanent body has not faded away, but I reflect every second that it is decaying gradually as a fire turns to ash, then vanishes. As a result of the decaying state, it convinces me that this body will finally decline.”

The Buddha continued, “Yes, it will. Great king, now you are old and weak. How does your face now compare with the one when you were young?”

King Prasenajit replied, “World-Honored One, my skin was fresh and shining when I was young. As an adult, I became healthy with fullness of blood and breath. But day by day, I am getting older and older. My shape becomes withered; my mind is confused; my hair becomes white; my face turns to folds. It seems that I do not have much time left to live. How can compare my face now with the face when I was young?”

The Buddha continued, “Great king, your appearance does not decay at once.”

The king explained, “World-Honored One, yes, the change is an invisible, continuous transformation in the course of time and seasons. In fact, I did not recognize it immediately. What does it look like? At age twenty, I was still young, but my face looked older than when I was ten. My appearance as a thirty-year-old looked older than in my twenties. Now at sixty-two, looking back on my fifties my appearance looks older.

“World-Honored One, I reflected on the invisible transfiguration of the body in each ten-year period. If I reflect on it in more detail, such as not only a decade but also every year, my body is subjected to the changes—not only every year but also every month; not only every month but also every day; not only every day but also every second, my appearance is changing.

“Contemplating closely, I experience that moment by moment, thought by thought; they never stop decaying. So, I know my body goes on changing until it vanishes in the end.”

The Buddha told the king, “By observing the nonstop transfiguration, you experience the process of your extinguishment. However, do you know that during the time of extinguishing there is something in your body which never extinguishes?”

King Prasenajit joined his palms together and replied in surprise, “Honestly, I do not know.” The Buddha continued, “I now show you the essence of neither production nor extinguishment. Great king, how old were you when you first saw the Ganges River?”

The king replied, “When I was three years old, my mother took me on a pilgrimage to the Jiva Goddess. When we passed a river, I knew it was the Ganges River.”

The Buddha continued, “Great king, you confirmed that in your twenties you looked older than when you were ten. You have become older and it has changed and day by

day, month by month, year by year until you were in your sixties. Now I ask you, at age three, when you first saw the Ganges River, what was different from when you saw it at age thirteen?"

The king replied, "When I was a three year old, and now at sixty-two, my seeing of the Ganges River is not different."

The Buddha continued, "You reflected that your hair became white and your face became wrinkled. Your face definitely has more folds than when you were in your youth. However, what does the seeing look like? You looked at the Ganges at a young age and now when you are aged, so is your seeing different from when you were young?"

The king replied, "No, World-Honored One."

The Buddha declared, "Great king, your face is wrinkled, but your seeing is not wrinkled. What wrinkles is subject to change. What does not wrinkle does not change. What changes will end. What does not change is neither production nor extinguishment. How can it be subjected to your birth and death cycle? Furthermore, why do you bring up the heretic theory of Maskari Goshaliputra that after the death of this body, it is extinguished completely?"

Hearing such words from the Buddha, King Prasenajit realized for sure that after the life of this body ends, there will be another rebirth. He and the great

assembly were so excited that they danced to celebrate what they had never heard before.”³⁹

The Buddha asked King Prasenajit whether he knew what is neither production nor extinction in his body. The king answered that he did not know, because he thought that death is the end, he did not mind what will happen in the future. Many people also think that death is the end, so they just enjoy life, fame, and sexual intercourse regardless of morality, conscience, and law. Because of this wrong view (*micchā-ditthi*) much evil happens in the world.

The Buddha clearly explained it with good illustrations of a three-year-old and a sixty-two-year-old and their seeing of the Ganges that does not differ, and the true nature of transcending production and extinction. This body, which is made of earth, water, wind, and fire will fade away, while the seeing nature is permanent as ever. The king and the assembly were delighted because death is not the complete end and they could continue in the next birth.

We should learn clearly the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* to realize its significance in regard to our bodies and to live with the unshakable permanent seeing essence, the great samādhi of Śūraṅgama.

We often have the habit of clinging to the body that will decay and become extinct. The Buddha instructed that everyone possesses an eternal inward substance—somewhere

³⁹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 91–95.

or something of permanence on which we can take refuge. Thus, the king and the assembly were as excited as children getting gifts.

POINTING OUT THE UPSIDE DOWN

From his seat, Ānanda joined his hands together, knelt down, and said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, if the nature of seeing and hearing is neither arising nor falling, why did the World-Honored One blame us as persons who lost the true reality and performed an upside-down act? Out of great compassion, World-Honored One, please wash our worldly defilements (*kleśa*) away.”

After that, from his shinning golden arm, a finger pointed down, and the Thus-Come One asked Ānanda, “You see my mudra finger. Is it pointing in the correct or reverse direction?”

Ānanda replied, “Living beings in the world thought that it is pointing in the reverse direction. I personally do not know what the correct or reverse direction is.”

The Buddha asked, “If people in the world take it as the reverse, what do they think is the correct direction?”

Ānanda said, “The Thus-Come One raises the arm with the tula-cotton fingers pointing up to sky which is the correct direction.”

Raising his hand, the Buddha explained, “Due to the different directions of hands, worldly people discriminate the upright and the reverse. Likewise, the Thus-Come

One's pure Dharma body is called universal wisdom while your body is upside down. Let's reflect on the reason it is upside down.”

Ānanda and the entire great assembly were stunned. They gazed unblinking at the Buddha, because they were confused about their bodies and minds being upside down. Out of great compassion, the Buddha uttered with his ocean-tide voice to guide Ānanda and the entire great assembly: “All good men, I often said that form, mind, conditions, and Dharmas belong to the mind, and the conditioned Dharmas all came from the mind only. Your bodies and your (illusory consciousness) minds are as something that appears in the mind. Why do you ignore the valuable original mind to wrongly accept dullness in the enlightened essence? Due to ignorance, the sky is formed. Clinging to dim ignorance, the sky becomes the form. Mixing with false thoughts, we perceive the form as a body. Gathering the movable conditions, chasing after the external objects, we grasp the chaotic darkness as our mind.

“Once we have the misconception of chaotic darkness as our mind, then we decide wrongly that the mind dwells in the physical body. We do not realize that the physical body is as the mountains, rivers, space, and earth, all of which are things that appear in the bright, true mind. We ignore hundreds of thousands of clear seas in order to accept a single bubble, which we consider as the great

oceans. You are the many-layered foolish ones who do not differ from my downward hand. The Thus-Come One confirmed that you are most pitiful.”⁴⁰

The Buddha held his hand up to ask which direction is right, correct and straight, and which direction is wrong, evil, and upside-down. Normally, we think the raised-up hand is correct and the opposite is upside-down. In fact, the hand is neither right nor wrong; neither is correct or is upside down. Raising the hand up is the heavenly realm; keeping the hand in the horizontal position is the human realm; stretching it downward is the hell direction. These are the functions of arms. For a long time, we have lived with the wrong functions of our real mind and regret having followed the opposite way.

Ānanda and the entire great assembly were dazed, and they stared unblinking at the Buddha. They did not know that their bodies and minds were upside down.

“Ānanda and the entire great assembly were so stunned that they gazed unblinking at the Buddha because they were confused about their bodies and minds being being upside down.”

The opposite means that we misconceive falseness as the truth. Here the Buddha pointed out the environment around us such as people, birds, city, state, vehicles, mountains, etc.

⁴⁰ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 98–100.

which are only the shadow of our human karma. Once we generally called it karma that is unreal.

Waves hit the shore and make bubbles. Bubbles are multicolored and multiformed. When waves fade away, the bubbles dissolve in an instant. The waves suddenly exist and then suddenly don't exist, but the sea remains as it ever is. Our mind is as the vast ocean, but we do not realize that in order to foolishly accept a suddenly existing, suddenly disappearing bubble as ourselves, so we are deadlocked in it. Our minds are stuck, fettered, and kept closely in this body so that we are unaware of anything. We become dull, without insight, and covered by five impurities.

We have three upside-down things:

1. We think that the mind is inside the body (Ānanda tried seven times to find the mind and failed to see its location).

2. We are not aware that the body is in the world, even as the mountains and rivers exist. The conditioned phenomena are as things that appear in our mind, so the mind is uppermost.

3. We consider the body as everything, so we are ignorant and have misconceptions. It is a mistake to think that the illusory consciousness which is stuck, fettered, and kept closely in this body is ourselves, so it is called the opposite. The impermanent body is seen as upside down, which we dully recognize as our real substance. The Buddha essence, the true mind, is the right side, but we misunderstand and consider it to be the opposite. **Now we, who must experience the real**

substance through ten features⁴¹ of seeing essential views, live firmly with this truth.

THE OBSTACLES OF EXTERNAL OBJECTS

The Buddha told Ānanda, "All phenomena in the world, such as big, small, inside, outside, and so on are external objects. You should avoid declaring the seeing, which stretches and shrinks. For example, it seems a square space is seen in a square box. I ask you: Is the square space seen in the square box a fixed or unfixed square shape?"

"If it is a fixed, square shape, as in a square box, the space will not be round. If it does not have a fixed shape, then when it is in the square box, it should not be a square-shaped space. You say you do not understand where the meaning is. The significance is thus: how can you doubt its source?"

"Ānanda, if now you hope to recognize the substance of neither square nor round, you only need to throw the boxes away because the substance of space has no shape. Therefore, you should avoid saying that to destroy the square shape of the space."

"Since beginningless time until now, all living beings have wrongly considered themselves as things, forgot their original mind, and been moved by things. Thus, in things, they see many varieties of big and small. If you can turn things around, you can become the same as the Thus-Come

⁴¹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 100–112.

One and your body and mind will be luminous and perfect. At an unshakened Buddhist place, a single hair can contain the countries of ten directions.”⁴²

We are subject to human karma. We think that we must have the thought and shape of a human. In the karma of a dog (tiracchānāyoni), human (manussa), or ghost (pittivisaya), we imagine that a dog, a human, or a ghost must have the thought and shape of a dog, human, or ghost. Actually, people, dogs, ghosts, or any species are similar as the square, round, long, short boxes. When it leaves the square, round, long, or short box, the space is still nothingness. In a round or square container, we seem to see the round or square space, but in fact, its nature is neither square nor round, nor human, animal, hungry ghosts, and so on. We are like emptiness, which is not a fixed shape, but according to conditions, the containers have multiforms and multicolors. We wrongly think we are in that shape or color. The appearance is revealed following the changeable condition, but the unchanging nature is as the space without any fixed shape. The true substance has no shape. The various shapes of the square or round containers are the retribution of karma which is revealed from the shadow of each species' nerves.

For example, an electrical shop sells many kind of bulbs, such as neon lights, circle lights, long lamps, automatic lights, blue, red, white, yellow light, and so on. Due to the various

⁴² The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 113–114.

shapes, sizes, structures, characteristics, and colors, that is where the electric functions shine out following its conditions of shapes, colors, and structure of the bulb. If a bulb is broken, it can be replaced, but an electric function does not follow the broken bulb (i.e., death is not the end; it will continue in another form). The seeing function of King Prasenajit when he was a three-year-old or a sixty-two-year-old did not differ. It is permanent with neither production nor extinction. The bulb can be various shapes or colors—square, round, long, short, red, or green, but honestly, the electricity is not yellow, blue, short, or any fixed form or color. Likewise, there is no fixed space of round or square. There are not any fixed substances in the true reality. The Buddha gave us profound and exact examples.

From these examples, let us think and imagine realizing how great we are. Because we are the fundamental essence of all Dharmas, sky, star, earth, ocean, mountain, river, grass, leaves, rope, knot, and so on, which are as phenomena that appear in our mind. Do we realize our real essence?

We are the space, sea, or electricity in which a variety of things appear. They are not our reality. Avoid grasping a little block, fetter, and knot in the body, the box, or this bulb as ourselves again, so we will not be admonished by the Buddha that we are upside-down crazy: **“We behave as to ignore hundreds of thousands of clear seas in order to accept a single bubble which we consider as all water or great**

oceans.”⁴³ If we are enlightened, we will be as the tip of a single hair that can completely contain all countries in the ten directions and do countless virtuous deeds.

In the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, the Buddha used multi-images with multi-sounds for excellent illustrations, such as letting go of hundreds of thousands of bubbles in the great ocean (the Buddha nature) in order to accept the illusory small bubble as our body. We can compare this to the guest (moving)-owner (staying) relationship in a motel, the tiny dust particles flying (our moving body) within the still sky (the Buddha nature). The subject of the seeing ability is not the nature-self. The space is still space without shape and everything—the flying mosquitoes buzzing around the room, the cooking of sand and wishing it to be rice, and so on, are sharp and exact examples that describe our body, mind, and environment.

TURNING FOUR DEPARTMENTS AND SEVEN ELEMENTS TO TATHĀGATAGARBHA

"Ānanda, you have not realized that all the illusory objects which come from the mind also go away from the mind. The illusory falseness is called the form, but its essence is the bright, wonderful reality. Likewise, five *skandhas*, six entrances, twelve places, and eighteen realms exist as a result of the false combination of dependent-origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). They disappear by the false separation of dependent origination.

⁴³ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 86.

You do not know that the nature of arising, falling, coming, and going is the luminous, unshaken, permanent absolute of tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena). In this reality, you hunt for the coming, going, ignorance, enlightenment, birth, and death; it must be impossible.”⁴⁴

Theravāda Buddhism teaches us about the origins or fundamentals to be freed from defilements and the rebirth cycle. For example, we must reflect on the illusions of the eighteen realms (six sense faculties, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses) i.e., letting go of the origination of falseness in order to be awakened. Going ahead to Mahāyāna means the developed period of Buddhism. The Buddha taught that the form of the eighteen realms is illusory while the inward nature is real. The true reality is neither shape nor form, but is transcendental vision, dual vision, true vision, unborn vision, permanent vision, and so on. When the qualities or levels of living beings became full grown, the Buddha prophesied and sealed for everyone, including women and animals, that they could be Buddhas. Not only humans or other creatures, but also insentient beings—all have the ability to be Buddhas.

The Buddha nature not only reveals the functions at the six sense faculties, but is also present in four departments (five skandhas, six entrances, twelve bases, and eighteen realms), seven elements, and in all phenomena, from tiny to large—every branch, every flower, table, chair, and so on. Where

⁴⁴ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 161.

earth, water, wind, and fire are presented, the tathāgatagarbha (source of all phenomena) is located.

The Buddha kindly guided us, thoroughly and gradually, in order that we can enlighten all to be tathāgatagarbha, that is, the Buddha in the warehouse. We just remove the stock, the boxes, and return to the space or nothingness. Removing the bulb is to return to the electricity source, detaching from the bubbles is to return to the immense tathāgatagarbha ocean.

Generally, four departments and seven elements are referring to our body and mind. It means our life is to return to tathāgatagarbha. Out of great kindness, the World-Honored One instructed and reinstructed us in detail. He mentioned our spiritual reality up to forty-eight times in the four departments and seven elements.

–The Buddha taught in the five skandhas that our body and mind are tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena).

–In twelve places, he repeated the teaching on tathāgatagarbha, i.e., six sense faculties and six objects that are also our body and mind.

–In eighteen realms, the six faculties, six objects, and six consciousnesses are also our body and mind.

–The Buddha felt that it was not enough, thus in seven elements, he repeated that our body and mind are tathāgatagarbha in order that we become aware of our Buddha nature or nature mind at the seven elements.

Therefore, our real absolute is at the body, mind,

environment, and all phenomena. The Buddha's compassion is boundless as well as immense! He repeated this forty-eight times in order that ignorant beings like us, who can grasp this real meaning, would be freed from suffering.

The Buddha opened the Buddha wisdom for us in order that we can experience the permanent, immutable, pure reality. The Buddha attained the supreme absolute of Buddhahood, so he showed us the ultimate way from his experience. He revealed the delicate vision at the six sense organs. Then, he explained five skandhas, six entrances, twelve places, eighteen realms, seven elements—all are the wonderful nature of tathāgatagarbha.

In each part of the teaching, the Buddha kindly reminded us that earth, water, wind, fire, view, space, consciousness, or all other conditioned things came from the delusion as the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* proved that “Due to ignorance, the space and sky-flowers are seen.”⁴⁵ The space and sky-flowers are presented in the world due to karma. However, in fact, its essence is tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena). Owing to a dream, we see the scene. When we wake up, the scene is nothing. Avoiding the damaged eye, the movable sky-flowers stop. All phenomena are just worldly objects due to ignorance. People in the world are so deluded. They discuss five skandhas, six entrances, twelve places, eighteen realms, and seven elements which are existent by the causes-conditions

⁴⁵ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 98–100.

(pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) or nature. These are just arguments without true meaning. So, in every part of each department and each element, the Buddha provided an explanation and a conclusion, such as the below quotation in the Earth Element:

“Ānanda simply does not realize that the form nature is the absolute śūnyatā (suññatā, void nature); the śūnyatā is the absolute form. This is pure and pervades over the Dharma world. According to creatures’ karma, in response to their capacities, our worldly bodies and the bodies of twelve kinds of living beings are seen. Due to ignorance, people who do not know about the *absolute form and śūnyatā*, images that are due to conditions or lack of conditions, twelve kinds of living beings appear or disappear. These mistakes arise from the discrimination and reasoning processes of the sixth consciousness which are nothing except the play of nonsense words.”⁴⁶

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER IV

Chapter IV discusses two roots of enlightenment and defilements. All sentient beings, all practitioners from beginningless time to the present, do not attain the supreme bodhi because they have not realized these two original roots, as they cook sand to get rice through numberless kalpas. It

⁴⁶ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 230.

cannot become rice. The root of defilements is due to attaching to the false thoughts as their minds. The root of enlightenment is the sense of awareness available in every being. Beings are not aware of this and as a result, fall into the six realms.

Our lives are five skandhas, six sense organs, twelve sense organ-objects, and eighteen organ-object-consciousnesses. They come temporarily into being as a result of the combining of cause-conditions ((*pratītyasamutpāda*, *paṭiccasamuppāda*) and are temporarily ended due to the pause of cause-conditions, whose root is the luminous perfect *tathāgatagarbha* (the source of all phenomena) pervading over the worlds.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the two roots of enlightenment (*bodhi*) and defilement (*kleśa*).
2. What is the meaning of the example, “Cooking sand to make rice”?
3. What are five skandhas, six sense organs, twelve sense organ-objects, and eighteen organ-object-consciousnesses?
4. What is the meaning of the phrase, “As the Buddha moved his gentle, golden hands up and down”?

5. Explain “the permanent essence vision” in the conversation between the Buddha and King Prasenajit.



Venerable Bhikkhunī Gioi Huong, Disciple Bhikkhunī Vien Quang and the Huong Sen pilgrims meditatively walking in September 2016 at the Ascetic Cave in Bodhgaya, India

CHAPTER V

TWO DIFFICULT PROBLEMS

In this section, Venerable Purnamaitreyaniputra (Purna) began appearing. Venerable Purna, well known as one of the ten excellent disciples of the Buddha, is the most eloquent analyst in the Saṅgha.

At that time, Venerable Purna presented that the World-Honored One, who was the most virtuous and mighty, expounded the first supreme truth of the Thus-Come One for the sake of living beings. Among Dharma preachers, Venerable Purna was said to be the most eloquent and remarkable in the Saṅgha. However, at the time when Purna heard the wonderful and subtle Dharma of the World-Honored One, he was like a deaf person at a more-than-hundred-pace-distance, who failed to see a mosquito, let alone hear its sound. Although the Buddha guided clearly to help him awaken, Purna still had some doubts about the Dharma.

Venerable Purna presented two difficult questions that he did not understand to beg the Buddha to explain. For the easier understanding of these questions, they are divided into five small sections as 1A, 1B, 1C and 2A, 2B:

QUESTION 1A:

“World-Honored One, if all the sense organs, sense objects, skandhas, places, and realms in the world are the forever pure tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena), why do there suddenly arise the conditioned forms of mountains, rivers, mainlands, and so on, continuously changing and transforming to the upside-down cycle?”⁴⁷

The Buddha answered, “Today the Thus-Come One will explain the profound, marvelous, supreme significance in the supreme meaning, in order that in the assembly, the fixed-nature voice-hearers (śrāvakas) and arhats who have not realized self-śūnyatā (suññatā) and Dharma-śūnyatā, develop the superior Buddhist vehicle (yāna), obtain the proper cultivation place, and enter tranquil states of the supreme vehicle. I will now explain it for you. Please listen carefully.”

PRESENTING THE TRUE ESSENCE TO SHOW THE ILLUSORY SOURCE

“Purna, you asked why, in the forever-pure essence, there suddenly arise mountains, rivers, earth, and so on. Have you not heard the Thus-Come One often teach that awakening is inherent, wonderful, bright, and that the enlightened nature is the illuminating wonder?”

“World-Honored One, yes, I often heard the Buddha mention this matter.”

⁴⁷ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 278.

The Buddha asked, “You say awakening is bright because its nature is inherent illumination, so it is called enlightenment. Or, if it enlightens without brightness, is it a so-called brightening enlightenment?”

Purna replied, “If the unillumination is called the awakening, then what is it unilluminated?”

The Buddha explained, “If the illuminating *object* is without the illuminating enlightenment *subject*, it will be neither *object* nor illuminating *subject*. If it is not bright, it will not be the illuminating, tranquil enlightenment. Thus, the inherent, awakened nature must be essentially bright. Due to false thought, it illuminates the enlightenment. Enlightenment is not something that is called the illuminating *object*. Owing to the bright *subject*, it formed the *object*. Once an *object* is falsely established, the wrong *subject* comes to exist.

“The reality originally is neither the same nor different; now it becomes a variety. This thing differs from that thing, which have the same causes. Once same and different are created, one which causes to form neither is not the same nor different.

“Such chaos continuously causes fatigue. The prolonged fatigue produces worldly objects which affect murkily one another and lead to the worldly defilements (kleśa). Something is emergent or arising, which is the so-called world. Something is concealed in stillness, which is the so-called space. The space is same (as the reality); the

world is different (from the reality). Indeed, what is neither the same nor different are the conditioned Dharmas.”⁴⁸

Now we focus on question 1A: Why do conditioned things suddenly arise in tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena) and living beings not only appear then disappear, but also decay then produce; produce then decay since beginningless time?

This teaching is for high-level persons as Venerable Purna and other arhats, and not so much for living beings like those who are full of greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), and delusion (samohaṃ). In the assembly, they were all saints, so when those in the lower level like us heard the teaching, they were confused. We must pay patient attention, train, and cultivate so that we can understand the true supreme significance in the supreme meaning. It is advised that we be patient with the unborn Dharma (uncreated Dharma patience, anutpattika-dharmakshanti).

Supreme: To receive Dharma to become a Buddha.

The true supreme meaning: To realize the cultivating main cause and the Buddha nature at six sense faculties, six worldly objects, six consciousness, and seven elements.

Thus, there are three meanings: the normal meaning, the supreme meaning, and the true supreme meaning.

In regard to *the normal meaning*, family, society, or school teach us how to become an ordinary person who fulfills

⁴⁸ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 282–286.

duties to family and society. There is a saying: “To be a normal human (manussa) is difficult and even more so to be a saint.” It means basically that we must have standards as ordinary people. Then we step ahead to move toward sainthood. Conversely, if we break the precepts, such as committing murder, theft, adultery, and so on, then we become prisoners, to be punished by the law.

Supreme meaning is the higher significance. In the first twelve years of the Buddha’s teaching, he taught this supreme meaning to us so we could realize life as it really is. The six sense faculties are deluded, the six sense objects are illusory, and the six consciousnesses are untrue. Understanding this helps us detach from greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), delusion (samohaṃ), false views (micchā-ditthi), and self-craving (self-ness).

The true supreme meaning is to experience the Buddha nature at the six sense faculties, the six sense objects, and the six consciousnesses. The nature of sound-hearers (śrāvaka), who have awakened to the way possesses the intention to gain something in practice. They recognize the six sense faculties as impure. They see birth and death as enemies and perceive Nirvana (Nibbāna) as the final safe place (*the supreme meaning*). In regard to the true supreme meaning, the Buddha advised us to turn to the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna), to receive the precious reality at the six sense faculties, that is, to experience the nature without birth, age, sickness, and death. The permanent Buddha nature presents at the six sense

faculties and is the delicate seeing of the absolute. It differs from illusory consciousness. This is the true supreme meaning of the supreme meaning.

Buddhism is complex and difficult to understand. It is a hard thing is to reveal the great result or the valuable core of Mahāyāna. For example, if we go shopping with just a few dollars, we can buy a small amount of candy, but with hundreds of thousands of dollars in hand, we can purchase a precious diamond. The cost can be a measure of the quality of a thing, so the amount of difficulty reflects the value. Be patient in order to comprehend and practice.

The awakening is the inherent, wonderful, brightness and the enlightened nature is the illuminating wonder. Our Buddha nature is described by the words “bright or illuminating” while its fundamental reality is described especially by the word “wonderful.” Because it is bright, it discriminates. Where discrimination arises, where we have insight about ourselves and other humans (manussa), there countless, distinct things happen. The fundamental reality is originally wonderful. It brightens everything and its reality is immutable and never disappears. Due to conditions, the brightness changes, but its essence is still wonderfully unchangeable. The nature of our mind is wonderful and its characteristic is bright or luminous.

Due to unawakening, the mind desires to explore too much. It is divided into two parts: brightness and the factors of brightness, that is, the seeing (*the spiritual subject*) and the

object seen (*the material object*). The ignorant root of the unawakened is the first foolish cause that produces all things. At the moment a thought arises, our mind, which is divided into two, becomes the eighth-consciousness, and is not the true mind anymore. Our reality is originally neither the same nor different, but now it produces a variety of movement.

As a result of movement—clinging and discrimination, there arises the difference. Seeing the distinction means that we ignorantly see the space. By attaching to the darkness, it forms shapes that differ from space. What is different becomes the same, that is, seeing that earth, water, wind, and fire are not the same as the space.

The seeing ability is regarded as ourselves and what is seen is regarded as external aspects. The illusory mind contacts with the external scene to discriminate, explore, and establish the presence of consciousness. The sixth consciousness is self-craving (*ahankāra*). It follows worldly objects with a polluted heart. This intense self-craving, which we have from birth, causes clinging to name and shape.

The seventh consciousness (ego-ness, *māna*) produces mental awareness and performs the functions of thinking and counting.

Since the sixth consciousness of discrimination has existed, it has generated the emotions of lust, greed, hate, and so on. Our false thoughts mix with one another. The more the mind distinguishes, the more cloudy and foolish it becomes. Clinging to this and that, naming and grasping objects cause

the arising of greed, hatred, delusion, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and countless defilements that form the rebirth karma. Once the karmic seed is established, it leads to the result of the so-called world, concealed in stillness and so-called space.

Step by step, we have started engaging deeply in the layers of ignorance. Actually, in the beginning there was only our real mind. As the result of a moment of unawakening, it started to curiously explore, understand, and distinguish. Since then, it has opened to measureless diversity where we are subjected to karma.

We read and reflect on every word of the Buddha, looking for the reason why we were originally Buddhas and then suddenly we have false views, now that we are human beings. Awakening is our nature, but then wandering thoughts arise to differentiate between objects, which goes on continuously. So, we must meditate to keep our mindfulness. If we do not meditate, the mind opens up to a lot of variety. The dynamic painting of the *Cycle of Life*⁴⁹ shows the tail of the impermanent ghost (pittivisaya) endlessly long; the hands have the feet of a devil and they grasp and turn the wheel ceaselessly.

Because we do not concentrate with insight, we want to add the brightness of enlightenment, while its nature has always been wonderful awakening. We want to be bright and

⁴⁹ *The Cycle of Life*, p. 125.

distinguish our nature, which is the so-called “sudden unenlightenment.” The Buddha called this the ignorance arising from our birth.

Seeing the inborn ignorance is only the first step. It is called the false mind that arose from inborn ignorance, and produced thousands of thousands of similarities and differences. The illusory thoughts and external objects continually disturb. Once we know one, then we want to know two, three or four. We become weary as a result. Since we have eyes to see, the false thoughts are engaged in duality that becomes wearisome. The seventh consciousness (selfness, *māna*) is the self-craving source and leads the sixth consciousness to cling and follow worldly objects to satisfy the craving for pleasure. Then it wrongly produces the prejudice-Dharma (considering phenomena as real). Honestly, in the first phase, there is only one mind, without self-clinging (*ahankāra*) or Dharma-clinging, or eight consciousnesses,⁵⁰ but now we have eight consciousnesses, self-clinging or Dharma-clinging, and countless other defilements.

The Buddha pointed this out step by step for us. Firstly, we must aware that the seeing subject is ego-ness, that is, the seventh consciousness appears. The seventh consciousness foolishly attaches to inward selfness. From this ignorance, it leads and demands the sixth consciousness to accumulate or

⁵⁰ Eight consciousnesses: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, skin-consciousness, mental-consciousness, matna-consciousness, and alaya-consciousness.

record the external aspects to create a “self.” So, the self and the illusion of belonging to the self are formed.

The reality is that originally neither were the same nor different—the same with space (because both are shapeless like the true mind), while the world is different with a multitude of forms, such as mountains, rivers, living beings (who are oppressed in the prison of five skandhas), humans living trapped in hell, and so forth. They are full of the subjects and objects of karma. From this, there are the results of karma, causing afflictions and suffering.

The Buddha explained that our fundamental nature is bright. If there is no brightness, why is it called the luminous nature of enlightenment? The fundamental, original nature is bright; its nature is bright, so why do we think of making it even more bright? We are originally bright. The subject, object, differences, similarities, human beings, existent beings, the world, and karmic retribution are continuously present. All these phenomena go on arising and falling continuously. This originally came from our sudden unawakening in the past.

This is what the Buddha taught to arhats, so it is not easy to comprehend. However, if we are patient and pay attention, we can understand and believe it. Let us reflect calmly hourly and daily to realize and experience the hidden marvelous Dharma.

1B. LIVING BEINGS, WORLD, AND KARMA CONSECUTIVELY ARISES

Venerable Mahakaushthila asked whether the consecutive presence of living beings, the world, and karma are related with all Dharmas (phenomena) and hoped from the Buddha's answer to clear his cloud of doubt.

His cross-question was about the mind of sentient beings having a Buddha nature. Why now, owing to wrong view, are we as human beings in the world with the continual, resultant karmic retribution, from this body to others, this environment to others, since beginningless time?

Did these six realms of sentient beings exist from primordial time without reason or were they due to later habits of falseness that caused them to come into existence? This part is very difficult because it has an abstract philosophical nature. We must mindfully think and practice anutpattika-dharmakshanti (uncreated Dharma patience) because we have not ever heard this teaching before. Let us patiently listen to it many times and reflect on the deep meaning, so we can realize and experience it with our mind and body.

Question 1B concerns the concrete details of question 1A. Venerable Purna asked why conditioned things move continuously. Why does the world, living beings, and karma turn on the consecutive wheel? Question 1B is about the correct explanation of these three problems as shown below.

THE CONSECUTIVE WORLD

Enlightenment is inherently luminous while space is dark. Both are dualistic and constantly changing, so the wind energy appears to maintain the world. Due to space, it produces movement and solidity to become an obstacle. By the illuminating enlightenment, a precious metal forms the hardness, thus the countries are protected by the metal. Attachment to solidity establishes the metals, while knowing the vibration is to be aware of the blowing of the wind. The wind and metal touch each other to create the fire whose nature is movable. The flame glows upward, the shining metal produces wetness. Hence, the water pervades over the realms in ten directions. Fire rises up while water flows down. Both touch each other to set up the hardness. Wherever is wet becomes the ocean. Wherever is dry becomes the continents or mountains. From the great oceans, fire often rises up, while from the continents, rivers flow down. As water energy is weaker than fire, it causes high mountains to form. In these mountains, rocks which are hit create sparks. These cook and melt as liquid.

As the earth level is less than water, that causes grasses and trees to be established. So the forest is burnt and turned to ashes. Illusory thoughts interact to make karmic seeds. These cause-conditions cause the consecutive world.⁵¹

⁵¹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 290–291.

This is the world's origin. Its origins and continuity is in regard to the physical perspective. The Buddha was aware of this with his supreme insight; we are still stuck in the flesh-eye, as if we were wearing black glasses that prevent us from seeing the true essence.

We call the atmosphere space, but in fact, it is the cycle of air which surrounds, covers, and holds our earth as the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* confirmed: **“Due to the space, it produces movement and solidity to become the obstacle. By the bright enlightenment, gold forms the hardness, thus the metal protects the countries.”**

The wind arises to shake. Our mind wants to stand strong; it is the so-called hardness. Due to solidity, it is an obstacle that inspires the effects of the precious gold. This means due to the hardness, our solid substance is formed. The metal line is the golden cycle surrounding the earth.

A long time ago, originally our mind was pure. It has been transformed gradually toward ignorant karma, so our saha world's mainland is the dark soil. The *Amitābha Sūtra* taught that the whole blissful land made of gold is due to the pure mind (without lust, *vītarāgaṃ*), without hate (*vītadosaṃ*), and without delusion (*vītamohaṃ*). This is a true story, not a fabricated one.

In the *Amitābha Sūtra*, Śākyamuni Buddha described the Pure Land vividly: **“Furthermore, Śāriputra, in the Pure Land, there are lotus swamps that are made of seven valuable substances, being full of the Eight Merit Water.**

The bottoms of swamps are covered by golden sand. Gold, silver, gems, and crystals are mixed to form the stairways at four sides surrounding the swamps. The architecture is adorned with gold, silver, crystals, pearls, sapphires, red rocks, and agates.

“In these swamps, there are lotus flowers the size of wheels. Blue lotus flowers illuminate with their radiant blue light. Yellow lotus flowers illuminate with yellow light. Red lotus flowers illuminate with red light. The white lotus flowers illuminate with white light. All these radiant flowers are sacred, fragrant, and pure.

“Śāriputra, this is how beautiful the Pure Land is adorned by the qualities of full merit.

“Śāriputra, furthermore, in that Pure Land, the heavenly songs are often played; the flat ground is made of gold; the heavenly mandala-flower rain pours down six times every day and night.”⁵²

By unshakably clinging to unenlightenment, formation of metals was produced, while the vibrations of illusory awareness created the wind. Wind and metal rubbed each other to establish the fire line whose nature is changeable. The shining metal produced moisture. The steam from the fire arose to burn the metal. It formed the liquid that encircles the Dharma worlds. This world has the wind, then the metal turned

⁵² *The Sūtra of Amitābha Buddha*, Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts, F. Max Müller, 1969, Part 2, p. 92.

into earth, after that fire and water. Now it has enough of four compositions (wind, metal, fire, and water turned into earth, water, fire and wind).⁵³ Since then, the landscapes, trees, mountains, rivers, and so on have been continuously appearing. First, the wind circle, metal/earth, fire and water. Our universe seems to be a circle after a circle as the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* described. The earth is a round shape surrounded by air. In the earth, there is the water circle inside, so if we dig deep inside the earth, there is the liquid line. In the central core of the earth, there is the place of fire. The fire rises up while the water falls down. Therefore, there is a fire in the ocean. The rock has both water and fire (the fire on the mountain or the mountain releases the fire). Both rocks hit each other to cause the fire. The mound means the place where it has more soil than water. Where it is wet, more soil gathers for trees, flowers, leaves, forests, fields, and so on to be born. From these causes and conditions, phenomena come and pass endlessly.

So the sight of the phenomena continues to appear. Clinging to ignorance, the space arises forever. Attaching to craving, anger, and dullness caused the establishment of the earth, water, wind, and fire without ceasing. Whenever we have an appetite, saliva forms in our mouth. Once the body is dead, water flows out of the eyes. When we encounter gold or win the lottery, then sweat is produced. As long as there is desire for sexual activity it is easy to lose mindfulness.

⁵³ <http://www.buddhismtoday.com/viet/kinh/dt/thulangnghiem.htm>.

Currently we see the greed (*abhiijhā*, *visamalobha*) that causes the liquid to arise. Every moment of anger (*sadosam*) causes the inward fire to arise. Combining the foolish formed worldly shapes, solidity, and rocks. Because these false thoughts are the seeds that connect each another, the soil, water, wind, and fire continuously arise and fall without ceasing. Thus the earth, water, wind, and fire are the foundation for the world's structure. From our karma, these things appear step by step, but originally all are unreal; they have not ever existed.

In our minds, water is the symbol of desire. Sexual intercourse makes the liquid come out. Crying for the self-craving, the tears drop. Water flows down, never up. Whenever feelings of anger, hate, and resentment (*upanāha*, *viddesanā*) arise, fire breaks out. We have both the hot fire and the desire water flowing. By being movable, wind is produced. The earth is formed with solid characteristics without translucence due to the consistent ignorance. All of these things came from all minds, not anywhere else. They form the causes for the body to be formed. If there is a body, there will be karma. This is why the world has continued, that is, soil, water, wind, fire continually arise and fall.

The Buddha compassionately repeated these teachings. Due to our karma, things appear temporarily but, honestly, they are unreal.

THE CONSECUTIVE CREATURES

Moreover, Purna, the false illumination is nothing but the mistake of putting more light in the awakening. After the falseness of a bright object is produced, the scope of the bright subject cannot transcend it. Due to this dependent-origination (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda), hearing cannot go beyond the sound, and seeing cannot go beyond the form. Because six illusory organs, namely, sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and so on are established, the reality is divided into six functions of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing.

The community karma binds together to form separation, formation, and transformation. Once seeing is created, sight is generated. Recognizing clearly the sight, thinking comes into being. Differing ideas generate dislike. Similar ideas produce lust. Spreading the craving is a seed, collecting the thoughts is the womb. The mutual intercourse developed to be attractive to the community karma. Since then these causes-conditions (pāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) create the *kalala*, the *arbuda*, and so forth.

The womb-birth, egg-birth, humid-birth, and transforming-birth are presented according to their own response. For example, the egg-birth is produced due to thought; the womb-birth is formed due to affection; the humid-birth arises from a combination of one another; and the transforming-birth occurs through separation.

When the emotion, when the thought, when the union, and when the separation have exchanged with one another, all the karma species are affected either going up or going down. These cause-conditions caused the consecutive creature beings.⁵⁴

The origination and continuity of the world is in regard to the physical field. The consecutive creature beings relate to two parts of the physical and psychological perspectives. In Buddhist terminology, a living being is the karmic person subject and the world is the karmic environment object.

The foundational ignorance led to the karmic person subject and the karmic environment object, which involved each other as follows: Honestly, we currently cannot see beyond the bright-dark, hear beyond the motion-stillness, smell beyond the smooth-obstruction, taste beyond the tasting/bland, sense beyond the touch-nontouch, and know beyond the arising-falling (these are very excellent contemplative themes). Six sense faculties face the six sense objects in order to distinguish love and hate, sorrow, sadness, grief, and lamentation which became the diseases or characteristics of living beings. Then the different views produce hatred; the similar views create love. If the loving does not leave or the illusory craving mixes into disorderly forms, this causes pregnancy and seduces the community karma.

⁵⁴ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 291–292.

If people who have the same karma and are fond of craving stay together and become parents, their sexual intercourse causes a main seed to rebirth. If a dog's karma, its spiritual consciousness is ready, it will copulate. When it has intercourse, it causes a seed to birth as a dog. The water stream of craving forms the rebirth seed. This seed seduces the community karma to work with embryos. The embryos develop in a womb and form six sense faculties (as six doors of a house) to contact with the external feelings or attachment. Attachment totally causes the seed of existence. Once the seed of existence appears, there is the seed of birth and death. The seed is formed, and is subjected according to the law of formation, existence, transformation, and decay, or the consecutive cycle of birth, ageing, sickness, and death. The womb-birth, egg-birth, humid-birth, transforming-birth, and so forth depend on what kind of seed accords with what species.

1. **Egg-birth:** The thoughts cause the egg to arise which becomes a species. There are various species, such as the flying birds in the sky, the swimming fish under water, the walking human beings, ducks, hens, cats, and dogs that live on earth, and so forth. If a person likes to eat chicken, he prepares to eat chicken soup. However, if his nose has not smelled the chicken flavor, the impermanent death ghost (pittivisaya) comes to catch him. His consciousness clings to a hen's fragrance so that it forces him to enter the hen womb, to be reborn as a hen life. This is an example of the thought causing rebirth in animal form.

2. **Womb-birth:** Due to emotion, there are species that grow in a womb without an egg. Human or dog, cat, and so on are the womb-birth style. At the moment of death, the karma consciousness leads. When the eye sees sexual intercourse between two different/same genders, in the mind arises sensual enjoyment. It's as fast as electricity. The mind of craving enters the embryo quickly. It seems two (the mind and the sexual enjoyment), but in fact it is only one (only mind). Our mind feels (only one), so we do not need to say that the feeling arises from craving (two: the feeling and craving), because in fact, as soon as the eye can see, the consciousness tie is already in the womb. The feeling (*vedanā*) and the craving are associated with each other very quickly because it is only one. The reason it is so quick is because we have accumulated this bad habit since beginningless time. That is the reason to transform the habit accumulation. We must return to the Buddha nature, dwell on the awakening essence, and not let it drag us away.

3. **Humid-birth:** This arises from union of moisture or wetness. The insect combines with the humidity, and is born in damp places, such as mosquitoes laying eggs in the water, insects, worms and beetles in moist soil, fields or swamps, and so forth.

4. **Transform-birth:** This appears from separation. The butterfly species is apart from the caterpillar. People who have performed evil acts—when they die and leave their body, they feel themselves turning out in hell (*niraya*), a realm of painful execution.

If people have a strong practice of virtue in this life, when the human life karma is ended, they will be transformed in the heaven realm where they will have lasting bliss, the blessedness of heaven, but it is not in retribution of egg, womb, or humid. It is called the transform-birth.

We live now with six objects, hungry for the sight. So this body grows up, gets old and dies, and then we wish to have another body. We have to create body after body, must let the six senses run out without realizing that they go in the way of delusion. So as this body dies, the spiritual consciousness of the body transfers to another body at once. If the spiritual consciousness is delightful, at the parental intercourse, this consciousness will turn into the fetus. After seven days, the fetus forms into bubbly foam. After twenty-one days, it becomes soft meat. On the twenty-eighth, it turns to hard flesh and on the thirty-fifth day it seems to have the human form. Then after nine months and ten days, it will be born as a human being.

The same karma colleagues are tied together to co-rebirth in saṃsāra under various form of births, either combination or separation; either emotion or thought. The combination-birth creates the feelings of like or dislike, which are the cause-conditions to fall together into the low realms.

The transform-birth leaves the old body to turn out in another body either in heaven or hell where it does not have the birth in human form.

When it has a mark for birth in the heavens, suddenly there is a baby boy or girl sitting on a heavenly deva's knees. There is the relationship of father and son or mother and daughter which is not the same as being born a human. In the hell realms, it happens the same way. This birth form is called the separation. Rebirth due to dissociation means to leave the old scene to take a new scene in hell. This is the transform-birth.

In the womb, a shape is formed. Like in the egg of a hen, the fetus forms similar to the chicken shape. While in the transform-birth, a butterfly transforms from a pupa or worm to grow into a butterfly. Twelve species⁵⁵ in the world follow their karma to bond to one another. The seeing itself invents the rupa (shape) to see which are as a pair of eyes and objects. Whenever there is a sound, there is an ear. Whenever there is fragrance, there is a smell. Once the smell organs appear, the fragrant and foul smells present. Sour or sweet goes with the tasting. Contact with the skin and touching go together. There is the Dharma object in the brain and the sense consciousness arises. Six sense organs and six sense objects arise and fall at the same time. There is the false mind because there is the illusory landscape. The false mind faces the illusory landscape to create the deluding thought. For example, the eyes see a

⁵⁵ Twelve beings: Because of two crazy causes of worlds and living beings, there are twelve beings: 1. Egg, 2. Womb, 3. Moisture, 4. Transformation, 5. Material, 6. Immaterial, 7. Thought, 8. Without thought, 9. Neither material, 10. Neither immaterial, 11. Neither thought, 12. Neither without thought.

guava, the thought starts to like it. So all the images, all the world scenes—the Buddha called these wrong view (false vision, micchā-ditthi). We record and collect the shadows outside. The Buddha called this wrong thought.

The wrong view and wrong thought (samohaṃ) are the root of saṃsāra. Now the wrong view and wrong thought are established and if we disagree with it, then hate (sadosaṃ) or anger (kodha) is produced; if we agree with it, love (trishna) is produced and we bond with each other. Craving is the bond; hate also is the bond. The hate or love mixed with false thought causes a seed of transmigration (saṃsāra). The sexual craving between men and women is the source of life in order to form the sea of birth and death. This is the main karma for serial reproduction. We often say there is a strong magnetic field between two opposite genders. With sex, there is a craving seed. If a seed does not meet the conditions, it becomes dry and dies. For example, if a jackfruit seed is stored, it is forever the dried jackfruit. But if it drops on the earth with many good conditions of sunlight, water, and fertilizer, it surely becomes a jackfruit tree. Therefore, to avoid the craving seed, we should live in a temple with good cause-conditions (paṭiccasamuppāda) to practice the awakened seeds.

The mind generates sexual desire (trishna) to acquire the idea of pregnancy. The woman thinks that she collects the seed or spermatozoon of the man, because both man and woman have the craving thoughts (sarāgaṃ), which cause their sexual organs to generate liquid. The male provides the sperm and the

woman receives the intersecting sperm into her blood. The mantra book mentions that the sperm and pus of the father combined with the red blood of mother causes the fetus. The father is as a guava seed, while the blood mother is as soil and sunlight. Guava seeds dropped to the ground and watered will gradually develop into a guava fruit. Likewise, a woman collects the sperm seed, warms the sperm up to be the granules in her blood, which is gradually shaped into the fetus and human body.

Due to sexual intercourse arising to stimulate the same karmic colleagues, the child consciousness, who has the sexual desire, pleasures at seeing the insertion of his father's penis into his mother's vagina, typically culminating in orgasm and the ejaculation of semen. The child consciousness clings to the father's sperm and mother's blood and pus, then later it becomes the bubbles and fetus.

The egg-birth, womb-birth, moisture-birth, and transform-birth are arisen according to their proper karma. If a person has the sexual pleasure karma, he will birth as a fetus in the womb. The egg-birth is born by the false thought. The spiritual consciousness of the same karmic persons touches the egg to be the egg-birth. For example, people who likes the smell of chicken and often kills chickens to eat, always thinks of the chicken scent. Because the karma likes to eat the chicken, when dying, they have an image of or smell the chicken scent, and at once their spiritual consciousness is

trapped in a certain hen egg. Therefore, with just one exhalation without inhalation, they are in the egg of the hen.

For someone who was previously a vertical human, it only takes a moment to remember the chicken smell and this results in being rebirthed in the hen egg. Then to pay the karmic retribution, it is born as a hen to people who cut the neck for flesh, because in the last kalpa, that person was inclined to eating chicken and ordered others to cook chicken for him. The distance or gap from this life to next life is just one moment and in a flash, it can turn into another species.

The Buddha taught to beware of five skandhas: forms, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. We feel and receive objects all day long, so our Buddhist practice is to be awakened. We, who must keep mindfulness, return to reciting the Buddha's name and we do not detach from the outside worldly scenes. When fragrance flies pass the nose, we should experience immediately that it is illusory. Our daily duty must be practicing detachment. For example, a meditator meditates at the lake, there is flower fragrance being sensed through the nose, he enjoys this so much that he keeps sitting to entertain it, until a Dharma Guard Protector complains about his infected virtue (*avimuttam*, *amahaggatam*), and he realizes and makes a confession about it.

So, we have to be careful at our six organs, such as if we are fond of listening to music or birds singing. We must be careful to be mindful at every posture and with every thought. We must practice continually and confidently at every hour.

This is the detach-feeling. Detaching the false feeling is to be a saint. Our six sense faculties have attached to six worldly objects since the beginningless time in order that we who become human beings, are full of cravings and feelings, and will fall to the low realms quickly at the blink of an eye when we die.

Why does the Buddha say, **“When the emotion, when the thought, when the union, and when separation have exchanged one another, so that all the karmic species are affected, either going up or going down”**? Because love is the main seed to cause the womb-birth to arise; because thought is the main seed to cause the egg-birth to arise. When a combination appears this is called the moisture-birth while the separation to produce is called the transform-birth. These species have exchanged in four forms of birth (fetal, egg, humidity, and transforming). We are turning all day in the rotation in order that at the time of death, we will be born either as worm, or egg, or moisture, or transform, and so on. Our mind follows the karmic cycle of craving, thinking, to rebirth in up and down realms. There are different levels, such as up to human, heaven, down to hell, down and up, up and down, good and evil, evil and good, etc. So the reincarnation is continuous. Due to dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) creature beings have continued birth and death, death and birth (saṃsāra), forever without end.

From the bright enlightened origination, by sudden unawakening, it distinguished to illuminate the enlightenment

to create thousands of thousands of varieties of phenomena, the body and the world, six distinctive organs and six objects. Since then it has received the feelings of love or hate, and greed arises, or anger. The like and dislike are the false thoughts that produce negative karmas of killing, theft, sexual misconduct, and telling lies. Once there is a cause, there is a result. We have to pay the price. Due to these cause-conditions, the consecutive creature beings have not stopped.

THE CONSECUTIVE KARMAS

Purna, thought and craving have ties to connection so that people who fall in love with each other cannot bear to separate. As a consequence, in the world, parents, children, and offspring who are produced continuously without end, have taken strong sexual desire (sarāgaṃ) as the root.

Lust and love (trishna) connect with each other to develop. Lust is consumed with an insatiable appetite, consequently in the world all the creature beings who are born in various forms of eggs, wombs, humidity, and transformation and who have competed and harmed one another have taken the killing desire as the root.

If a human (manussa) being eats a sheep and after death, the sheep becomes a person, after the human being dies he will be reborn as a sheep. Likewise, up to ten species are alternated in the cause-effect cycle (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) to death-birth and eat one another's bodies. Their evil karmas have developed up to the future. They have taken the stealing desire as the root.

This person owes a life to that person. One person has to repay the old debt to another person. Due to these cause-conditions, we have passed hundreds thousands of kalpas (lives) in the cycle of transmigration (saṃsāra).

This person loves that person's mind. That person likes this person's figure. Due to these cause-conditions, we have passed by hundreds thousands of kalpas in the cycle of the mutual entanglement. Killing, stealing, and lust are the basic roots for the cause-conditions for consecutive karmas.⁵⁶

The world is the karmic object while living beings are the karmic subject. Why do karma and the world exist continuously? The Buddha pointed out three main reasons:

1. The loving attachment (trishna) is without separation, so the children are born nonstop. The consciousness does not detach from the beloved ones, so they always rebirth together in the same karmic species. For example, 500 lives have passed, and the dove still are the dove; seven generations of Buddhas have passed and the black ants still are born as black ants. People are heavy with sexual lust (the Buddha taught to reflect on the impurity for a cure). Sexual lust (sarāgaṃ) is one of the three main causes that forces living beings to bear the consecutive karma.

⁵⁶ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 292–293.

2. The fetus, egg, humidity, and transform births in the world, and human beings in the womb create species that have competed with and harmed one another. The weak being is oppressed by the stronger being. For example, people (having good karma) use their smart mind to kill animals (tiracchānayoni, less good karma) and live on meat eating. Humans use sharp knives to tear the animal body, use means such as electricity to kill animals, and enjoy the evil hobbies of hunting, fishing, catching crabs, and other creatures. These are the seeds and appearances of people who are heavy with the killing karma. *The killing* is the cause that forces living beings to bear the consecutive karma.

3. Human beings robbed animal flesh to eat without permission. A gecko eats insects or gnats; an eagle bites a snake while the hunters shoot the eagles; big fish swallows the small fish. These are all the kinds of stealing (we lean on our strength or intelligence to trap small victims). These people are heavy with the stealing karma. It is *this robbery* that causes people to repay their debts continuously, made by the evil karma retribution up to the future life.

“This person owes a life to that person. One person has to repay the old debt to another person. Due to these causes-conditions, we have passed hundreds of thousands of kalpas (lives) in the cycle of transmigration (saṃsāra).” The Buddha taught this doctrine very well and deeply. Our life now is to pay off or to receive the retribution. Due to the fair law of cause-effect (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda), we

cannot control. Knowing the cause and effect, we will live peacefully and purely more than when we are lost, misunderstood, maltreated, unlucky, destroyed, and so on. We do not make the cause to live in the path of birth-death, of paying debts, and receiving revenge again.

“This person loves that person’s mind. That person likes this person’s figure. Due to these cause-conditions, we have passed hundreds of thousands of kalpas in the cycle of the mutual entanglement (saṃsāra).” The cause for reincarnation of humans is craving. She loves his dignified manner. He admires her attractive body. It is this craving thought that has ensnared us for countless lives. We meet one another in various forms, either spouses or friends, or parents, or relatives, in many lives.

One day, the Buddha went begging where a merchant family holding a party. The owner was a clumsy person, but the Buddha knew he had merit; it was time to convert the owner, so the Buddha came to alms. The host scolded the Buddha for begging shamelessly while everyone was enjoying the party. The Buddha responded with the verse as follows:

Eating father’s flesh and killed mother

Embracing the care of the enemy

Mother chews deliciously on her child’s bone

Who is to know the shameless?

He was eating the lamb that had been his father, who was reborn as a lamb. Eating the lamb was to eat his father’s meat.

Behind the house, the servants were continuing to slaughter pigs as treats for the guests. A pig was his mother reborn. The hostess was hugging a child who was an enemy in the past, and who was reborn in the house to destroy the owner's estate to clear a debt. The chicken she chewed on was her biological child who had just died and was reborn in a hen body. Relatives in the same real blood family were eating one another, which was evil, and they were not ashamed.

After listening to the Buddha's explanation, the host and relatives were awakened and felt very shameful. They admired the Buddha's wisdom and sought refuge in the Buddha to become a purely Buddhist family for supporting the Three Jewels.

Therefore, the Buddha taught to turn these love affections, these bonds of cravings (sarāgaṃ) into the great pure love, into the good Dharma friends, into the bodhisattvas. This good-hearted love without selfish craving is praised in Buddhism.

There are only three root causes (lusting, killing, and stealing) on which the causality of karma is continuous: the world, sentient beings, and karmic results came from these three root causes.

Purna, the three kinds of upside down continually come from the inherent luminous brightness which is added to enlightenment. With this false enlightening of the knowing-nature, subjective awareness gives rise to objective appearances. Both are born of false views

(micchā-ditthi), and from this falseness, the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned appearances unfold themselves in a succession that recurs in endless cycles.⁵⁷

Killing, stealing, and lust are the basic roots for the cause-conditions for consecutive karma. Living beings and karma are developing continuously. This came from the main roots of killing, stealing, and lust. It means the main roots of killing, stealing, and lust caused the world, living beings, and karma to exist and develop endlessly.

Purna, three things (the world, living beings, and karma) have continued to go up-side down, because the luminosity of the enlightenment is bright and clear. Following the false thought, the wrong view (micchā-ditthi) appears to have all phenomena of mountains, rivers, mainlands that changed, rotated back and forth without stopping.⁵⁸

Why do these three things (the world, living beings, and karma) come from the enlightened luminosity? It must have a cause which leads to the disturbing result. What does it mean that the world, living beings, and karma have continued to go up-side down due to killing, stealing, and lust and the enlightened luminosity?

⁵⁷ <http://www.buddhismtoday.com/viet/kinh/dt/thulangnghiem.htm>.

⁵⁸ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 293.

The Buddha explained that because of wanting the curious exploration to be brighter or more distinct, the false curious thought became solid to create the killing, stealing, lust and then all phenomena followed that pattern.

The Buddha's explanation is simple and clear. Do we still have that inclination to explore the enlightenment? When six base organs face six objects, we remember to keep mindfulness, recite the Amitābha Buddha's names, and do not run away from the outside scenes. Detaching the receiving or feeling means to avoid receiving or feeling, because once there is the receiving, then there is the discrimination. Due to distinguishing, there is a shape. Because the eyes see the form, the ears hear the sound, the nose smells the scent, the body contacts the touching thing, the brain knows the images are generated and receives the form (*rūpā*). Then the false thoughts (*samohaṃ*) appear to discriminate among worldly objects. It means the series of twelve chains of dependent-origination are produced.

As long as the receiving appears, the like (*vītamohaṃ*), and dislike will be born. There is the like-dislike, there is the wrong view (*samohaṃ*). Then the series of craving, the craving-views, a stronger degree of desire (*upadana*), and the process of becoming or existence (*bjava*) are also presented in order. Hereafter, the killing, stealing, and lusting appear. As a result, all phenomena of mainlands, human beings, grasses, leaves, ropes, knots continue to be born. Thus, the illusory things of our lives go on and on without stopping.

Method of practice: Owing to distinguishing, the figure appears. We meet six objects, the discrimination starts. Now we are just awakened that all is illusory. The scene is delusion. This body is impure so that we must erase the self-craving or self-view. Be mindful at the breath to calm the mind, without disturbance. Let go naturally to detach from the outside scene without receiving. Once the self-craving presents, we still receive or feel the objects. If we are awakened and let go of this body, we will gain detachment from receiving or feeling.

The Buddha explained this so clearly in order that we understand and experience delusion and awareness. We recognize that delusion is ignorance while enlightenment is the awareness. Therefore, we are not afraid, we do not worry that it is hard to become a Buddha because this ignorance is delusion, while the Buddha is true. Delusion must disappear soon. This understanding is called the pure knowledge.

What is the pure knowledge? It means to see the truth. We know that ignorance does not have the root, the origin of delusion is empty while the Buddha is true. The Buddha nature is the obvious truth. Do not embrace the body, mind, and scene, do not consider it as real, do not live with it anymore. This is called the pure knowledge.

The purity is to know the truth as it is. We know the truth, live with the Buddha nature, while the three sets of body, mind and scene is detached from.

A day of no lust (*vītarāgaṃ*), no anger (*vītadosaṃ*), no delusion (*vijjā*) is a day of the Buddha characteristics. If there

is still lust (sarāgam), anger (byāpāda, dosa), ignorance (avijjā) on other days, we are not ready to be awakened. Then we need to clean five layers of impurity (amahaggatam), that is, the five skandhas, and we return to the Buddha. The origination is neither the same nor different, but now we make it to be the same or different. This is the origin of the phenomena, so it began to have three consecutive forms in the world, living beings, and karma. It continues to develop indefinitely.

1C. POINTING OUT THE ENLIGHTENMENT CANNOT PRODUCE IGNORANCE

Purna presented, “The nature of wonderful enlightenment is the inherent, miraculous brightness which is the same as the Tathāgata’s mind, neither greater nor less. It suddenly arises to have all the conditioned phenomena of mountains, rivers, mainlands, and so forth. The Thus-Come One has attained the wonderful luminous enlightenment, without discrimination, and when will the mountains, rivers, mainlands and all conditioned habitual inflows (sravas) appear again.”

The Buddha replied to Purna, “For example, if a person in a village is confused and has a misconception of south being north, does this confusion arise out of confusion or awakensness?” Purna said, “The person has neither confusion nor awakensness. Why? Confusion is fundamentally without root, how can it arise from confusion? Awakensness does not produce the confusion, how can it generate from the awakensness?”

The Buddha taught, “A confused person is on a confused course and suddenly he meets an awakened person who points out the correct direction, and makes him aware of the way. Purna, how do you think, once the person expels the confusion, can he lose his way again?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

“Purna, the Thus-Come Ones of ten directions are the same thing. The confusion is without root and ultimately is void. It looks as if there was confusion and enlightenment. Once we are awakened to the confusion, then the confusion is paused. Hence, enlightenment cannot produce the confusion.

“For example, a person with sore eyes sees the sky-flowers in space. If he cures his sore eyes, the flowers in space will disappear. If there is a stupid person looking up to the sky where the flowers disappeared, waiting for the flowers to reappear, do you think that person is foolish or intelligent?”

Purna replied, “The sky fundamentally does not have any flowers. Due to sickness in the eyes, there are the arising and falling. Seeing the falling of the sky-flowers in space is already an upside-down view. Waiting for them to reappear is madness. Why bother to determine further if such a mad person is foolish or intelligent?”

The Buddha taught, “Since your understanding and explanation are as such, why do you ask if the wonderful luminous enlightenment without discrimination of

Tathāgatas can once again provide the arising of the mountains, rivers, and mainlands?”

“For example, a piece of ore retains the gold substance. Once the pure gold is extracted, it cannot become an ore again. Likewise, if a piece of wood is burned to ash, it cannot become wood anymore. The bodhi Nirvana of all Buddhas and the Thus-Come Ones are the same.”⁵⁹

Actually, Purna knew the problem of the enlightenment and unenlightenment, but he loved future beings and for the sake of many, he asked that the Buddha clarify the matter. Purna questioned if the Buddha declared the enlightenment but did not produce the impurity (*amahaggaṭaṃ*). Purna’s mind is the same as the Buddha’s mind—it neither increases nor decreases. We are living with the same mind of the Buddha. If we saw the mountains, rivers, and mainlands, and were disturbed by defilements (*kleśa*), so likewise, in the future, the Buddha will return to living beings like us, will become unenlightened, ignorant, and defiled like us (Purna) here. This Buddha did not answer straightaway, but instead he provided four examples and raised four questions to Purna:

–A person who lost the way was guided to the correct direction by a person or a navigator. Did he confuse the path again?

–A sore-eyed person spotted the sky-flowers. When his eyes were cured, did he see the sky-flowers again?

⁵⁹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 299–301.

Has the filtered gold returned to the ore again? A tree is burned to ash. Can it become a tree again? These questions and examples are clear. The Buddha left for Purna to answer the questions by himself and then he realized the deep meaning through his reflection and answer. Ignorance is neither the root, nor form, so it cannot be taken out. The ignorance is clearly without its substance. If it has roots, then it cannot be the falseness. It is only because of ignorance, we accept bodies as us. Because of ignorance, we who eat rice, drink water to form the body, enter the mother's womb, take the soil, water, wind, fire to be the body, but the impurity body or ignorance does not have a root. For example, a chrysanthemum is due to the chrysanthemum seed in order to be a flower. Spinach is presented due to the seeds of spinach. What is the seed of the human being? It is the ignorance. The practice is to wake up, to see the real mind, to let go of the delusion and the ignorance. If there is someone to point out the ignorance, then we will be enlightened, no longer bound by the impurity anymore. For example, the confused person is pointed in the correct direction; a sore-eyed person is cured, the sky is clear; gold is no longer sand anymore; if a plant is burned, it cannot become a tree. Due to ignorance, wrong view, killing, stealing, and lusting, and so on have arisen. Just be awakened, it will disappear as in the above examples.

The question about when the Buddha returns to living beings is the same question as when right view becomes wrong view or when enlightenment returns to ignorance. Because the

mind is awakened, suddenly ignorance is called the wrong view. The Buddha descended in this world to have only one purpose: he showed the way to enter, experience, and realize the Buddha's wisdom for the sake of many. The bodies of creature beings and the Buddha are still the same. Seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and knowing are the Buddha nature. Awakening is called the right view and unawakening is called the wrong view (*micchā-ditthi*). However, unawakening does not have substance. We are foolish to see these bodies as ours, but when we are mindful we realize the ignorance is nowhere. Zen Master Huyền Giác confirmed that "The true nature of ignorance is the Buddha nature." Once we are awakened, we become Buddhas, so at that time it is called the ultimate absolute without ignorance. The impurity does not have the foundation; our reality is the Buddha nature; the four immeasurables (*appamañña, apramāṇa*): love (*mettā, maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā, upeksā*) are developed. However, because we collect false habits, it becomes the illusion (*samohaṃ*). For example, we are peacefully happy and then suddenly someone tells us that a friend has said unkind things about us. After hearing the voice of that person, we become so angry, as if a fire burns in our heart. Actually, there is no anger (*upanāha, viddesanā*). Before that we were peaceful. If we are mindful and do not engage in retaliation which causes resentment (*upanāha, viddesanā*), and instead reflect on the four immeasurable virtues (*appamañña, apramāṇa*): love (*mettā, maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), joy

(muditā), and equanimity (upekkhā, upekṣā), the greed (abhijjhā, visamālobha) and anger will disappear. Therefore, the ignorance does not have a root. If self-craving, is arising, it looks like there are lust, hate, and so on, but if we are mindful to contemplate the sound which is a false dream and is the vibrating game, we will wake up. At that time the anger is gone, it does not exist there. We wake up, it dissolves. Our fool is too much a falseness to be our boss. We are awakened, it melts, so we have to be embarrassed because it is nothing, and we have allowed it to dominate and master us.

We have five impure (amāhaggatam) layers,⁶⁰ that is, the five illusions (samoham). That we are awakened at one layer is better than nothing. Step by step we will open these five knots.

Right view does not return to wrong view (micchā-ditthi) anymore. The seeing essence has not been wrong or ignorant for a long time. It depends on karma to appear to the unawakening and awakening. However, our reality is still unchangeable and wonderful.

As awakening presents, the delusion (samoham) is paused. The truth is obvious. Enlightenment or ignorance comes from using our wrong or right functions. Due to delusion, we forget our real nature. Once we are mindful we can experience that both are as one. The Buddha called using the wrong function ignorance (avijjā). The Buddha taught that

⁶¹ *Five layers of impurity*: 1. The impure kalpa, 2. The impure view, 3. The impure defilement (asava), 4. The impure living beings, 5. The impure life-spans

its nature is to clarify the mind, so if we begin distinguishing now, there is hope for the scene. **The countless creature beings are as the sands in the Ganges River. They are on the ignorant path where ignorance is the illusion** We fail to grasp this because it is illusory, without reality. Our mind became the delusion. We are ignorant by ourselves and we awaken by ourselves.

Ignorance is the delusion. Ignorance itself has no root and enlightenment and does not produce delusion. This part is rather difficult to understand. It is difficult to comprehend the answer of the Buddha because we are clearly ignorant; we are on the foolish path. We feel it is hard to understand. Do we believe ignorance is originally without a foundation? Yes, it is. The ignorance is without a true base because once we are awakened, the ignorance disappears. We remember the painting of the life cycle⁶¹ with the hen, snake and pig in the background. Blue is the color of the falsehood (*chādeti*). Greed (*abhiḥhā*, *visamalobha*), anger (*sadosaṃ*), and delusion (*samohaṃ*) are the centers that control us in the up and down realms of seven paths.⁶² However, they are ignorant as clouds. Once we cultivate awakening to transform greed, hatred, and ignorance, this means to be clear without cloudiness. Our mind can be pure without lust, hatred, and ignorance.

⁶¹ *The Cycle of Life*, p. 10.

⁶² Seven paths: heaven (*deva*), asura (*asurakāya*), immortals (half deva-human), humans (*manussa*), demons (*pittivisaya*), hell (*niraya*), and animals (*tiracchānayani*).

2A. ALL ELEMENTS ARE PENETRATING ONE ANOTHER

“Purna, you also mentioned the substances of soil, water, fire, and wind penetrate one another over the Dharma world. Your questions are why the water and fire do not destroy each other and why the space and soil can combine each other in the Dharma realm.

“Purna, for example, the substance of the space is not the forms and does not prevent all figures from developing within it. Why? Purna, the sky is luminous as it is sunny, is dark as it is cloudy, sways as the wind blows, is transparent as it clears, hazy as it is smoky, is obscure as a dust storm arises, and reflects sparkling light when the water is still.

“What do you think? Are these different conditioned forms created from these conditions themselves or the space? Purna, if they originate from those conditions, on a sunny day, the sun is luminous, all the worlds in ten directions should become the shape of the sun. Then how on that day, can we still see the round sun in the sky? If the space is bright, the space must itself shine. Why on a cloudy night, is there is no brightness? The brightness is from neither the sun nor the space, and is not other than the space and the sun.

“Contemplating the appearances is falseness, hard to point out their significance. They are just like sky-flowers that produce the sky-fruit. How can you still ask the meaning of these elements?

“Reflect on the original nature, which is the truth, the wonderful enlightenment, and is neither water nor fire. How can you still ask the meaning of these elements and how they combine with each other?”

“The true wonderful enlightenment is nature. You create the space that makes the space appear. The earth, water, fire, and wind are created and appear one by one. If they are invented at the same time, they will present together.”

i. Pointing out conflict with enlightenment and combining with the worldly form:

“Purna, you take the form and space to destroy one another in tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena), so tathāgatagarbha depends on you to create the form and the space over the Dharma realm. Since then, within it, the blowing wind is movable, the space is stillness, the sun is bright, and the cloud is dark. Living beings, who were deluded, combine with the worldly form. Thus, the defilements (kleśa) and the mundane world come into existence.”

ii. The wonderful illumination unites with tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena):

The inherent wonderful illumination is neither ending nor arising, united with tathāgatagarbha. Hence, tathāgatagarbha is the marvelous enlightenment and shines all over the Dharma realm.

Therefore within it, the one is measureless; the measureless is one. The small produces the big; the big produces the small. The unshaken bodhimanda pervades all over the worlds in ten directions; the body contains the space in ten directions. On the top of a single hair appears the Jeweled King Country. Sitting in a molecule of dust, I turn the great Dharma wheel. By transforming the defilements (kleśa) and combining with enlightenment, the wonderful sacred enlightened nature is created.”⁶³

The Buddha taught that the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind penetrated all Dharma worlds. In reality, we see the four great elements to have opposite, distinct characteristics. Water and fire pervade throughout the world, while water extinguishes a fire, land is added to mounds, tidal waves increase to wipe out the mound, land, and houses. So why does the Tathāgata say that seven elements of the earth, water, wind, fire, space, perception, consciousness stay together all over the world. Why do not they overlap one another?

The Buddha answered that earth, water, wind, fire, space, perception, and consciousness pervade all over the world, but the nature of the space is not lost nor decreased. In *Four Departments and Seven Elements*,⁶⁴ the Tathāgata confirmed

⁶³ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 305–313.

⁶⁴ Four departments (*five aggregates skandhas, six sense organs, twelve bases, eighteen realms*) and seven elements (*earth, water, fire, wind, space, perception, and consciousness*).

that the form nature is the absolute śūnyatā (suññatā, void nature); śūnyatā is the absolute form. This is pure and pervades over the Dharma world. According to creature beings' karma, in response to their capacities, worldly bodies, and the bodies of twelve kinds of living beings or four departments and seven elements come into being.

The fire is full in space but without burning the world. Therefore, the Buddha said that the fire essence is the absolute śūnyatā. The space does not have the fire but when the need requires it, the fire appears. One person ignites the light, one person has fire. People in ten directions ignite the fire, ten directions have the fire. The fire stays everywhere in the world without any separate certain place, so the Buddha states that the fire nature is the absolute śūnyatā (void nature); the śūnyatā is the absolute fire. This is pure and pervades over the Dharma world. According to creature beings' karma, in response to their capacities, the fire comes into being.

Water is all over the world, but it neither extinguishes the fire nor engulfs the entire world into a terrible storm, so the Tathāgata confirmed that the water nature is the absolute śūnyatā. The Dharma realm of the space is not the water element, but the space is full of water, so digging a well, there is water. Therefore, the Buddha said that śūnyatā is the absolute water. This is pure and pervades over the Dharma world. According to creature beings' karma, in response to their capacities, the water comes into being.

The natures of the other elements of earth, wind, space, perception, and consciousness do not dominate, control or become obstacles to each other. Understanding the subtle nature of seven elements, we will experience the meaning of the *Prajñā Scripture* or the *Heart Sūtra* that we daily chant: “Form does not differ from śūnyatā (suññatā). Śūnyatā does not differ from form. Form is śūnyatā. Śūnyatā is form.”

The Buddha wanted to express that the shapes of seven elements, namely, earth, water, wind, fire, space, perception, and consciousness are illusory sky-flowers, and emptiness whose nature is delusion. How can they conflict with each other? With regard to the reality, they are the tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena) or absolute śūnyatā; therefore, they can penetrate each other. We are confused because we see flowers, glasses, bells, microphones, and so forth as flowers, glasses, bells, microphones. With regard to the shapes, they are all false. The real essence for all of them is the tathāgatagarbha or absolute śūnyatā. We know seven elements are illusory on the surface of theory; thus, flowers are still flowers; glasses are still glass, so two concrete things cannot enter through each other.

The Buddha replied to assist Purna in understanding “the insight vision of Buddha” which the Buddha realized from his enlightenment experience. The truth is that all forms of the world are delusional and unreal, but their reality is the tathāgatagarbha, the absolute śūnyatā, the marvelous enlightenment. Following the karma of each species, it will see

its realm which is not the truth. Once we called following the karma unreal. Becoming the Buddha, we can see as real the insight vision of the Buddha. This is the great function of the Buddha, which the *Flower Adornment Scripture (Avataṃsaka Sūtra)* called without obstacle between works.

The reality of seven elements is the absolute śūnyatā (void nature). This is pure and pervades over the Dharma world. According to creature beings' karma, in response to their capacities, seven elements come into being. Because of karma, it ties in twelve chains of dependent originations (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda), so it seems to have conflict among seven elements. The karma or the dependent origination is as a person wearing black glasses—his vision will not be clear to see the truth. All elements are changeable, independent of their own authenticity (for example, earth, water, wind, fire in the human body are not fixed in a human body forever; they assume various shapes according to different karmas). Just as boxes have various shapes—square, round, and rectangle—all elements depend on conditions to appear as illusion.

From the deep consciousness store, the Buddha experienced forms as emptiness, the causal conditions of karma (while we realize things only on the surface of mental consciousness). The Buddha had the insight that all phenomena is his tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena), therefore he could go through the wall, enter the fire, go into the water without being blocked, burned or sunk so Buddhas and

bodhisattvas could save all suffering people. As mundane people, we understand that land, water, wind, and fire are illusory. We still see the wall to be the wall. Hence, if we want to go out, we must get through the door. Going directly to the wall, our head will hit. From our deep consciousness, we have not yet awakened to the general illusory things and the ultimate absolute, so that we still see the phenomena as obstructed, overlapping one another.

We have the misconception to see scenes of the four faculties and seven elements as real.⁶⁵ All phenomena, perception, space, and consciousness elements are wrongly seen as true. Each species as a result of its own karma envisions the world according to its karma. The Buddhas recognized that the earth, water, wind, fire are not real. We only understand generally in theory land, water, wind, fire; therefore we still see the earth, water, wind, fire. So, we cannot get through the wall, because in our consciousness, we still obstinately believe that the wall is solid material so it is a barrier.

The Buddhas know with insight that the earth is not real. Due to ignorance (*avijjā*), the soil is formed. Because of anger, fire is established. Because of craving (*trishna*), water is set up. The Buddhas were free of greed (*abhijjhā*, *visamalobha*), anger (*kodha*), delusion (*samohaṃ*), and arrogance (*atimāna*). The

⁶⁵ Four Departments (*five aggregates, skandhas, six sense organs, twelve bases, eighteen realms*), and seven elements (*earth, water, fire, wind, space, perception, and consciousness*).

earth, water, wind, and fire are created from the mind. Ever since then, they can go through walls, walk on water, enter flames without burning to save people. This is the meaning of the thirty-two applicant embodies of Guan Yin (Avalokiteśvara) Bodhisattva.

“If someone chants the name Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, even in a big fire, the fire will not burn, thanks to the great power of the Bodhisattva.

If someone is swept away by water, if he recites the name of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva he will find dry land. .

If a person is going to be harmed, if he sincerely reads the title of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, the knife of his attacker will be broken in pieces, and immediately he will escape.”⁶⁶

2B. DOUBT THAT THE UNAWAKENED CAN BECOME ENLIGHTENED

Purna presented that “The Tathāgatas and my wonderful enlightened mind are perfect without duality. Since beginningless time, I have been subjected to false thoughts and stayed a long time in saṃsāra. Now I receive the holy teaching from the Buddhas, and have not yet realized the ultimate. Tathāgata, please explain the reason why all sentient beings who are unawakened, hear the teachings

⁶⁶ *The Sūtra of Universal Door, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*, Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts, F. Max Müller, 1969, part 2, p. 92.

and are still submerged in saṃsāra? The unawakening originally has no root.”

The Buddha said to Purna that “Although you eliminated your suspicion, the subtle doubts are not cleared. Now I bring a question about current world affairs. Did you hear in Flowering Virtue City, when Yajiadatta looks in the mirror in the morning, he is angry because his head cannot see the face while eyes can see it. He thought that he, who has no head, is like a monster and suddenly feels scared and runs away. What do you think, for what reason did the man madly run away?”

Purna answers: “His mind is crazy, there is no other reason.”

The Buddha taught: “The perfect enlightenment is luminous everywhere. If it is called falseness, then how can it have a cause? If there is a cause, then how can it be called falseness? The false thoughts turn out to be the connecting causes for each other. You have experienced it through countless kalpas as molecules of dust. The cause of such unawakening suddenly appears and realizing there is no unawakening, then the falseness has no place to take refuge. There is neither arising nor ending. The Bodhisattva, who realized the bodhi way, is like the one waking up in the dream to narrate the dream. His mind remembers everything in the dream, but it is impossible to obtain the things in dreams. For example, in the Flowering Virtue City, Yajiadatta has no cause, but suddenly he

becomes crazy with fear and runs away. When he is not crazy, his head is neither lost, nor brought back from the outside. Purna, if the nature of falseness is as such, how can it have a cause? Due to pausing the conditions, the madness is ended.

“You just do not follow the three continuing things, namely, the world, karma, and sentient beings. When the three conditions pause, then three causes are not born again. The madness of Yajiadatta is in his mind and will end. Ending means the pure bodhi mind is luminous across the world, is not brought back by someone, and does not need to practice hard to become enlightened. For example, a person has a hidden precious gem in his garment, but he has no knowledge of it, and must beg for food. Although he is poor, the gem is not lost. Suddenly, there is a wise man, pointing out the gem in the garment. After that, whatever he wants to be, he can become. He becomes a rich man, realizes that the precious gem is inside him, and that it does not come from outside.”⁶⁷

The wonderful enlightened minds of the Buddha and Purna have a pure and perfect nature without duality. But since beginningless time, we have been subjected by false thoughts, staying a long time in saṃsāra. Why do we make this mistake?

The Buddha replies to the questions of Purna through the sentences above: 1A, 1B, 1C, and 2A. Although the suspicion

⁶⁷ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 321–327.

is ended, Purna still has some subtle doubts. So now in sentence 2B, the Buddha adds one more example of Yajiadatta which shows the delusion is not rooted.

In 1C, the Buddha gave many examples: a person knows the road after guidance, a sore-eyed person sees the sky-flowers, filtered gold cannot turn out to be ore, a burning plant cannot be planted, enlightenment cannot produce unawakening, and Buddhas cannot turn out to be sentient beings.

The Buddha replied it is the ignorance that is unreal. If it is real, then there is no illusion. If it really has roots then it is real. And now it is the ignorance, the emptiness, the false, so it has no root. The ignorance (avijjā) itself has no root and the enlightenment does not generate the ignorance.

The answer of the Buddha is difficult to understand, because we are clearly in the ignorant way. We now have the path of unawakening, but the Buddha says that it is unreal. We find it hard to understand because the unreal now is dominant in our consciousness. The Buddha said the unawakening does not have its own substance, just wake it up, and it is completely done. If it has a root, then we must borrow a shovel to dig while it is nothing, just ignorance.

The Buddha gave the example of Yajiadatta looking at his face in the mirror to admire his smooth hair, delicate eyes, attractive eyebrows, and gentle nose. Suddenly, he does not see where his head is and he becomes mad because he thinks he has lost his head.

He puts down the mirror to run around his village, crying loudly that he lost his head. Everyone laughs that he is crazy because his head on his neck, but he cannot see and wrongly declares that he lost his head.

Do we have the same behavior as Yajiadatta? Mr. A. died on the date . . . My mother is ill and just died . . . Someday we will also die and should say goodbye to this world . . .

We all have concepts about losing the body, that is, losing the head. Our heads are still here. Now we ask, from where does the craziness originate? Does it come from the mirror? When we look at the mirror, why do we do not see strangely as Yajiadatta does. Is he crazy? Where is that madness? It does not have a root.

So, the Buddha declared that the ignorance does not have a root like Yajiadatta looking at the mirror. The Buddha told us that we behave as Yajiadatta. The Buddha's statement does not have a root like the mirror. The Buddha told us to be like the multihit.

Our essence is originally Buddha nature in the here and now, but we forgot that and we run outside to find it or we practice to be the Buddha. Our behavior is the same as Yajiadatta trying to find his head (trying to find the Buddha but the Buddha is available inside us).

Ignorance is not real. Once we are awakened, it is ended. If the unawakening is the truth, the basic, the root, just wake it up and ignorance will be completely ended.

Our mind is foundationally permanent, happy, true self and pure; therefore it does not need to beg or look for anything outside. Stay calmly in our reality. However, to remain mindful in our samādhi, we must let go of or detach from the illusory worldly objects. This is the temporal teaching of the first twelve years of the Buddha for the *Āgama Sutta* (Five Nikāya Canons). Detach the greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), delusion (samohaṃ), and attachment (māna) in order to be calm with insight (vijjā).

Ignorance (avijjā) becomes wrong view (micchā-ditthi), if killing, stealing, sexual conduct, are dominant. However, the ignorance has no root; if we just return back and reflect with insight it will be exhausted. The worlds, mountains, mainlands, six realms of reincarnation and so forth, arise and develop from the prospect of the individual and community wrong views.

What is the meaning of looking at our head in the mirror?

1. Looking at us and our lives through the sense nerves of our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

2. Looking at us and our lives through the shadows of the working nerves (not dead).

3. Looking at us and our lives through human being's karma. According to creature beings' karma, in response to their capacities, our worldly bodies, and the bodies of twelve kinds of living beings are seen.

We always have the Buddha seed

We are dwelling in the Dharma body all the time.

We have the Buddha's seed all the time. We always stay with the Dharma body (kaya). However, we forgot to shout that we have no nature (losing the head). Then we assume that we have mundane defilements (kleśa), so we need to find the way to become a Buddha. We always have the Buddha's seed in us but we have forgotten.

Thần Tán Zen Master expressed these ideas:

The miracle moon illuminates organs and objects

Showing organs and objects without seeking for words

The pure mind is ever to be fulfilled

Leaving the false thoughts, we immediately become Buddhas.

It means once we are awakened, the illusory thoughts (samohaṃ) disappear and we return to our Buddha essence. We do not waste time using language to explain anything, we just return to the inner reality. There we will experience it.

Patriarch Đôn Hà explained that for these deep meanings, we, ordinary people, do not understand, but the enlightened ones will recognize and experience it immediately.

And how did the Buddha answer these questions? It is simple. Unawakening is not original, so we do not need to lecture, just giving an example of Yajñadatta is enough.

Once upon a time, Venerable Sāriputta went to the cave of Venerable Maha Kāśyapa to present that there was a group of heretics asking Venerable Sāriputta: "After entering Nirvana, is the Tathāgata subjected by birth and death? After

entering Nirvana, is the Tathāgata not subjected to birth and death? After entering Nirvana, is the Tathāgata either subjected to or not subjected to birth and death? After entering Nirvana, is the Tathāgata neither subjected to or not subjected to birth and death?”

Venerable Sāriputta could not answer, because he had not heard this complex thing from the Tathāgata. Now he expected Venerable Maha Kāśyapa to explain it. Venerable Maha Kāśyapa replied that the Tathāgata has cleaned up all cravings. His mind is no longer afflicted, is permanently freed from bonds. His enlightenment is too vast to imagine. We could not use mundane thoughts to ask. He could not use language to answer. Because this complex question should not be asked, the Blessed One often does not explain.⁶⁸

Thus we see there are some problems which the Buddha did not waste time with lengthy explanations. Here too, the delusion is not real, so it does not need an explanation. Just an example of Yajiadatta is enough.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER V

Chapter V discusses Venerable Purna begging the Buddha to explain two difficult problems: Firstly, why do in the pure awakened nature there suddenly arise the conditioned forms of mountains, rivers, mainlands and so on that continuously

⁶⁸*The Buddha's Ten Great Disciples*, East West Printing, 1999, p. 11.

change and transform to the upside-down cycle. The Buddha replies that the enlightenment is the inherent illumination, but due to false thoughts the subject, object, animate, and inanimate worlds are established.

Secondly, owing to sudden unenlightening, three general results of the world, sentient beings, and karmic effect consecutively appear and develop. The Buddha also pointed out that ignorance has the same root as Yajñadatta, who looks in the mirror and suddenly cries out because he thinks he has no head. The Buddha also presents seven great elements (earth, water, wind, fire, perception, space, and consciousness) penetrate one another in perfect tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Please summarize two difficult problems discussed in Chapter V.
2. Please explain: “The awakening is the inherent wonderful brightness and the enlightened nature is to illuminate the wonder.”
3. Why are the sense organs, objects, skandhas, places, and realms the pure awakened nature and why do they suddenly produce the conditioned and unconditioned forms?
4. Why do the worlds, beings, and karmas continually develop?

5. What is the philosophical significance of Yajiadatta losing his head?



*The Opening Ceremony of the Bell in August 2017 at
Huong Sen Temple, Perris, California, USA*

CHAPTER VI

ŚAMATHA

Having heard the five questions and answers about delusion (samohaṃ) and enlightenment (bodhi), three consecutive themes of the world, living beings, and karmic retribution, Venerable Ānanda cried and said that we are like sunken people in the suffering ocean, floating everywhere. The Buddha kindly showed the great house (the profound Dharma) but we do not know where the entrance is. The great house means the Buddha nature, but how can we get in? Please World-Honored One, the supreme compassionate one, kindly guide us.

The Buddha used the skillful means of these various causes and conditions (paṭiccasamuppāda) to encourage all of us who are immersed in the suffering sea, that we should know how to escape it. Despite having heard the sound of Dharma, we know that tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena) of the inherent wonderful enlightened mind pervades all the worlds in ten directions and includes the precious pure Buddha lands in ten directions. Yet, the Thus-Come One again admonished Ānanda for his lack of cultivation and samādhi even though he was a scholar.

So now Ānanda, who is like a wanderer, suddenly encounters a reigning king who provides him with an elegant house. He has obtained a big house, but there needs to be a door in order that he can enter. The Thus-Come One, with

great compassion, instructed us in the assembly who are covered by darkness, so that we may renounce the small vehicle (Hīnayāna) and attain the bodhi way to reach the Thus-Come One's Nirvana (Nibbāna) destination. He will enable the learners who still have inflows (sravas) to know how to subdue the age-old dependent-origination (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) minds, to obtain dharani and to enter into the knowledge and vision of the Buddha.

The Buddha began preaching two decisive themes in śamatha method.

THE FIRST THEME:

THE CAUSE OF BASIC BODHI

Using the space to compare with the main cause.

“What are the meanings of the two resolutions to begin developing the bodhi mind?

“Ānanda, the first resolution, if you want to give up the position of sound-hearer (śrāvaka-yāna) to cultivate the bodhisattva vehicle (bodhisattva-yāna) for entering the Buddha view, you must consider carefully whether the beginning of bodhi mind and the result of the enlightenment are similar or different.

“Ānanda, in the cultivating period, it is impossible if you take the arising-falling mind as the cause of the Buddha vehicle (Buddha-yāna). Owing to this significance, you should reflect that all existing phenomena in the world are subjected to change and extinguishment. Ānanda, you

must contemplate that whatever thing is made in the world will be destroyed. But, you have never heard that space is destroyed, have you? Why not? It is because space is not the thing which can be made so it can never disappear.”⁶⁹

The Buddha taught that in the period of śamatha practice, we must realize two decisive keys of the main cause:

1. The fundamental bodhi is the first decisive meaning.

2. The reflecting of the fundamental defilements (kleśa) is the second decisive meaning. Śamatha is the theory to distinguish between trueness and falseness. Samāpatti is the practice of the truth, the fundamental bodhi or the basic wisdom. *Dhyāna* is the application of the resulting wisdom that all truth is falseness and all falseness is truth. The practitioner will attain the basic wisdom and the resulting insight for application.

This part is the introduction to śamatha in which the Buddha repeated and analyzed again to demonstrate two basics for dwelling in or putting away. Why is the Buddha permanent and happy while we, living beings, are subjected to the turning of the wheel of birth and death? The Buddha explained that according to what kind of cause for cultivation, it reaches to accord such effects. So which cause of cultivation must we master to follow? Two decisive keys are necessary to comprehend the the cultivating cause:

⁶⁹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 344.

1. The fundamental bodhi:

a) If we want to be the Buddha of neither production nor extinction, we must master the first function of the brightness enlightenment which is called the measureless light, that is, the luminous seeing, hearing, and knowing at our six sense faculties.

b) We must also master the second function of the permanent enlightenment, which is the measureless, living duration span. It is the permanent seeing, hearing, and knowing of neither production nor extinguishment, while this false body of earth, first decisive meaning in which the practitioner must master and cultivate in the right way so that she/he can obtain the right result. For example, all things in the world are made, so they are extinguished or disappear, while the space is not created by something, therefore it does not decay or fade away. As with a broken light, it can be replaced with many shapes, colors, or sizes of bulbs, but the electric energy source is still permanent and depends on the bulb, made shiny by the energy. The bulb can break, but the power is never lost. water, wind, fire will fade away or be reborn in other realms.

Amitābha Buddha is the measureless light and ages. This is the characteristic or wonder of the Buddha nature.

There is an idiom:

Please do not rely on the wall because the wall will fall,

Do not rely on the bed because the bed will collapse,

Do not rely on the tree because the tree will tilt,

*Do not rely on a person because a person will die,
Let's rely on ourselves.*

“Based on ourselves” means we must master the inherent luminous, permanent, wonderful nature of our seeing, listening, and knowing at our sense organs.

We, who must hold the true bodhi essence, avoid mixing it with the false consciousness. When we take the true bodhi nature and meditate on it, we have the right cultivating root as Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva who took the hearing as a means for cultivation, which is known as the perfect penetrating hearing. The hearing, which is the enlightenment of neither production nor extinguishment, is independent. Once we calm ourselves to live with it, the delusions (samohaṃ) gradually fade away and we return to our Buddha nature.

2. The fundamental birth and death:

We, who must filter the roots of ignorance (avijjā) to be pure, avoid receiving it as our truth. *Prajñā-pāramitā* or the *Heart Sūtra* confirm that reflecting on the five aggregates (skandhas) does not differ from emptiness while the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* states that we must transform five layers of impurity. The *Amitābha Sūtra* also called the roots of ignorance five layers of impurity.⁷⁰ Whenever five aggregates⁷¹

⁷⁰ Five layers of impurity: 1. The impure kalpa, 2. The impure view, 3. The impure defilements (asava), 4. The impure living beings, 5. The impure lifespans.

are transformed, there is calmness, and then we can get back our true reality.

All Buddhas selected the main cause of cultivation which must possess two characteristics of enlightenment and permanence. Relating to the Four Noble Truths (the Āgama in the first twelve years of the Buddha's teaching), it also clarifies two causes and two effects through the Four Noble Truths (*catvāry āryasatyāni, cattāri ariya-saccāni*):

1. The mundane cause (*samudayāryasatya*, the origin of suffering): greed, anger, ignorance.

2. The mundane effect (*duḥkhāryasatya*, the suffering): creature beings are influenced by eight sufferings.

3. The transmundane cause (*duḥkhanirodhagāminī pratipad*, the way leading to cessation): practicing the Eightfold Path.

4. The transmundane effect (*duḥkhanirodhāryasatya*, the cessation of the origin of suffering): Nirvana.

These are two decisive keys in the first expedient spreading of the doctrine. Back to the great vehicle (Mahāyāna) of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, it emphasizes that in the five impurities (amahaggataṃ) in our mind and body, which cause of cultivation must we select? Definitely, we take the first one, the fundamental bodhi.

⁷¹ Five aggregates (pañca skandha): rūpā (matter), vedanā (feeling), sanjna (ideation), samskara (forces or drives), and vijñana (consciousness or sensation).

FIVE IMPURITIES

“Ānanda, in your body, what hardness is the earth, what moisture is the water, what warmth is the fire, and what moving is the wind? Because these four elements are bonded, your luminous, tranquil, perfect, wonderful mind which creates the seeing, hearing, touching, and knowing, turned out five layers of impurities covering everything from beginning to end.

“What does the impurity mean? Ānanda, for instance, the clear water is originally pure and clean while the characteristic of the dust, soil, ash, and sand is basically blocked. Two properties are too different to combine with each other. It is supposed that if an ordinary person throws some soil into the clear water, the soil loses its hard characteristic and the water loses its pureness. The opaque quality is called impurity. Your five layers of impurity are similar to it.

“Ānanda, you see the space pervading over ten directions. The space and the seeing do not separate. However, the space is not its real reality and the seeing is not the awareness, which both mixed falsely with each other in order to form the first layer, the impure kalpa.

“At present, you are taking four elements (earth, water, wind, and fire) as your body substance which covers

the seeing, hearing, tasting and knowing to be obstructed. And opposite, you make the water, fire, wind, and earth (to be body) to have the ability to see, hear, taste, and know. Two things become entangled falsely with each other in order to establish the second layer, the impure views.

“Further, in your mind, the memory of learning creates the knowledge and view at six worldly objects. Leaving apart the sense objects, there are no appearances. Leaving apart the knowledge and view, they have no substance. Both of them become entangled falsely with each other in order to form the third layer, the impure defilements.

“Again, all day and night, your mind endlessly arises and falls. The knowledge and views really want to remain in this world, but your karma strongly forces you to rebirth in various realms. Both of them become entangled falsely with each other in order to establish the fourth layer, the impure living beings.

“Your seeing and hearing nature do not originally differ, but due to the many forms of worldly objects, suddenly they become different. In regard to the nature, they have mutual awareness, but in the function, they are different. By losing the identity standards, the similar and the different become entangled falsely in order to establish the fifth layer, the impure lifespan.

“Ānanda, now you hope that your seeing, hearing, touching, and knowing are united with the Tathāgata’s

characteristics on the permanence, happiness, true self, and purity. Firstly, you must exclude the root of birth and death by relying on the neither-produced-nor-extinguished mind, to reach the tranquil nature everywhere.

“By using the tranquility, you take the illusory arising and falling to be the enlightenment. After obtaining the luminous enlightenment that is neither produced nor extinguished, you take this as the main cause for practice. You are able to gain the great result of the enlightenment. For example, the muddy water in a container is kept so long that it becomes still. The sand drops down to the bottom so that clear water appears. That is called the initial conquering of the worldly defilements. There is only the pure water which is called the ‘totally without fundamental ignorance.’ When the transparent appearance is really pure, then whatever functions are performed, they do not cause the defilements, and must accord with the wonderful virtues of Nirvana.”⁷²

The Buddha taught that once we know where the enemy is, then we can transform them in order that we can enjoy safety and peace. For example, the grass must be uprooted for the flowers to bloom; if we want to have clear water, we must let the dust, soil, and ash settle down to the bottom, and then

⁷² The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 345–347.

the water is purified. Sandy turbidity makes water dirty or unclean, that is, we must purify the cause-conditions (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) of ignorance and avoid recognizing it as ourselves.

Let's see where the upside-down ignorance stays in order for us to uproot it. According to the Buddha's teachings, there are two upside-down ignorances:

The innate ignorance (avijjā, basic, root) and the subordinate ignorance (branch, part).

The innate ignorance is also called the three subtleties, while the subordinate ignorance is called six unsubtleties.

Three subtleties are the innate ignorance, the transforming ignorance, and the forming ignorance. Six unsubtleties (six sense faculties, six arising flesh organs) are the subordinate ignorance.

According to the *Awakening of Faith Treatise* (Khởi Tín Luận), three subtleties are the karmic ignorance, the vision subject, and the view object.

What is the innate ignorance? Our unique nature is called the everlasting Dharma Realm. Because it had wanted to brighten the enlightenment, it started to distinguish something, and then the false illumination and the false awareness arose. When the mind wants to discriminate, it sees something different from itself. Because of this delusion, it is divided into duality (the active subject and the passive object, the seeing subject and the object is seen, the spiritual and the material, the

karma subject and the karma environment object). The karma subject is divided into the six sense faculties, such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. According to these six organs, the enlightened nature, which is divided into six functions of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing (the bright ability), follows six organ structures and shapes to shine out six different lights (functions). The karma environment is the object, the outside world, space, land, water, wind, fire, and six sense objects (sight, sound, scent, flavor, touch, and images in the brain). Delusion (samoham) began to generate the same and different which is called the innate ignorance. It also started to transition from a state of true mind to the eighth consciousness (consciousness means delusion). This moved clearly to divide into two which is not called the true mind anymore; it is called the transforming ignorance. The transforming ignorances shifted into the forming ignorance, that is, the world, creature beings, and karma change constantly from subtle to unsubtle without stopping. The forming appears in fullness. The process is shifted from the innate to the transforming to the full shape of the forming ignorance. It is originally the true mind, but now it becomes the root of ignorance to the transformation of ignorance. It was originally the true mind, which now became the eighth consciousness or the ignorance. Due to seeing the space and keeping the dark ignorance, the earth, water, wind, and fire are seen, the seeing subject and object (what is seen) are formed clearly.

Three subtle parts are very complex, only the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who have the insight eyes can experience these states. As ordinary people, it is difficult to be aware of subtleties. We do not even know or experience the movement in our body as nails increase, hair grows, old cells or skin decay away, much less other subtle, abstract, inward movings.

In addition, there is the knowledge of ignorance. We distinguish ourselves to exist. We hear, smell, taste, and realize shapes and know there are sentient beings.

The suffering object is the last object to display. For example, human beings are subjected to eight sufferings.⁷³

The consecutive object: It starts with the distinguished knowledge, and then the suffering of sentient beings, the false mind, and the false environment arise. This environment, which is displayed from the mindstream, is not the external scene. We want to distinguish what is outside, so we see, hear, and taste. That is called the false mind. The seventh consciousness (*matna*) appears to call the consecutive object.

The clinging object: From the seventh consciousness leading to the sixth consciousness, we who go outside to grasp six sense objects, cling to its appearance as identity and misconceive it as real.

⁷³ Eight Sufferings (dukkha (p), duḥkha (s): Birth is dukkha, aging is dukkha, illness is dukkha, death is dukkha; sorrow, lamentation (parideva), pain, grief (soka), and despair are dukkha; association with the unbeloved is dukkha; separation from the loved is dukkha; not getting what is wanted is dukkha. In conclusion, the five clinging aggregates are dukkha.

The clinging label: Because of clinging to craving appearances, we give labels.

In summary, the enlightened nature is divided into two sections: the seeing subject and the object. The seeing subject is the sentient being. My seeing subject is different from A's because I see with my vision and another sees with her vision. Both are different. However, they do not differ from each other because the essence of my and another's seeing are the same. The reality is neither the same nor different; it becomes wearisome to discriminate the false environment. Due to delusion, the space and various things, such as earth, water, wind, fire, the seeing subject, object, sentient beings, and so on, are seen. The stream of mind is fond of seeking and distinguishing all phenomena so much that it is wearisome. Owing to the discrimination, it makes biases on the concepts of selfness and other people (Dharma), then the seventh consciousness (matna) arises. It follows the defilements so insistently and tiredly that it generates the sixth consciousness to cling to worldly phenomena—this is mine or that is theirs.

If it is enlightened, then it must be inherently bright. Why are we curious to explore more, to add more brightness in order to have more learning? A thought of more distinction leads to the appearance of false illumination. To ordinary people, three subtleties (the innate ignorance), transformed ignorance, and the formed ignorance are difficult to understand. Six sense faculties are six unsubtleties. Unsubtle means we can easily recognize it and claim that we are seeing, knowing, and

discriminating with our body. Thinking it from our body is recognized. Learning it from our body is awakened. Buddhas and patriarchs are also looking forward so that we can understand. They just turn this meaning and explain only the difficult matters. If we do not learn it, then it is regretful. Here they are talking about our consciousness from formation to development and continual progress.

Our own body is something which is upside-down crazy, unable to think clearly. We fall in love (*vītadosaṃ*) with this or that person, hate (*sadosaṃ*) the other one, are satisfied with this or that thing and unsatisfied with the other. It is our own idea to allow the wearisome defilements to arise. When there is either greed (*abhijjhā*, *visamalobha*), or anger (*upanāha*, *viddesanā*), it engages deeply the defilements.

Three subtle and six unsubtle are taken to measure the size or level of our delusion from subtle to unsubtle states. Due to ignorance, the dualism between space and earth, water, wind, and fire are seen. Our distinguishing is the insight object, while the continuous discriminating is called the consecutive object. Owing to greed, hatred and delusion, we create karma that turns us to the rebirth cycle. The enlightened nature, which is originally nonproduced, nonextinguished, measureless lifespan and measureless light, is the Amitābha essence of all beings. From this essence, we are following the course of karma to transform into many species in six realms, such as human, animals, ghosts, hell, heaven, and asura (*asurakāya*). We have transitioned from this body to others endlessly. The

false mind is the karmic result—the Buddha preached the falseness of the world and karma.

What is the subordination ignorance? Subordination is the branch. Our delusion is as the branch and top of the leaves. Ignorance is the set of sense bases, the sense objects, and the consciousness that produces three poisons of greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa) and delusion (samohaṃ).

What are the sense organs, objects, and consciousnesses? First, the eyes see the shadows that are called the worldly objects. The sunlight shines to reflect the shadow at the eye nerves of undamaged eyes. According to human karma, thanks to the parents, the school has educated us that this is as a vase. Once we know this is the vase that is an eye-consciousness to be born. The ear-consciousness, the smell-consciousness, the tongue-consciousness, the body-consciousness, and the mind-consciousness are too.

The seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting daily is the sense object; we take the earth, water, wind, and fire to be our body, and then we perceive that the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and Dharma are the outside aspects which stimulate greed, anger, and delusion to arise. From there, we wrongly regard three poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion as our mind. So, the upside-down ignorance has been the root of innate ignorance. We now consider the false thought as our mind. If we want to delete it we must transform. After two poisons of lust and anger ended, now we want to stop the delusion. We who must contemplate the illusory body, avoid regarding this

body as our reality, and stop chasing after conditional or dependent consciousness. Dependence means we prefer the outside conditions of the pretty figure, the sweet voice, the gentle touch, and so on. We chase after seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting. Because of chasing the outside aspects, the mind produces and clings to the three poisons of greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), anger (byāpāda, dosa), and ignorance (avijjā) to lead to the actions of killing, stealing, lusting, and telling lies. So where do the actions of killing, stealing, lusting and telling lies come from?

Next, the five impurities: the Buddha shows that the six sense organs are the main reason for the rebirth flowing. The six senses depend on six worldly objects to arise in six consciousnesses. The eye-consciousness distinguishes sight, the ear-consciousness discriminates sound, the nose-consciousness distinguishes scent, the tongue-consciousness discriminates flavor, the body-consciousness distinguishes feeling, and the mind-consciousness accounts the images in brain. Then, the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion arise. Thus, the six sense organs are the root of six consciousnesses and the birth and death cycle.

In the twelve links of dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda), the contact (*sparsha*) means the touching of faculties and objects which leads to the experience of touching. Next is the feeling. The feelings are pleasure or pain. Suffering creates hatred while attraction produces craving. The craving leads to love, while the

unsatisfied feeling leads to dislike. Then the hate and love arise next with the clinging. The experience of clinging is the insistent holding. We cling to satisfy our senses which causes karma or inflows to be created in the existent realms. From the presence of inflows, it leads next to birth, old age, illness, and death (*jaramaranam*) in the endless rebirth cycle. In twelve links of dependent origination, the Buddha advises us to pay attention to the contacting factor, because it is the main drive that controls us. When the six faculties contact with the six external phenomena, we must train and protect our six faculties in order that we can cut off the branch ignorance.

FIVE IMPURITIES

Because of delusion, space is seen and earth, water, wind, and fire are established as the worldly form (*rūpa*). The form is mixed with false thoughts to create the body, mind, and the outside aspect or five layers of impurities. The impurity means illusion (*samohaṃ*), dirtiness (*amahaggataṃ*), and pain (*dukkha*) which result in impermanence, losses of the eternal reality of the permanence, the pure, the true self, and the joyfulness.

It loses the eternal reality of permanence, because our body and the outside aspect are influenced dominantly by the law of birth, old, illness, death or the discipline of the birth, existence, change, and decay while the Pure Land is not affected by this impermanence.

It loses the joyfulness, because from morning to evening, we often associate with the various negative feelings which

lead us to lamentation (parideva), contempt, jealousy (*issā*), sadness (*soka*), dissatisfaction (*avimuttam*) and so on.

It loses the purity, because our body is dirty, has a bad smell with nine holes to release the impurities. The mind also has impurity, defilement, and craving.

It loses the intrinsic essence, because the body falls ill, the body will decay, it will die. The back and neck are painful. After taking drugs, they will be well. If our body does not recover, then we who sit reciting the Buddha's name, observe how sickness is turmoil. We, who cannot do anything, fail and succumb, unable to control our body. Even we who are able to pay large amounts of money for medical care, still cannot be saved. The body must dissolve and fade away finally without following our wish. These turbidities cover five parts of our body and mind. We can see five layers of ignorance which are called the five impurities:

1. **The impure kalpa:** The root has begun with the Buddha nature pervading throughout the Dharma Realm. This is the non-dual substance of all things. Now, we are falsely on the move in order that we see it to be two: the seeing subject and the object. The fundamental mind without duality is divided in two: spiritual and material. We recognize the spiritual as ourselves while others are not ourselves. This causes the formation of the kalpa turbidity, a false aspect. In the darkness, clinging to the ignorance creates the form which is initially to establish the earth, water, wind, and fire. There is light, that is, there is fire. There appear the pairs of objects,

such as light and dark, motion and stillness, associate and separate, insipid and interesting, touching and non-touching, producing and extinguishment. It means to have the false view (micchā-ditthi) and the worldly objects. Why is it called the kalpa? A kalpa is an aeon or a relatively long period of time. The earth, water, wind, and fire in the space change, so that there are differences among yesterday, today, tomorrow. It is like the past, present, and future to mark the change. Therefore, the day, night, year, month, and time are established for every period of time. It lost the permanent reality of time in order to be the impermanent period.

2. The impure view: Because initially there is space, earth, water, wind, fire, light and darkness, then seeing is created. Because there are motivation and tranquility, then hearing is created. Because there are association and separation, then smelling is created. Because of insipid and interesting, then tasting is created. Because there are touching and non-touching, touching is created. Due to the producing and extinguishment, knowing is created. We have the false environment which is called the skandha form (rūpa). The worst thing is that we cherish the earth, water, wind, fire as our real body. The cycle of life is well illustrated by a house of six doors.⁷⁴ The illusory body is divided into six sense organs, so that it focuses on six objects according. Therefore, the impure view is the false perspective. The worst ignorant feeling is that

⁷⁴ *The Cycle of Life*, pp. 90–91.

we wrongly cherish the earth, water, wind, fire as our real refuge, which is established by the six sense organs and transformed by six sense objects accordingly. We again misconceive the six objects as outside aspects. From youth to old age, day to night, we wrongly attach to the body as our real substance and objects as the external aspects. So, this impure view is the skandha feeling (vedanā). Feeling is to receive something from outside to emotion. The word *skanda* means to prevent or cover the truth. It makes us to forget our true nature.

As a result of attaching to the earth, water, wind, fire and believing it to be our inner skin, bone, body, we consider anything that doesn't belong to ourselves to be outside worldly objects. This impure view is an illusory perception. We are constructing ignorance with the self-clinging as our body. From this body, we created six sense organs, turned out six objects of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch—Dharmas that are the outside aspect. All day, we chase after conditioned things to feel and receive the outside world. This is called the skandha feeling, the impure view. Firstly, we receive this body and then it opens to thousands of instances of receiving in our life, such as receiving health insurance, automobile insurance, emotional life, a nice place to live, fame, a high position, wealth, sickness, and death, and so on. Every life is a school of the feelings. If we recognize that the feeling or receiving are faulty it forces us to fall down into the suffering saṃsāra. The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* referred to it as the illusory thoughts. We perceive that there are our bodies, communities, saṅghas,

pagodas, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, Dharmas, and everything which seems to appear in front of our eyes, but in fact these are the illusionary shadows or feelings (vedanā) which are called the false bright thoughts. We are receiving rice to eat, water to drink, air to breathe, which is called the impure view. Do we realize our view is illusory? We accept that we are eating noodles, drinking juice, breathing air in order to maintain this body. We prefer to get the jacket, precepts, offerings, nice things, reverence, and so on to promote our self-esteem. This is an impure false body and the wrong view (micchā-ditthi). It cannot lead us to the right way or to enlightenment as the spoilt eggs which are rotten cannot produce babies.

3. The impure defilements (kleśa): Inwardly, all day and night, we have attached to the earth, water, wind, fire as the physical substance or the dwelling body of ourselves. Then outwardly, we look out at six worldly aspects of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, and Dharma as the external aspect, so that we start to calculate the beneficence or unbeneficence, good or bad, and so on. It opens the doors for the three poisons of the greed, anger and wrong view and is called the impure affliction. It is illusory thought but we have wrongly attached to the greed, hatred and delusion as our mind. The defilements burn us all the time, so much that we are uneasy, uncomfortable, and unpeaceful. For example, we become agitated and unconcentrated because of various feelings of like, dislike, sad, happy, and so on. For example, I am very angry; I

like this, I hate the other and so forth. Thus, the Buddha called it the impure defilements. Connected to five skandhas, it belongs to the skandha thinking.

Therefore, the first ignorance is the illusory environment (the turbidity of time).

The second ignorance is the false body (the turbidity of view). The third ignorance is the false mind (the turbidity of affliction).

The Buddha recognizes these three illusions (samoham) clearly. He is aware that this life is temporary, fragile, and unreal. Hence, he and the Saṅgha do not take much time to worry about what to wear, what to eat, how to decorate the teeth, the hair, and so forth. The image of ancient monks is that they walked on foot, shaved their hair, lived a simple life in order to have time to return to their true nature. These images are a great role model for us on the way to be pure and enlightened.

4. The impure living beings: We are full of the illusory environment, body, and mind. Because there is such a false mind, all day and night lust, hatred and delusion arise which cause killing, stealing, and lying. Due to many karmic causes, the consciousness store follows karma to transform into retribution, so we are subjected to having a body.

Because of the turbidity of view, we are ignorant every day and require eating this food, other dishes, buying many kinds of drinking water in the refrigerator for next days, breathing air, collecting the outside earth, water, wind, fire, and

receiving the outside sunlight and so forth to create blood, flesh, and accepting this body as ourselves.

The false view (micchā-ditthi) is a misconception that this body is our real reality and we must protect it. We must eat and drink, take care to preserve the body. We want to form the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and so on in order to feel six worldly objects. So at any cost, our body and mind must try to compose the body by the earth, water, wind and fire, so there is the body as our wish.

The Buddha preached it profoundly; we feel brokenhearted to experience it. The earth, water, wind, and fire do not exist a long time. They will follow the rule of birth, old age, sickness, and death (jaramaranam) and fade away, then again return in another form. We insistently seek for the body due to the karmic course. Today we have the human (manussa) body; tomorrow it may be the animal (tiracchānayani) body, such as snakes, dragonflies, butterflies, lizards, and so on. It transforms forever in six realms.

Due to the karmic force, when a dog is embodied, we wrongly take the dog figure as our real body. When a human is manifested, we perceive it as ourselves. When a heavenly being is presented, we get it as the ego. When a ghost is embodied, we regard it as our body, and so on.

With any species, we are wrongly clinging to the flesh body of earth, water, wind, fire as ourselves. However, any

body of twelve species⁷⁵ is illusory, fragile, and decays in a short time, so it is called the impure living being. In regard to five skandhas, the impure living beings belong to the skandha volition formation (sankhara). Because the skandha formation is constantly movable and changeable in the subtle course, ordinary people cannot see it, so it is called the subtle illusory force.

The karmic retribution turns around whenever we must receive any body which we cherish as ourselves. As a human being, we cling to earth, water, wind, fire as our ego (matna) that is called a living being. “Beings” are the large number, “living” means to form a sentient or insentient being. Previously, if we embody as a cow, cat, dog, and so forth, we would cling to the earth, water, wind and fire in the cow, cat, or dog’s flesh as ourselves, living beings. If we are awakened, we do not cling to earth, water, wind, fire as our reality, and then the living beings are not existent. Our bodies are changing at every moment. They decay, then they continuously transform to another body without stopping, so it is called the skandha formation. Owing to the formation skandha, the karma transfigures endless in the saṃsāra world.

We try our best to protect and nourish the body for longevity. Our knowing is to secure the body, feed it, let it

⁷⁵ Twelve beings: As a result of two crazy causes of worlds and living beings, there are twelve beings: 1. Egg, 2. Womb, 3. Moisture, 4. Transformation, 5. Material, 6. Immaterial, 7. Thought, 8. Without Thought, 9. Neither material, 10. Neither immaterial, 11. Neither thought, 12. Neither without thought.

wear warm clothes, and take care it carefully in order that it can maintain a life as long as possible.

How does our knowledge want to live long in the world but the “retribution of karma” forces us away to other realms? At present, the impure body in the saṃsāra realm comes from the passion cause. There is a saying that “Without the craving, without giving birth in the saha world.” Cats and dogs, rats, and snakes are unclean. We cherish the small puppy with a gentle or loving touch, but we do not know that under the whitish, brown fur, there are foul-smelling things. If a tiny insect bites the puppy, but it cannot utter a suffering word. Now we recite Amitābha Buddhas’ name to keep three karmas (body, speech, and mind) out of impurity so that we become pure. When this impure body gets older, gets sick and dies, then the pure body in the Pure Land will appear.

5. The impure lifespans: After having received the body of a living being as ourselves, if we are still breathing, eating, talking, laughing, living, going, coming, and so on, we are called existent. If the body does not exist anymore, six sense organs and six consciousnesses fade away, and then the life is endless. The lifespan of a hen is about six months, the lifespan of a pig is about three years, the life duration of a dog is about ten years, and lifespan of humans is about eighty years, and so forth. So, we receive the lifespan of an impermanent body of earth, water, wind, fire. This is called the impure lifespan.

The turbidity of a lifespan belongs to the consciousness store which is too subtle and too difficult to understand. It is

called the distinctly subtle thought.

Because we insistently cling to the produced-extinguished time, we forget the nature of non-produced, non-extinguished, the essence of infinite life which we are living. The reality of infinite life is not bothered or related to any substance of the body of earth, water, wind, and fire. The fundamental infinite life has existed for a long time as space. We should learn the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* to become aware of who we are and our real nature pervading over the Dharma realm, which is not connected with the body of earth, water, wind, and fire.

The four-element body is collected and then soon it fades away, but our Buddha nature is unmovingly permanent and does not need to collect because it is ever full.

The essence of infinite life is unshakable and independent of outside objects. If there is a sound or a form, it will present the hearing or seeing ability. If there is no-sound or no-form, it still is aware of the states of no-sound or no-form. The Buddha nature is still unmoving and independent while the sounds, forms, perfumes, bad smells, sweet and sour, hot and cold, and so forth manifest a short time and then fade away, so they are not related to our inherent Buddha nature. Until the false mind of loving *abhiḥhā*, *visamalobha* or hate (*byāpāda*, *dosa*), joyfulness (*avimuttam*) or anger (*kodha*), which is just the illusory habit (*samohaṃ*), the deluded practice just suddenly emerges and then in a short time fades away. But, the Buddha nature reflects with insight as the love arises, the hate

presents, then the love disappears, the hate ends as passing guests. Our Buddha essence remains in the freedom permanence, and independence.

THE SECOND THEME: DEEPLY CONTEMPLATING THE FUNDAMENTAL DEFILEMENT

In the second deciding meaning, if you definitely wish to develop the bodhi mind and great courage in the Bodhisattva Vehicle, you must surely transform all conditioned appearances. You should inspect carefully the fundamental defilement (kleśa), the ignorance (avijjā) creating the karma and the beginningless rebirth. Who makes it and who suffers from it?

“Ānanda, you are practicing the bodhi way. If you do not carefully contemplate the fundamental defilement, you cannot be aware where the false organs and objects are upside down? If you don't even know its location, how can you control it to attain the Tathāgata position?

“Ānanda, you see in life, people want to open a knot. If they can't see the knot's place, how can they untie it? But I have never heard that the space is destroyed. Why? Because the space has no appearance; thus it does not have a knot to open. But now your six faculties, such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are as matchmakers for the thieves to rob the jewels from your house. Since beginningless time, living beings in the world have been bonded together, so that cannot be transcended in the

material world.”⁷⁶

How do we contemplate thoroughly the fundamental affliction, i.e., the root of birth and death? We must consider where we are upside down. If we can't see where the knot is, how can we untie it? If we cannot see where upside down is, how can we catch the thieves? If we consider where the thieves are, we can tame them. When we tame the thieves, we will enjoy safety. For example, if a gardener is planting dahlias, she must uproot the wild grass. If the wild grass grows everywhere, our flowers will not grow. Also, we must consider thoroughly the afflictions to uproot. We have five skandhas, such as form, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra called them the five turbidities (amahaggaṭaṃ), five deluded thoughts (samohaṃ) or five ignorances (avijjā). We only avoid receiving these five things as us when our job of practicing is done. If we are aware of the fundamentals of birth and death, the five turbidities, the deluded thoughts, we let them pass away without regret. That is called contemplating thoroughly the fundamental affliction. It is very simple but has a great effect.

The way of transforming and eliminating the root of affliction (kleśa) is not just to cut off the top of the root of five skandhas (*pañca-skandha, pañca-khandha*), because it will still remain and then the grass will grow again with conditioned things. The affliction must be uprooted completely. If we

⁷⁶ The Śūraṅgama Sūtra, pp. 353–54.

insistently regard the five skandhas as our body, as well as mind, then the defilements will still disturb us. If we recognize this body to be composed of four illusory elements (earth, water, wind, and fire), it is not our real reality. So, it does not matter to our Buddha essence when this body presents or decays. We will feel calm with any expression of compliment, admiration, or criticism, because we experience that this body will fade away tomorrow; everything is unreal. Every time six organs face six objects, we must pay attention mindfully to keep tranquility independent, so that the shadow of illusory thoughts (*samohaṃ*) will fade away. If we keep such a way, gradually we will attain the experience of awakening totally. That is to transform the skandha form.

Once we are aware that the body is deluded, we continue being calm, independent, and stable; we are not bothered by the outside. We realize that when we attain independence, we will be freed from suffering and joyfulness. Therefore, there is no feeling or receiving. That is to transform the skandha of receiving. Because the skandha feeling is empty, we do not cling to it anymore. Once there is no pain or joyfulness, then the perception of having hated, having fun and anger become empty which transforms the skandha to perceive (*saṃjñā, saññā*). Once we are aware that form, feeling, and thinking are illusory, and that the formation is moving, our nature is tranquil. That is to transform the skandha volition (*saṃskāra, saṅkhāra*).

If we are not governed by form, feeling, thinking, and formation, we do not have the consciousness that transforms the skandha consciousness (*viññāna*, *viññāṇa*). In brief, we have only the job of practicing to be mindfully independent and peaceful.

We want to know where the knot is, that is our six sense faculties and nothing else. Every time we wake up, our eyes or six sense organs are opened wide and we see the external sense objects. The mind immediately distinguishes good and bad. Thus, as soon the feelings of lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*soka*), love (*trishna*), and hate (*sadosaṃ*) arise, then it quickly becomes a firm knot. When we realize that six faculties and six objects are illusory, we do not tie and the knot will release naturally. The knot is tied at the six sense organs, therefore we must tame it at the six sense organs. That is how we know to cure the sickness.

Fortunately, the defiled ignorance (*avijjā*) or the spiritual trouble is unreal, an illusion, and we just need to be awakened, we do not grasp it. Let it release, because we are originally the fundamental bodhi, the unlimited light, and the infinite lifespan.

We return to our essences of permanence, peace, true self, purity, joyfulness, and happiness. So, to learn Dharma, there is not anything else. Let the defilements release, because our nature is fundamentally Buddhahood, and now the only thing is letting it go away. If we feel uncomfortable, agitated,

with hate, please just let it release. Avoid saying that “I am angry, disturbed and defiled.”

Deep contemplation means we understand thoroughly the five layers of turbidities, five levels of afflictions, or five layers of ignorance. The deep contemplation is to avoid accepting it as ourselves. All day and night, we wrongly grasp it as ourselves and we continue on the dark way without awakening.

The Buddha advises us to select the correct cause for cultivating. Let us practice the correct basis, and then the correct result for becoming the Buddha will come. In contrast, if we live for illusion, of course the result will be distracted. This is the ultimate doctrine, the absolute teachings of the Buddha in order to help us to realize our true mind.

The Buddha preached about *śamatha* to show two decisive themes on mutual cause and effect. It reminds us to understand thoroughly the fundamental bodhi to uproot the affliction, that is, we must be awakened to cut off the origin of birth and death.

THE PERCEPTION CREATING THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE PERCEPTION WITHOUT SEEING

“At that time, the World-Honored One felt pity on Venerable Ānanda and the inflowing (srava) students in the assembly, as well as future creature beings. He expounded the holy transcendent cause for attaining the Dharma eyes for the time to come. He gently touched Venerable Ānanda's head with his jambunada purple-golden bright hand. Then, all the world quaked in six ways. Tathāgatas in

ten directions are as numberless as the molecules. At each land, from the head of each Buddha emitted the precious light. At the same time, the glory light also shined on the Jeta Garden and reached to the crown of the Thus-Come One's head. All attendees in the great assembly experienced what they had never experienced before.

“Meanwhile, Venerable Ānanda and attendees in the Great Assembly heard tathāgatas who were as countless as molecules in ten directions, with different mouths but in a single voice, spoke to Ānanda: ‘Sadhu! Sadhu! Ānanda! Your innate ignorance is the main knot that causes your turning in the rebirth wheel. This knot is your six sense-organs and nothing else. You also want to experience the ultimate bodhi in order that soon you can attain the wonderful happiness, liberation, tranquility, and permanence. It is also exactly your six sense-organs and nothing else.’ ”⁷⁷

In the past, we had the image of the Buddha as something who lives on a far higher plane. If the Buddha is as a saint living on a high cloud and blesses us who are down in the mundane world, we can easily believe it. However, now we can see that the Buddha is at our ears, eyes, or or six sense bases which is extremely unbelievable. In the first period (Theravāda) of spreading Buddhism, the Buddha used to

⁷⁷ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 385–386.

declare that the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue of this body are sick, dirty, and illusory. Now in the Śūraṅgama of the Mahāyāna period, the Buddha starts to point out the true Buddha essence at our six deluded faculties.

We remember in the introduction of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, Venerable Ānanda tearfully begged the Buddha to teach the samāpatti method to escape rebirth in saṃsāra. The Buddha questioned him, where is the mind for admiring the thirty-two good characteristics of the Buddha and the beauty of Matangi? Venerable Ānanda replied that it is inside the body. Buddha rebuked this, saying that it is only the false thought, the enemy and the eyes, as well as the body, are the matchmaker for the enemy of false thought to enter. All these things are reincarnation.

Thus, it is the Buddha himself who correctly clarified that the false thought is the path of reincarnation. Now the Buddha declares that the enemy (the false thought) and the matchmaker (six faculties) are also the way of salvation, and are the place where the Buddha got enlightenment. In fact, it is very difficult to understand and feels hard to believe.

The Buddha's word is as follows:

The perception creating the knowledge is the original ignorance (avijjā).

The perception without seeing is Nirvana (Nibbāna).

“Ānanda, you want to know the innate ignorance (the basic ignorance) is the root of the knot that makes you

continually move within the cycle of birth and death. This ignorance is your six sense organs, not other things. You also want to know the superior bodhi way which brings the fruits of the tranquility salvation and permanence is also your six sense faculties, not the other.”⁷⁸

The perception creating the knowledge is the basic ignorance: Origin of birth and death is due to the perception creating the knowledge. The knowledge is the knowing of the sixth consciousness, that is, the mental consciousness. The seeing is the knowing of the first consciousness, that is, the eye consciousness. All six functions of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or knowing, are called perception.

The perception creating the knowledge: According to the functions of the seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting with six worldly objects of sight, sound, scent, flavor, and so on created the knowing. Whenever we are attached to our knowledge as a holding that is called “creating the knowledge,” and because we grasp it as real, that is the root of ignorance.

As we are now seeing, the eyes see the flask of flowers, which we consider as real. Seeing the masses of people sitting here, we think it is true. Because we feel it as real, that it is the original ignorance.

Because of the previous five impurities, the Buddha confirmed that:

The first ignorance: we appreciate the scene as real (the

⁷⁸ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 353–354.

impure kalpa).

The second ignorance: we identify the body as real (the impure view).

The third ignorance: we apprehend the mind as real (the impure defilement).

It must be contemplated that this is the eye that comes from a karmic retribution of human (manussa) beings, so the images seen here are following the karmic retribution of the human being. Once it is called karma, it is not true. We are deceived by karma; we make up the knowledge as the truth. We forget that we are wearing the eyeglasses, the karmic glasses, which is untrue. By the deceitful karmic cause, we are deluded and compete, winning and losing every day, every night and throughout our lifetime. This is the root of ignorance.

We forget and follow the black karmas, thus it must be ignorance. Every dog, cat, animal (tiracchānayoni), heavenly being (deva), hell (niraya) can see according to their karmic retribution. They all are the karmic shapes, not truths and we wrongly take our knowledge as real. Once we create the knowledge as real, that is, there is the blind, ignorant, elder lady walking in the woods of the skull as the book *Cycle of Life* illustrated so well.⁷⁹

So how do we adjust our seeing to be true? In the first twelve years of teaching, the Buddha expounded the Āgama doctrine to contemplate that karma of all species is illusory

⁷⁹ *The Cycle of Life*, pp. 77–78.

(samohaṃ). After awakening to the impermanent nature of phenomena, let go of the body, mind, and scene to receive the permanent true essence of seeing and hearing at the body. That is the meaning of the later developed *Mahāyāna Sūtra*.

The perception without seeing is Nirvana (Nibbāna):
What is the meaning of “without seeing”? We reflect with insight on the body, mind, and scene as illusory. Seeing is as without seeing. We, who must be aware mindfully, avoid letting it dominate, obscure, and deceive us, because this is a false image of reality. We must calm our spiritual practice, prevent the outside scene from deceiving us so that we do not lose our autonomy and self control. We do not accept the enemy as our child; we avoid accepting slaves as our real blood sons in order that we do not regretfully bear the suffering. This means that we are in Nirvana state.

Although living with humans, wearing six sense organs of human beings, we are still in Nirvana, because we experience that all phenomena is illusory. Such a seeing is so insightful.

Now we learn the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, where the Buddha confirms that the path of liberation and the path of fetter are at the six sense bases. We must remember the figures that show up that is the karmic work of mankind, not our real substance; therefore we prevent creating the knowledge about it. These attendees in the assembly appear due to their karma, while the truth is that ourselves and the public listeners are all the Buddha nature.

If in the group here, there is a person who shows his anger (byāpāda, dosa), foolishness (avijjā), arrogance (atimāna), pride (*mada*), provocation (*sārambha*), or jealousy (issā) to us, then we should realize that these figures are just dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) appearing falsely, but its original nature is the inherent Buddha essence. The perception without seeing: receiving but without receiving, seeing but without seeing, because they are all deluded (samohaṃ). Therefore, we do not mind if people are annoying or stubborn (*thambha*). We are not sad when people misunderstand. Just mindfully drop the falseness lightly down and keep our mind awakened.

The Buddha knowledge means our seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing. If we live with the nature of seeing, hearing or knowing, it means we live with the inherent Buddha nature. If we live with the eye-consciousness, we are inclined to the knowledge of human beings. The Buddha view is at the sense organs. The Buddha pointed it out clearly and we ourselves have received, learned, and understood it already. The Buddha knowledge is the nature of our seeing, hearing, or knowing. If we live with the nature of seeing, then we become the Buddha. If we live with the eye-consciousness, the ear-consciousness, the nose-consciousness, the tongue-consciousness, the body-consciousness, and the mental consciousness, we are sentient beings, going toward the sentient beings' knowledge.

The Buddha was enlightened to the ultimate, so he

showed his absolute experience to us, that is, he revealed the Buddha knowledge by saying, "Gradually opening to reach to the ultimate salvation of tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena)." The Buddha pointed out the seeing essence to be not only at six sense organs, but also at the five skandhas, six entries, twelve bases, eighteen realms, and seven elements which all are the permanent wonderful tathāgatas.

The Buddha nature not only manifests the wonderful functions at the six sense organs, but also at the five skandhas, six entries, twelve places, eighteen realms, and seven elements, even at a stream, grass, flower, branch, cup, or glass, and so forth. Wherever there is land, water, wind, fire, these places are all tathāgatagarbha. The Buddha reveals to us that all phenomena are the Buddha essence.

The Buddha reiterated this many times and he thought that we may still not believe it, so he urged the Buddhas in ten directions to confirm this statement about the Buddha nature: **“Meanwhile, Venerable Ānanda and attendees in the Great Assembly heard tathāgatas who were as countless as molecules in ten directions, with different mouths but in a single voice, speak to Ānanda: ‘Sadhu! Sadhu! Ānanda! You want to know your innate ignorance is the main knot to cause you turning in the rebirth wheel, which is your six sense organs and nothing else. You also want to experience the ultimate bodhi in order that soon you can attain the wonderful happiness, liberation, tranquility, and**

permanence. It is also exactly your six sense organs and nothing else.’ ”⁸⁰

From their realms, countless Buddhas uttered their confirmation. It was not the Sambhoga Buddha or the vivacious voices flying in vain, but the real Buddhas from their realms who shined their halos to expound the ultimate doctrine. With different mouths but in a single voice they declared that saṃsāra and Nirvana are at our six sense-organs.

The Tathāgatas released the halo to the whole assembly in order that they could witness with their eyes and ears, and accurately proclaim this abstract complex spiritual nature, so that there is no doubt anymore.

And yet, after waiting for the Tathāgatas to finish their lecturing, Shakyamuni Buddha summarized it with a long verse to explain how the rebirth and Nirvana are at the six sense bases. When we are alive, the six basic organs are activities. Once the six units are not working anymore, this is called death. All our lives depend on six faculties. Each thought starts to incline toward the cycle of saṃsāra. We are only calm, not require laboring hard at all, do not do anything too deep, we only realize the sense of true identity and then settle in our Buddha nature. That is Nirvana. In contrast, it is the saṃsāra world.

The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* has accurately and carefully declared that saṃsāra and Nirvana are at our six sense organs.

⁸⁰ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 385–386.

Why it is so thorough? This is incredibly hard, but it is real. Luckily, we have the Buddha seed at our six flesh faculties. Please put forth effort and use your abilities!

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER VI

Chapter VI is an introduction to śamatha, the technique to distinguish between falseness and trueness. There are two main determinants of reflecting the enlightened (bodhi) root and the fundamental defilements (kleśa). Firstly, when practicing, we use the arising-falling mind as the main cause to gain the neither-arising-nor-falling fruit of the Buddha-yāna which is impossible. Secondly, we have to filter out all ignorant seeds (root and branch), and not accept it as ourselves again. We must transform five impurities (kalpa, view, defilement, lifespan and living beings) into five purities. We must know the knot to untie it.

The inborn ignorance is the beginning knot that causes rebirth, which comes from the six sense organs. If we want to cultivate the supreme bodhi, we must practice from six sense bases too. The perception creating the knowledge is the basic ignorance (avijjā). The perception without seeing is Nirvana.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is *śamatha*?
2. Explain the “bodhi root.”
3. Please describe five impurities.
4. Why is it said: “Six sense faculties are birth-death and are Nirvana too”?
5. Please explain: “Perception creating knowledge is the basic ignorance. Perception without seeing is Nirvana.”

CHAPTER VII

THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA PRECEPTS

In the great assembly, for the sake of the future living beings, Venerable Ānanda, whose mind was absolutely clear, had a mix of feelings of delight and sorrow. He adjusted his robes, touched his palms together, and prostrated to present to the Buddha that **“The greatly compassionate World-Honored One, I already realized the Dharma-door to become a Buddha. I practiced throughout without any doubt. I often heard Tathāgata teach that ‘Firstly save others which is the Bodhisattva mind. When you attain perfectly your own enlightenment, then you can enlighten others which are the application in the world of the Tathagatas.’ I am not saved yet, but I am willing to have a vow to save all living beings in the period of Dharma ending.**

“World-Honored One, those living beings are far away from the Buddha. There must have been as many heretics as sands in the Ganges to expound their wrong views (micchā-ditthi). If I want to tame those heretics to

enter samādhi, how can I cause them to form a bodhimanda to keep away the evil works and to preserve the irreversible mind for bodhi?

“At that time, the World-Honored One complimented Venerable Ānanda in front of the whole assembly by saying ‘Sadhu! Sadhu! Now you ask how to form a bodhimanda to protect living beings, who are sunk in the period of Dharma ending. Pay attention to it carefully, because of you, I expound it now.’ Venerable Ānanda and the great assembly respectfully upheld the great teaching of the Buddha.

“The Buddha told Ānanda, ‘You often hear me explaining in the Vinaya that there are three decisive aspects for serious practice, such as focusing on the mind and keeping strictly the precepts; from the precepts, then the samādhi arises, and out of samādhi, then wisdom is produced. These are called the Three Outflowing Studies.’ ”

POINTING OUT THE DECISION TO DESTROY LUST

“Ānanda, why do I call focusing on the mind the precepts?

If in the six realms, existent beings do not have sexual intercourse, they will not follow the consecutive course of birth and death.

“You want to practice samādhi to overcome the tiring defilements (kleśa). If you don't give up your desire, you will not get out of the worldly defilements.

“If a practitioner attains the samādhi insight, but has not cut off lust (sarāgaṃ), then he must enter the realms of evil spirits. At the highest level, he becomes a demon king; at the middle, he becomes a demonic citizen, and at the lowest level, he is a female demon. These demons have their disciples. Each announces that he fulfilled the unsurpassed way.

“After my passing away, in the Dharma-ending period, there will be many vigorous demonic groups like wildfire in the world who will engage in sexual lust, pretend to be good friends, and cause sentient beings to fall into the deep hole of craving views and lose the bodhi way.

“When you guide people in the world to cultivate samādhi, firstly they must transform all the lust in their thoughts. This is the first decisive pure instruction of the Tathāgatas, Buddhas, and World-Honored Ones.

“Thus, Ānanda, if a practitioner does not cut off the lust (sarāgaṃ) to cultivate samādhi, it is as impossible as cooking sand in the hope of getting rice. After spending hundreds of thousands of kalpas, it will become just hot sand or hot stone. Why? It is only a seed of sand or stone and is not rice to begin with.

“If you take the physical lustful seed to the Buddha's wonderful fruition, even if you obtain a marvelous awareness, it will be a lustful root. The root becomes desire, you must be subjected in three paths and do not get out of it. Which way do you take to cultivate reaching the

Tathāgatas' Nirvana? You must destroy the desire at both body and mind. Even in the mind the tendency must end, then you can reach the bodhi fruit of the Buddha.

“What I have said here is the Buddha's word. Any opposed word is the teaching of Papiyan Demon.”⁸¹

“Why is focusing on the mind the precepts?”

The *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra* narrates the story that when the devas offer flowers to Venerable Sāriputta and Upasaka Vimalakīrti, Venerable Sāriputta instantly brushes them down, because he knows that in the precepts, it is prohibited to use flowers or incense powder to decorate body. However, how strange it is! The more Venerable Sāriputta sweeps it off, the more the flowers cling on his shoulders. While Upasaka Vimalakīrti sits silently without action, the flowers fall down naturally. The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is an ultimate sūtra of the Mahāyāna Buddhism system that emphasizes the mind more than form. Therefore, if the mind likes flowers, attaches to flowers, then the act instantly brushes them down; while the bodhisattva who is freed or detached from the six sense objects, realizes the flowers are illusory, does not cling to the flowers, then they fall effortlessly down.

Here too, is focusing on the mind the precepts? The mind is awakened that six sense faculties are illusory, six sense objects are deluded, and six consciousnesses are falseness, then our mind focuses at one point without losing or sinking into

⁸¹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 549–554.

cravings. The state of focusing on the awakened mind is called the precepts of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

In the first precept, the Buddha taught that if we cultivate samādhi, but lust has not been deleted, then we cannot escape the law of birth and death. Even if we luckily attain some levels of wisdom, we will become demonic kings, evil spirit citizens, or female demons.

This is the cause-effect (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) in six desire heavenly realms (kāmasugati-bhūmi). The cause to be born in heaven belongs to the present life in which a person should cultivate meditation, ten precepts, and charity and still have sexual conduct with his/her partner.

Now we get through the Buddha's teachings on the causes and effects of six Heavenly Sensual Pleasure Realms ⁸² as follows:

1. *Four Heavenly Kings (tāvatiṃsa, tettiṃsā):* These heavenly beings still have sexual conduct with the wife or husband, but it does not prohibit. Their minds are bright. After death, they will reborn to live near the sun and the moon.

2. *Traystrimsah Heavenly Realm (tāvatiṃsa, tettiṃsā):* These heavenly beings have less sexual conduct with the spouse and favor dwelling as a tranquil resident. Their minds are bright. After death, they will reborn to live at the top of the human world, over the sun and the moon.

⁸² The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 721–722.

3. *The Suyama Heavenly Realm (Yāmā)*: These heavenly beings little remember or think about the love of intercourse, and are more static with less action. Their minds are bright. After death, they will reborn in the place where the sun and the moon cannot shine.

4. *Tushita Heavenly Realm (tusita)*: These heavenly beings live always in a static state, but the emotions are still dominant. After death, they will reborn in the subtle place where the destroyed kalpa and three disasters of the heaven and human (manussa) worlds cannot reach.

5. *The Blissful Transforming Heavenly Beings (nimmānaratī)*: These heavenly beings have no lust in their mind even they must meet the need, but it is as tasteless as wax. Destiny is born in the scene of transformation.

6. *The Transforming Heavenly Beings of the Comfort from Others (paranimmitavasavattī)*: These heavenly beings do not have the worldly mind, only the five sensual pleasures with the world, but they arise to detach it. After death, they will reborn in the place of modified and unmodified scenes.

The form of six heavenly realms has less motion but their hearts are still attached to five desires. From the heavens downward is called the *Sensual Pleasure World*.

This sixth celestial realm has human beings, animals (tiracchānayani), hungry ghosts (pittivisaya), and hells (niraya). It is the Sensual Pleasure World (kāmasugati-bhūmi). It is heavily influenced by the craving for sex (sarāgaṃ).

The Two Chanting Complements and the Supreme Dharma Treatise (Nhị khoá hiệp giải và Thắng pháp tập yếu luận) taught that the lifespan of heavenly beings is generally equivalent to hundreds of thousands of billions of years in human beings, because they have blessed merit and meditative power. However, despite that their living span is rather long they will eventually fade away and fall down to the lust realms.

We see the sixth heaven realm of the Transforming Heavenly Beings of the Comfort from Others (*paranimmitavasavattī*) “where there is no worldly mind, they only do five sensual pleasures as the need arises, but in their mind arises the wearisome or detachment.” These heavenly being have reduced the desire because they feel bothered by the five sensual pleasures, such as property, beauty, fame, food, and sleep of the world. This is the main cause, the preparing state for them to pass from the sensual pleasures realms (*kāmasugati-bhūmi*) if he wants to move forward to the heavenly form and immaterial worlds. The two heavenly material (*rūpāvācāra-bhūmi*) and immaterial (*arūpāvācāra-bhūmi*) worlds are freed from five desires, but they are still subjected by form and meditation (The meditation is the four *dhyāna* and the four nothingness. It is not the ultimate Śūraṅgama *samādhi*, i.e., the absolute permanent solid concentrating force of our mind).

If a person puts forth much effort to meditate but lustful thoughts remain, then depending on its desire level, he will be

reborn in different realms:

- a. At the highest level, one will be a demon king.
- b. At an average level, one will be a demonic citizen.
- c. At the lowest level, one will be a female demon.

These demons and spirits have their disciples. Each declares that he has accomplished the unsurpassed way. After the Tathāgata's passing away, in the Dharma-ending age, the evil spirits will pretend to be the good friend, causing living beings to fall into the pit of craving views (self-ness, māna) and losing way to bodhi.

Why does the Buddha raise sexual intercourse up as the first important precept for monks or nuns (śrāvaka's vinaya) and the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* also promotes it as the first precept? There are some reasons:

Karma ties to this body are expressed by the root of *ignorance* (avijjā). Because of the impure view, we think this body is our true body, therefore the whole day and night we, who are busy eating drinking, clinging to the outside earth, water, wind, and fire, breathe the air, and recharge with sunlight. Then, we mix all of these parts to compose the flesh, skin, blood, and bones to form a body which is the root of ignorance.

In regard to other ignorance, once we are tricked into seeing this body as real, then we have no mind to find what our true essence is. We just blindly follow whatever view our grandparents, father, or mother handed down. To accept having

a body, getting married, earning a living, giving birth, ageing, illness, death, we are going down hole of impermanence.

We do not know the truth of what we are, so that we wander to collect the earth, water, wind, and fire as our body. It is delusion (samoham) that is the root of ignorance.

Craving our body is unwise, but now we attach to another body (even the same or opposite gender) to get married and be bound for love. This delusion is worse. This person loves that person's mind; that person adores this person's beauty. Due to this dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda), we have been mutually entangled through hundreds of thousands of aeons.

In regard to consecutive karma, the Buddha taught that **“The beloved thoughts become bound with one another, so that people who love each other cannot bear to be apart. As a result, the world has seen the endless successive births of parents, children, and grandchildren. This group takes the lustful mind as the root.”**⁸³

Taking the lustful mind as the root means that person is very attached to sexual pleasures. There is a saying, “If craving does not arise, it is not reborn in the world.” If one is without craving, we will not have rebirth in this world, so from the impure seed and the unclean root we come into being.

The patriarchs added that “In this world there is only one sexuality, but if there are two things there is no one in the

⁸³ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 292.

world to be able to cultivate. If we attach to something that causes the sexual desire (sarāgam), how can we attain the unsurpassed bodhi?”

The precept of sexual conduct is the most difficult precept. It prevents many diligent, devoted Buddhists from entering a homeless or monastic life. Some monks must leave the holy life to disrobe with painful regret.

The Buddha taught very carefully that not only the body must not break this precept, but also the mind must be prohibited from thinking it. Cultivators who do not cut off lust cannot get out of the deluded way. They are as a silkworm which releases its cocoon silk inside and binds itself in the net prison. People often think of sexual pleasures like someone who cooks sand in the hope of getting rice—there is only the hot sand. After hundreds of thousands of aeons, it will still be hot sand.

If we take this sexual foolishness as the fundamental for cultivation, it is only the root of lust and then we must be propelled into three realms—there is no way out. The bodhi way is never attained for such a person. The delusion and awakening, which are similar to light and darkness, cannot present at the same time. That why the Buddha sincerely advises us that regardless if it's Pure Land or Zen school, when a person cultivates the salvation, the first thing is to free ourselves from the root of this sexual ignorance. Not only cutting off lust, but also not thinking of it. The tendency of cutting the lust must end in our mind. We should remember

that process of pureness. The Śūraṅgama precept is very difficult; we must keep it pure as transparent ice. Because it is so strict, very rarely does someone become a holy person.

The Buddha also confirmed that certainly it as an iron nail fixed in a pillar: **“What I have said here is the Buddha's word. Any opposing word is the teaching of Papiyan Demon.”**

Papiyan, who is a demon in the heavenly sixth sense pleasure realm (*paranimmitavasavattī*), likes sexual indulgence (*trishna*) and entertainment (*pamāda*). This is the standard for present and future to judge the teachings and ask, “Which is true to the Dharma?” The Buddha taught us to rely on the pure precepts as the standard (*kāmasugati-bhūmi*).

POINTING OUT THE DECISION TO DESTROY THE KILLING

If in the six realms, existent beings do not have killing, they will not follow the consecutive course of birth and death.

You want to practice samādhi to overcome the tiring defilements (*kleśa*). If you don't give up your killing, you will not get out of the worldly defilements. If a practitioner attains the samādhi insight, but he has not cut off the killing, then he must enter the realms of spirits. At the highest level, he becomes a mighty ghost (*pittivisaya*); at the middle level, he becomes a flying yaksha, ghost commander, and at the lowest level, he is an earthy

rakshasa. These ghosts and spirits have their disciples. Each announces that he fulfilled the unsurpassed way.

After my passing away, in the Dharma-ending period, there will be many vigorous ghosts (*pittivisaya*) and spirits like wildfire in the world to declare that whoever eats meat, will attain the bodhi way.

Ānanda, I allowed the *bhikkhus* (*bhikṣus*) to eat five styles of the pure meat. This meat originally comes from my spiritual superpowers, and does not have the life energy. You brahmans live in a hot and humid atmosphere and a rocky and sandy area where vegetables cannot grow. Thus, from my great magic and compassion, I use the skillful means to assist you to have the taste like meat. Honestly, it is not the real meat. After my passing away, how can people who eat the flesh of animals (*tiracchānayoni*) be called the Buddhist disciples?

You should know that if people eat meat, even though they may gain some certain awareness levels in *samādhi*, they all will become *rakshasas*. When their retribution ends, they will suffer and sink into the ocean of suffering. They are not disciples of the Buddha. Such people are killing and eating one another without ceasing, how can they come over the three realms?

When you guide people in the world to cultivate *samādhi*, firstly they must transform all the killing in their thoughts. This is the second decisive pure instruction of the *Tathāgatas*, *Buddhas*, and *World-Honored Ones*.

Therefore, Ānanda, if a practitioner cultivates samādhi, but he does not cut off killing, his behavior is as a person who covers his ears, calls out loudly, and expects no one to hear him. The more he wants to hide it, the more it is revealed.

The pure bodhisattvas and bhikkhus cannot step on grass in the pathway; much less pull it out with their hand. How can people with great compassion take the animals flesh and blood as their food?

A bhikkhu who does not wear oriental silky cloth, does not use leather boots or fur material, does not consume milk, cream, or butter, and can indeed transcend this mundane world. Once they pay off their past debts, they will not enter three realms anymore.

Why? Because when a person uses something taken from a living being, he will create the influence from that creature being. For example, when a person eats the hundred grains, their feet cannot leave the earth. Both physically and mentally, a person must avoid eating or using the bodies and body parts of living beings, by neither wearing them nor eating them. I say that such a person is indeed liberated. What I said here is the Buddha's word. Any opposed word to it is the teaching of Papiyan Ghosts (*pretas*).”⁸⁴

Similarly, if a person cultivates samādhi, if he is in favor

⁸⁴ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 557–558.

of killing, he will drop down the spirit realm. According to his merit and concentrating force, there are three levels as follows:

a. At the best, a person will become a mighty ghost.

b. At the average, one will become a flying yaksha, a ghost commander.

c. At the lowest level, one will become an earthy rakshasa.

What is the meaning of the heavily favoring on killing? The Buddha said that: **“Greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha) and craving feed each other to develop without stopping. The result is that in the world all the species, such as those born of wombs, eggs, moisture, and transformation, depend on their strength to compete and eat one another, take killing as the root.”**⁸⁵

Owing to the food greed, the wine-tasting meat, the hobby of fishing or hunting, or the evil mind, twelve species of sentient beings⁸⁶ rely on their strength to hurt the weak ones, and use sophisticated means to kill or harm other species without stopping. Therefore, in hundreds of thousands of eons, they have lived in the rebirth cycle to repay their debt on blood and flesh.

For a long time in India, because it was a drought, the trees did not flourish, so the Buddha permitted the bhikkhus to

⁸⁵ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 292.

⁸⁶ Twelve beings: Because of two crazy causes of worlds and living beings, there are twelve beings: 1. Egg, 2. Womb, 3. Moisture, 4. Transformation, 5. Material, 6. Immaterial, 7. Thought, 8. Without Thought, 9. Neither material, 10. Neither immaterial, 11. Neither thought, 12. Neither without thought.

eat five kinds of pure meat. Five kinds of pure meat means the animal meat like lamb, pork, fish, chicken, goats (none are offered the bhikkhu if the five conditions are not met: the meat cannot be suspected of being killed for a treat, and the animals must have died naturally). This is the skillful teaching at that time for the unavoidable circumstance of drought. Today vegetables, fruits, and green beans are grown, full of nutrients, so why we do not use vegetarian food to cultivate our compassion?

The Buddha taught, how can those who eat the flesh of living beings can be called the disciples of Shaky Buddha? Such kinds of these groups will spread in the world like wildfire. They announce that eating meat will bring one to the bodhi way. That is their word, not the Buddha's. Be aware that although they attain some certain levels of samādhi, they still drop the path of spirits, without salvation. Therefore, they must stop the killing. This is the clearly decisive second statement of the Buddhas.

Their behavior is like the one who covers up his ears, calls loudly out, and expects no one to hear his sound, but it is impossible. Likewise, a person who cultivates samādhi, does not cut off killing, expects to liberate, and attains nothing. Because the more he wants to hide, the more the evidence is revealed. In the monastic precepts, the Buddha taught bhikkhu (bhikṣu) and bhikkhunī (bhikṣuṇī) do not step on grass in the pathway, protect the environment, much less eat the flesh and

blood of living beings, and proceed to use meat. How we can nourish the saint seed of compassion?

Abstaining from eating the flesh and blood of living beings as above is not enough. In addition the Śūraṅgama precept taught us carefully and more subtly as follows:

The Buddha taught that a person still wears fur or leather boots, uses woolen or silk cloths, and consumes milk means he takes something from a living creature's body, and is in debt to that being. Whenever we use something from others, we still remain the owner. So, the Śūraṅgama precept advises us to avoid drinking milk and wearing fur cloth. Just as a person still uses the hundred grains in the land, his feet cannot leave the earth.

We cannot follow these ultimate teachings. We have not kept them because our virtue and wisdom is not enough to reach these goals. The true cultivators can hold them, accept to die for the purity, and determine to keep strictly these noble precepts. They would rather to die than drink virus water or break a precept. They would die in order to follow the teachings of the Buddha. The saints do not regret the temporary body and keep the precept strictly to the end. They are the bodhisattva precept keepers. This is the bodhisattva's precept while we just keep sound-hearer (śrāvaka) precepts only.

Here, the Buddha surely affirms that both physically and mentally, we 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. What I have said here is

the Buddha's teaching. Any explanation that is contrary is the teaching of papiyan ghost (pretas).

Thus, here the Buddha advises what food we should eat? Keeping vegetarian and avoiding eating meat is clearly a progressive step. We also should not use directly or indirectly anything from animals, such as butter, milk, fur, or cloth. This is another progressive step. If we eat the hundred grains, we will become relatives to grains, then our feet cannot leave the earth. So finally, what food we should use to maintain our life? There are three kinds of eating, such as the peaceful Zen food, the thought food, the conscious food, and the segment food.

The Buddha meditated for forty-nine days without any food because of his peaceful spiritual state. This is eating to maintain life by thought and Zen. The devas in the sense pleasure (kāmasugati-bhūmi), material (rūpāvacarabhūmi), and immaterial (arūpāvacarabhūmi) realms also get nourishment by thought and the tranquility of meditation for the maintenance of life and longevity.

Besides, what else should we eat? Four holy ones and six mundane worlds⁸⁷ get nourishment by thought in which delusion (samohaṃ) differs from enlightenment.

The holy men have consciousness that is perfectly enlightened purity which is called tathāgatagarbha (the source

⁸⁷ Four holy ones: Buddha, bodhisattva, pratyek, and śrāvaka.

Six mundane worlds: Heaven (*deva*), asura (asurakāya), human (manussa), animal (tiracchānayoṇi), ghosts (pittivisaya), and hell (niraya).

of all phenomena) or the Thus-Come-One. So, the Śūraṅgama-samādhi nature can preserve all virtues and merits of the outflows (āsravas), which are neither having nor empty, neither dwelling nor not-dwelling. Here the eating takes incredible merit to maintain. If we use this dish to transform consciousness into enlightenment, then we will escape the segment eating of the human (manussa) beings.

This is a spiritual process of liberation.

ABSTAINING FROM STEALING

Ānanda, if in the six realms, existent beings do not steal, they will not follow the consecutive course of birth and death.

You want to practice samādhi to overcome the tiring defilements. If you don't give up your stealing, you will not get out of the worldly defilements. If a practitioner attains the samādhi insight, but he has not cut off stealing, then he must enter the devious heretic realms. At the highest level, he becomes an apparition; at the middle level, he becomes a phantom; and at the lowest level, he is a devious heretic person whose bodies the ghosts (pittivisaya) can enter. These devious heretic groups have their disciples. Each announces that he fulfilled the unsurpassed way.

After my passing away, in the Dharma-ending period, there will be many vigorous phantoms and apparitions who are like wildfire in the world. They will secretly cheat others, promote themselves as good friends, declare that they have attained the superhuman (manussa) fruit, and

deceive and threaten innocent people to lose the right faith. Wherever phantoms and apparitions pass, houses will be damaged and destroyed.

I teach bhikkhus (bhikṣu) to beg for alms in order to help them give up greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha) and accomplish the bodhi way. Bhikkhus are not allowed to cook their food. It means this fragile body only stays temporarily a short time in three realms. This is the last life. They present here, and do not come back.

How can thieves wear Buddhist robes and sell the Tathāgata by declaring that all karmas are created by Buddha-Dharma? They defame that bhikkhus have kept the monastic precepts to be as the Small Vehicle (Hīnayāna). They cause countless livings to doubt, so they fall into the Unstopping Hell (avīci).

After my passing away, bhikkhus who determinedly practice samādhi, stay in front of the Tathāgata image to light a candle, burn a finger off or burn the spot on their bodies, pay off their debts from beginningless time, leave this mundane world, and are freed of the inflows (sravas).

Although the bhikkhus have not understood much about the ultimate enlightenment, they have already firmly set their mind on the Buddha-Dharma. If whoever does not practice any tiny token of the ritual offering his body, even if he realizes the unconditioned way, he must still be born as a person to pay his past debts as I must pay the retribution from eating the horse grain.

When you teach people who cultivate samādhi in the world, they must also cease stealing.

This is the third decisive pure instruction of the Tathāgatas, Buddhas, and World-Honored Ones.

Hence, Ānanda, if a person cultivates samādhi, but he does not cease stealing is as someone who pours water into a leaking cup, and expects to fill it. He spends as many aeons as molecules of dust, but the cup will not be full.

Besides robes and bowls, bhikkhus do not collect anything more. If they have extra food from alms, they must donate their food to hungry people. In the great assembly, they put their palms together to bow. People scold bhikkhus who contemplate this as complements. Bhikkhus can sacrifice their own bodies and minds including their flesh, bones, and blood to become the common possession of living creatures. Bhikkhus do not consider the non-ultimate teachings of Tathāgata as their knowledge to avoid misunderstand for beginners. The Buddha approves such kind bhikkhus to attain samādhi.

As what I have said here is the Buddha's word, any opposed word to it which is the teaching of Papiyan Demon.”⁸⁸

If a person cuts off the seed of birth and death to practice the transcendent path of freedom, but still retains the negative characteristic so that he engages in stealing, how can he be

⁸⁸ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 559–561.

liberated with such a mind?

In the consecutive karma, the Buddha teaches that “A person eats a sheep. After death, the sheep becomes a person. The person dies and after that he becomes a sheep. Ten species get on through the same way of death after death and birth to eat one another. The evil karma arises and flourishes up to the future without ceasing. This group takes stealing as their root.”⁸⁹

The animals (tiracchānayoṇi) also want to be freed from suffering or killing, but we use many means or forms to kill their living bodies which is the most dangerous stealing connected to killing. Besides, there are many ways of stealing as stealing money, regardless if it is large or small, from Triple Gems or others. We must refrain from stealing what is not given. If we use the thing without permission of owner, we will be committing the crime of stealing.

If a person practices samādhi, even if he obtains certain levels of samādhi, he will still enter a devious heretic path if he steals.

- a. At the highest level, he will become an apparition;
- b. At the average level, he will become a phantom;
- c. At the lowest level, he will be a devious heretic who is possessed by a ghost (preta).

These devious heretics have their groups of disciples. Each will announce that he has accomplished the unsurpassed

⁸⁹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 292.

way.

So, whoever commits cruel killing, murder, or causes pain to animals will become a demon. Ignorant craving (trishna, sarāgaṃ) of everything is the seed to become a ghost. Whoever steals will be reborn as devious heretics, apparitions, phantoms, and so forth. Stealing means that we cling to external things and tie ourselves so firmly to them that this is called the devious hoards. How can we enter right samādhi?

The phantom is a monster, a ghost (pittivisaya), and a deceitful thief going towards evil.

The superstitious belief: there are good and devious spirits who are heavy with killing karma and they fall down into spirits. If the spirit enters the human body to disturb it, it will be called the evil spirits. If he enters to bring benefits to the human, he will be called the honest spirit. It is like the general officer (Guan Kong) entering the body to cure disease for patients or expel the evil demons.

The Buddha taught that bhikkhus who must go for begging, keep their transient bodies in three temporary realms, manifested only in this last life, and do so without returning.

The monks go for alms without collecting or storing food in order not to be greedy (abhijjhā, visamalobha). The giver offers whatever food in a bowl, and the monks must use it. The purpose of eating is to preserve the fragile life only for a short time in the three temporary realms (the sensual, material, and immaterial realms). It means the food is used to protect this transient body and to be in service to the religion without

enjoying the tastes. At every meal, the Buddha sincerely teaches that we should conduct five contemplations:

1. Contemplating the place where food came from including the labor and hard word to plant it.

2. Contemplating whether we have enough virtue to deserve this meal.

3. Preventing our mind from greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), anger (kodha), delusion (samohaṃ) which is the evil root (palāsa).

4. Contemplating the way that food can be used as medicine to heal various physical hungers.

5. The reason for eating is simply to provide the needed energy and nutrition to be able to continue on the path toward enlightenment.

In the past, the Saṅgha of the Buddha went around for alms in India. What they begged, they used what they were offered. Bhikkhus are not allowed to preserve food for the future, because Buddha wants his Saṅgha to spend more time cultivating.

In India, giving alms is ordinary conduct, but when Buddhism spread to China, Chinese people were very scornful of begging. If anyone begs in the street, he is despised as a homeless beggar. Moreover, monks are the World-Honored Enlightened disciples, masters of Gods and men. If the teacher of Gods and Men takes action to beg, Chinese people will despise and scorn them.

Therefore, when Buddhism spread to China, the patriarchs depended on circumstances to change flexibly. Then, the pagodas, the kitchen, the storehouse, dining hall and so forth were established to serve each purpose to avoid the prejudice about monks' begging. This is skillful means to change lifestyle in the Saṅgha in order to accommodate local custom. Since then, Buddhism can survive and develop in any situation and any time.

Moreover, even the robes of the monk are changed to fit Chinese culture. Yellow robes are the symbol of gentle patience. The wide-sleeved chanting dress, the long dress, the formal customs are simple brown or gray, that is, modest, without arrogance. Thus, from Chinese colors to the way of sewing Buddhist robes are different from the ones in India. Depending on the custom and culture of each country, Buddhism is flexible according to the culture.

Vietnam is also influenced by the Chinese culture, so we still store the rice and food to cook, and go less for alms. Our clothing is also the same as the Chinese tradition. The patriarchs are not clinging and insisting to the form; they tried to be flexible in order that we fit in with any local custom and culture.

In regard to offering the body part, the Buddha taught that after his passing away, if any bhikkhu who decides to cultivate samādhi should stand in front of the statue the Buddha, light a lamp by himself, burns a finger or any other body part, ignites a incense stick, then the Buddha will declare

that his past debt or the beginningless karma in this lifetime will be paid off, and he will be able to escape the defilements.

Burning body or hands implies letting go of the self-craving and the self-view. The donor does not think of his body anymore, non-self. The meaning of the Mahāyāna scriptures is abstract. The Buddha did not request burning our hands. Burning hands or a body part is letting go of the self (*matna*), because the body is the most precious thing from which we can detach; there is nothing more.

If anyone can burn an offering on his body with such equanimity (*upekkhā*, *upeksā*), then his debt in the past will be paid off. The body is detached, the mind is too. Another thing is also detached—he uproots all phenomena.

If everything is gotten rid of, the Buddha certifies how much of the debt is clear. With the insight eye, the Buddha sees, but as a mundane people, how we can realize it? This is the experience from the Buddha. Believing in the Buddha's word, if we want to cut off evil (*palāsa*), the only way is to detach from all defilements.

Burning a body part or hand also means that the Buddha advised us to sacrifice our body and mind to serve the community. Be awakened that this body is illusion, in the upper level, we should use it to serve the Triple Gem, in the lower level, we must save all living beings. We bring this body and mind to benefit everyone, so that we can attain wisdom. Thus, we have to rise to serve Buddhism tirelessly. If there is any misunderstanding or blaming (*sātheyya*), we will have

neither affliction nor hatred. When there is praise, we are not proud because we contemplate that the body is illusory.

We use the deluded body and mind to serve the Three Jewels, parents and grandparents, and to serve all sentient beings in ten directions. If we practice self-mortification of the body, then we will reap the results.

It is important that we must keep the mind to be awakened in order to make it wholesome. In contrast, if the mind has delusion that the body follows to the wrong view (micchā-ditthi).

We must mindfully conquer the mind. If it is haphazard, the body will not be long-life. The mind is the boss. We, who should contemplate the impure to be awakened, obey the Buddha's teaching to keep the precepts. If our mind has not yet awakened, it is difficult to keep the precepts. Thus, it is necessary that the mind be lucid, and then the way will be on the correct track. The Buddha called this part as *focusing strictly on the mind and the precepts*, i.e., being mindful and using samādhi to preserve the holy precepts. If we still have greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), and wrong view, we must pay attention and correct it, reflect on the impurity of this body to detach from it. Then, the no-lust (vītarāgaṃ) and no-anger (vītadosaṃ) will present naturally. If there is lust (sarāgaṃ) and anger (kodha), there is still ignorance (avijjā). Reflecting on the impure helps to stop all the foolish wrong views (micchā-ditthi).

The Buddha uses an example of how to pour water into a

leaky cup. Just as if the stealing precept is broken; how can we pour the pure precepts into Buddhism and how can Buddhism stand without the pure precepts? The water of Dharma will flow away through the holes. So, we only deceive ourselves, because success cannot be reached. If we are stealing while we are still practicing Buddhism, then enlightenment is hard to attain. We only suffer by ourselves, deceive ourselves, because it is not possible for a thief to be successful. Whoever steals is still greedy (*abhijjhā*, *visamalobha*), and cannot become a Buddha.

ASBTAINING FROM TELLING A LIE

Ānanda, in the six realms, existent beings must not violate killing, stealing, and lusting precepts, which must be kept perfectly. However, if they tell a lie, their *samādhi* is impure, and they will become the self-craving demon and lose the Tathāgata's seed. They declare they have attained what they have not attained; they have enlightenment when they have not been enlightened. Because they desire to seek the most respect, prostrations, and offerings from the world, they will falsely announce to other people that: I have attained *sotapanna*, *sakridagamin*, *anagamin*, *arhatship*, *pratyekabuddha*, or the various levels of *bodhisattvahood* within or before ten *bhumis* (grounds).

These *icchantikas* destroy their Buddha seeds like a person chops down a tala tree. The Buddha declares that such *icchantikas*, who lost their good roots forever, do not

have right view, sink in the suffering sea of the three realms, and fail to gain samādhi.

I order bodhisattvas and arhats, after my passing away, in the Dharma-ending period, to save living beings in the rebirth cycle. They must manifest in various forms, such as shramanas, white-robed laypeople, kings, officials, virgin youths or maidens, widows, profligates, thieves, butchers, or dealers in contraband, and so forth, to do the same jobs with these living beings. Since then, bodhisattvas and arhats praise the Buddha vehicle to cause their body and mind to enter samādhi. But they should never reveal their identities by saying that ‘Indeed I am a bodhisattva’ or ‘Honestly, I am an arhat,’ or look to people who have not yet studied.

Bodhisattvas and arhats only reveal their true identities on some special occasions like the moment before death. How can bhikkhus cheat living beings by telling a lie? Ānanda, when you teach people in the world to cultivate samādhi, they must cease telling lies. This is the fourth decisive pure instruction of the Tathāgatas, Buddhas, and World-Honored Ones.

Thus, Ānanda, whoever does not stop telling lies is like a person who uses the human (manussa) feces to carve a chandana tree and expecting to have fragrance. It is impossible. I teach bhikkhus to take the straight mind as the bodhimanda in which they should practice without cheating in four gestures; how can they announce

themselves to reach the Dharma of a superior person? That is like a citizen crazily calling himself a king in order that it forces him to be executed. Much less how can a bhikkhu claim himself with the title of Dharma King? When the cause is not true, the effects will be distorted. Likewise, a person who seeks the Buddha's bodhi in this way is like a person who tries to bite his own navel, he will fail to do it.

Bhikkhus who keep their minds straight as lute strings, keep the truth in everything enter samādhi, and must never be involved in the demon's affairs. I sealed that such bhikkhu will fulfill the bodhisattvas' unsurpassed knowledge and enlightenment.

What I have said here is the Buddha's word. Any opposed word is the teaching of Papiyan Demon.”⁹⁰

The Buddha taught that if people cultivate samādhi, attain some certain levels of meditation in the present but are still telling lies, they will become the demons of craving view and will lose the Tathāgatas' seeds. Why? It is like a tala tree in India or a bamboo tree in Vietnam. The body of a tree that is chopped down is dead and cannot grow. Likewise, if a person tells a great lie that he is enlightened and is a saint, the Buddha declares that such a person destroys good roots, loses his right view, and sinks in to the suffering sea of three realms (the sensual, material, and immaterial realms).

In Buddhism, there are many stories of monks, nuns or

⁹⁰ *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 562–565.

Buddhist followers who claim themselves to be Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, have enlightened minds as the saints, and seek the foremost veneration and offering in society. They often announce that they have attained the fruits of sotāpanna,⁹¹ sakridagamin,⁹² anagamin,⁹³ arhatship,⁹⁴ pratyekabuddha,⁹⁵ or bodhisattvas⁹⁶ up to ten bhūmis (daśabhūmi).⁹⁷ The Buddha called them the icchantikas who destroy their Buddha seeds just as a tala tree is chopped down.

With the insight eye, the Buddha realized the danger of lying, hence he created the precept to abstain from lying so that ordinary people do not claim to be a saint or indirectly show

⁹¹ Sotāpanna: one who has entered (āpanna) the stream (sota).

⁹² Sakridagamin: one has seven deaths and seven births remaining.

⁹³ Anagamin/ariya-puggala: the one is “never-returned,” or one who will not be reborn in the human realm and will enter the realm of the gods at the time of death.

⁹⁴ Arhat/arahant: one who is worthy or perfected, having attained Nirvana.

⁹⁵ A pratyekabuddha/pacceka-buddha: a lone buddha, a buddha on their own or a private buddha.

⁹⁶ Bodhisattva is the one is able to reach Nirvana but delays doing so out of compassion in order to save suffering beings.

⁹⁷ The ten bhūmis (stages of a bodhisattva, daśabhūmi):

1. The joyous (pramudita)
2. The stainless (vimala)
3. The light maker/the luminous (prabhakari)
4. The radiant (arcismati)
5. The very hard to conquer/difficult to cultivate (sudurjaya)
6. The turning toward/the manifest (abhimukhi)
7. The far going/gone afar (durangama)
8. The unshakeable/the immovable (acala)
9. The good mind/the good intelligence (sadhumati)
10. The cloud of Dharma (dharmamegha)

themselves as supramundane people. If we are not enlightened but we declare that we have attained Buddhahood, while in fact we are only ordinary, this is called cheating. People show respect to us and offer much material to earn merit. That is why it belongs to one of the most important precepts.

Even the great disciples of the Buddha practiced and attained certain level of spiritual superpowers. This is like the flowers on the way of spiritual holiness or the magic of the quiescent mind. We who must keep such a thing, go on ahead, and do not cling on it. If we cling to the wonderful superpower, it becomes harmful and dangerous. Moreover, we should not take advantage of the spiritual superpowers as a unique means to collect disciples.

Venerable Devadatta is jealous with the Buddha and wants to have the prestige and support of wealthy monarchs. He uses his master mind to consolidate authority to become the leader of the Saṅgha instead of the Buddha. He uses his superpower to fly in the sky and manifests a snake climbing on the thigh or wrapping the body of the Ajātaśatru (Ajātasattu) prince, who admires Devadatta's ability. Since that time, the prince became a servant of Devadatta's dark intentions.

After he won the heart of the Ajātaśatru prince, Devadatta advises him to kill his old father, King Bimbisara, and rob the throne, because King Bimbisara still has the highest position, and the prince is still influenced by his father. Devadatta fails to do anything. Prince Ajātaśatru sent soldiers to the jail to kill his father.

But the death of King Bimbisara and the words of Queen Vaidehi made Prince Ajātaśatru regret his terrible evil deed. The Prince repented before the Buddha and later became a devout Buddhist and served the Three Jewels wholeheartedly. Due to many extreme sins, Devadatta immediately falls into interminable hell forever.

Therefore, the Buddha always advises the Saṅgha to limit the use of supernormal powers only for the purpose of conversion. The young monks should be more limited. Venerable Maudgalyāyana (Mahāmaudgalyāyana) is the great disciple who was believed by the Buddha when using divine power to convert the heretics.

The Buddha declares that telling a great lie is a slander, neither allowed nor forgiven. It is like taking feces to carve a fragrant tree. Due to craving of self, we promote and pretend we are saints or Buddhas to receive the respect or offering from others. It is fake; how can we become Buddhas? This is foolishness after foolishness. It is ignorant to fall into this ignorant pit. If we bring living beings into the dangerous pit, how can we bring beings into the bodhi?

Monks and nuns must consider the straight mind to be our bodhi ground. In all postures like walking, sitting, standing, lying down, we never tell the lie that we are the self-professed higher moral ones. For example, if ordinary people dare to claim themselves as kings or president, they bring disaster to themselves.

Therefore, the Buddha decides that his disciples must

refrain from lust, killing, stealing, and lying. Whoever wants to cultivate the Buddha, they definitely decide to throw away these four sins. Śrāvakas keep the precepts and maintain the body prestige, while the bodhisattva is banned from the mindset initiation.

Non-lusting is non-birth.

Non-killing is not-killed.

Non-stealing is non-loss.

The bodhisattvas and the śrāvakas precepts are all taught by the Buddha, but each person can keep the rule depending on their ability. If a female is ordained (keeping five precepts), vows to receive the sadini ordination (keeping ten precepts), the sikkhamānā ordination (250 precepts),⁹⁸ and then proceeds to keep bhikkhunī (348 precepts), this depends on the level of ability and the vow of the nun. The virtue of śrāvakas is liberation in this life, without returning to the cycle of rebirth (saṃsāra). Bodhisattvas are willing to stay in the mundane life to help creature beings for many kalpas until all beings become the Buddhas. Whoever has these noble ideas, the Buddha provides the bodhisattva conduct with ten major and forty-eight sub-major precepts to benefit beings. It is important that the wise person knows how to practice the Dharma-Buddha in a flexible and appropriate manner within the contemporary social environment.

⁹⁸ Thức Xoa Ma na (Sikkhamānā): After receiving the ordination of sikkhamānā, a nun must spend two years learning the 250 sikkhamānā precepts and basic precepts of a Tỳ kheo ni bhikkhuni.

Bodhisattva's conducts are for both mundane and transmundane people regardless of level, skin color, and degree. Everyone can keep it, anyone can become a Buddha. The bodhisattva virtue is a bridge to be the Buddha and it will follow us for the rest of our lives. The Buddha is devoted to explaining the meaning and action of each precept, because it is our mind, not outside. All of the precepts have the same capacity to progress on the Way.

How do we earnestly accept the precepts to be promoted as such? The moment of receiving the precepts in the ordination. It will have the spiritual impression of keeping watch over us forever. If in the ordination ceremony, we are distracted, do not know anything, just blindly follow others, then our precepts are only on the surface, because they are absent from the heart. In contrast, if we are sincerely receiving them, even if the bad karmic force after life forces us into rebirth as a buffalo or a cow, the bodhisattva's precepts are never lost, because we still have that noble vow in our *alaya* consciousness. It can be old vows, but if we meet good Dharma friends, face the Three Jewels with enough the nice conditions, our spiritual flowers will bloom and will fruit.

If we have broken the precepts, then we must earnestly repent. Trying to learn and maintain morality, our mental precept nature, and capacity is restored.

Through reading the precepts of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, we see the Buddha saying that precepts are to protect and support the peaceful life of everyone. If we are good at

applying and practicing, we will bring peace and happiness to self and others.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER VII

Chapter VII is an introduction on the śrāvaka's precepts in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra. There are three decisive aspects for serious practice, such as keeping the mind strictly on the precepts; from the precepts, then samādhi arises; and out of samādhi, then wisdom is produced. These are called the "Three Outflowing Studies." The Buddha declares the decisions to refrain from killing, stealing, lusting, and lying. Owing to it, twelve living beings in seven realms are consecutively produced.

The Buddha heartily expounds the meaning and the work of each Śūraṅgama precept. The Śūraṅgama precepts enforce that we must strictly keep the precepts not only with the body but also with the mind. The mind does not commit killing, stealing, lusting and lying in order to escape the consecutive rebirth course. Not only the body and mind, but also the nature of breaking the precepts must disappear. After that, we can expect to be enlightened with the bodhi fruit of the Buddhas.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of “Keeping the mind strictly on the precepts”?
2. Please describe a śrāvaka’s precepts in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra.
3. What is the meaning of “cooking sand for rice”?
4. Explain the sentence: “Not only the body and mind, but also the nature of breaking the precepts must disappear. After that, we can expect to be enlightened with the bodhi fruit of the Buddhas.”
5. What the meaning of “Three Outflowing Studies”?



Dr. Sumedha Thero and the Huong Sen pilgrims in August 2016 at Awkana Buddha statue of Anuradhapur City, Sri Lanka

CHAPTER VIII

THE SPIRITUAL MANTRA OF ŚŪRAṄGAMA

Ānanda, you asked the way to focus the mind and I replied that the practitioner who wants to enter samādhi must learn the wonderful method, seek for the Bodhisattva Way, and must firstly keep four precepts as pure as ice crystals without any branches or leaves. It means three karmas of the mental and four karmas of the mouth do not have the cause to arise.

Ānanda, if the practitioner holds four precepts strictly, does not attach to form, fragrance, taste, touch, then how can the demonic affairs arise?

If the practitioners cannot transform their old habits, you should teach them to wholeheartedly chant my mantra “Mwo he sa dan dwo bwo da la—the Illuminating Buddha Head.” This is the spiritual mantra of Śūraṅgama spoken by the undoing Buddha mind from invisible Head of the Tathāgata who appears from the summit, and sits on a precious lotus petal to recite the mantra.

Besides, Ānanda, because you and Matangi have accumulated so many causes and conditions from many past kalpas that became the craving habits. However, as soon as I declared the mantra, he who is freed forever from lust, attains arhatship.

As a prostitute, Matangi did not have the intention to practice, but based on the blessing of the spiritual mantra, she reaches the position beyond the study of outflows (āsravas). What about you, the sound-hearers (śrāvaka) in the assembly, who seek the most supreme vehicle and are determined to accomplish Buddhahood. It should be as easy as dust flying in favorable wind. Are there any obstructions?⁹⁹

For many kalpas, we have created countless evils of killing, stealing, lusting, and telling lies which result in the retribution of karma. We must receive the results of the heavy or light karma

The less craving (trishna) will reborn as birds and fishes.

The less angry (sadosam) will reborn as snakes, cats, or tigers.

The less ignorance (avijjā) will reborn as elephants, pigs, flys, and ants.

Once we pay off the retribution of animal (tiracchānayani) karma, but there remains the small karma so that we are reborn as human (manussa) beings who often have many hindrances as follows:

1. Due to bad habits in the past, monks or nuns easily commit the precepts of killing, stealing, lusting, and telling lies. If the lay Buddhists are keeping five precepts or ten precepts, but owing to the past habits, their precept upholding

⁹⁹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 570–571.

is not fully pure.

2. Due to the remaining karma, we easily become persons who are without enough sense organs in some way.

3. We are easily subjected by the afflictions (kleśa), difficult to tame. Because of the defilements, the evil (sātheyya), greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), and delusion (samohaṃ) are quickly accumulated and push us continually in the three realms.

Because three things control us, especially the seeds of previous lives, so our practicing career that leads to Buddhahood is difficult to attain, and our will is shaken.

The habit from previous lives is invisible, but it governs us all the time without. Therefore, in Zen, there is a famous verse:

Enlightenment is equal as the Buddha

The past habit is really deep

The wind is stopped but the waves remain shaken

Realized the doctrine, but in reality the defilements still remain in full

Because the animal (tiracchānayani) seed from the previous life remains to this present to make three bad karmas¹⁰⁰ for us, such as 1) obstacles in the human body (defective six organs, handicapped, sickly), 2) the obstacle of afflictions (kleśa), sorrow (dukkha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), jealousy (issā), disturbance (pamāda)], and 3) the obstacle

¹⁰⁰ Three karmas: body, speech, and mind.

karma (the bad seed of actions in the past still remain) block us on the way of enlightenment. To eliminate those karmic habits, in addition to repentance and meditation, we should contemplate to train the mind, and sincerely recite the spiritual mantra of Śūraṅgama to help us strongly uproot the profound habitual karmas.

The Śūraṅgama-samādhi mantra is also called “Mwo he sa dan dwo bwo da la—the Illuminating Buddha Head” or the Spiritual White Umbrella of the Buddha Summit Dhārāṇī (*Mahā-sitātapatra-uṣṇīṣa-dhārāṇī*) that mean the vast substance of the fundamental nature. “White” is wisdom. “The Spiritual Umbrella” is the great compassion. Thus, the Śūraṅgama-samādhi mantra manifests the perfect substance of the mind nature that is called the mind mantra.

This mantra has such great power and is so effective that it can eliminate the old habits of killing, stealing, lusting, and telling great lies, especially the habits of craving. This mantra saved Ānanda and Mangati and helped them to be freed forever from the craving cloud. As we recite this mantra with a whole pure mind this matches with the original nature.

The Śūraṅgama mantra belongs to the secret Buddhist vehicle¹⁰¹ and is divided into five parts without explanation, while other parts belong to the doctrine in which the Buddha explains with words in detail. According to each country, the mantra is read with different sounds. However, chanted with a

¹⁰¹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 583–600.

pure mind it has the same effect.

In most temples, the Śūraṅgama-samādhi mantra is called the early morning retreat because it is often recited at 4:00 a.m., 5:00 a.m., or 6:00 a.m. Besides five parts of the Śūraṅgama-samādhi mantra, there are the Great Compassion and other nine mantras.

This is the pure morning praying session because after having slept the whole night, our mind is fresh and pure, the daily busy work has quieted down, and so the mantra easily penetrates deeply in our body and mind. In addition, in the early morning the atmosphere is quiet, fresh, soothing to the nerves, so chanting mantras will easily increase the energy of spiritual inspiration.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER VIII

Chapter VIII discusses the mysterious mantra energy of the esoteric sect. The Śūraṅgama-samādhi Mantra is brief, “Mwo he sa dan dwo bwo da la—the Illuminating Buddha Head” or “The Spiritual Umbrella” (compassion). It has the great characteristics and functions of the inherent bodhi nature and the mantra mind of inactive Buddhas’ minds from the Tathāgatas’ Invisible Summit. Anyone reciting this mantra can transform the inflowing craving to attain the supreme bodhi soon. This mantra mind has great capacity and effect, and is capable of eliminating killing, stealing, lusting, and lying,

especially lusting. It is this spell that saved Ānanda and Matangi from the craving cloud. When practitioners are devoted and recite it with a mind penetrated in balance with this mantra, it balances with the inherent bodhi nature.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does the Śūraṅgama-samādhi Mantra belong to the esoteric sect?

2. What is the full name of the Śūraṅgama-samādhi Mantra? What does it mean?

3. Please explain the sentence: “The mantra mind in active Buddhas’ minds from the Tathāgatas’ Invisible Summit speak out.”

4. Why can the supreme mantra transform old habits, the inflowing craving to attain the supreme bodhi?

5. Demonstrate the power of the mantra through the story of Ānanda and Matangi.



*Venerable Hanh Nguyen and the Hrong Sen pilgrims in
September 2016 at Deer Park Stupa, where Gautama Buddha first
taught Dharma, Sarnath, U.P., India*

CHAPTER IX

TWELVE SPECIES OF LIVING BEINGS

“Ānanda, you now want to cultivate the true samādhi to reach straight at the Tathāgata’s parinirvana. First, you must realize two upside-down causes of living beings and the world. If this upside-down state does not arise, it is the Tathāgata’s true samādhi.

“Ānanda, what does the upside-down state of living beings mean? Because the mind nature is the inherent brightness which itself is the perfect illumination. Curiously, by adding the shining, a false substance is produced. The wrong view (micchā-ditthi) perceives that the nature arises. Since then the ultimate is originally nothingness, which now becomes the ultimate existence.

“Such an existence comes from without cause to be the cause. The attaching subject and object are basically without root. Then, based on what is fundamentally rootless, the world and living beings are established.

“Due to ignorance (avijjā), it failed to recognize the inherent perfect brightness, so it produces the falseness which has no reality and cannot be relied on. If now a person wants to return to the reality, it is not the true suchness anymore. The reality of true suchness is not a

truth that we seek for returning. What is basically unborn is called the birth, what basically is undwelling is called the dwelling, what is basically unmind is called the mind, and what basically is without Dharmas (phenomenon) is called the Dharmas.

“These things produce and develop without stopping which established the tendency to collect the habit of creating karma. The same karmas have the feeling of stimulating one another. Then there arise the karmas of arising and destroying. That is the reason for the upside-down state in which living beings exist.

“Ānanda, what is meant by the upside-down state of the world? Due to such an existence, each section and part are falsely generated, so space is established. Because taking the without cause as the cause, without the attachment of subject and object, it often shifts without settling down, so time is established. Three times and four directions combine and interact mutually, in which twelve species of living beings are movably transformed.

“Since then in this world, due to the motion, there is the sound; owing to the shape, there is the scent; due to scent, there is the contact (sparsha); due to the contact, there is taste. Due to taste, there is the knowing of Dharmas. The disorderly false thought creates the karma nature. Since then twelve species are changeably transformed. Thus, in the world, sounds, smells, tastes, and contacts are changeable to the extreme through twelve

categories to complete a cycle and rotate again without stopping.

“Based on the consecutive wheel of the upside down, so in the world, many species are born, such as egg, womb, moisture, transformation, material, immaterial, thought, without thought, neither material, neither immaterial, neither thought, and neither without thought.

“1. Ānanda, because in the world, a consecutive *illusory* wheel of the upside-down state on the *motion* happens, that combines with *atmosphere* to form eighty-four thousand modes of *flying, sinking* disorderly thoughts. Then, the *egg beings* (kalalas) come into the world, such as fish, birds, reptiles, and snakes. These are abundant everywhere.

“2. Because in the world, a consecutive *craving* wheel of the upside-down state of *lust* (sarāgam) happens, that combines with *thinking* to form eighty-four thousand modes of *vertical/horizontal perverse* disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into the *womb beings* (arbudas) in the world, such as human (manussa), animal (tiracchānayani), dragon, and immortal (half deva-human) beings. These are plentiful everywhere.

“3. Because in the world, a consecutive *attaching* wheel of the upside-down state of the *inclination* happens, that combines with *warmness* to form eighty-four thousand modes of *sideward/upward* disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being the *humid beings* (arbudas) in the world,

such as movable worms and insects. These are abundant everywhere.

“4. Because in the world, a consecutive *changeable* wheel of the upside-down state of the *deception* happens, that combines with *contact* to form eighty-four thousand modes of *new/old* disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being the *transforming beings* (*ghanas*) in the world, such as backward forward moving, walking, and flying creatures. These kinds are plentiful in everywhere.

“5. Because in the world, a consecutive *obstruction* wheel of the upside-down state of the *hindrance* happens, that combines with *clinging* to form eighty-four thousand modes of *stunning/wise* disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into *form beings* (*ghanas*) in the world, such as auspicious and inauspicious essences. These kinds are abundant everywhere.

“6. Because in the world, a consecutive *extinction* wheel of the upside-down state of *ignorance* (*avijjā*) happens, that combines with *darkness* to form eighty-four thousand modes of *anonymity hiding* disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being *immaterial beings* in the world, such as the void, scattered, extinct, and submerged creatures. These kinds are plentiful everywhere.

“7. Because in the world, a consecutive *imaging* wheel of the upside-down state of the *shape* happens, that combines with *preserve* to form eighty-four thousand modes of *connection in mystery* disorderly thoughts. Then, there

comes into being *thought beings* (ghanas) in the world, such as spirits and ghosts (pittivisaya). These kinds are abundant everywhere.

“8. Because in the world, a consecutive foolish wheel of the upside-down state of unknowledge happens, that combines with stubbornness to form eighty-four thousand modes of thin, dry disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being the without thoughts beings in the world, such as spirits turning out in soil, trees, gold, and stones. These kinds are plentiful everywhere.

“9. Because in the world, a consecutive parasitic *interacting* wheel of the upside-down state of *pretending* happens, that combines with *affliction* to form eighty-four thousand modes of *replying* disorderly thoughts. Since then, there comes into the *neither-form* beings (ghanas) in the world, such as jellyfish that use shrimp for their eyes. These kinds are abundant everywhere.

“10. Because in the world, a consecutive *relating* wheel of the upside-down state of the *characteristic* happens, that combines with *mantra* to form eighty-four thousand modes of *called gathering* in orderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being the *neither immaterial beings* in the world, such as the hidden beings in mantras and incantations. These kinds are plentiful everywhere.

“11. Because in the world, a consecutive *false combining* wheel of the upside-down state of *transgression* happens, that combines with *odd* to form eighty-four

thousand modes of *exchangeable* disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being the *neither thought* (ghanas) in the world like the *varatas* who borrow other substances to create their bodies. These kinds are abundant everywhere.

“12. Because in the world, a consecutive *antagonist* wheel of the upside-down state of *killing* happens, that combines with *monster* to form eighty-four thousand modes of thought to *consume their parents’ flesh*. Then, there comes into being the *neither without thought beings* in the world, such as a dirt owl that hatches a dirt lump to be its child or a *Pou Ching* bird that incubates a poisonous fruit to be its offspring. When the child grows up, it will eat its parents. These kinds are plentiful everywhere.

“These are twelve species of living beings.”¹⁰²

The part of consecutive living beings in the Three Consecutive Kinds (the world, living beings and karma)¹⁰³ is explained in general, while in the section of “Two Upside-down Causes of Living Beings and the World” the Buddha expresses the upside-down state of the twelve species of living beings in detail.

The Buddha teaches that **the wonderful nature which is the inherent illuminating perfection detaches the label, has not originally existed in the world of living beings. Due to**

¹⁰³ *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 624–629

¹⁰⁴ *Chapter V, Two Difficult Problems*, pp. 128–130.

falseness, the production appears. Owing to the arising, the extinction comes. The production and extinction are both falseness. Ending the falseness is the trueness which is called “Two Transformings of the Unsurpassed Bodhi and the Tathāgata's Pari-nibbāna (Parinirvāṇa).” Because there are the producing and extinction, two aspects of transformation appear, such as from the defilement (kleśa) to bodhi and from the birth and death cycle to the Tathāgata’s parinirvana. So, the Buddha flexibly formulates the expedient doctrine and the ultimate doctrine.

What does the upside-down state of living beings mean?

The Buddha is like the good physician. Living beings are sick so the Buddha prescribes drugs. Our suffering, disasters and sickness are to turn out twelve categories of living beings. Therefore, the Buddha points out that we are in the twelve upside-down states.

We have just come from our mother’s womb which means from this upside-down state. We are suffering so the Buddha must set up the Dharma. He mentions the cultivating path and the enlightened path. Because there are suffering living beings, Buddhism comes into existence.

Our original nature itself is the illuminating perfection that is everywhere. By adding brightness, another nature arises, and from that the wrong views (micchā-ditthi) that we are clinging insistently to as true. Thus, from the inherent absolute nothingness becomes the illusory existence which continuously arises without stopping.

Thus, this existence is without cause, which looks as if it has a cause. The clinging subject and object are basically groundless. Then, from upon what is fundamentally unreliable, the world and living beings are set up.

Now, we want to return to our reality. We generate a thought to seek for the suchness which is not a truth anymore. Once we are wrongly directed to the untrue reality, that leads to appearance of the wrong form, because we are originally the Tathāgata's suchness (Tathāgatagarbha), the source of all phenomena). Therefore, the moment the thought arises to wish for the truth, that is already the false form and the incorrect thing. We are living in an illusory phenomenon, which is not the creation, dwelling, mind, and Dharma, but temporarily they are called the creation, dwelling, mind, and Dharma.

As they consecutively arise, they form the proclivity to create karma. Similar karma sets up a mutual stimulus. Because of the karma generated, there is mutual production and mutual extinction. That is the reason for the upside-down cause for living beings to come into being.

What does the upside-down cause of the world mean?

Due to the false view (micchā-ditthi) of the phenomena as truth, the concepts of every part, length, width, area, circumference, and size of the phenomena arise falsely in order that the space is established. Because in the space, the phenomena of things, earth, water, wind, and fire which have changed seem without cause to be as cause, without the clinging subject and object, turn around in order that yesterday,

today, and tomorrow are totally different. The past, present, and future mark and measure the change. Therefore, the concept of “time” is set up by human beings. Time and space are summarized as the world.

The time had three (past, present, and future) aspects. The space has four (east, west, south, and north). Three multiplied by four: $3 \times 4 = 12$. Four multiplied by three: $4 \times 3 = 12$ interference in each other, so living beings transformed into twelve categories.

Our body is a small world. Firstly, where there is the body, there is movement. The movement brings about sounds. The sounds bring about forms. The forms bring about smells. The smells bring about contact (sparsha). The contact brings about tastes. The tastes bring about awareness of Dharmas which results in the false thinking at six objects in order to perform greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), anger (sadosaṃ), delusion (samohaṃ) for creating the karma. Six disorderly false consciousnesses become the substance of karma. Thus, $3 \times 4 = 12$. Twelve false deceptive ways rotate in the nonending cycle. So, in the secular world, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, contacts, and Dharmas are changeable through twelve categories or twelve times to make one complete cycle.

Four directions and three times transform to be twelve species of living beings. We create the lust (sarāgaṃ) which is passed through four directions and three periods, i.e., it shows the change. Using 3×4 points out the general number. It is hard for us to be freed from the transforming cycle, so we are

subjected to all the beginning, the present, the future, and the past. We have used and are familiar with the upside-down cycle for a long time. In the present, we are in the turn of the twelve categories of living beings. Six false consciousnesses are the mutual causes-conditions (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) to set up form. The form brings smell. The smell brings tastes . . . up to Dharmas and the phenomena world. There is the world which means we have the upside-down consciousness about the arising-falling perspective of the phenomena world.

If there is not seeing, there is not form. Due to the false movement, sounds are brought about. The sounds bring the discriminating forms. Thus, it is called six random false upside-down consciousnesses. “Random” means it does not follow the orderly six sense objects. The process is not in order, because firstly it has the appearance of movement, then the defiling object of sounds arises. Later on, forms and smells, contact, and so on come into being.

This deep significance is explained in such simple words. But in fact, the mundane world actually is upside down and nothing definitely being fixed on. The world is our body and mind, and because we have tasted the mango, we are aware of the sweet and sour. Our mind has the worldly Dharma or the mental objects. By looking at the mango, we know the tastes of acidity and sweetness, so the worldly Dharma is in our mind.

We have four directions. The eyes see money, they generate the greedy (abhijjhā, visamalobha) stealing. This

stealing comes from our body and pervades through whole body. The stealing is actually in the hand. The right hand takes money. The hand is our body, it is a sin.

After creating the stealing karma, we must bear the buffalo repayment, i.e., entering the buffalo mother's womb by our eyes seeing the mating of buffalo female and male, then the lustful enjoyment arises. This is the motive of clinging that leads to rebirth (saṃsāra).

So, in four directions, we can be in a place to perform the bad deed, the stealing, or the evil. In another place, we commit a sexual misconduct that is the craving seed. A variety of karmas are mixed with one another. For example, from the stealing karma, we must repay. But there is added the committing of sexual passion which drags us into the womb. Then, due to the ignorant mental state that forces us to be an animal to repay.

If we are liberated to become bodhisattvas, then we must repay it in another lighter way due to our awakening contemplating force. So, the karmas that surround us in our lives are either before or after, either left or right, which is according to destiny to work. All karmas are nutrient and smooth to combine with one another to create the recompenses of karma. For example, we create many kinds of karma, such as a thief, dullness, telling a lie, sensual misconduct which are forcing us to go inside the womb. Which karma is heavy, we will repay first in the rebirth cycle (saṃsāra).

1. Ānanda, because in the world, a consecutive illusory wheel of the upside-down state of the motion happens that combines with atmosphere to form eighty-four thousand modes of flying, sinking disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being the egg beings (kalalas) in the world, such as fish, birds, reptiles, and snakes. These kinds are abundant everywhere.

The worlds are our body and mind i.e., five aggregates (*skandhas*). Our whole body and mind in the birth and death cycle still retains the habit of following the illusion. All these deluded Dharmas (phenomena), in which we are living are created by the perplexed, false thought. False thought means without truth of our real nature. We wrongly live in delusion, unaware of the truth, following upside-down behavior in order to create a false motivated karma. So, in the illusory world, the upside-down state of motion occurs. It unites with atmosphere to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random flying, sinking thoughts. Then, there comes into being the egg kalalas which multiply throughout the lands in the form of fish, birds, amphibians, and reptiles. These kinds are expanding everywhere.

At the death moment, we are unawakened to unite only with atmosphere falsely in order to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are either of the flying species as birds, eagles, or the watering species as fish, shrimp, and so forth.

The smell organ of a female hen receives only the air. If

we grasp that scented air, we will fall into the egg of hen to rebirth as a hen. Studying Buddhism helps us to experience or see the transformation which we must spend in the turning wheel. Now, if we are staying in a temple or monastery where we strive in pursuit of enlightenment, but in fact we do not know how we will be in the future, what will we attain? It may be rebirth as a hen, fish, shrimp or human in the karmic turning wheel. We must be afraid of this karma in order to pray sincerely for rebirth in the Pure Land. We should get familiar with the liberated path and chanting the name of Amitābha Buddha in order that we can be reborn in the Pure Land. At the hour of death, we pray to have no sickness, remember mindfully the *Amitābha* Buddha name without upside-down false thoughts.

2. Because in the world, a consecutive craving wheel of the upside-down state on lust happens, that combines with thinking to form eighty-four thousand modes of vertical horizon perverse disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into the womb beings (arbudas) in the world, such as human (manussa), animal (tiracchānayoni), dragon, and half-human-heaven being. These kinds are plentiful everywhere.

This is the craving habit in which whole body is upside down with sensual lust (sarāgaṃ). It means that the upside down creates the main desire karma in order to make the fruit. Every category depends on the light or heavy karma but the main point is the sensual lust in the group of vertical horizontal

perverse. If there is heavy karma, we will enter the womb of animal, buffalo, dog and cat, and so forth. If it is light karma, we will rebirth in the heaven (deva) realms. Human beings who practices for long or eternal life become half heaven-human being which also belongs to the human species. The karma is neither serious nor light that leads to enter the human's womb. At the time approaching death, we see the passion sperm of parent, once our mind is contaminated and enjoys it, so that our consciousness clings to the womb. Depending on the loving karma, it is stimulated to be eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are vertical horizontal perverse that happens all because our craving arises up. Humans, animals, dragons, and half human-heaven come into being from the womb.

If we want to be freed from the womb, we should avoid feeling like or dislike toward something. Of course, sensual lust is the most important thing to destroy. We, who do not create that desire karma anymore, leave the contaminating karma down, because the self-contaminating mind is the main reason to force us as a fetus to get out.

Due to living in the disorderly desire world, we feel attachment to whatever we see. When we see a daisy, we like it. When see an orchid, we also like it. We like this one, so we grasp this one. Due to these emotions, it forces us to the womb. Loving means attaching (trishna). The more clinging becomes sensual thirst, this is very strong and forms the karmic seed for entering the womb.

3. Because in the world, a consecutive attaching wheel of the upside-down state on the inclination happens, that combines with warmth to form eighty-four thousand modes of sideward upward disorderly thoughts. Since then, there comes into being the humid beings (arbudas) in the world, such as flourishing, movable worms and insect in water. These kinds are abundant everywhere.

The Buddha points it out in detailed order. The world in the birth and death cycle is familiar with attaching. The attachment (abhijjhā, visamalobha) shows that we still have the habit of attaching to this thing that is good or pretty while clinging to the other is ugly or bad. More clinging is stronger grasping at the place where we have the emotions. If there is something we love (vītadosaṃ), then we cling to those things. Something we hate (sadosaṃ), we also hold onto, so it creates a karma that is called the rebirth karma.

In the Disciplines of Novice (Sāmaṇera Vinaya), the patriarch addresses that a young monk favors drinking milk. After he died, he turned into a worm in the milk. Likewise, if we are addicted to tea or coffee then we should be careful to prevent rebirth as maggots in the café trees or the tea leaves. Those who are addicted to whatever, they will become beetles in such substances. If an abbot, who is the head of the temple, is only interested in a clump of cane, and takes care of it daily, then at the time of death, his mind wanders around the cane without leaving which forces him to rebirth as the worm in the

clump of cane.

One woman broke into tears over the corpse of her husband. The consciousness of the dying husband is uncertain where to go. He loved his wife so much that when he saw her crying bitterly, he could not bear to go to the other realm and was quickly reborn as a worm in his wife's nose. It means the husband's spirit turns out the worm. All comes from form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. The husband saw or heard the cry from his wife and received the strong feeling (trishna). Once there is the receiving, there is the perception to get stuck in; therefore, he failed to escape his insect karma.

For that reason, living beings have continuously generated and developed without stopping. Thus, whatever we grasp, we will stick at that place, which is the attaching process in the rebirth wheel. We have the habit of clinging to the rebirth wheel. We create karma and chase after feeling. Then, we will reincarnate into that feeling realm. Firstly, join in the interesting wet air to reincarnate as worms. Wherever the mind is fond of drinking milk, it will become a worm at that place. If a monk enjoys the sugar cane, he will become a worm in the cane. All that a gentle feeling seems as nothing, but it strongly forces the spiritual and is moved all the way to an unexpected rebirth.

The form of the crawling invertebrate worms is called eighty-four thousand of the upside-down species due to their moving by turning up and down (just as a baby turns over).

There are many kinds of random thoughts, such as the vertical horizontal perverse, the flying sinking, the old new, the marvelous clever, the secret connection, and so on, while this kind of random thought moves upside down. The upside-down moving is mentioned as the form, the body or the moving way, except the mind or the movable mind.

According to the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, the Buddha shows that our true reality is revealed with seeing, hearing, knowing, and so forth. We must be stable in the seeing, hearing, knowing as our refuge. To the external six objects, we mindfully detach because if there is attachment, there is pain. We see the ice cream, cake, or watermelon; we attach to the sweet cake, ice cream or watermelon, and then we chase it to satisfy our illusory pleasure. Now, whenever we see our favorite food, we must practice being peaceful with tastes and eat whatever is offered without attachment arising (abhijjhā, visamalobha).

In brief, the reason for all things is from the mind clinging to six objects. Because we have the contaminating habit to create sensual, lustful karma (sarāgaṃ) that is the principle to cause rebirth. Now, if we want to avoid six sensual attractions, we should practice without following the upside-down defilements (kleśa).

In the first part of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, the Buddha says that all living beings have continued in the birth and death wheel (saṃsāra) because we are neither awakened to the eternal peaceful true nature, nor awakened to the stable peace, the eternal true nature that causes our six sense organs to

cling to six worldly objects.

We have six windows of sense faculties to grasp, because we chase outside to hear the sound, smell the scent, taste the flavor, or in fact we only just remember a worldly object in our brain which is also to be stuck on it already, much less think and touch all six objects all day long.

1. Because in the world, a consecutive changeable wheel of the upside-down state of the deception happens that combines with contact to form eighty-four thousand modes of new old disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being the transforming beings (ghanas) in the world, such as back-forward moving, walking, and flying creatures. These kinds are plentiful everywhere.

A silkworm in a winged cocoon comes out to fly. It combines with touching to enter the egg of the silkworm. When silkworm eggs become silkworms, then a new life cycle of silkworms begins. They release silk to make a cocoon, which turns to a pupae and a moth, then it becomes a chrysalis (butterfly) to lay eggs. The eggs hatch silkworms. The silkworm does not die. It lives forever, life after life. It eats mulberry and dies after leaving silk. The silkworm is completely a transforming species, life cycle through four different stages of sex: eggs, silkworms, pupae, and moth.¹⁰⁴

This transforming species combined with contact (sparsha). How is the contact? If we learn about these

¹⁰⁴ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, p. 292

organisms in biochemistry that will help to know its birth and development process in physics. In regard to the mind, the Buddha, by his wisdom, realized that the process of reproducing the life of the silkworm connects with eighty-four thousand modes of new old disorderly thoughts. These ideas we have not experienced since we still live by our mundane consciousness.

2. Because in the world, a consecutive obstructive wheel of the upside-down state happens that combines with clinging to form eighty-four thousand modes of stunning wise disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being material beings (rupas) in the world, such as auspicious and inauspicious essences. These kinds are abundant everywhere.

The foolish obstruction means dull without cleverness. We have many obstructions in life because the karma, the wrong view (micchā-ditthi), and the upside-down state and so forth hinders our way. At the time of death, we see the lights of good and bad stars. Because of dullness, karma creates just as worshipping fire. Thus, at the time of death, we will see the light and become the inauspicious essences and spirits.

3. Because in the world, a consecutive extinction wheel of the upside-down state of ignorance (avijjā) happens, that combines with darkness to form eighty-four thousand modes of anonymity hiding disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being the immaterial beings in the

world, such as the voided, scattered, extinct, and submerged creatures. These kinds are plentiful everywhere.

This idea wrongly holds that the destroying means to see everything as empty; once the body has died, there is the end or nothing is left behind, even the cause and effect, dependent-origination (paṭiccasamuppāda). This species unites with darkness because it attached to emptiness. At the time of death, it unites with the darkness to become these species that are void, scattered, extinct, and submerged. The majority of this kind becomes deities in the immaterial heavenly realms due to their attached view of nothingness. There are also the realms of immaterial Brahma-lokas as the meditating state of neither thought nor without thought. They belong to the void, scattered, extinct, and submerged in the dark voidness.

4. Because in the world, a consecutive imaging wheel of the upside-down state on the shape happens, that combines with preserve to form eighty-four thousand modes of connection in mystery disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into the thought beings (ghanas) in the world, such as spirits and ghosts (pittivisaya). These kinds are abundant everywhere.

The world is subjected by the illusory shadows. For example, a person thinks to buy a hen to feed. Then, it develops into a herd of hens. He sells them to purchase a pig which later became a herd of pigs. He sells it to buy a cow. After it gives birth to a buffalo, this later develops into a herd of buffalos. Such imagining is called the illusory shadow. So

when the moment of death comes, we often think of those shadows in the brain memory. Due to the upside-down state of shadows, the large number of the deceased are reborn into a ghost or demon (pittivisaya).

The wrong view (micchā-ditthi) causes obstruction. Through a continuous process of illusory imaginings (samoham), the upside-down state of shadows occurs in this world which we misunderstand as the truth. In fact, we have never seen the true shadow. What we see is only the shadow in our eyes. The sunlight reflects on the nerves of the eye and because we are having the human (manussa) karma, we are aware of it according to human knowledge. Every day, we live with false illusions and we chase after the false flavors from the tongue, the false feelings from the body and six organs. We have not experienced the truth except to live on the feelings. We do not realize that everything is perceived by our nerves, which work to present the sights, sounds, fragrances, tastes, and objects. We ourselves lean on our nerves to turn out six sense objects.

Our whole life, we live with the false thoughts or the upside-down shadows. The shadow is to remember what we kept in our brain. We remember our mother, the beloved ones, the hated ones—they are all shadows or feelings of false thoughts. Thus, large numbers of people will be reborn as devils after death.

5. Because in the world, a consecutive foolish wheel of the upside-down state on the unknowledge happens, that

combines with stubbornness to form eighty-four thousand modes of thinly dry disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into being the without thought beings in the world, such as their spirituals turn out as soil, tree, gold, and stone. These kinds are plentiful everywhere.

Through the continuous world of slow dullness, the upside-down state on the ignorance (avijjā) unites with obstinacy or stubbornness. So, after death, people easily become the without thought species, such as pines, lands, rocks, and golds. It means they think themselves insentient beings as forest, soil pile, gold blocks, and dry stone, and so on.

6. Because in the world, a consecutive parasitic interacting wheel of the upside-down state on the pretend happens, that combines with affliction to form eighty four thousand modes of replying in disorderly thoughts. Since then, there comes into the neither material beings (ghanas) in the world, such as jellyfish that use shrimp for their eyes. These kinds are abundant everywhere.

Owing to the interacting state in this world, it seduces people to get trapped in upside-down and create the evil karma (palāsa) which is the opposite of righteousness. Therefore, it receives the retribution to be born as a neither material but it looks like material. For example, through a parasitic interaction they become involved with a being that is endowed with form, like a jellyfish. This type often looks like bubbles in the water which is neither form, but it plays the role as a form.

What is a consecutive parasitic interacting wheel?
Waiting to eat on another body is called a parasitic interaction.

The upside-down state on the pretending: The elder and young people are trying to find a way to cheat others.

Someone cheats other people to take benefit for himself, so before death, his karma is combined with attachment to become his new body. Like a jellyfish, it does not have a real body, therefore it attaches to a bubble as its form. There are eighty-four thousand kinds of such neither-form random thoughts. Fishermen often see these types on the ocean.

We wrongly take other forms as our body. This is called cause-effect (paṭiccasamuppāda). A jellyfish relies on a bubble to make its body. Due to random thought, it does not recognize anything at all. It clings to everything without order and considers this as its reality. Most jellyfishes are translucent like water in the ocean. In fact, it has some red veins in the translucent body. We only recognize it when it stirs and sticks on our feet. Otherwise, we have difficulty seeing it.

7. Because in the world, a consecutive relating wheel of the upside-down state on the characteristic happens, that combines with mantra to form eighty-four thousand modes of call gathering disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes neither immaterial beings in the world, such as the hidden beings in mantras and incantations. These kinds are plentiful everywhere.

What is a consecutive relating wheel? There are many smart persons but they are still tricked by mantras or beckoning

summon. Because they used the evil mantras to trick others in the past lives, so they themselves are trapped in this life by their evil mantras.

Why is it neither immaterial? Ghosts (preta) and spirits still exist but we cannot see them by our ordinary eyes. However, thanks to mantras, they can appear. The mantras do not create them. Ghosts and spirits live everywhere, at trees, grasses, mountains, rivers, and so forth. Mantras have the force to summon these kinds of beings who are living in the dark places.

Enchanters can speak with ghosts and spirits. They have their methods of secret mantras to do that. Someone can cure all diseases like a snakebite, that is, he has the mantras to summon snakes. If he calls snakes at midnight, then these snakes will come to gather at his legs at midnight.

8. Because in the world, a consecutive false combining wheel of the upside-down state on the transgression happens, that combines with odd to form eighty-four thousand modes of exchangeable disorderly thoughts. Then, there comes into the neither thought (ghanas) in the world like the varatas who borrow other substances to create their bodies. These kinds are abundant everywhere.

Combing the falseness means grasping the outside things to consider as self or self's possessions. It is like someone who adopts another to become his real child.

9. Because in the world, a consecutive antagonist wheel of the upside-down state on killing happens, that

combines with monster to form eighty-four thousand modes of thought to consume their parents' flesh. Then, there comes the neither without thought beings in the world, such as a dirt owl that hatches a dirt lump to be its child or a P'ou Ching bird incubates a poisonous fruit to be its offspring. When the child grows up, it will eat its parents. These kinds are plentiful everywhere.

Fraud (*māyā*) means double-dealing (*chādeti*), something belongs to another, but we tell a lie and claim it as our own.

How is the dirt owl? It incubates a clump of dirt as its young. Strangely, a clump of earth turns out a real young bird. Because it always thinks of a clod of dirt as its child, it is called “it combines with monster.” It is not a normal bird. Its mother wishes it to grow but when it grows, it devours its mother, so it is called a being without thought.

A clump of earth is without thought, but it turns into a real bird. When it is mature, it eats its mother. Like a P'ou Ching bird, it does not hatch a clod of dirt; it incubates the poison fruit to produce a bird. It is spiritual and not only knows to drink or eat, but also creates its feather, limbs, and wings. Hence, these species are the strange monsters.

What is a consecutive antagonist wheel? It is hatred and malevolence at parents, teachers, or respected people and it creates evil karma. It commits the karmas of killing, stealing, and sexual intercourse to repay its debts. For example, it kills its parents and debtors, which is called the upside-down state of killing. For that reason, so many strange monster species

appear in this world. Weird birds eat their parents; it has consciousness, so it is transformed from a tree to a bird, a Pou Ching bird. It belongs to the species that hates and eats its parents and benefactors. The Buddha said that this kind of beings can be found in every country. Evil is plentiful in the realms.

We must avoid having hatred (byāpāda, dosa), obstinacy (thambha), and wickedness (upanāha). Obstinacy means ignorant holding while wickedness is the villain. It means the mind becomes immoral, unyielding, and harms others. Such a mind surely goes to the hells (niraya). Then they will go to the ghost (pittivisaya) realm with the extreme suffering. After that, they will be reborn into kinds of poisonous worms or cruel animals (tiracchānayoṇi) due to their wicked thoughts (palāsa).

There is a kind of poisonous worm in India. People use it to make poison. Due to anger (kodha) and hatred (byāpāda, dosa), people will be reborn into the animal realm of poisonous worms.

This section mentions twelve causes to give birth to twelve species. These beings come from our mind, can be found in the time (three periods), and the world (ten directions), that is, our mind daily has these disorderly thoughts of the twelve species. The Buddha declared that they are plentiful in the world, but honestly, we do not realize it.

This chapter is vitally important because it helps us to think about the twelve paths. There are enough of these twelve beings in our daily mind. Therefore, we will chase after what

we think about, which leads us to rebirth in that realm according to our mind. We should be careful to reflect on our daily mind every moment. If we keep following the craving (trishna) one time, then two times, and so on, we will get used to it and it will become our afflicting (kleśa) habit.

The habit is repeated regularly to become our behavior, manner, or characteristic. By the moment of death, if there is any false thought, we will get caught up in that thought which drags us to rebirth into that species. At present, we just get out from the womb (the second of twelve categories of beings).

We are in the way of twelve species, so the Pure Land School provides us the method of reciting the Amitābha Buddha name to build good behavior for us. If our mind always remembers the Amitābha Buddha and recites his name, we will reach the aim to be reborn in the Pure Land, and escape the dangerous nets of twelve species.

We have just come from the human (manussa) womb, our mind is full of wrong view (micchā-ditthi) as the defilements (kleśa). We have many kinds of negative seeds in our conscious store, so we should change these seeds in ourselves daily by reciting the Amitābha Buddha name or doing meditation.

Meditation means mindfulness without racing out to the six sense objects. If we cannot meditate to keep awakening all the time, we should build the habit of reciting the name of Amitābha Buddha to always remember the Buddha.

Reciting the Buddha's name is a mindful habit; it can

help us to escape the dangerous thoughts of twelve species. We must practice daily, then at the moment of death, we expect the habit of reciting the Buddha's name remains in order that it can expel the wrong thought. This is also the reason why patriarchs advised us to recite the Amitābha Buddha name regularly until it becomes our habit and this habit leads us to the Amitābha Buddha land.

This means that we get out of twelve categories of beings. In this life, we are stuck in these twelve categories but it is lucky that we understand the reason and we should explain and spread the knowledge to others so that everyone can avoid the dangerous net.

The first danger is the inborn ignorance (avijjā). If we can understand the process of ignorance, we can cut off the cycle of twelve chains. The snake of ignorance is long since beginning-less time. If we can grasp the head of ignorance, we cannot run out to the six sense objects and we are mindfully aware of the present moment.

What is the illusion? The ignorance is illusion, we just detach it, and then it will disappear. We possess the inward permanent awareness nature; we only need to return our mind to this nature. It is simple, why do we not do it? Why do we hesitate to return to our potential Buddha nature?

We do not accept to settle down as a Buddha. We chase to discriminate and favor in seeing, hearing, traveling and doing everything to add more wrong view (micchā-ditthi). Our mind always changes and discriminates. Our falseness

discriminates without anything else. Why do we not dwell upon our Buddha nature?

Our nature is the Buddha; we do not care about it. Our six organs often attach to six sense objects to make countless mistakes and create a delusive sky without beginning. The karma of killing, stealing, and sexual intercourse makes saṃsāra longer and longer up to now we have not escaped from it. We do not realize that the mistakes come from discrimination of six outside sense objects. Once a worldly sight appears in front of our eyes, we see the form to distinguish, i.e., there is seeing. The object of what is seen presents, and then the subject exists simultaneously. All wrong origins arise from the discrimination.

In brief, there are twelve categories of species

1. egg	2. womb
3. moisture	4. transformation
5. material	6. immaterial
7. thought	8. without thought
9. neither material	10. neither immaterial
11. neither thought	12. neither without thought

Each species in these twelve categories of living beings has eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts that exist everywhere, but if we are asked to find one species, we will fail to find it. We must dwell on the bodhi foundation of the inherent, illuminating, wonderful mind essence and single-

mindedly recite the Buddha’s name. We avoid chasing after the external objects, because it leads the mind to turn into these twelve species. Keeping mindfulness is important. We must be awakened with insight to observe our mind to be permanent as a block that does not turn out to be twelve species which are too fragile and illusory. As being a worm or a butterfly or insect, it is hard for us to go up the higher realm or return a human being, so it is too dangerous.

As a human being, we have more abilities to approach liberation. We also have many opportunities to overcome these difficulties. If we lose this human body, we will fall into the other lower beings easily.

This is what the Buddha taught and revealed to us. Otherwise, we would not have this knowledge.

TWELVE SPECIES OF LIVING BEINGS

No	Cause	Upside Down	Combine	Disorderly thought	Kind of species	Shape
1	illusory	motion	air	flying, sinking	eggs	birds, reptiles, and snakes
						human, animal,

2	craving	lust	thinking	horizontal vertical	wombs	dragon and half human- heavenly being
3	attaching	inclination	warmness	sideward, upward	moisture	the movable worm and insect
4	change	deception	contact	new, old	transfor- mation	walking, and flying creatures
5	obstruct	hinder	cling	stunning wise	Material	auspicious and in- auspicious essences
6	extinction	ignorance	darkness	anony- mously hiding	immate- rial	void, utter, annihi- lated, and sub- merged creatures

7	imaging	shape	preserve	connect in mystery	thought	spirits and ghosts
8	foolish	dull	stubborn	thinly dry	thought -less	soil, tree, gold, and stone
9	interacting	pretend	affliction	replying	neither material	jellyfish that use shrimp for their eyes
10	relating	manner	mantra	call gathering	neither im- material	the hidden beings in mantras and incanta- tions
11	sub- stances	transgress	odd	exchange	neither thought	the varatas borrow other sub- stances to create their bodies

12	antagonist	killing	consume their parents' flesh	neither with thought beings	neither without thought	dirt owl, Pou Ching bird
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SUMMARY OF CHAPTER IX

Chapter IX discusses twelve species of living beings. Because there are two crazy causes of worlds and living beings, there are twelve beings:

1. Egg, 2. Womb, 3. Moisture, 4. Transformation, 5. Material, 6. Immaterial, 7. Thought, 8. Without thought, 9. Neither material 10. Neither immaterial. 11. Neither thought 12. Neither without thought.

Without following the crazy causes, it is the true bodhi (samādhi) of all Tathāgatas. Each species is also full of twelve crazy roots. It is just due to rubbing the eye, the sky-flowers all come out.

The nature is originally bright. Due to being bright, the form seems to appear. Then, the wrong view accepts that it is born from the essence. In the absolute place, it is nothing which now seems to have things. Due to such an existence, each session and part are falsely generated, so *the space is established*. Because taking the without cause is as the cause,

without the attached subject and object, it often shifts without settling down, *so the time is established*. Three times and four directions are combined and interacted mutually, in which twelve species of living beings are movably transformed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Please list the twelve species of beings.
2. Discuss the crazy causes of the world.
3. Discuss the crazy causes of sentient beings.
4. Explain the cause-effect of a species.
5. Why in twelve species, is the human the ultimate and highest?



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CHAPTER X

THREE GRADUAL PROGRESS STEPS

In the conclusion of the original cause of the upside-down states, arises the meaning of three gradual progress practices:

“Ānanda, each species of creature beings has twelve styles of the upside-down states, just as due to pressing the eyes, many sky-flowers are generated. Once the wonderfully illuminated perfect pure mind has become suddenly inverted, it creates a fullness of false random thoughts.

“Now that you have experienced the samādhi of the Buddha, you must cultivate three gradual progress steps to transform the original cause of these random thoughts. For example, the container must be washed by hot water, ashes, and incense to clean out the poisonous honey. Then, it can store the pure water.

“Revealing three gradually progress practices: What are three gradual progress steps? Firstly, it is to destroy the aiding causes of rebirth, secondly, sincerely cultivating to scrape the main characteristics of living beings, and thirdly, inverting diligently the present bad karma.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 539–542.

Each species of creature being has twelve styles of upside-down states, just as due to pressing the eyes generates many sky-flowers. Once the wonderfully illuminated perfect, pure mind has suddenly become inverted, it creates fullness of the false random thoughts. The Buddha advised Ānanda that if he develops the bodhi mind to cultivate samādhi of the Buddha, he must go through three gradual progress stages.

“Gradual” means step by step in order, cultivating gradually, learning slowly to understand and attain from low to high fruition.

“Spontaneous” means unplanned. For example, an upper level person practices Zen or listens to the teaching of the absolute Mahāyāna which he understands deeply with no wonder or challenge in the processes of being aware of the truth. Thus, such a great everlasting enlightenment is not limited by the time which is called “only a fingernail moment, he becomes the outflows (āsrava).

And here, the Buddha teaches us from the beginning to the fruition, there are three gradual progress lessons to practice. We are as a vase from beginningless time. It holds too much of greed (abhijjhā, visamālobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), and delusion (samohaṃ). If we wish to become a Dharma implement to contain the Buddha-Dharma, to become a Buddha, the first thing we must do is clean the vase with perfume in order that it can be able to contain the ambrosial water. It means we should use three gradual progress stages to clean our body and mind. Three gradual progress stages are as

follows:

1. To get rid of the aiding that causes the birth and death cycle.
2. To scrape the main characteristics of living beings, i.e., to keep precepts.
3. To prevent the manifestation of the present bad karma.

To the external aspect, we get rid of seducing conditions while in the internal aspect, we must keep strictly the precepts, avoid heedlessness as the common underlying nature of all men. At the six senses bases, we guard and pay attention at our mind, and prevent generating greed (abhiijhā, visamalobha), anger (upanāha), and ignorance (avijjā). That is the correct Buddhist karma leading to Buddhahood of a devout practitioner.

The gradual state means step by step. For example, we did number one already, then we move next to number two and three. Of course, we must walk from the lowest to the second and the third stairway. In any fruit, we also walk step by step, from the lowest to higher and the highest step, from narrow to wide. Likewise, we gradually cut off the external conditions and cultivate at six organs until we become a Buddha.

1. TRANSFORMING THE AIDING CAUSES

“What are the aiding causes? Ānanda, twelve species of living beings in this world are not completely independent, but depend on four styles of eating, such as eating in portion, contact, thought, and consciousness. Therefore, the

Buddha said that all living beings must lean on eating to live.

“Ānanda, all living beings can live if they eat good food, and they die if they take poison. So, whoever wants to attain samādhi, should not eat five caustic herbs in the world. If these five are eaten in cooked food, they increase sexual lust. If they are eaten in uncooked, they produce anger.

“Therefore, in the world there are people to preach twelve sets of scriptural Buddhist categories,¹⁰⁶ but they eat the caustic vegetables with much bad smell, so the devas and immortals in ten directions keep far away from them while the ghosts favor in this smell so much that they approach to touch their lips. Such people always live in the same place with ghosts, and their merits decrease day by day without lasting benefit anymore.

“People eat the caustic vegetable and even though they cultivate samādhi, they cannot receive the protection from bodhisattvas, devas, immortals, and good spirits in ten directions. Hence, the great mighty demon king takes advantage to manifest in the body of a Buddha to preach wrong Dharma for them, such as criticizing the precepts and praising lust (sarāgaṃ), rage (upanāha, viddesanā),

¹⁰⁶ The twelve scriptural categories: 1. Expositions on themes of practice, 2. Melodic verses, 3. Revelatory accounts, 4. Metered verses, 5. Special verses, 6. Ethical narratives, 7. Illustrative accounts, 8. Ancient narratives, 9. Past life accounts, 10. Epic presentations, 11. Fabulous accounts, and 12. Decisive explications.

and delusion (samohaṃ). At the time of death, these people will join the relatives of demon kings. When they end their merits as demons, they will fall into the unintermittent hell (avīci niraya).

“Ānanda, those who cultivate for bodhi should never eat five caustic vegetables. This is the first gradual progress step.”¹⁰⁷

All living beings can live if they eat what is wholesome, and they die if they take poison. We like this danger, so the Buddha teaches clearly how dangerous it is! For example, we prohibit children from going out under the sunshine but they still like the sunny weather, because they are too young to distinguish the harm. Likewise, we do not recognize it, so the Buddha taught wherever the spicy vegetables are (onions, shallots, garlic, manic pile, and young garlic), the guardian and devas stay far away because it is the place of ghosts (pittivisaya).

We avoid eating or touching the spicy vegetables because as we touch or eat these things, we often meet the ghosts. The hungry ghosts hover around us to smell and enjoy five pungent plants. So, people who eat five spicy plants are the relatives of the ghosts (preta) and stay in the same place with ghosts, dissolve their merit as the days go by, and they experience no lasting benefit.

¹⁰⁷ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 642–643.

The condition is the spicy vegetable while the cause is greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), anger (byāpāda, dosa), and ignorance (avijjā). Preventing the condition is to get rid of the greed and hatred. In fact, the greed, hatred, and delusion (samohaṃ) are not the condition, they are the root. Keeping out the condition is to cut off the root, i.e., to avoid eating these five caustic plants. If they are eaten raw, they increase our anger. If these five are eaten cooked, they cause sexual lust to arise. Thus, we should never eat them to prevent the bad conditions. Whoever seeks samādhi should refrain from eating five spicy herbs. Even if a practitioner entered the main samādhi, he must never eat them. Even if the Dharma preacher can expound twelve sets of sūtras, if they eat pungent plants, the guardian, heaven (deva), and immortal (half heaven-human) stay far away from them, but the hungry ghosts (preta) hover around to touch their lips. Because the nature of the ghost is a kind of living being who likes to do evil karma, the Buddha advises us to never eat these things.

The Buddha provides only one example of five spicy plants. In fact, we have countless conditions around that are the aiding cause (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) to the birth and death cycle (saṃsāra). Not only the pungent plants, but also all things that do not benefit our cultivation, we cut them off. Our lives in the family and society have thousands of kinds of conditions to lead lust (sarāgaṃ) and anger (sadosaṃ) to arise in our mind. Greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha) and anger (kodha) arise in our mind. That is the form of ignorance (avijjā)

or the root of delusion (samohaṃ). We thought these conditions were true, so we let the greed and the anger rise up.

Now, we must escape the conditions, because it causes the bad habit to be produced. For example, we know that someone hates us, does not like us. Every time they see us, they have a provocative posture, uttering words so deafening that our mind aches, which make us to easily succumb to our temper. If we recognize that they possess evil thoughts (palāsa), we should avoid them. We should not go in front of them having a defiant mood (thambha) with any animosity (upanāha) toward them. We must avoid the conditions to release the bad karma between us.

Whoever is often talkative or fighting (sārambha) which causes an unpeaceful saṅgha must leave the community. Demanding that someone leave the saṅgha is to get rid of the bad conditions that break peace in the temple.

We must be careful at keeping our five spicy herbs. We also are awakened at our six sense organs facing six worldly objects. Our mind must be mindful to escape from the bad condition, and avoid the arising of greed, hatred, and delusion to develop the self-craving.

Therefore, first of all, the Buddha advises that we should leave our parents to live in a pagoda; it is called preventing external conditions. Too often, parents who pamper their children and give them the best things easily get angry or sad if they see their children unhappy because they cannot get what they want. It is the love of parents to be the root to develop the

greed, hatred, wrong view, craving, or ego-ness.

So, the Buddha taught that we should leave our home for a monastery which helps us avoid the condition of the birth and death cycle. It can be said that parents and existent beings are in the condition of saṃsāra. They are living in the cycle of “ignorance-karma-suffering.” If we live with them, i.e., we engage in the cycle of “ignorance-karma-suffering,” so we must leave home for the temple. This is another aiding cause of rebirth which needs to transform. After we are liberated, we will return home to guide members in family to cultivate. Moreover, when we leave our home to live in monastery, we have to shave our hair. Our hair is also an aiding condition of rebirth, so we have to cut off it, in order that we do not take time to comb or take care of it daily because it is illusory. The Buddha wants his disciples to be realistic and save time to do everything in the true significance. There is a saying, “Live in a gourd, you grow round. Live in a tube, you grow long.” If we live in a tube, we want to grow round which is impossible. If we live in gourd, we want to be long which is impossible too. Likewise, in a good situation in a pagoda, the great ideal of super mundane can be generated and the bad conditions will be restrained.

This saying implies that we should not look down on the external conditions. We should choose good people to make friends. If we see the heavy drinkers, gamblers, as well as gossips, we should stay away from them, and not make friends with them. We do not waste time to think about the gossip. Let

them do their business, we do our business. It is good plan that we should avoid them. We should be careful to choose the good teacher to preach, good friends to communicate, and good accommodations to stay.

If we have just practiced as a beginner, we must follow these three gradual progress stages. In Buddhism, children are often obedient to their parents to keep the filial piety. It is the fundamental moral. Then why does the Buddha advise us to leave our family for renunciation? Why should we leave the “father like the great mountain, the mother like water out of the source”? Why should we say farewell and enter the temple, cut off the family lifestyle?

Because there are so many ties in families we cannot have much time to cultivate or learn scriptures as when we renounce and live in a temple. Therefore, the Buddha teaches that monk or nun should lead a life without family in order that they reach the holy life for themselves and others.

Avoiding the external conditions, staying away from family to live in a pagoda, and preventing influence of mundane habits. Monks and nuns are not allowed to gather in neighborhood for leisure and must respect their cultivation life to gain much fruit of peace and liberation. They have much time to cultivate for themselves and train for others. Monks and nuns live in the good circumstance of a saṅgha so that they have many opportunities to develop bodhi mind, and build a good Dharma brotherhood.

The patriarch declared that “Tigers fail as they leave their herds. Monks fail as they leave their saṅgha.” A strong tiger will be killed by hunters if it leaves its herd to go out in forest. Monks and nuns cannot cultivate good if they do not live in a good cultivating circumstance. Most of them fail in their will, only a few can succeed and they rarely have opportunities to teach other a spirit life because they have not experienced it.

Why do monks and nuns have to live in the community? Living at the pagoda, our craving (trishna) and selfness (māna) will be worn out. Although we study a lot of scriptures, we still attach subtly to our selfness (mātna) and views from our consciousness store. We easily forgive our mistakes as well as skip our bad thoughts. Thus, we need to live with our companions around so that our friends can see our wrong actions to remind us to correct and confess in order that we can continue to improve. So, the temple or pagoda is a good condition for this ideal to succeed.

Thanks to our teachers and friends, we can wash out the greed, hatred, delusion, conceit, doubt, and wrong view, and so forth. These poisons are implicit in our daily speech, action, and thought which can manifest in our appearance, smile, gesture, and behavior. Once these poisons from our mind appear without our attention, then the master, friends, and others will remind us, they even force us to repent. This is the reason why the Buddha teaches us to rely, repent, and support one another to purify our three karmas of mouth, body, and thought. The life of six virtue unions guarantees purity for the

left-home people, so the Buddha states that “Tigers fail as they leave their herds. Monks fail as they leave their saṅgha.”

If we wish to gain sainthood, we have to live with our teachers and friends. If we live alone, we only enjoy the peace and do not gain sainthood. Beginners who leave their home need to live in the Saṅgha, in order that they can rely on the great blessing of the community to practice and proceed.

In brief, a cultivator needs to quit five pungent plants which helps prevent the conditions of greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), and delusion (samohaṃ) from arising. Too often, we do not notice the conditions. From now on, we need to be mindful of it.

There are four styles of eating which twelve categories of living beings often use as follows:

i. Eating by portions: Eat each piece or drink per mouthful. A patient fails to chew but swallows but the soup going straight to the intestine instead to mouth. It also belongs this kind of portion.

In what realms do the creature beings eat in this portion way? The heaven (deva), human (manussa), and animal (tiracchānayani) realms. They use the following:

–Three sense objects as their foundation: scent, bad smell, and non-smell.

–Three flavors: sweet, insipid, and sour.

–Touch (vedanā): touch food or smell portion of scent (per portion) to feel full without hunger.

ii. Eating by contact (sparsha): Use the mind subject to contact with six consciousnesses to make food. This is the way of eating of ghosts (preta) and spirits. They contact with the scent to feel full.

iii. Eating by thought: The inflow (srava) thought of the mental consciousness specializes in endless thinking. It is turned into the wonderful meditative view to assist in maintaining the heavenly (deva) body.

The meditative power is as nourishing as food and the Dharma joy is served as food. In daily life, we enjoy practicing meditation and studying scripture so much that we feel the ecstatic and true happiness in present moment which serves as the nourishing food for our body and mind. The Buddha sat meditation for forty-nine days without eating anything because the ecstatic samādhi remained to balance his body.

iv. Eating by consciousness: The eighth consciousness maintains the body without decay. Nails and hairs grow longer, old cells die and new cells are born which are thanked by the consciousness to remain and operate the activity of the body. Eating by consciousness is the spiritual dish. As cultivators, we should not watch action movies or read violent magazines because they are also unwholesome for conscious nourishment.

In fact, four saints and six mundane realms all use the eating by consciousness but some are still in ignorance (avijjā) while others are awakened and liberated.

With saints, their consciousnesses are perfectly enlightened; it is called Tathāgata Store (tathāgatagarbha),

because it retains countless merits including the (āsrava) outflows, neither material nor immaterial, neither dwelling, nor without dwelling. This way of eating comes from unbelievable merit. Beings in the hells (niraya) also live by their consciousness which also belongs to this kind of eating.

We, human beings, eat by portions, thoughts, and consciousness. Once we feel so ecstatic in sitting meditation so much that it is possible to spend six hours without movement, frostbite, and hunger. It is also called eating by consciousness and thought.

Even the four dhyāna of material heavens (rūpāvācara-bhūmi)¹⁰⁸ and the four nothingnesses of the immaterial heaven (arūpāvācara-bhūmi)¹⁰⁹ use this power to maintain their lives.

¹⁰⁸ Four dhyāna: Belongs to the Material Heavenly Realms

The first dhyāna: the Community Heavenly Beings (brahmapārisajjā), the Brahma Minister Heavenly Beings (brahmapurohitaà), and the Great Brahma Heavenly Beings (mahābrahmā).

The second dhyāna: the Lesser Light Heavenly Beings (Parittābhā), the Limitless Light Heavenly Beings (Appamāṇābhā), and the Light Voice Heavenly Beings (Ābhassarā).

The third dhyāna: the Lesser Purity Heavenly Beings (Parittasubhā), the Measureless Purity Heavenly Beings (Appamāṇasubhā), and the Prevalent Purity Heavenly Beings (Subhakiṇhā).

The fourth dhyāna: the Blessed Birth Heavenly Beings, the Blessed Love Heavenly Beings, the Abundant Fruit Heavenly Beings (Vehapphalā), and the Without Thought Heavenly Beings (Akaniṭṭhā).

¹⁰⁹ The four dhyāna of material heavens (detaching their forms and desires, arūpāvācara-bhūmi):

1. The state of infinite space, (ākāsānañcāyatana-bhūmi).
2. The state of infinite consciousness (viññānañcāyatana-bhūmi).
3. The state of nothingness (ākāñcāyatana-bhūmi).

However, although they can maintain their lives for many kalpas, they will also fall into the hell one day because they did not attain the absolute essence. This means that our way of cultivation is still very lengthy.

2. THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF LIVING BEINGS

Ānanda, living beings who want to enter samādhi firstly must firmly keep the pure precepts. They must destroy the lustful thoughts (sarāgaṃ), without drinking wine or eating meat, and they only eat cooked rather than raw foods.

Ānanda, if cultivators do not destroy the desire and killing, it is impossible for them to transcend three worlds. You must contemplate lust (sarāgaṃ) as a poisonous snake or an enemy. Firstly, you must observe the sound-hearer's (śrāvaka) four or eight parajikas precepts to control your motionless body; after that you cultivate the bodhisattva's pure precepts to control your motionless mind. When the important precepts are obeyed successfully, the cultivators do not produce the karma of birth and killing one another in this world. If people do not steal, they will not be indebted to repay the past due in this world. If the pure cultivators enter samādhi, even though they have not attained the divine eyes, they will see ten directions of the worlds by the flesh body which is given by their parents. They will see the Buddhas, listen to Dharma, receive

4. The state of neither-discrimination-nor-nondiscrimination (nevasañ-ñānāsaññāyatana-bhūmi).

personally the Buddha’s teaching, attain the superpower to travel through ten directions, gain the pure vision of past lives, and do not face to the difficult dangers. This is the second gradual practice.¹¹⁰

The first thing is leaving home to live in a pagoda. The next thing is to be ordained with the *sramanera* precepts, *siksamana* precepts, bhikkhunīs (bhikṣuṇī) precepts, from the low stage to high stage. Because we come from the womb, our flesh and bones are made from blood, so our nature is ignorance (avijjā), since the beginningless time we have lived with delusion.

Scraping the characteristics of living beings: According to precepts and scriptures, we build right view for ourselves, follow the saints’ examples in each step so that our ignorance can turn into bodhi nature. This is the second nature.

Scraping the characteristics of living beings means we go against them. We control ourselves to not chase after greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha) for beauty, form, fame, sleep, food, drink, sleep, and rest anymore. However, they permeated our blood; it is difficult for us to remove them. We cannot clean lightly but must clean them out. We must clean all kinds of greed out so that we do not fall into hell (niraya).

Entering samādhi means essentially upholding the precepts purely, especially we must cut off lust (trishna), alcohol, and meat. They make human beings delusive.

¹¹⁰ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 643–644.

Why are we painful if we quit our ordinary nature? Once we do something wrong, our parents or teachers shout at us, we cry a lot, or we will fight with them. It is hard for us to remove these bad behaviors. Someone backbites us and we also do the same to them; we do not easily quit these bad natures.

Our skin and flesh are made from blood, blood comes from rice and dirt water. Our mind attaches to our skin and flesh and we ourselves build our selfness. Now we quit them, the selfness, we cannot bear it. We keep grasping everything, so if someone takes our things, we will be angry, while whoever takes care of us, we will fall in love with him. This is the main characteristic of living beings.

We regard greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha) and anger (kodha) as our nature while we consider the skin, bone, blood, and flesh as our body which we cannot abandon. It is difficult for us to omit them. So, we need to refrain from killing, without eating the meat of living beings to build compassion. We refrain from stealing other's possession to build generosity.

Four important precepts, such as not-killing, not-stealing, not-lusting and not telling lies are the root of other precepts. We must uphold them seriously and as purely as the transparent ice. We are mindful in every movement and gesture of body, mouth and mind. Precept, concentration, and wisdom are related together with the virtue.

Once we intend to say something wrong, we must be mindful to stop. If we intend to grasp cakes from others, we must control our hands. If we intend to step on an ant, we

should kindly move our feet away. We have to build compassion for ourselves and we need to have ability and concentration to uphold the precepts without failing. If we keep talking nonstop, we will fail to maintain our own precepts. The wisdom helps us know how to discriminate right from wrong. Concentration assists us in knowing how to control our speech and action. If someone is lazy about cultivating precepts, concentration, and wisdom, he cannot scrape his main mundane characteristics or his inner part off and will stay in the rebirth cycle. These bad characteristics are from the external aspect, but we have been influenced for so long that it permeates into our blood to be the inner aspect. It is as an enemy who invades our house so long time that it becomes the house owner.

Habits are formed from many past lives, so they are latent in our mind. Some people really do not want to steal but because of their deep habits, they like to collect or steal things. Such people must recite mantras to destroy these bad habits so that they can uphold their precepts and approach the improvements.

Whenever reciting mantras, people can cut off their false thoughts. Thanks to the power of mantra, the bad habits from beginningless time cannot arise anymore. Thus, keeping precepts means detaching these characteristics of human beings. Promising to hold the precepts proves that we are making a great attempt.

Today, monks or nuns, especially those who left their home to be novices when they were children, can keep their precepts perfectly. It proves that they are as the saints who appear in this life. We need to respect them because they have to live without family, stay away from ordinary property, and keep the pure virtue demeanors to be a role model for people in the world.

Someone cannot liberate from rebirth if he keeps thinking of sexual lust (sarāgam) and stealing other's things. He must repay the debts in his next life. The debt will remain if we have not repaid. Especially, monks or nuns should not grasp things in the pagoda as their personal belongings. Because devotees offer to the Triple Gems, the offerings belongs to Three Gems. Living in a pagoda, we should not waste what the devotees offer. If we do, we will be debt to them. However, if we lead a meaningful and pure life for others, what the devotee offers will be the means of building the Triple Gems, we will not be in debt. Therefore, monks and nuns have to lead a pure life to bring peace to others.

Thanks to the precepts, concentration is born. Six organs are pure because we keep precepts perfectly. Thanks to concentration, wisdom is developed, and then our vows of transmundane are fulfilled.

3. OPPOSITE THE PRESENT KARMA

“What is the present karma? Ānanda, whoever keeps such important precepts purely, do not have thoughts of sexual lust, and do not overindulge in chasing the six external

sense-objects anymore. Because they do not chase after worldly objects, they will return to their own reality. Without the conditions of worldly objects, there is no reason for six faculties to contact. Thus, they reverse their flow to return to the perfect. The functions at six organs are not disturbed, and then all countries in ten directions are illuminated pure as the radiant moonlight in a lapis. Their bodies and minds are the wonderful tranquil equal perfection, and they attain the great peace in which all the secret pure penetrations of all Tathāgatas appear. Then, these cultivators attain Anutpattika-dharmakshanti (Uncreated Dharma Patience). They gradually practice following their virtue to gain the saint positions. This is the third gradual practice.”¹¹¹

The first gradual stage is entering the pagoda to cultivate in order to avoid the condition of birth and death. The next stage is upholding precepts and the last is going against the manifestation of karma.

We, who are the cultivators, have lived at the pagoda for a long time, are ordained as well, study scriptures, and have to practice this third gradual stage in order that we can observe insight and control our mind daily.

Every time our six organs contact (sparsha) with six sense objects, we need to be mindful right away. We need to be aware of them with mindfulness, because the Buddha said that

¹¹¹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 644–645.

our mind is like a monkey which moves from this branch to another branch all day long. We need to be aware not to let arise in the mind thoughts of greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), and delusion (sarāgaṃ). This is the way cultivators should pay attention in detail. We should live in solitude to reflect on our mind and control it at each moment so that we can purify our habits from beginningless time. This is an important task we have to do.

Because of good deeds from past lives, now we understand saṃsāra, cause-effect (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda), the morality-immorality. We uphold the precepts with attention. The manifestations of the present karma are our appearance (the subject) and what is around us (the object).

If our manifestation of present karma is good, it means we created good deeds in past lives and in this life, we inherit them. For example, many devotees donate quartet offerings;¹¹² we see offerings and disciples' respect; we hear sweet sounds and words; we wear the smooth robe and live in the pure pagoda without thinking, and so on. All things come and are satisfying and pleasant.

However, the wise ones have to contemplate that due to our past good deeds, they can inherit such conditions. If we do not cultivate seriously in this life, our merit will be worn out. So, being in this advantaged situation, we who do not enjoy

¹¹² The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 624–629.

much, use wisdom (prajñā) to contemplate this body as illusion, live with a pure mind, detach from the blessing life, and should be calm in any worldly situation.

If the manifestation of the present karma is not good, we often encounter what we dislike, other insults (sātheyya), and betrayals (makkha). We need to contemplate them which come from our past bad deeds. We have to contemplate our false thoughts, body, and action to accept the repay of the bad result. We repay lightly without complaint (soka) and sadness (parideva) because all appear illusory (samoham). We must keep calm, tranquil, and peaceful so that we can expect to lead a good life in the future.

If the manifestation of karma in this life is good, many disciples will come to offer four necessary items¹¹³ (in Saṅgha life) to seek merit. We must control our mind without being influenced by worldly objects and respect. Upholding precepts wholeheartedly and dwelling on the bodhi nature without attachment to the external aspects so that we can return to our united reality.

The mundane people often chase after six sense objects while we, cultivators, must go inversely to the inflow to return to one pointedness. The meditating practitioners mindfully return to the bodhi nature, while some recite the name of Amitābha Buddha to be single-minded. Once six functions of organs do not manifest anymore, detaching the body, our minds

¹¹³ Four necessary items in Saṅgha life: robe, food, medicine, and lodging.

are purely blissful as moonlight in crystal, then all lands in ten directions are brilliantly clear. We will experience the equally tranquil wonderful penetration.

The wonderful penetration is the wisdom of receiving the intuitive nature while our body has arisen from karma, impermanence, and is unreal. Knowing, seeing, and hearing is the measureless lifespan without birth and death. The body can end but the hearing and seeing still exist. Likewise, the bodies of cat, dog, and other species can be decayed but their hearing and seeing are boundlessly permanent. Ants and worms, and others have the same characteristics with our Amitābha nature. Let's recognize the equally tranquil wonderful penetration in our Amitābha nature.

Due to the dark ignorance (avijjā), the crabs, fishes, animal (tiracchānayoṇi), human (manussa) beings, heaven (deva) beings, hell (niraya), ghosts (pittivisaya), and so on, are born. The forms are different but their measureless lifespan or the hearing and knowing essences are the same. Those who comprehend these things will abide in the Pure Land with Buddhas and bodhisattvas which the mundane people cannot comprehend.

Honestly, if we want to be good at precepts and behavior, why do we keep making mistakes, doing evil, or being a slave of karma? It is habits which are accumulated from past lives, hidden deeply in our mind. For example, there are many people who do not want to tell a lie, but as they encounter problems, even though they do not think about lying, they still utter a lie

and build many false stories.

There are many monks and nuns who keep their demeanors but once hearing some music, they move suddenly their bodies or beat their fingers following the rhythms. To transform these deep habits, they have to sincerely recite the mantra countless times to control themselves and preserve their supermundane noble manner.

While chanting the mantra, the cultivator's mind does not allow wandering with the illusion. Thanks to the mantra, the beginningless time habits are destroyed and go against the manifestation of present karma. Our daily life follows our habits. It easily runs down the slope to fall into the hole. So if we invert our habits by going uphill, it is difficult and causes fatigue. The deep habits of defilements (kleśa), greed (abhiḥjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), ignorance (avijjā), arrogance (atimāna), cover (chādeti), and wrong view (micchā-ditthi) must be cleaned out from the consciousness, and then the cultivator will attain sainthood.

The Buddha taught that in any situation or position, we must take these three gradual progress practices as the fundamental. Cultivating samādhi is abiding on the hearing nature, choosing an organ of seeing or smelling, or other to dwell on. It means living with the bodhi nature to filter out the defilements (kleśa).

The meaning of these three gradual progress practices are to transform the upside-down state. Our first upside-down state is that we often eat, drink, breathe, and take sunlight to

compose the blood, skin, bone, and flesh which we consider our shelter, accommodation, or selfness. This is the reason why the patriarchs often compared our action or behavior to silkworms when they release their silk to build a safe place to protect themselves. However, the cocoons do not know that it is the silken cocoon that is the reason for people who drop it into boiling water to take silk for their own use.

We act as the silkworms. Since beginningless time, we have been ignorant in our mother's womb until we get older and die. We keep thinking how to eat, how to wear clothes, and we do not care to cultivate and nourish our spiritual life. The body is the prison of craving which we consider to be our real body. This is the first upside-down state. After wrongly clinging to this body as our true substance, we move to consider the surrounding circumstance of six worldly objects as real. This is the second upside-down state.

Six consciousnesses rely on objects and the body for the distinction to arise between good and bad, benefit and harm in order that the calculation and defilements are generated. This is the third upside-down state.

Internally, we grasp our selfness and externally, we cherish worldly objects in which we create the negative karmas of killing, stealing, lust, and telling lies. That leads to the consecutive human beings and worlds. Therefore, we need to cultivate three gradual progress stages to transform three upside-down states. Like a poison vessel that contains five impurities in the conscious store, we must use the three gradual

progress practices to wash the vessel. Once the defilements or hindrance is cleaned, then we will be able to contain the Dharma water and we can peacefully dwell on the Buddha nature.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER X

Chapter X explains the three gradual progress steps: Firstly, destroying the aiding causes of rebirth (abstaining from eating the five caustic herbs); secondly, sincerely cultivating to scrape the main characteristics of living beings (keeping the precepts as pure as ice), and thirdly, inverting diligently the present bad karma (avoid chasing after six worldly objects).

We must experience the samādhi of the Buddhas and must cultivate three gradual progress steps to transform the original cause of these random thoughts. There are four styles of eating which twelve categories of living beings often use as follows: eating by portion, contact, thought, and consciousness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do we abstain from five caustic herbs?
2. Please discuss the interpretation of four ways to eat by portion, contact, thought, and consciousness.
3. Please explain the paragraph: “You must contemplate lust as a poisonous snake or an enemy. You must observe the sound-hearer's four or eight parajika precepts to control your

motionless body. When the important precepts are obeyed successfully, the cultivators do not produce the karma of birth and killing one another in this world.”

4. Why is it called “sincerely cultivating to cut out the main characteristics of living beings”?

5. What is “inverting diligently the present bad karma”?



*Myanmar and Vietnamese nuns in August 2016
at Shwemawdaw Temple, Myanmar*

CHAPTER XI

BAD HABITS PRODUCE SEVEN REALMS

Venerable Ānanda presented to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, Bhikkhunī (Bhikṣuṇī) Valuable Lotus Fragrance ordained the bodhisattva precepts but she commits sexual intercourse and then confirms that the sexual relations are not serious as killing or stealing, so they do not have the karmic retribution. After uttering these wrong words, there is a big fire at her female organ that spread, burning all her joints as she drops into the unintermittent hell.

“Again, as Mighty Crystal King exterminated the Gautama clan and Bhikhu Good Stars declared that all Dharmas are empty (without cause-effect). Both of them fall into the unintermittent hell (avīci).

“Do these hells have fixed places or do they appear in variety according to the karma of each person? We beg the great compassionate Buddha to kindly open our knowledge in order that all human beings who can develop their positive mind keep the precepts, respectfully listen to the decisive meanings, and happily preserve these things without violation.”

The Buddha praised Ānanda, “What a good question!

It makes all living beings avoid the deviant views. Now you should focus on it; I will explain it for the sake of you all.

“Ānanda, all living beings are originally really pure, but due to false views, the illusory habits are generated, which are divided into two parts, an internal site and an external side.”

AN INTERNAL SITE

“Ānanda, an internal site refers to the main characteristics that originate from inside living beings. For example, due to craving, false emotions arise. These emotions accumulate endlessly; they can create the lust liquid. Therefore, that is why living beings' mouths release water as they think about delicious food. When they miss a person, or either like or dislike someone, their tears flow down. When they desire possessions and jewels, their mind releases a craving current to polish their body. When they enjoy sexual pleasure, from both male and female organs fluids come naturally.

“Ānanda, there are a variety of loves, but their liquid flows are the same. These fluids cannot ascend—they naturally go downward. This is called the internal side.”

AN EXTERNAL SIDE

“Ānanda, an external side refers to the characteristics that happen from the outside aspiration of living beings. Due to admiration, the ideals which are invented as well as accumulated without stopping can create the ascending air.

Therefore, that is why when living beings keep the prohibitive precepts in their minds, their bodies will be light and pure. When they chant sincerely the mantra from their minds, they become mighty and strong. When they wish to born in the heavens, in the dreams they definitely fly up there. When they focus their mind at the Buddha lands, then the Buddha realms appear in front of them. They, who serve the good and wise Dharma friends, put their egos down.

“Ānanda, the thoughts differ, but the lightly flying are the same. With the upward fly without descending, they naturally become transcendent. This is called the external side.”¹¹⁴

In the part of a question, Venerable Purna (*Purnamaitrayaniputra*, *Punnamantaniputta*) asked the reason why living beings fell into six realms. The Buddha replied that because they committed killing, stealing, lusting, and lying. In this chapter, Venerable Ānanda asked the Buddha: “**Do these hells have fixed places or do they appear in variety according to the karma of each person?**” Owing to this question, the Buddha explained that due to false views , there are the internal and external habits to generate seven destinies.

The parts of śamatha and samādhi explained the right way to cultivate. In this part, Venerable Ānanda kindly manifested to make mistakes in order to remind us to avoid the

¹¹⁴ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 679–686.

dangers and offenses which we easily face and commit. Once we commit offenses, we will fall into the unintermittent hell , because four precepts of killing, stealing, lusting, and lying are the root or key while other precepts are branches.

The Buddha praised Ānanda's question that it makes sense in helping living beings to get out of the false views: **“All living beings are originally really pure, but due to false views , the illusory habits are generated, which are divided into two parts, an internal site and an external side.”** Depending on many or less thoughts from an internal site or an external side, seven destinies will appear.

This is the Buddha's vision. He recognizes with insight the road of cause-effect and he compassionately instructs us to avoid it.

What do the false views become the false habits? For example, when we see Ms. A, our false view holds that she is Ms. A. But in fact, fifty years ago, she has not been born yet. At present, she borrows food from outside to nourish her body. In the future, she gets old, sick, and dies. It means the earth, water, wind, and fire disappear in the world. Ms. A also disappears gradually to become voidness. Therefore, if we see we are A, another is B. This is the false view.

Ms. A who is composed of the earth, water, wind, and fire, is temporarily an illusion called Ms. A. If we think that Ms. A is true, it is the false view. Because we consider we are A, another is B. So, if B gives us cakes, we feel happy which is called the false habit. If B does not give us cakes, she eats

alone; we will be annoyed and dislike her which is called the false habit. Such false habits come from false views. Today we accumulate a little bit; tomorrow we are angry a little bit. Due to benefits, we like to welcome the donor. Tomorrow we think of a plan or a trick to continuously have the cake to eat. Day by day, such habits are built. We become angry and greedy people.

Hence, from false views, there are false habits) which are divided into two parts, an internal aspect and an external aspect.

An internal aspect consists of like and dislike, happiness and unhappiness, and so on. An external aspect is the thought, admiration or inventing new ideals. We need to transform from mundane people into saints. The mundane is the ignorance or illusion while the saints are our true nature or original mind.

The original mind is true, so we must return to live with it. That way, we will become a bodhisattva or Buddha. What mundane people indulge in are the falseness, foolishness, and illusion, When we detach to be awakened, it will disappear. In brief, the mundane or supreme all comes from our mind.

An internal aspect is our behaviors or characteristics which we accumulate for so long a time that they become a part of us and we regard them as ourselves. This is deep inside our mind, so it is called the internal side. They are the defilements of greed, anger, selfishness, lust, hate, gladness, worry, and so on which come from the ego-grasping, self-love, and wrong view. They constitute our nature or emotion.

An external aspect belongs to the outside aspiration. Thanks to the Buddhas, saints, and patriarchs teaching us how to have spiritual aspirations so that we can transform from mundane into a trans-mundane state. It is like a person who upholds the precepts, determines to keep the rules purely and seriously. Without doubt, we always live with our precepts in order to change from the mundane into supreme-mundane state. It is called an external aspect.

Thanks to studying Buddha-Dharma, we realize that greed, hatred, and delusion are bad; we must transform them gradually. We cultivate to wash them out day by day but we must really want to clean them, then there is hope. In fact, if we daily practice sincerely, we wash a bit on the surface or outside. So, this is called an external aspect.

Actually, the mundane is delusive and illusory, while the saints are our reality, truth, and mind to which we must return to live in awakening. It is heavy, if we are too intent on emotion, we will suffer. In contrast, if it is light, if we incline the thought, we will attain sainthood and enlightenment.

An internal aspect belongs to emotion and an external aspect belongs to thought, so that living beings have seven destinies. Honestly, all of them come from the mind alone. The mundane or super-mundane, ghost or devil is all from our mind. We are ordinary persons, but if suddenly we are enlightened, we will become Buddhas.

Owing to false views, if we see something wrong and do something dishonest, there are the external aspect and the

internal aspect. For example, according to the Asian custom, the father-grandchildren are closer to blood than the mother-grandchildren. The internal aspect is close while the external aspect is far or outside. For us, the emotion is as the substance, we take it as our characteristic, so it is inward.

We have two parts—the emotion is the self-craving or ego-grasping. Sexual lust causes the semen to come out; this is called sexual lust attachment. The Buddha fears that we do not trust it, so he provides the realistic examples in life. Owing to craving attaching, we produce water in the world. Aversion causes anger so we generate fire without stopping. Stupidity turns into the earth and the distraction changes into wind and storms in the world. Hence, the lust, anger, ignorance, and disorder have stimulated the arising of earth, water, fire, wind in the present. Our behavior produces all kinds of forms, so it is called an internal aspect.

The ideal is once we have aspiration for the truth and seek the reality, it causes the ascending air while living by the emotion produces the water in the world. Because of heaviness, the water usually runs down, never flows upward. Likewise, if we do not cultivate, if we only seek interest or fame for ourselves, we chase after the feelings of greed, like , dislike , we incur a bad heavy internal aspect in our karma. On the contrary, if we cultivate, go to the holy level, our body will release the ascending air which is light and pure. Thus, when we pass away, leave this body behind, we will fly to the higher realm.

CLARIFYING THE STATE OF POSITIVE THOUGHT AND NEGATIVE EMOTION

“Ānanda, all beings in the world are in the consecutive course of birth and death. They live following their habitual inclination. Once they die, they change into a different flowing. At the time of dying, when the final warm air has not left their bodies, all the good and bad karmas which they have accumulated in this life suddenly and simultaneously manifest. They experience the intermingling of two trends, such as the antagonistic toward death and an attraction to living.”

1. THE WHOLE POSITIVE STATE: Whoever is in the total thought state will ascend to certainly be born in the heaven realms. While flying, if they have blessings, merits, and wisdom, as well as the pure vows, they will be awakened to see all pure lands of the Buddhas in ten directions and they will be born in the realms as they wish.

2. THE STATE OF MORE POSITIVE THOUGHT, LESS NEGATIVE EMOTION: Whenever they have more positive thoughts than emotion, they ascend not very high where they can become the flying immortals, the great mighty ghosts kings, the traveling space *yakshas*, or the traveling earth *rakshasas* who go at any corner of the four heavens without barriers.

If they have good vows and hearts to protect Buddha-Dharma or precepts, they will go to support whoever keeps precepts, chants the mantras, practices meditation, and

follows the Dharma patiently. These heavenly beings themselves stay close to the Buddhas under the Tathāgatas' seats.

3. THE EQUAL STATE BETWEEN THOUGHT AND EMOTION: Whenever thought and emotion are equal, they are neither flying up nor falling down, but they are born in the human realm. If their thought is bright, they will be smart. If their emotion is dark, they will become foolish.

4. THE STATE OF LESS THOUGHT AND MORE EMOTION: Whenever they have more emotions than thought, they enter the animal species. By having the heavier emotion, they become the fur-bearing beasts. By being the lighter emotion, they become the winged creatures.

5. THE STATE OF SEVEN EMOTIONS AND THIRD THOUGHTS: Whenever they experienced the state of seven emotions and third thoughts, they are born in the ocean or at the fire region, where they often bear the heat. Having the bodies of hungry ghosts, they are constantly burned by that blaze. Because water can hurt them, they have nothing to eat or drink for hundreds of thousands of kalpas.

6. THE STATE OF NINE EMOTIONS AND ONE THOUGHT: When they experienced the state of nine emotions and one thought, they are born in the fire realm and in the interacting point of wind and fire. By having the

lighter emotion, they are born in the intermittent hell. By being the heavier emotion, they are born in the unintermittent hell to bear constant suffering.

7. THE WHOLE EMOTION STATE: When they experience the whole emotion state, they sink into the avīci hell. Moreover, if they defame Mahāyāna Buddhism, slander the Buddha's precepts, expound the Dharma for the offerings as well as the respect from the devotees, execute five felonies as well as ten major offenses, then they are further reborn in avīci hells) in ten directions.

Due to evil karma, we face bad results. In the same community karma of human beings, there is the available personal hell) for any crime.¹¹⁵

All of us desire to live and are afraid of death. On one side we fear death, on the other side side we are thirsty to live. These two desires are intermingled with each other. We are living following our habitual tendencies. After death, we come to change into another flowing. At the verge of dying, when our final warmth has not completely left our bodies, all the good and evil deeds that have been done in this life suddenly and simultaneously manifest. We experience the intermingling moment of two habits: an abhorrence of death and an attraction to life. This is so frightening! It warns us to practice diligently in order that we can be mindful at the intersection point. If we are living a pure, liberated and holy life, we will ascend

¹¹⁵ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 687–689.

without the intermingling moment of two habits of negative or positive.

The whole thought: We always cultivate or focus on reciting the name of Amitābha Buddha without remembering the emotions of love and hate; we will get the blissful wisdom. If we wish to come to Buddha land, our pure consciousness will lightly ascend and see the Buddhas in ten directions. The Pure Land School presents this method clearly with three necessary steps of belief, conduct, and vows in the western land while the Śūraṅgama Sūtra calls it the whole positive thought or whole pureness.

1.The state of more thought and less emotion: A person cultivates diligently but remains a little negative about the self and the possession of self. He can fly lightly but not too high, so he becomes an asura, a great mighty ghost king or a Dharma guardian who protects the cultivators from dangers. Guardians uphold the precepts and support those who hold precepts like them. If guardians cultivate concentration, they will support those who practice meditation like them. They do not leave Dharmas. The Dharma guardians belong the Buddhist divine beings or devas, protect Dharma, and have higher realms than human beings. They experience more thought than emotion, thus they fly upward, while we human beings have the balanced level of thought and the emotion. Normally, ghosts or devils live in the three evil realms, but Dharma guardians who protect Dharma have much more bliss and merit than ghosts or mundane people. There are the Vajra devas with

the sharp teeth and the great mighty deva kings, and so on. They also have the superpower to travel from one to another realm without obstacles.

In Buddhism, the Buddha does not advise us to be born in heaven, because even though we have a pleasant long lifespan with super power and merit, it will end and after that we will fall down into lower realms. In the human world, even our lifespan is shorter than heavenly beings, we have less merit than devas, but we have the ability to understand the Buddha's teaching for salvation. The Dharma guardians are as bodhisattvas whom we respect for their ideals to protect Buddhism.

2. The balanced state of thought and emotion: When people experience the balanced state of thought and emotion, are neither flying up nor falling down, they are born in the human realm . In this balanced state, if they incline to the emotions, they become foolish. If their thought is bright, they are smart. The emotions are the defilements such as greed , hatred , foolishness), defilements , lust , no-lust , dislike , revenge , jealousys, selfishness) self-clinging and phenomenon-clinging, and so on, that is the foolish way . In contrast, the positive thought is the insight ideals of sacrifice, virtue, donation, altruism, diligence, practice, meditation, and so on.

3. The state of more emotions and less thought: If people sincerely cultivate, it will be good. Otherwise, whoever cherishes ego only return to the suffering, and will be born as the lower types of foolishness and selfishness. However, if

luckily they have a little bit of religious practice, a little positive thought, they can raise up to live as the animals on the earth. There is a variety of the animal species. If they have the heavier emotion, they become the fur-bearing beasts. If they are the lighter emotion, they become the winged creatures. If they are cruel and evil, they become the wild brutal animals.

4. The state of seven emotions and the third thoughts:

If people experience only the third positive thought, and there is the heavy state of seven negative emotions, they are reborn under the water. Inside and beneath the earth, there is water. Where there is a water source, there is also a fire region. So, even if they have not dropped in the fire realm, they will be born in the ocean, but they will still be affected by the heated atmosphere of the terrible blaze. The bodies of hungry ghosts are constantly burned by that fire and they have nothing to eat or drink for hundreds of thousands of kalpas.

The more negative emotion people have, the more suffering they are subjected to. To avoid this, we must devotedly practice the positive virtues, such as altruism, nobility, and prevent negative emotions as pessimism, doom, and so on.

5. The state of nine emotions and one thought:

Whoever has only one positive thought but also has nine negative emotions, they will be born into the circle of fire and the intersection point between the lines of wind and fire. If it is a lightly negative emotion, they will transform in the intermittent executed hell. If it is heavier negative emotion,

they will be born immediately in the uninterrupted executed hell to be subjected to suffering constantly. These beings are evil, immoral, break the precepts, harm other people, and fail to be born as human and even animal. They must transform in the hell which is lower than human and animal realms.

6. The entire state of emotion: Whoever experiences a wholly negative emotion sink into the avīci hell. In addition, if they slander Mahāyāna Buddhism, break the Buddha's precepts, speak crazy and false Dharma to receive offerings and reverence from the faithful disciples, and commit five rebellious conducts, as well as ten major offenses, that forces them to be born in avīci hells in ten directions.

What are the hells in ten directions? A hell is in a realm for a certain time. Once this realm disappears, the hell also disappears. The victims will be transformed in another realm and subjected to the suffering in another hell. Once that realm disappears, such a hell) also disappears. The victims will bear the extremely terrible executed hells in ten directions. This means the creature beings are dreadfully punished in all spaces and times.

This is the retribution for their terrible offenses. This is what the Buddha replied to Venerable Ānanda's question about the same community karma of human beings—is there available personal hell for any crime.

Hells are the available realistic punishment for anyone who takes responsibilities for what he created with his terrible karma. Likewise, if one creates offense, he will incur

retribution. In the world, we are living with the same human karma since the beginningless time,. There are available hells for any personal crime. Likewise, in a society, there are many available prisons for those who commit crimes. Those who do not commit the offenses will not be imprisoned. This karma is our personal part. We have the same community karma as human beings. If someone attends to the Buddhist affairs with anger, please do not blame this on other people's mistakes, because it comes from the angry seeds in our karma. Once we retain anger in our mind, we have to be subjected to retribution. However, there are some people who do not maintain their anger, but they manifest their anger with a serious face and words in order to remind other people to correct their mistakes. This is the flexible means. These bodhisattvas have merit without offenses, because they use the means of "deep meaning in their strictness and sternness. This is the compassion to instruct people in cultivating.

There is the question that if people who cultivate diligently definitely go to the higher level, what about people who forget their bodies to serve others. Can they get merit to ascend the same as people cultivate diligently? Yes, they can. But they must really detach (service but without seeing that they are serving: non-self and no-dharma) from the bottom of their hearts, not only announcing it.

Those who single-mindedly recite the name of Amitābha Buddha with whole positive thoughts, want the stillness, quiet.

They are not talkative and put everything aside to focus on this practice.

It may seem that they are selfish and care only for their salvation, but it is not that. As soon as they are enlightened, they will have the great ability to teach and transform all kinds of living beings. They observe noble silence to keep their mindfulness and to avoid disturbing motion.

The root of birth and death comes from the organs, objects, and consciousness. The fundamental of bodhi is to live with the intuitive mind. Hearing is the hearing essence to hear the self-nature. If we keep attaching to our unordered consciousness, we cannot concentrate which leads to the domination of the heavy state of negative emotion.

It is said that if a preacher speaks crazily false Dharma to benefit himself, he will fall into hell for his retribution, because he intends to make people trust in him. The preacher, who does not intend to cheat listeners, thinks that his lecture is delivered correctly; he does not commit a crime. Thus, the preacher should propagate Dharma properly so that living beings can be influenced by his positive teachings.

If someone has much negative emotion but sincerely recites the mantra diligently and repents, he also finds relief. According to bodhisattva's precepts, if someone devotedly repents his offense until he sees good signs from the Buddha, it means his offenses are eliminated. This is called the holding form of repentance.

If those who have not yet made vows to uphold the precepts commit offenses, their retribution is light, but if those who do make vows to uphold the precepts commit offenses, they incur offenses seriously. However, if they know how to repent and transform, their retribution can be eliminated. They can start to cultivate diligently so that they can bring benefits for the sake of many. Normally, once people break a certain kind of precept, they should repent according to the category.

Upholding the bodhisattva's precept, they must repent according to the bodhisattva's precept.

Upholding the bhikkhunīs (bhikṣuṇīs') precepts, they must repent according to the bodhisattva's precept.

Upholding five or ten precepts, they must repent according to five or ten precepts.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER XI

Chapter XI focuses on the bad habits producing seven realms: heaven, immortal (half deva-human), asura, human, hell, hungry ghosts, and animal are the inner parts (presented inwardly by sentient beings since beginningless time) and the external parts (the good characteristics have been recently practiced as the external).

Living beings who keep the prohibitive precepts in their minds, chant sincere mantras from their minds, focus their mind at the Amitābha Buddha lands, and serve good and wise

Dharma friends, put their ego down fly upward fly without descending and they naturally become transcendent. This is called *the external side*.

Due to craving, false emotions arise to create the lustful liquid. Therefore, living beings who think about delicious food, miss a person, desire possessions and jewels, and enjoy sexual pleasure experience their craving water flowing out. These fluids cannot ascend. It is their nature to flow downwards. This is called *the internal side*.

There are seven bad habits leading living beings to rebirth as follows:

1. *The whole positive state*: They will ascend in the heaven realms. If they have pure vows at the pure lands, they will be born in the realms as they wish.

2. *The state of more positive thought, less negative emotion*: They ascend not much higher where they can become the flying immortals.

3. *The equal state between thought and emotion*: They are born in the human realm.

4. *The state of less thought and more emotion*: They enter the animal species.

5. *The state of seven emotions and third thoughts*: They are born as demons.

6. *The state of nine emotions and one thought*: They are born in the intermittent hell.

7. *The whole emotion state*: They sink into the avīci hells in ten directions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Define inner and outer parts.
2. List the examples of flying gently upward of the external parts.
3. List the examples of sinking heavily down of the inner parts.
4. What is the wrong view that makes the wrong practice?
5. Talk about seven states of thought and emotion generating seven realms.



*Dr. Bhikkhunī Giōi Hwong at Theravāda almsgiving
Mahagandayon, Myanmar, August 2016*

CHAPTER XII

TEN HABITUAL CAUSES OF HELL

Ānanda, all seven realms come from the karma of creature beings who themselves receive the retributions for what they invoke. For example, if they have created ten habitual causes, so they must bear six corresponding results.

POINTING OUT TEN HABITUAL CAUSES

What are ten habitual causes?

1. Ānanda, firstly, the habits of the LUST and touching interactions generate the mutual rubbing. This rubbing is endless. It arises as big fire as two hands rub each other to produce the warm feeling.

Because these two habitual habits burn each other, there arise the iron bed, the copper pillar, and other such forms.

Therefore, all Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize the sexual lust as the desire fire which bodhisattvas avoid as a fire pit.

2. Secondly, the habits of GREED and calculation produce an attractive force. When this attraction becomes dominant without ceasing it generates an inward cold. It turns into freezing which seems to crack in shapes. For example, a person feels cold as he inhales the wind into his body.

Because these two habits confront each other, the forms of chattering, whimpering and shuddering, blue lotus, red lotus, white lotus, frozen lotus, and so forth come into existence. Therefore, all Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize the extravagant greed as the water of desire. Bodhisattvas avoid it as a poison ocean.

3. Thirdly, the habits of arrogance and competition generate mutual bullying. When it becomes dominant without stopping, it produces passionate moving which is collected as the water current. For example, saliva runs stimulating the tongue itself.

These two habits hit each other, so the forms of the blood river, the ash river, the hot sand, the poisonous sea, the molten copper which is poured into the mouth are created.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize the arrogance and avoid drinking the foolish water. Bodhisattvas avoid it as a huge abyss.

4. Fourth, the habits of ANGER and conflict produce mutual dissent. When it becomes dominant without end, it turns so hot that it makes the fire burn the air into metal. It produces the knife mountain, the iron baton, the sword tree, the sword wheel, hammers, halberds, spears, saws, and so forth. For example, when a person earns resentment, he rouses his anger to react.

These two habits clash with each other, so the violent instruments of neutering, cutting, beheading, depriving,

thrusting, sticking, beating, and others are established.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize the anger as sharp knives and swords. Bodhisattvas avoid it as killing.

5. Fifth, the habits of DECEPTION and enticing produce mutual cunning. When it becomes dominant without ending, it generates the rope, tree, string, thread, cord to hang the pole like water penetrated into a field, and then the grass and trees grow.

These two habits compete with each other, so the punishing items, such as handcuffs, fetters, cangues, locks, whips, clubs, sticks, cudgels, and so on are formed.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize deception as the deceitful culprit. Bodhisattvas avoid it as the evil wolf and tiger.

6. Sixth, the habits of LYING and DECEPTION produce mutual cheating. When it becomes dominant without ending, it generates corruption. Dust, dirt, excrement, urine, filth, stench, and impurities come into existence. It is as if the dust is flying on the wind on which we cannot see.

These two habits conflict with each other, so the sinking, drowning, jumping, tossing, pitching, flying, falling, floating, flooding, and other movements are formed.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize cheating as the robber and murder. Bodhisattvas avoid it

as stepping on a poisonous snake.

7. Seventh, the habits of MALEVOLENCE and hostility produce aggression. When it becomes dominant without ending, it generates forms of tossing rocks, throwing stones, containers, closets, cages, jars, bags, and covers. It is like the evil cherishes and nurtures the wicked behavior.

These two habits swallow each other, so the throwing, tossing, pitching, seizing, catching, beating, shooting, casting, pinching, and other forms are established.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize aggression as the harmful devil. Bodhisattvas avoid it as drinking the poisonous wine.

8. Eighth, the habits of EVIL VIEWS and quarrel such as self-craving , wrong views, the solid insisting on precepts the deviant insights leading to the bad karmas, cause conflict with each other. The court officials are presented to check the documents. It is likes a huge crowd people who travel back and forth on a road and meet each other.

These two habits interact with each other, thus there comes into existence the official forms of investigations, interrogations, disclosures, craftiness, research, requests, the strict youths who analyze the record books for understanding the matter clearly, and so on.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize the evil view as the devil pit. Bodhisattvas avoid it as standing at a poisonous ditch.

9. Ninth, the habits of **BLAME** and **HARM** to others generate the wrong charges. When it becomes dominant without ending, it generates the crushing between mountains or rocks, the rollers, rinders, harrows, and so on. It is like an offender who blames unfairly the innocent persons.

These two habits face each other, thus the catch, beat, the blood squeezing, the body strain, and so on.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize the wrong allegation as the deceitful perpetrator. Bodhisattvas avoid it as the thunder.

10. Tenth, the habits of **LAWSUITS** and **THE DISPUTATION** produce the unrevealing. When it becomes dominant without ending, it generates the mirror and the bright fire. It is like in the daylight; the shadow is not hidden.

These two habits are displayed to each other, thus the bad friends, the karma mirror, the flaming pearl show the past karma to ascertain and experience, and so on.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize unrevealing as the secret enemy. Bodhisattvas avoid it as bearing the high mountain on one's head while stepping in

the ocean.¹¹⁶

The Buddha explained that the habits of the internal aspects and the external aspect can be cause to establish seven worlds.¹¹⁷ In this chapter, the Buddha measures these habits in detail by putting them on a scale from one to ten. For example, ten emotions means the whole false feeling which creates many hells in ten directions.

1. The habits of LUST: The habits of sexual lust and touching interactions generate the mutual rubbing. The course of this rubbing is endless. It arises as a big fire as two hands rubs each other to produce the warm feeling.

Because these two habits burned each other, there arise the iron bed, the copper pillar, and others.

Therefore, all Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize sexual lust as the desire fire which bodhisattvas avoid as a fire pit.

It means that if sexual intercourse is conducted and touches each other without ceasing, it produces a tremendous raging fire. It is like the heat that comes from both hands when they are massage each other. Because these two lustful habits burn each other, the iron bed, the copper pillar and other punishing forms come to present in the hell. Therefore, the Buddha in ten directions called it the desire fire. Bodhisattvas

¹¹⁶The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 691–699.

¹¹⁷ Seven worlds: heaven (*deva*), immortals (*half deva-human*), asura (*asurakāya*), humans (*manussa*), hell (*niraya*), hungry ghosts (*pittivisaya*), and animals (*tiracchānayoni*).

avoid it as a flaming pit. In America, people call their lover a new flame. Flame is fire, because as a man touches a woman, it will produce the lustful fire.

What is the habit? The habit is a thing that we do so often that it becomes our characteristic or behavior. In fact, it has not ever arisen. Due to our wrong view, the false conduct is produced as follows: Without thinking, we do it daily a little by a little for so long that it becomes a habit and is hard to stop. This habit constitutes our nature.

What is the habitual presence and what is the habitual seed? Today, we think or do something one time. Tomorrow, then after tomorrow, we think or do it again, so the consciousness will save it and make the seed of something deeper and stronger in our brain which is called the past habitual seed. Once the habitual seed is displayed it is called the habitual presence. Here, habits indicate the craving habits which are deep in people's mind. For example, a man will marry a woman in order to seek sexual intercourse.

How do the habitual presence and the habitual seed burn each *other*? The old habits or the habitual seed from the past will ignite when the root meets the present habits. Dry wood touches the fire and produces a big flame. Likewise, the present and the past habitual lustful seeds have touched each other to cause **the fire hells** and burn the victims, but people do not realize that. They keep seeking and enjoying the pleasures of the flesh. In Buddhism, it is said that when a woman is ready to get married, she is ready to tie herself to the burdens of family

or throw herself into the big fire. Bodhisattvas avoid sexual desire as they avoid a fiery pit while mundane people are madly fond of it without ceasing.

2. The habits of GREED: The habits of greed and calculation attract each other. This attraction becomes dominant, ceaseless, and generates an inward cold. It turns to be freezing which seems to crack into shapes. For example, a person feels cold as he inhales the wind into his body. Because these two habits conflict with each other, the chattering, whimpering, shuddering, the blue lotus, the red lotus, white lotus, freeze and other forms are established.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions look upon excessive desire as greedy water. Bodhisattvas avoid it as a poisoned ocean.

When two lustful bodies touch each other, it produces the fire of desire. When a person is greedy to accumulate wealth and properties, it generates cold in him. There are many kinds of greed, such as greed for fame, praise, position, food, sleep, and so on. For example, desire for compliments belongs to the self-craving, because we favor raising the egoness upwards and accumulating the illusory sound. Greed of property is wanting to collect the material for ourselves. Greed for position means being fond of having privileges and receiving people's services. Greed for eating is to feed the body and satisfy the flavor at the tongue. Greed for sleep is being lazy, leisurely, and enjoying doing nothing, just resting.

Because we desire for material, there seems to be the

suction or attractive force as breathing in the cool wind, there seems to be **the cool hells** of chattering, whimpering, and shuddering. The greedy seed in mind and the present desire habit of collection have interacted with each other, so that the hells are created. Because living beings are executed in so cold a hell that their teeth clash together to produce the shaken sounds of chattering, whimpering, and shuddering all day and night, so it is called the chattering, whimpering, and shuddering hells.

Once living beings stay in the hells, their skin and flesh are do cold as they stay in the ice. Therefore, they become as follows:

– Their pale skin is like a blue lotus, so there is the blue lotus hell.

– Their reddened faces are like a red lotus, so there is the red lotus hell.

– Their white faces are like a white lotus, so there is the white lotus hell.

– Due to the extreme cold, their faces turn into ice and there seem to be a lot of cracks. This is the icy hell.

What surrounds living beings comes from their minds. There is the cold, hot or double suffering environments (the external misery). They undergo the torture of extreme cold, not only in their minds, but also in the circumstances around them.

In spite of undergoing such cold and ice, living beings cannot die easily. They must be subjected to execute for their

offense which is created from their karmas.

Such execution comes from the conscious mind, so it is not called death. This body is decayed but it reappears in other places. Living beings have no body to bear it in the hells, only the karma.

Is it true that those who are usually sick or feel cold in their bodies is because they have just come out from the hells? Is their retribution still maintained a little in their bodies? We can realize this thing is very deep. However, through the Buddha's insight teachings, we comprehend the road of cause-effect clearly in this world. Hence, if in the present we often get sick and lack the inward heat, we know that our retributions from past life still remain in this life.

Bodhisattvas avoid it as the poison ocean while we grasp material as much as we can. Bodhisattvas consider greed as the bottomless sea because the more we have, the more we want without end. If we have one, we generate the desire to seek the second, third, and so on. There is a saying that "After we have an elephant, we again want to have the angel." We have not experienced that the desire is the main cause to bring the misery.

We are fond of sexual intercourse or fleshy touch which is the first habitual cause. We seek for money, property, and fame which is the second habitual cause. People keep thinking how to earn much more money which is called the habitual seed to be the habitual presence. Most people day and night dream to be rich. That is called the habitual seed. If they work

hard to save money to become rich, this is the habitual presence. If we engage in sexual pleasure, it causes a lustful flame to ignite. If we have the habits to collect material or property, it produces a form of icy water.

3. The habits of ARROGANCE: The habits of arrogance and competition generate the mutual bullying. When it becomes dominant without stopping, it produces passionate moving which is the water current. For example, saliva is produced and stimulates the tongue.

These two habits hit each other, so forms of the blood river, the ash river, the hot sand, the poisonous sea, the molten copper which is poured into the mouth are created.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize the arrogance as drinking the foolish water. Bodhisattvas avoid it as a huge abyss.

The self-pride and override generate false thought, intimidation, and competition. Our mind wanders everywhere so much and we think we are better than others. The mind of self-satisfaction emerges as we look down on others and speak harshly to them. The more self-satisfied we are, the more arrogant seed we have in our mind.

The Buddha provides a good example of a foolish person who keeps trying to stimulate his own tongue. This effort produces saliva. Similarly, arrogance means planting the delusion seeds. The more we are proud, the more we drink the foolish water. The arrogant attitudes from the past combine with the self-satisfaction in the present, and there comes into

being many kinds of hells and suffering pits.

Bodhisattvas stay away from arrogance because they fear to fall into the hell, while we foolishly push ourselves into the hells **of the blood river** (*Vetarani niraya*). The more arrogant we are, the deeper the hells are. The dangerous hollow is deep at the bottom.

4. The habits of HATRED: The habits of anger and conflict produce mutual dissent. When it becomes dominant without ending, it becomes so hot that it makes the fire burn the air into metal. It produces the knife mountain, the iron baton, the sword tree, the sword wheel, hammers, halberds, spears, saws, and so forth. For example, when a person earns resentment, he rouses his anger to react.

These two habits clash with each other, so the violent instruments of neutering, cutting, beheading, depriving, ing, sticking, beating, and so forth are established.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize anger as sharp knives and swords. Bodhisattvas avoid it as the killing.

The anger habit and conflict give rise to mutual resistance. When resistance is developed without ceasing, this person becomes so bad tempered that fire is produced. Due to burning the air, it turns into metal. The air is our breath or wind (four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire). All materials which come from the spiritual are shaped to be the form.

It is solid and turns into metals. In the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, in Chapter V of “Five Impurities” and “the consecutive world, living beings, and karmas” define it as accumulating ignorance to produce the form. Because the hatred seeds and present habits clash with each other, there come into being violent items, such as the knife mountain, the iron baton, the sword tree, the sword wheel, hammers, halberds, spears, saws, tools used for beheading, depriving, thrusting, sticking, beating, and others. The bad temper generates the fire of ignorance. That kind of energy is so violent that it turns into metal and then, **the hells of sword and knife to cut the body in pieces are established.**

The hatred karma causes many disasters to appear. From the conflict between two people, two groups, two families, two countries, deadly war can happen, which in fact, come only from the human’s hatred.

How is the habit of hatred formed? Once we are not satisfied, we will easily become angry. We are angry today, and tomorrow we will be annoyed again. When we are misunderstood, we are also disturbed by the unpleasant. Likewise, we accumulate the hatred habits day by day without knowing until one day, we cannot control ourselves and serve as a slave of fury. Hatred is the reason why we fall into hell. Hence, the Buddha taught that as we contact objects, we do not chase after the external objects and that will help us be awakened.

The angry mind produces fiery air which is burned to be

the metals. Therefore, there are retributions, such as the sword, knife, gun, hammer, iron pole, and so on. The murdering face means a person's face is cruel and angry. It seems that he desires to kill or harm the opponent. The retribution of this rage does not only appear in the present, but also has effects in the future. At this time, his consciousness is subjected to burning and later he will be hurt from the metal weapons.

When we conflict without harmony, day by day, we collect the bad habits in order that we create karma.

All Buddhas recognize hatred as sharp knives and swords. Bodhisattvas avoid it as the execution.

5. The habits of DECEPTION: The habits of deception and enticing produce mutual cunning. When it becomes dominant without ending, it generates the rope, tree, string, thread, and cord.

These two habits compete with each other, so the punishing items, such as handcuffs, fetters, cangues, locks, whips, clubs, sticks, cudgels, and so on are formed.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize deception as the deceitful culprit. Bodhisattvas avoid it as the evil wolf and tiger.

Cheating and misguiding generate mutual slyness. When such maneuvering continues without ceasing, it produces ropes, woods, the hanging string, the needle, the prick.

Two habits have been perpetuated by each other, so the handcuffs, fetters, cangues, locks, whips, clubs, sticks, cudgels,

and other instruments of punishment are established. The Buddhas in ten directions realize deception as a treacherous crook. Bodhisattvas fear it as a wild wolf and tiger.

Because of false thought, people deceive others to obtain benefit for themselves. They think their knowledge is so correct that they insist on keeping it without ever making changes. However, the more they go inside, the worse they get lost. Deception is the shape of cheating. Telling lies causes suffering once the truth is discovered. The deception seeds from the past and present habits have interacted, thus the punishment instruments of handcuffs, fetters, canes, locks, whips, clubs, sticks and cudgels, and **the hells of chaining, stringing, and hanging are formed**. Such experiences come from our mind alone.

Once we deceive others, not only others suffer but also we incur our offense many times. The Buddhas contemplated with insight as an enemy tying us in chains. Bodhisattvas views these cheaters as cruel animals They need to keep a distance for safety. If we cheat other people and make them suffer, in fact we ourselves face the miseries or disasters hundreds of times. It is our alaya-vijnana as a fair judge. We create karma; we will incur such karma. We tell a lie with other people, but we cannot cheat ourselves.

6. The habits of LYING: The habits of lying and deception produce mutual cheating. When it becomes dominant without ending, it generates corruption. As a result, dust, dirt, excrement, urine, filth, stench, and

impurities come into existence. It is like dust flying in the wind on which we cannot see.

These two habits conflict with each other, so sinking, drowning, jumping, tossing, pitching, flying, falling, floating, flooding, and other movements are formed.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize cheating as the robber and murderer. Bodhisattvas avoid it as stepping on a poisonous snake.

Due to habitual lying, at the time of death, the king of the hell asks his servants to bring that person to the hell. At that time, his mind is unclear and he feels that he is pulled by a strong wind.

Due to interaction between the past habitual seed and the present habit of lying, the movements of sinking, drowning, tossing, pitching, flying, falling, floating, submerging, and so on are established.

With insight, the Buddha showed us that if we still tell a lie, we will be covered by dust and dirt, excrement and urine, filth, stench, and impurities. **The filthy hells (*milhakupa niraya*) of excrement, urine, stench, and impurities are formed.**

Because we create dirty karma, we encounter such retribution, while all divine beings in the heavens do not encounter such results. The Buddhas realize lying as the robber and murderer that kills our good heart while bodhisattvas regard it as a venomous snake in our heart without conscience.

If we still cheat using sweet words to take advantage, we can gain what we want from others, but we cannot estimate what terrible punishment we have to undergo in the future.

Once we harbor the idea of telling a lie, it means we stepped on a venomous snake which is created by ourselves.

The fifth is the habits of deception, misleading, and involvement.

The sixth is the habit of lying, cheating, or and fraud.

Both these kinds of habits appear in different shapes, but they have the same roots and lead us into the hell.

7. The habits of ANIMOSITY: The habits of malevolence and hostility produce aggression. When it becomes dominant without ending, it generates the forms of tossing rocks, throwing stones, containers, closets, cages, jars, bags and covers. The evil cherishes and nurtures the wicked behavior.

These two habits swallow each other, so the throwing, tossing, pitching, seizing, catching, beating, shooting, casting, pinching, and other forms are established.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize aggression as the harmful devil. Bodhisattvas avoid it as drinking the poisonous wine.

The animosity gives rise to the grievances. From this, there come into being flying rocks, stones, caskets, closets, cages, jars, containers, bags, rods, and **the hells of kalasutta (victims are tied and dragged to die by black threads)** are

established. The habits of malevolence and hostility are conflicted, so the throwing, tossing, pitching, seizing, catching, beating, shooting, casting, pinching, and other forms are established. It is like someone harming others secretly—he harbors, cherishes, and nurtures evil.

The Buddhas in ten directions look upon animosity as a harmful ghost. Bodhisattvas regard it as drinking poisonous wine.

The animosity refers to resentment and making false accusations. From the heart, we nourish resentment so that we like to vex other people. Then there come into existence flying rocks, stones, caskets, closets, cages, jars, containers, bags, and rods. We are kept in cages or prison owing to the resentment.

The more we suppress resentment, the more it permeates deeply in our blood. If we can express our anger through words, everything is ended with nothing left behind. The resentment is burning so strong in the mind that it demands us to find a way for revenge. If the resentment can be displayed with words, it will be released. The Buddha teaches that we should contemplate the emptiness of five skandhas so that we can recognize the body, mind, and environment which are voidness, and then the revenge is also empty.

In other words, if we harbor animosity, it is like that red smoldering fire that one day will burst into flame. In addition, the punishing instruments of flying rocks, thrown stones, caskets, closets, cages, jars, containers, bags, and rods are

performed to satisfy the evil mind. The Buddhas consider revenge as the devil that harms our mind and body while bodhisattvas regard it as the poison snake that destroys our insight body and pure precepts.

8. The habits of EVIL VIEWS: Habits of evil views and quarreling, such as self-craving, wrong views, solid insisting of precepts, deviant insights leading to bad karma, which cause conflict with each other. Since then, the court officials are presented to check the documents. It is like a huge crowd of people who travel back and forth and meet each other on a road.

These two habits interact with each other, thus there comes to existence the official forms of investigations, interrogations, disclosure, craftiness, research, requests, the strict youths who hold the record books to analyze for convincing the matter clearly, and so on.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize the evil view as an devil pit. Bodhisattvas avoid it as standing at the poisonous ditch.

The evil views are self-craving, wrong views, solid insisting, deviant insights, and they conflict with one another. When we are covered by these wrong views, we often feel opposition and antagonism with other persons.

We think that we are intelligent and enlightened, but in fact, we are deviants, heretics or the false enlightened person. If we have not attained arahantship but we tell a lie that we have, to destroy the good root in our mind.

Some people have evil views as they think that animals are born to be served for people to eat. Thus, they are willing to kill animals to enjoy their meal. There are some people who do not care about the cause-effect doctrine because they hold the view that death is the end with nothing left behind. Because of their evil views, they create bad karma. They do not listen to other's advice; they even fight those who are trying to stop their work. They create ugly karma non-stop. So then, **the hells of investigation, testing, and questioning are formed.**

9. The habits of INJUSTICE: The habits of blaming and harming (others generate the wrong charges. When it becomes dominant without ending, it generates crushing between mountains or rocks, rollers, rinders, harrows, and so on. It is like an offender who blames innocent persons unfairly.

These two habits are faced on each other, thus the catching, beating, the blood squeezing, the body straining, and so forth are formed.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize the wrong allegation as the deceitful perpetrator. Bodhisattvas avoid it as thunders.

The habit of blame is the result in the false charges and libeling. Since then, it produces mountains, rocks, rollers, grinders, plowing, and pulverizing, and so forth. It is like a slanderous villain who blames the innocent people. Because these two habits join each other, the form of violence, such as pressing, pushing, bludgeoning, compulsions, squeezing,

straining, weighing, measuring, and others are established. The wrong accusation means to sue someone without cause or reason. The former karmic seeds of blame are combined with the present habits to generate the terrible torture instruments on the body, such as pressing, pushing, beating, squeezing, and **the hell of *sanjiva* (repeated birth and death many times during the punishing process)** are formed.

The Tathāgatas in ten directions consider the wrong accusations as a cruel tiger. Bodhisattvas avoid it as a thunder to keep their bodies secure.

10. The habits of LITIGATION: The habits of lawsuit and the disputation produce the unrevealing. When it becomes dominant without ending, it generates the mirror and the bright fire. It is like in the daylight, the shadow is not hidden.

These two habits are displayed, thus the bad friends, the karma mirror, and the flaming pearl show past karma are established.

Therefore, the Tathāgatas in ten directions recognize unrevealing as the secret enemy. Bodhisattvas avoid it as bearing the high mountain on one's head while stepping in the ocean.

The lawsuit and argument give raise to the covering. It produces a mirror and flame in the world. It is like there is no way one can hide his shadow in the daytime. Because these two habits are displayed, there come into existence bad

companions, the mirror of karma, the fiery pearls which are exposed as a result of the past karma.

All the Tathāgatas in ten directions look upon the covering as a “secret villain” while bodhisattvas regard it as a person carrying a mountain on his head while walking in the ocean.

Due to the habits of lawsuit, it generates the unrevealing. What is the unrevealing? Both in the pagoda and the mundane world, people always have the deep habit to cover their mistakes but they like to disclose other’s mistakes. The lawsuit means we hold that we are right while others are wrong, so we keep the mutual dispute going. So, **the hells of pressing, pushing, beating, squeezing** are established.

If we do not provoke other people’s errors, we will keep silent without suing. If indeed people commit mistakes, there will be the court or the cause-effect for them; we can kindly show the sin in order that they can correct. In contrast, they are innocent, we blame on them which is the false accusation.

In conclusion, we study ten habitual causes to reflect our mind. The past habitual seeds appear and combine with the present habits, which push us to create karma. The strong seeds meet the external conditions as soon it becomes the action. For example, we like so much a gold watch that when there is nobody looking we steal it and put it in our pocket. Due to the former habitual seeds and the present habits, there are results. Because we have not recognized the dangerous root of both habits, we spend a long time in ignorance as their servants.

Hence, the past habitual seeds push the present habits which in turn nurture and support the former habitual seeds in order to establish the consequences of many hells.

As a result of accumulating bad habits for many lives, they finally become our nature. Once we cultivate, we can transform the bad qualities in our mind and body. In reality, we do not have such bad habits; our nature is originally bodhi nature. It is because we have accumulated a little day by day until it becomes too close to us as “our-ness,” our flesh or substance. Now we turn to have ten habitual causes, such as the habits of lust, greed, conceit, hatred, deception lying, animosity, evil views, betrayal and litigation. Then, according to ten habitual causes, ten destinies of hells appear in our mind.

If we see people who have ten habitual causes and they fall into hell, we should recite the Amitābha Buddha’s name to pray for them. Their nature is originally Tathāgatagarbha (the source of all phenomena), the Tathāgata Store, and the reality of all Buddhas. Thanks to the Buddha’s blessing, merit, and virtue, they can escape from the hells.

We do merit for those who have undergone torture in hell. They will be affected by our prayers if we sincerely concentrate in our holy cause. It is like in Chapter III, part 3¹¹⁸ of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, where twenty five bodhisattvas present twenty five methods of enlightenment. Candraprabha

¹¹⁸ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 177–274.

(the Moonlight) Bodhisattva contemplated water in his room. Based on Candraprabha Bodhisattva's samādhi, his novice attendant sees that the room is filled entirely with water, without anything else. The samādhi of Candraprabha Bodhisattva has a very powerful effect on the surrounding environment. Likewise, based on our devoted prayer, contemplation, and meditative energies on the Western Pure Land, living beings in the hells can see Buddha-lands. Not only one person is blessed but also other victims in the hells are affected by the Amitābha Buddha's merit and blessing.

It is the cultivator's vows, good heart and altruism. He really wants to save all living beings in different realms to be freed from the suffering torturous consequences of ten habitual causes.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER XII

Chapter XII explains ten habitual causes of the hell which sentient beings create and receive bad consequences.

Ten habitual causes are as follows:

1. Due to lust, it has the hells of flame pits, iron beds, and copper poles.
2. Due to greed, it has the cool hells.
3. Due to arrogance, it has the hell of the blood river.
4. Due to anger, it has the hells of swords and knives to cut the body in pieces.

5. Due to deception, it has the hells of chaining, stringing, and hanging.

6. Due to lying, it has the filthy hells of excrement, urine, stench, and impurities.

7. Due to malevolence, it has the hells in which victims are tied and dragged to die by black threads.

8. Due to evil views, it has the hells of investigation, testing, and questioning.

9. Due to blame, it has the hells of birth and death many times and punishment by rocks, rollers, rinders, and harrows.

10. Due to lawsuits, it has the waterfall nail hells.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are ten habitual causes of hell?

2. Describe in detail how a habitual cause leads to the fruit of a hell.

3. What is the “habitual presence” and what is the “habitual seed”?

4. What kind of practice avoids ten habitual causes of the hell?

5. List ten examples of ten habitual causes that all Tathāgatas must keep a far distance from.



The Buddha's Parinibbāna, Kushinagar, India

CHAPTER XIII

SIX CONSEQUENCES

What are six consequences? Ānanda, all living beings have created karma with their six consciousnesses. Therefore, they are subjected to evil consequences. All these wrongs come from six sense faculties. What are the negative consequences from six sense faculties?

1. Firstly, THE CONSEQUENCE OF SEEING causes to bear the negative fruit. When the seeing karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly the red flames in all over ten directions are seen. The spirituality of the deceased flies following the smoke to fall down into the unintermittent hell (avīci). which has two appearances as below:

The foremost, the deceased, sees the illumination in which there are too many evil things and he feels terrible horror.

In the other view, the deceased sees the darkness where there is no sight and it is so quiet that he feels terrible horror.

With such a seeing retribution, when the fire of seeing burns the hearing, it can make the pan of boiling and the molten copper. When it burns the breath, it can produce the black smoke and the red fire. When it burns the taste, it can generate broiling tablets and the iron rice. When it

burns the touch, it can make the hot ash and the coal tunnel. When it burns the consciousness, it can produce fire everywhere to shake the entire space.

2. Secondly, **THE CONSEQUENCE OF HEARING** causes to bear the negative fruit. When the hearing karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly the giant waves flooding all over the earth and heaven are seen. The spirituality of the deceased descends in the water to fall into the unintermittent hell (avīci). which reveals two states as follows:

The foremost, the deceased hears clearly but there are too many noisy things and he feels confused.

In the other, the deceased becomes deaf. There is no sound and it is so quiet that he feels he is sinking in a down state.

With such a hearing retribution, when the waves of hearing pour into the hearing, they can produce the complaints and questions. When they pour into the seeing, they can generate thunder, roar, and poisonous evil smokes. When they pour into the breath, they can make rain and fog to penetrate on the poisonous worms that totally cover up the body. When they pour into the taste, they become pus, blood and the filthy things. When they pour into the touch, they can create animals (tiracchānayoni), ghosts (pittivisaya), excrement, and urine. When they pour into the thinking, they invent the lightning and hail which destroy mental thought.

3. Thirdly, THE CONSEQUENCE OF SMELLING causes us to bear the negative fruit. When the smelling karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly the poisonous smoke all over the near and far atmosphere is seen. From the earth, the spirituality of the deceased arises to enter the unintermittent hell (avīci). which has two experiences as follows:

The foremost, the deceased, smells smoothly. There is so much extremely toxic air that his mind becomes terribly puzzled.

The other, the deceased's nose, is obstructed. The breath fails to get through, so he faints on the ground.

With such a smelling retribution, when the smelling intrudes the breath, it can smooth and create hindrances. When it intrudes the seeing, it can generate fire and torch. When it intrudes the hearing, it can produce the sink, drowning, the ocean, and boiling water. When it intrudes on the taste, it can make hunger and rancid foods. When it intrudes the touch, it can create the ugliness, splits, a giant mountain of flesh which has a hundred thousand eyes, is sucked and fed upon by numberless worms. When it intrudes the thinking, it can make the ash, the deadly air, and the flying stones to beat upon the body in pieces.

4. Fourthly, THE CONSEQUENCE OF STINGING causes to bear the negative fruit. When the tasting karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly a flamed iron net in all over ten directions is seen. The spirituality of the

deceased which is aroused up from the earth, is suspended upside down at the net to enter the unintermittent hell (avīci). There, there appears two sensations as follows:

The foremost, the deceased inhales the air which is solidified too, so freezing that his flesh becomes cracked.

In the other, the deceased spits in the air and flies up to the big fire burning the bones and marrow.

With such a tasting retribution, when the tasting takes action at the flavors, it can make what is recognized and what is endured. When it takes action at the seeing, it can generate the burned metal and stones. When it takes action at the hearing, it can produce sharp weapons and knives. When it takes action at the smell, it can create a big iron cage which covers all the countries. When it takes action at the touch, it can invent the bows, arrows, crossbows, and darts. When it takes action at the thinking, it can make the flying molten irons that rain down from the space.

5. Fifthly, THE CONSEQUENCE OF TOUCHING causes to bear the negative fruit. When the touching karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly four faces of a big mountain joining to be one completely without a road is seen. The spirituality of the deceased sees a vast iron fortress, firing snakes, firing dogs, wolves, lions, ox-headed prison keepers, and the horse-headed rakshas as brandishing spears and lances drive him into the iron fort

gates toward the unintermittent hell (avīci). There appear two experiences as follows:

The foremost, the deceased combines with the touching so, the consequence is the mountains squeeze his body. His flesh, bone, and blood are disseminated completely.

The other, the deceased, detaches from the touch in which swords and knives hit the body, cut the liver and heart in pieces.

With such a touching retribution, when this touching gets through the sensation, it can make the road, shop, hall, and table. When it gets through the seeing, it can generate the char and sear. When it gets through the hearing, it can produce the hitting, beating, piercing, and shooting. When it gets through the breath, it becomes cover, push, investigation, and cord. When it gets through the taste, it can invent the plow, pinching, chopping, and severing. When it gets through the thinking, it can generate the falling, flying, cooking, and grilling.

6. THE CONSEQUENCE OF THINKING causes to bear the negative fruit. When the conscious karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly the terrible wind blows and the land is seen. The spirituality of the deceased is stormed up into space following the wind and spiraled downward to the unintermittent hell (avīci). There are two appearances as below:

The foremost, the deceased, is aware of anything in which there is extreme confusion that he chases without stopping.

The other, the deceased, knows without confusion in which he feels suffering and terrible pain without stand by the fury burn.

With such mental-conscious retribution, when the mental-consciousness unites with thinking, it can make the location and place. When it unites with seeing, it can produce the mirror and proof. When it unites with hearing, it can create the big joining rocks, ice, frost, soil, and fog. When it unites with breath, it can invent the great firing cart, a firing boat, and a fiery stockade. When it unites with tasting, it can generate the loud shout, confession, and regretful crying. When it unites with touch, it can make the large, small, tilted, and down posture in which he can daily spend ten thousand births and ten thousands deaths.¹¹⁹

Those who nurture ten habitual causes will encounter six retributions. *What are six retributions?* They are six kinds of sufferings resulting from bad karma which are created by our six organs and six consciousnesses.

There are two categories about the time of consequences such as “at once” or “later.” For example, people incur their offense soon after they created the bad karma or at the time of

¹¹⁹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 700–705.

death, they will encounter the consequences. However, some cases of wholesome and unwholesome karmas are created in this life, and they will pass through the second, third life, or even longer to be present, because they still wait for the right conditions or the meritorious retributions, and so on. It is the conditions to obstruct the consequences. The conditions clash with one another to produce many kinds of retributions:

7. THE CONSEQUENCE OF SEEING causes to bear the negative fruit. When the seeing karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly the red flames in all ten directions are seen. The spirituality of the deceased flies following the smoke to fall down the unintermittent hell (avīci). which has two appearances as below:

The foremost, the deceased, sees the illumination in which there are so many evil things that he feels terrible horror.

The other, the deceased, sees the darkness in which there is no sight and so quiet that he feels terrible horror.

With such a seeing retribution, when the fire of seeing burns the hearing, it can make the pan of water boil and the copper molten.

When it burns the breath, it can produce black smoke and red fire.

When it burns the taste, it can generate broiling tablets and the iron rice.

When it burns the touch, it can make the hot ash and the coal tunnel.

When it burns the consciousness, it can produce fire everywhere to shake the entire space.

The Buddha describes how, at the moment of death, the deceased will have a terrible experience due to his seeing karma. For example, if the criminals from the eyes like seeing valuable things, in his mind, the idea of stealing arises. If they like to watch the sexual desirability, killing, war, the impure things, the evil or immoral thing to harm people and animals (tiracchānayani). Thus, when he dies, the evil retribution of seeing will appear. Eye-organ has two external objects like brightness and darkness. The deceased will affect either the retribution of the bright or the dark, but it does not mean he bears two objects of bright and dark in turn. It is true that we must see two objects of bright and dark, but if we make sin on the eye-faculty, that is where we must face the different consequences.

And here the fire of seeing burns six senses of organs, such as fire of the seeing, hearing, smelling (breath), tasting, touching, and knowing. As burning at each sense, there are the raging flames, boiling water pan, the molten copper, the broiling tablets, the iron rice, the hot ash, the coal tunnel, and other horrible things appear to torture the deceased in the unintermittent hell (avīci). Thanks to the Buddha, we know these things. Therefore, we should be afraid of it and protect our six organs. Whenever six faculties see six objects, we must

detach the greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), anger (*kodha*), and wrong view (micchā-ditthi). We maintain mindfully the righteous eyes and the open heart without stealing and other crimes; we will avoid this fiery disaster at the moment of death.

If we see the dark that is guilty, what is the meaning for a person going to steal in the night or find darkness? This is a subtle place for us to notice. The karma consequences come from our mind. It is meticulously, one by one, that we have to take time to pay attention and reflect.

8. THE CONSEQUENCE OF HEARING causes to bear the negative fruit. When the hearing karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly the giant waves are seen, flooding all over earth and heaven. The spirituality of the deceased descends into the water to fall into the unintermittent hell (avīci). which reveals two states as following:

The foremost, the deceased, hears clearly in which there are so many noisy things that he feels confused.

The other, the deceased, becomes deaf. There is no noise and it is so quiet that he feels he is sinking in the down state.

With such a hearing retribution, when the waves of hearing pour into the hearing, they can produce complaint and question.

When they pour into the seeing, they can generate the thunder, the roar, and the poisonous evil smokes.

When they pour into the breath, they can make rain and fog penetrate the poisonous worms that totally cover up the body.

When they pour into the taste, they become pus, blood, and the filthy things.

When they pour into the touch, they can create animals (tiracchānayani), ghosts (pittivisaya), excrement, and urine.

When they pour into thinking, they invent the lightning and hail which destroy mental thought.

The ear-organ is often to hear the sexuality (sarāgaṃ), seductiveness (*trishna*), harming (*sātheyya*), oppression (thambha), competition (sārambha), fighting (upanāha, Viddeśanā), wrong view (micchā-ditthi), and so on, thus at the time of death, the deceased receives the negative retribution of the hearing.

Hearing has two objects like motion and stillness, so it belongs to the vibrating waves and water. The deceased will hear all sorts of noises or be deaf without a voice.

In the consequences of hell (niraya), the deceased is fearful of the noise. It is right, because the sound is too loud that he feels disturbed and uncomfortable. Moreover, he feels terribly afraid of the silence. Why does it happen? When he was alive, he was familiar with the vivid sounds of family member and people in society. Now in this circumstance, he is scared of the lonely state without sound in the vast space.

And here the waves of hearing make six senses of organs sinking down, such as flooding seeing, hearing, smelling (*breath*), tasting, touching, and knowing. As watering at each sense, there are the rain, waves, wind, fog, pus, blood, urine, and other dirty things appear to torture, drown, or destroy the mind of the deceased in the unintermittent hell. Thanks to the Buddha, we know these things. Therefore, we must reflect carefully on it and mindfully protect our six organs as contact with six external objects.

9. THE CONSEQUENCE OF SMELLING causes to bear the negative fruit. When the smelling karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly the poisonous smoke all over the near and far atmosphere is seen. From the earth, the spirituality of the deceased arises to enter the unintermittent hell (avīci) which has two experiences as follows:

The foremost, the deceased, smells smoothly. There is so much extremely toxic air that his mind becomes terribly puzzled.

The other, the deceased's nose is obstructed. The breath failed to get through, so he faints on the ground.

With such a smelling retribution, when the smelling intrudes on the breath, it can smooth and also create hindrances. When it intrudes on the seeing, it can generate fire and torch. When it intrudes on the hearing, it can produce sinking, drowning, the ocean and boiling water. When it intrudes on the taste, it can make hunger and

rancid foods. When it intrudes on the touch, it can create ugliness, splitting, a giant mountain of flesh which has a hundred thousand eyes, is sucked, and fed upon by numberless worms. When it intrudes on the thinking, it can make ash, deadly air, and the flying stones to beat the body in pieces.

The nose-organ is often used to smell the impure sperm, eroticism, blood, killing air, wine, animal (tiracchānayani) flesh, filthy things and so on, thus at the time of death, the deceased receives the negative retribution of scent.

Smelling has two objects like the open and sticking, so it belongs to the air, foul, and odors. The deceased will smell all sorts of poisons or be stuck without odor.

The terrible odor of smelling makes six senses of organs, such as the seeing, hearing, smelling (*breath*), tasting, touching, and knowing to be stuck. As air is stuck at each sense, there are the poison air, big current, fire, flame, hunger, tedium of eating, ugliness, cracking, fleshy mountain, flying stones, and other things appear to destroy or be sucked into the body of the deceased in the unintermittent hell (avīci). Thanks to the Buddha, we know these things. Therefore, we must reflect carefully on it and mindfully protect our six organs as contact with six external objects to avoid the negative consequences of the smell.

10. THE CONSEQUENCE OF TASTING causes to bear the negative fruit. When the tasting karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly a flamed iron net in all

ten directions is seen. The spirituality of the deceased has jumped up from the earth, suspended upside down at the net to enter the unintermittent hell. There, it appears to have two sensations as follows:

The foremost, the deceased inhales the air which is solidified so freezing that his flesh becomes cracked.

The other, the deceased, spits in the air to fly up which is formed to be the big fire burning bones and marrow to the end. With such a tasting retribution, when the tasting takes action at the flavors, it can make what is recognized and what is endured.

When it takes action at the seeing, it can generate the burned metal and stones.

When it takes action at the hearing, it can produce the sharp weapons and knives.

When it takes action at the smell, it can create a big iron cage which covers all the countries.

When it takes action at the touch, it can invent the bows, arrows, crossbows, and darts.

When it takes action at the thinking, it can make the flying molten irons that rain down from space.

The tongue-organ is often to taste the wine, animal (tiracchānayani) flesh, to talk, tell a lie, defame the Triple Gems, wrongly blame, and so on. Thus, at the time of death, the deceased receives the negative retribution of the tasting.

Tasting has two objects like flavor and bland, so it

belongs to the red flame. The deceased experiences the extreme cold so that his body is cracked or the raging fire burns his bones and pus endlessly.

In the consequences of hell, the deceased feels the fire of tasting burn six sense organs, such as seeing, hearing, smelling (*breath*), tasting, touching, and knowing. As burning at each sense, there are the melting metals, huge cage, sharp weapons, bows, arrows, crossbows, darts, and other instruments of torture appear to punish and destroy the body of the deceased in the unintermittent hell (avīci). Thanks to the Buddha, we recognize these realistic things of cause-effect. Therefore, we must reflect on it and mindfully protect our six organs as contact with six external objects. Due to being a slave of our tongue, we kill animals to satisfy our meat cravings. The animals suffer horribly as we do this. We receive food by harming the animals (tiracchānayoṇi) by eating, chewing, and swallowing them, and so in the present and future, we are subjected to suffering and the negative consequences in return.

11. THE CONSEQUENCE OF TOUCHING causes to bear the negative fruit. When the touching karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly four faces of a big mountain join to be one completely without a road is seen. The spirituality of the deceased sees a vast iron fortress, the firing snakes, the firing dogs, wolves, lions, ox-headed prison keepers, and the horse-headed rakshas as brandishing spears and lances drive him into the iron fort

gates toward the unintermittent hell (avīci). There appear two experiences as follows:

The foremost, the deceased, combines with touch in which the mountains squeeze his body in order that the flesh, bone, and blood are disseminated completely.

The other, the deceased, detaches from the touch in which the swords and knives hit the body, cut the liver, and heart in pieces.

With such a touching retribution, when this touching gets through the sensation, it can make a road, shop, hall, and table.

When it gets through the seeing, it can generate the char and sear.

When it gets through the hearing, it produces the hitting, beating, piercing, and shooting.

When it gets through the breath, it becomes covering, pushing, investigation, and cord.

When it gets through the taste, it can invent the plow, pinch, chop, and sever.

When it gets through the thinking, it can generate falling, flying, cooking, and grilling.

The body-organ is often enjoyed to touch another person's flesh, seductiveness, gentle silks, luxury accommodations, violent weapons, and so on, thus at the time of death, the deceased receives the negative retribution of the touching.

Touching has two objects like separation and combination, so it belongs to the sensitive. The deceased will frighten either the surrounding mountains without exit for him or the swords cutting his body in pieces.

And here the sensation of touching burns six senses of organs (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing) to extinguish. As smothering at each sense, there are the mountains squeezing the body, swords cutting the internal body parts, the hitting, beating, piercing, shooting covering, pushing, investigation, cord, plowing, pinching, chopping, severing, falling, flying, cooking, grilling and other torture instruments appear to execute the mental consciousness of the deceased in the unintermittent hell (avīci). Thanks to the Buddha, we acknowledge these things. Therefore, we must reflect mindfully protect our six organs and contact with six external objects.

12. THE CONSEQUENCE OF THINKING causes to bear the negative fruit. When the conscious karma takes action, at the time of death, firstly the terrible wind blows and the land is seen. The spirituality of the deceased storms up into space following the wind spiraling downward to the unintermittent hell (avīci). They have two appearances as follows:

The foremost, the deceased, is not aware of anything. There is so much confusion that he chases without stopping.

The other, the deceased, knows without confusion in which he feels suffering and terrible pain without standing by the fury burning.

With such mental-conscious retribution, when the mental-consciousness unites with thinking, it can make location and place.

When it unites with seeing, it can produce the mirror and proof.

When it unites with hearing, it can create the big joining rocks, ice, frost, soil, and fog. When it unites with breath, it can invent the great firing cart, a firing boat, and a fiery stockade.

When it unites with tasting, it can generate the loud shout, confession, and regretful crying.

When it unites with touch, it can make the large, small, tilted, and down posture in which he can daily spend ten thousand births and ten thousands deaths.¹²⁰

The mental consciousness is often to think of six external objects, killing, stealing, sexuality, telling a lie, committing the precepts (vinaya), dirty things (amahaggataṃ) and wrong views (micchā-ditthi), and so on, thus at the time of death, the deceased receives the negative retribution of the hearing.

Knowing has two objects like the appearing and disappearing, so it belongs to the image or shape. The deceased

¹²⁰ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 687–689.

cares so much that he runs unaware and confusedly or he suffers extremely from all sorts of burnings.

And here the images or shadows of knowing fire at the six senses of organs, such as seeing the blazing, hearing, smelling (breath), tasting, touching, and knowing. As flaming at each sense, there are the mirror, proof, rocks, ice, frost, soil, fog, a great firing cart, a firing boat, a fiery stockade, the loud shout, confession, the regretful crying, births, deaths, and so forth to torture the mind of the deceased in the unintermittent hell (avīci). Thanks to the Buddha, we come to know these things. Therefore, we must reflect and mindfully protect our six organs as contact with six external objects.

Ānanda, these are called ten causes and six retributions of the hells (niraya), which are all created by the ignorance and falseness of living beings.

If six organs of living beings simultaneously create evil karma, they can enter the avīci hell to endure extreme suffering in measureless kalpas. If each of six sense organs creates the evil karma including environment and organs, the deceased must fall down into eight unintermittent hells. If three karmas of body, mouth, and mind commit killing, stealing, and sexual intercourse, the deceased can transform into the eighteen hells. If only one or two among three (of body, mind, and mouth) commits just one act of killing or stealing, the deceased will enter thirty-six hells (niraya). If there is only an organ breaking a precept, the deceased must enter one hundred and eight hells.

Because of the different individual karmas, living beings create the certain same karma in order to enter the collective hells. These arise from false thinking which originally does not exist in the world.¹²¹

In the above paragraph, the Buddha summarized ten causes and six consequences of the hells (niraya) which are created by the ignorance and falseness of living beings.

- If six organs of living beings simultaneously create evil karma, they can enter the avīci hells.

- If each of six sense organs creates evil karma including environment and organ, the deceased must fall down into eight unintermittent hells (avīci).

- If three karmas of body, mouth, and mind commit killing, stealing, and sexual intercourse, the deceased can transform into eighteen hells (avīci).

- If only one or two among three of body, mind, and mouth commits just one act of killing or stealing, the deceased can enter thirty-six hells (avīci).

- If there is only an organ breaking a precept, the deceased must enter one hundred and eight hells (avīci).

Living beings alone create karma in order to fall into the same commutative hell themselves. It arises because of the false thoughts (samohaṃ) which originally did not exist. Due to suddenly unenlightenment, the inborn ignorance (avijjā) appears. Likewise, owing to the sore eyes, the sky-flowers

¹²¹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 706–707.

arise; honestly, the sky still shines bright and clear. Do not grasp phenomena and illusory thoughts, the original nature appears obviously as Vĩnh Gia Zen Master expresses in his poem that:

*Whenever the dust is ended, the mirror will shine
Mind and environment are detached,
the true nature will present.*

THE REMAINING CONSEQUENCES:

Again Ānanda, if living beings who do not defame or destroy the disciplines, violate the bodhisattva precepts, slander the Buddha's Nirvana (Nibbāna), but generate many complex kinds of karma, so that they must be burned in human lives. Once their punishing karmas is finally finished, they will be reborn in the ghost (pittivisaya) form.

1) If living beings paid for already THE GREEDY (abhijjhā, visamalobha) SINS FOR MATERIAL OBJECTS (rūpa), they will meet the material objects to take it as their shapes. This is called the odd ghosts.

2) If living beings paid for already THE GREEDY (abhijjhā, visamalobha) SINS FOR THE SEXY FORMS (sarāgaṃ), they will meet the wind to take it as their shapes. This is called the blowing ghost.

3) If living beings paid for already THE GREEDY (abhijjhā, visamalobha) CRIMES OF TELLING A LIE (māyā), they will meet the animal (tiracchānayani) to take it as their shapes. This is called the pretend ghost.

4) If living beings paid for already **THE GREEDY (abhijjhā, visamalobha) SINS OF ANGER (byāpāda, dosa)**, they will meet the worms to take it as their shapes. This is called the poisonous ghost.

5) If living beings paid for already **THE GREEDY (abhijjhā, visamalobha) SIN FOR THE REVENGE (upanāha)** they will meet the atmosphere to take it as their shapes. This is called the pestilence ghost.

6) If living beings paid already **THE GREEDY SINS OF ARROGANCE (mada)**, they will meet the worms to take it as their shape. This is called the hungry ghost.

7) If living beings paid for already **THE GREEDY (abhijjhā, visamalobha) SINS OF CHEATING (*musāvāda, abhūtavādi*)** they will meet the gloom to take it as their shapes. This is called the paralysis ghost.

8) If living beings paid for already **THE GREEDY (abhijjhā, visamalobha) SINS OF CRAVING (trishna)**, they will meet the core to take it as their shapes. This is called the illusory ghost.

9) If living beings paid for already **THE GREEDY SINS OF WRONG BLAME (*upavādī*)**, they will meet the vividness to take it as their shapes. This is called the servant ghost.

10) If living beings paid for already **THE GREEDY SINS OF COVERING (chādeti)**, they will meet the human (manussa) beings to take it as their shapes. This is called

the spreading ghost.

Ānanda, these people are wholly emotional states,¹²² so they will fall down in the low realms. Once their karmic fires are extinguished, they will reborn as ghosts (pittivisaya). This is aroused by their own karma of false thinking (samohaṃ). If they are enlightened at bodhi nature, there will have nothing at all in the wonderful perfect luminousness.

In addition, Ānanda, when their ghost (pittivisaya) karmas are ended, the state of emotional as well as discursive thought is resolved. At that time, he who will rebirth as animal (tiracchānayani) to pay his remaining past debts, will meet the debtors to solve the matter between them from past lives.

1) The karma of *the odd ghosts* in the form of things is ended and the things disappear, and then almost of them will be reborn in the world as the species of owls.

2) The karma of *the blowing ghosts* in the form of the wind is ended and the wind is diminished, then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the ghostly species of ominous prophecies.

3) The karma of the *pretend ghosts* in the form of animals (tiracchānayani) is ended and the animals are dead, then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the species of tigers.

¹²² The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 177–274.

4) The karma of the *poisonous ghosts* in the form of worms is ended and the worms perish, then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the vicious species.

5) The karma of *the pestilent ghosts* in the form of deterioration is ended and the deterioration is paused, then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the species of worms.

6) The karma of *the hungry ghosts* in the form of air is exhausted and the air is finished, then almost of them will be reborn in the world as the species of animals whose flesh is used for food.

7) The karma of *the paralysis ghosts* in the form of undisclosed is declined and the undisclosed ended, and then almost of them will be reborn in the world as the species of animals which is used for clothing.

8) The karma of *the illusory ghosts* in the form of energy is finished and the essential energy is extinguished, and then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the species of migratory birds.

9) The karma of *the servant ghosts* in the form of vividness is finished and the vividness disappeared, and then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the auspicious species.

10) The karma of *the spreading ghosts* in the form of human (manussa) beings is paused and human beings are dead, then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as

the species of domestic animals (tiracchānayoṇi) which are friendly close to people.

Ānanda, after their karmic fire is burned out, they will rebirth as animals to pay their remaining debts from past lives. All these retributions come from their own false illusory karmas. If they are enlightened at bodhi nature, then the illusory conditions are originally empty.

As you mentioned above, Bhikkhunī (Bhikṣuṇī) Precious Lotus Fragrance, King Crystal, and Bhikkhu (Bhikṣu) Good Stars own caused the evil karmas which neither fall down out of the heavens nor spring up from the earth, nor imposed upon by any person, but it is their own falseness to bring into being in order that they themselves must undergo it. In the bodhi mind, it is as the form or result of false thoughts.

In addition, Ānanda, as animals repay their past charges, if they pay over the quantity they owed, they will rebirth as human beings to ask the surplus.

If the debtors are healthy and have merit, they can return to the owner (on surplus) in their human realm. In contrast, if they have not enough merit to do it, they will rebirth in the animal form continually to repay this debt.

Ānanda, you should know that whether money or labor, once it is paid off, then it comes to end naturally.

But if in the course of payment, if they commit killing other beings or eating their flesh, then they continue in

such a way, pass numberless kalpas as many as molecules, turn around as a rotating wheel, and exchange in the up and down states without stopping except for practicing śamatha or meeting a Buddha ascending in the world.

i. You should know that after the owls have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm belong to the *corrupt and stubborn beings*.

ii. When the ghostly species of ominous prophecies have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm belong to the *strange beings*.

iii. When the tigers have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the *foolish beings*.

iv. When the poisonous species have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the *malignant beings*.

v. When the worms have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the *cowardice beings*.

vi. When the species of animals being used for food have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the *chicken-hearted beings (Khuppipasinos preta)*.

vii. When the species of animals being used for clothing have paid off their charges, they who regain their original

form as human beings in the human realm, belong to *the toiling beings*.

viii. When the species of migratory birds have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to *the literate beings*.

ix. When the auspicious species have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to *the smart beings*.

x. When the species of domestic animals being friendly close to people have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to *the well-communicated beings*.

Ānanda, after paid off the past old debts, these creatures are reborn in the human shape. Due to ignorance (avijjā) from beginningless time, they have created the upside-down karmas of pay-borrow, lack-extra, and kill/being killed one another. If they have not met the Tathāgata or listened to Dharma, they must rotate forever in the wearisome saṃsāra cycle without stopping. How pitiful such creature beings are!¹²³

Living beings who have not defamed and destroyed the precepts, violated the bodhisattva rules, and slandered the Buddha's Nirvana (Nibbāna) except committing various complex kinds of karma, then after many kalpas

¹²³ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 700–705.

have passed of being burned, they finally finish paying for their offenses to be reborn in the ghost shape.

1) **The odd ghosts:** Due to desire for things, human beings commit offenses. After finished paying for their sins, they take things as their shapes. Therefore, they are called the odd ghosts (pittivisaya).

2) **The blowing ghosts:** Due to desire for the sexy forms, human beings commit offenses. After they finished paying their sins, they take wind as their shapes. Therefore, they are called the blowing ghosts.

3) **The pretend ghosts:** Due to desire for lies, human beings commit offenses. After they finished paying their sins, they take animals as their shapes. Therefore, they are called the pretend ghosts.

4) **The poisonous ghosts:** Due to desire for anger, human beings commit offenses. After they finished paying their sins, they take worms as their shapes. Therefore, they are called the poisonous ghosts.

5) **The pestilent ghosts:** To desire for revenge, human beings commit offenses. After finishing paying for their sins, they take the deteriorations of enemy as their shapes. Therefore, they are called the pestilent ghosts.

6) **The hungry ghosts:** Due to desire for arrogance, human beings commit offenses. After they finished paying for their sins, they take air as their shapes. Therefore, they are called the hungry ghosts. Greed (abhijjhā,

visamalobha) to be arrogant (mada), people commit offenses, after they finish paying for their crimes, they take shape when he encounters gases (pittivisaya).

7) The paralysis ghosts: Due to desire for cheating, human beings commit offenses. After they finished paying for their sins, they take undisclosed as their shapes. Therefore, they are called the paralysis ghosts.

8) The illusory ghosts: Due to desire for the evil views (micchā-ditthi), human beings commit offenses. After they finished paying for their sins, they take the essential energy as their shapes. Therefore, they are called the illusory ghosts.

9) The servant ghosts: To desire for blame, human beings commit offenses. After finished paying for their sins, they take vividness as their shapes. Therefore, they are called the servant ghosts.

10) The spreading ghosts: Due to desire for covering the group's evil, human beings commit offenses. After they finished paying for their sins, they take human beings as their shapes. Ghosts enter their bodies to control and demand them to speak the lucky/unlucky things. Therefore, these beings are called the spreading ghosts.

At present they are ghosts under the human shapes. However, if they are enlightened the bodhi nature, in the wonderful perfect illumination, there has not anything at all.

Owing to the wholly emotional states, these creatures fall down to the low realms. As their karmas are paused, they will reborn as ghosts. These retributions which they must bear themselves come from false thoughts. If they become awakened at the bodhi nature, then they will realize that there has not anything at all in the wonderful perfect illumination.

As the ghost karma is ended, the emotion and thought become voidness too. At that time, they will meet the lenders to repay what they borrowed or cheated. They will reborn in the form of animals (tiracchānayani) to repay the past remaining debts.

i. **The species of owl:** The karma of the odd ghosts in the form of things ending and the things disappearing—then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the species of owls.

ii. **The ghostly species of ominous prophecies:** When the karma of the blowing ghosts in the form of the wind is ended and the wind is diminished, then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the ghostly species of ominous prophecies.

iii. **The species of tiger:** When the karma of the pretend ghosts in the form of animals is ended and the animals die, then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the species of tigers.

iv. **The poisonous species:** When the karma of the poisonous ghosts in the form of worms is ended and the worms perish, then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as

the vicious species.

v. **The worm species:** When the karma of the pestilent ghosts in the form of deterioration is ended and the deterioration is paused, then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the species of worms.

vi. **The species of animals being used for food:** When the karma of the hungry ghosts in the form of air is exhausted and the air is finished, and then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the species of animals whose flesh is used for food.

vii. **The species of animals which is used for clothing:** When the karma of the paralysis ghosts in the form of undisclosed is declined and the undisclosed is ended, and then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the species of animals which is used for clothing.

viii. **The species of migratory birds:** When the karma of the illusory ghosts in the form of energy is finished and the essential energy is extinguished, and then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the species of migratory birds.

ix. **The auspicious species:** When the karma of the servant ghosts in the form of vividness is finished and the vividness disappears, then almost all of them will be reborn in the world as the auspicious species.

x. **The species of domestic animals:** When the karma of the spreading ghosts in the form of human beings is paused and human beings are dead, then almost all of them will be reborn

in the world as the species of domestic animals which are friendly and close to people.

After these various creature beings are burned from their karmic fires, they will reincarnate as animals to pay off their remaining charges. These suffering circles come originally from the false thought which they cause by themselves so that they must bear the consequence by themselves. If they luckily realize the bodhi essence, they will experience fundamentally none of these false conditions to exist.

Bhikkhunī (Bhikṣuṇī) Precious Lotus Fragrance, King Crystal, and Bhikkhu (Bhikṣu) Good Stars created the evil karma which neither springs up from the earth, nor falls down out of the heavens nor imposes by other persons. It is brought by their own falseness—they must undergo it. In the bodhi mind, these retributions and karma are just the cohesion of false thoughts.

They live out the lives in animal forms to labor or serve their flesh for food in order to pay back the remaining debts. If in the process of payment, it is more than the amount they owe, they then get rebirth as a human again to make up the difference. If the debtors accumulate blessings and merits, then they can pay it off in this life; they do not wait for the next life. But if they lack blessings and merits, then they will return to the animal realm to continue repaying the remaining debts.

Thus, in the course of payment, they can use money, materials, goods, or manual labor to pay the charges, it will naturally work to come to an end. But if in the process of

repaying their debts, they create new karmas of killing creature beings, stealing, cheating, or eating other beings' flesh. Due to tying up the bad conditions with other beings, they continue in the same low way, passing through kalpas as many as motes of fine dust, rotating through cycles of consuming and being slaughtered in an endless cycle. There is no way to put a stop to it, except through the practice of *śamatha* or through a Buddha's coming to the world.

1. **The corrupt and stubborn people:** After the owls have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the corrupt and stubborn beings.

2. **The strange people:** When the ghostly species of ominous prophecies have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the strange beings.

3. **The foolish people:** When the tigers have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the foolish beings.

4. **The malignant people:** When the poisonous species have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the malignant beings.

5. **The cowardly people:** When the worms have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the cowardly beings.

6. **The chicken-hearted people:** When the species of animals being used for food have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the chicken-hearted beings.

7. **The toiling people:** When the species of animals being used for clothing have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the toiling beings.

8. **The literate people:** When the species of migratory birds have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the literate beings.

9. **The smart people:** When the auspicious species have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the smart beings.

10. **The well-communicated people:** When the species of domestic animals being friendly and close to people have paid off their charges, they who regain their original form as human beings in the human realm, belong to the well-communicated beings.

After these beings finally finished repaying the karmic debts they owed, they will rebirth as human beings. They igno­rantly keep creating the same kind of upside-down evil karma by killing as well as being killed and lacking extra payment. If they have not met the Tathāgatas or hear the true

Dharma, they will remain forever in the wearisome mundane world. Such beings can truly be called the pitiful ones.¹²⁴

In brief, we experience that the reincarnation of any species definitely relates with characteristics and functions of what it creates from the past. Due to the past cause, it will affect the present result. Owing to the present cause, it will affect the future which is like the rotation of twelve chains without stopping.

Because of killing, stealing, and lusting, they must fall into the hells. After finishing paying the debts in hells, they will be born as kinds of ghosts and animals. Therefore, due to their own karmas, the realms of hell, ghosts, animal, or human beings are seen in accordance. If they can awaken the bodhi nature to live with it, there is no retribution at all because it appears as an illusion.

Thanks to the Buddha who comprehended the complex cause-effect discipline and who kindly pointed out for us to avoid them. The disliked or liked people must meet one another to pay or repay their past dues which is the endless cycle of cause-effect.

Once the states of emotion and thought are ended, i.e., living beings spent too much time suffering and being punished in hells. Moreover, there is still a small debt which force them to be born into the bodies of animals to pay off the past dues. Then, they can be reborn as human beings.

¹²⁴ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 708–713.

Whoever creates ten habitual causes, such as lust, greed, conceit, ahankāra, hatred, deception, lying, animosity, evil views, injustice, litigation, and slanders the precepts will fall into the hells. Breaking the precepts is a small sin but slandering the precepts is a serious sin because it destroys the correct view. It also encourages us and others disregard the valuable Buddhist precepts, so the wrong view people will easily drop in the hells in many directions.

In the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, Bhikkhunī Precious Lotus Fragrance announces that sexual acts do not hurt and injure other people as killing or stealing, so they do not carry the karmic retribution. After death, she falls into the hell because she broke the right views and precepts.

Those who break the right views are ready to break precepts. False thoughts lead to false acts. After death, they fall into the hells (niraya) and be subjected to torture. Once they finish paying their karma in hell, they will be reborn a ghost, and then animal. They wander from this to another realm in three evil worlds without stopping. Nguyen Du exclaims that:

*The hungry ghosts (preta) wander on the way
Devils without heads cry at the night rain*

Whenever we see such suffering ghosts, we should pray for them to get out of their karma as soon as possible.

When animals recompense their old charges, if they pay back more than the needed amount, they get reborn as persons to make up the difference. It means the debtors become the

creditors and in contrast, the creditors become the debtors. In the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, we learn śamatha to distinguish between falseness and reality. All phenomena in the world are illusory. Only the Buddha nature is real. Realize it and we should not continue creating such a disturbing karmic net of saṃsāra. There are many ways to pay, such as money, material, health, labor (as a slave), and so on which can be changed for people's karmas. However, if they take other's lives, they must be paid by their own lives.

For instance, A eats B today. Then in the future B will eat A in return. Then, A takes revenge B. B hates A. Both of them keep taking revenge each other and kill or harm each other. For example, a person eats a goat and a hen in this life. A goat and a hen will be reborn into human beings and a person is reborn into a goat or a hen in the future. They will eat one another to pay the flesh owed. Through numberless kalpas, they are stuck in the cycle of birth and death, because of the debt of flesh and lives over and again. This body is the heavy retribution, a misery net, therefore we should not slave for it to cause the bad karma.

Śamatha also teaches us that all living beings have the same permanent nature, so we do not hate any one. Understanding this absolute, the revenge will turn into the compassion easily. If not, we keep attaching to our bodies. If someone abuses us, we will hate him and want to take revenge. So, we will wander in the saṃsāra again and again until we see a Buddha who can teach us how to avoid the complex cause-

effect (*pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda*) way.

As we attain the prajñā wisdom, we will enlighten that this body is an illusion, a bond, or a burden to detach. If one pays his debts with hatred, his consciousness still follows his enemy to take revenge in return.

If we are killed, we do not know this is our debt to pay, so in our mind arises the hatred to follow the murder to revenge. The murder also counterattacks the opponent. This life is important and precious, so it is a terrible crime if the body is hurt. Not only the debt the life but also using the animals' flesh, blood or body parts which are still the resentment against the body parts. We eat five grams of animal flesh, then we must pay the exact amount of five grams of meat too.

Pork is sold in the market, hundreds of thousands of people eat it, and so hundred thousand people must pay their debts of flesh. They keep eating and killing one another in the rotation wheel. If people drink the cow's milk, they will owe debts on liquid but not debt of flesh. Thus, we are advised to take vegetarian to avoid the debt and develop the great compassion.

These are the consequences of six misery retributions on bad karma which are created from six organs and six consciousnesses. Thus, Trần Nhân Tông King composed the repentance book on six organs to recite every morning in some pagodas. This book helps practitioners repent from serious guilts to subtle mistakes which were made from six organs

intentionally or unintentionally.

Thanks deeply to the Buddha's wisdom; he kindly shows us the way of cause-effect (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) and each low realm to avoid, especially at the time of approaching death, our dark consciousness easily goes to the wrong direction.

In *The Book of Death*,¹²⁵ Sogyal Rinpoche said that Tibetan monks with their power of concentration and deep wisdom, can experience the approaching state to death. If the present karma is good, the intermediate consciousness will be happy. If a person creates bad karma in present, in the approaching state to death, he will see the unsatisfactory states as follows:

–When he has just stopped breathing, the basic light appears.

–The intermediate existent body is as tall as a boy between eight and ten years old and is very quick and healthy (the deceased may be ageing lame or blind).

–The intermediate existent body wanders around as a person in a dream and hears the mountain falling behind, the roaring sound of the large waterfalls, volcanic eruption, wind storms, and so on.

–The intermediate existent body in the dark horror tries to escape the counterattack by the whole blood hailstorm, the

¹²⁵ “The Peaceful Life and Death” (from *The Book of Death*, Sogyal Rinpoche, Venerable Tri Hải translated it into Vietnamese), short composition by Bhikkhuni Diệu Khiết, 1997, pp. 44–47

haunted sound of screaming demons, monsters, and beasts being hunted. It always has three deep pits ahead. The karmic wind is strongly sucking him away without a place to hold on.

The hurricane wind pushes the intermediate existent body away. Everything is blown away like the pistil flying in the course of wind. Then the intermediate existent body wanders hopelessly, looking for a refuge place.”

Thus, we see that the Tibetan monk masters have seen the same as what the Buddha said in detail twenty-six centuries ago. With the flesh eyes, we fail to see, but we can understand and believe strongly that once we focus at one pointedness without heedlessness, keep the morality pure, our mind will be bright and the eye wisdom will illuminate everywhere.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER XIII

Chapter XIII is about six consequences. All living beings have created karma with their six consciousnesses. Therefore, they are subject to the evil consequences. All these wrongs come from six sense faculties.

Six consequences are as following:

1. *The Consequence of Seeing* causes to bear the negative fruit. At the time of death, the flames in all over ten directions are seen. They fall down to the unintermittent hell (avīci).

2. *The Consequence of Hearing* causes to bear the negative fruit. At the time of death, the giant waves flooding all

over the earth and heaven are seen. They fall into the unintermittent hell.

3. *The Consequence of Smelling* causes to bear the negative fruit. At the time of death, the poisonous smoke all over the near and far atmosphere is seen. They enter the unintermittent hell.

4. *The Consequence of Tasting* causes to bear the negative fruit. At the time of death, a flaming iron net all over ten directions is seen. They enter the unintermittent hell.

5. *The Consequence of Touching* causes to bear the negative fruit. At the time of death, four faces of a big mountain joining to be one completely without a road is seen. They fall into the unintermittent hell.

6. *The Consequence of Thinking* causes to bear the negative fruit. At the time of death, first, the terrible wind blowing up the land is seen. They spiral downward to the unintermittent hell.

These six causes of hell (niraya) are caused by the delusions of sentient beings.

If six organs of living beings simultaneously create evil karma, they can enter the avīci hell (niraya) to endure the extreme suffering in measureless kalpas. If each of six sense organs creates evil karma including environment and organ, the deceased must fall down eight unintermittent hells (niraya). If three karmas of body, mouth, and mind commit killing, stealing, and sexual intercourse, the deceased can transform

into eighteen hells. If only one or two among three (of body, mind, and mouth) commits just one act of killing or stealing, the deceased will enter thirty-six hells (niraya). If there is only an organ breaking a precept, the deceased must enter one hundred and eight hells.

- Ten types of demons: the odd ghosts, the blowing ghosts, the pretend ghosts, the poisonous ghosts, the pestilent ghosts, the hungry ghosts, the paralysis ghosts, the illusory ghosts, the servant ghosts, the spreading ghosts.

- Ten types of animals: owl, ominous prophecies, tiger, poisonous, worm, animals being used for food, animals which are used for clothing, migratory birds, auspicious species, and domestic animals.

- Ten types of people: 1. The corrupt and stubborn people, 2. the strange people, 3. the foolish people, 4. the malignant people, 5. the cowardly people, 6. the chicken-hearted people, 7. the toiling people, 8. the literate people, 9. the smart people, 10. the well-communicated people.

Because of the different individual karmas, living beings create the certain same karma in order that they enter the collective hells. These arise from false thinking which originally did not exist in the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are “six consequences”?
2. Explain the sentence, “These six causes of hell are caused by the delusions of sentient beings.”
3. Present the hell retribution of one or many sense faculties and one or three body, speech, and thought.
4. What is the “remaining karmic retribution”?
5. List ten types of demons, ten types of animals, and ten types of people.



The Buddha's Parinibbāna in Kushinagar, India

CHAPTER XIV

IMMORTALS, HEAVENS, AND ASURAS

Immortals

Theravāda Sūtras in the beginning period often teach that there are six realms in the universe, but later in the Mahāyāna Sūtras, they add one more realm of immortal. Therefore, we have seven realms, such as heaven (*deva*), immortal (half deva-human), asura (*asurakāya*), human (*manussa*), hell (*niraya*), hungry ghosts (*pittivisaya*), and animal (*tiracchānayani*) realms.

In the previous chapter, we mentioned the hell, hungry ghosts, and animal worlds. In this chapter, we talk about three worlds of immortals, heavens, and asura.

Immortals are higher than human beings or the half deva-human beings. They do not keep the Buddhist precept-concentration-wisdom to attain *samādhi*, but they follow false thought to maintain the body for a long time in the mountains and forests where people fail to reach. They become ten kinds of immortals as follows:

1. Ānanda, there are living beings who determinedly take the nutritious medicine without stopping until their method of ingestion succeeds. They become *the earth-acting immortals*.

2. There are living beings who determinedly use the

whole grasses and herbs without stopping until their method of medicine succeeds. They become *the fly-acting immortals*.

3. There are living beings who determinedly train the metal and stone without stopping until their method of transformation succeeds. They become *the roam-traveling immortals*.

4. There are living beings who determinedly use the activity without stopping until their method of atmosphere core is succeeded. They become *the space-acting immortals*.

5. There are living beings who determinedly train the saliva without stop until their method of penetration succeeds. They become *the heaven-acting immortals*.

6. There are living beings who determinedly train the whole essence of sun and moon without stopping until their method of consummation succeeds. They become *the penetrate-acting immortals*.

7. There are living beings who determinedly chant the whole mantras and spells without stop until their method of mystery succeeds. They become *the way-acting immortals*.

8. There are living beings who determinedly train their thought without stopping until their method of focusing succeeds. They become *the illuminate-acting immortals*.

9. There are living beings who determinedly train the whole intercourse of water and fire without stopping until

their response method succeeds. They become *the essential-acting immortals*.

10. There are living beings who determinedly train the whole transformation and change without stopping until their method of enlightenment succeeds. They become *the absolute-acting immortals*.

Ānanda, these immortals who are in human realms who train their minds in the wrong way of enlightenment, aim to obtain some special way to live long for tens thousands of years, and favor to stay in the deep mountains or on the islands in the oceans far away the human world. However, they are still the false thought of the saṃsāric wheel. If they do not cultivate samādhi, once their retributions are ended, they must return the six realms.”¹²⁶

The immortals leave the noisy luxury world behind to dwell in the deep caves, mountains, islands, and remote areas where human beings fail to come. Their aims are to maintain the long life as angels without death, and they do not feel interested in practicing the āsrava triple of precept-meditation-wisdom.

Because they cultivate their own way for maintaining life, they must attain the false fruits. They also obtain the superpower, joyfulness, and long span. However, no matter how long life they have, they cannot be out of the cycle of

¹²⁶ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 715–719.

rebirth and death (saṃsāra). After ending their lives and merits, they are still subject to fall into the low realms.

1. The earth-acting immortals: The immortals know well what kinds of nutritious herbs or foods are useful for maintaining their body. Honestly, we do not really know about it, so we take many doses of delicious food to feed the body, but it turns out to poison us. The immortals experience how to take wholly the nutritious food day after day. As a result, they become the beautiful immortals who walk gently on the earth.

2. The fly-acting immortals: the immortals taste each flavor of grasses and herbs to recognize well which kind of herbs can cure the sickness. As the physician, he cuts, dries, or fires herbs or trees, then he crushes it into powder which is used as medicine. Likewise, because the immortals take this whole medicine herbs every single day without fail so that their bodies respond and become the fine divinity. Due to their determining this method without stopping, and as their methods eventually start to work, their bodies are light as flying.

3. The roam-acting immortals: The immortals have mixed gold, silver, mercury, and lead together, and then they crush, penetrate in water, heat and make these ingredients to be the nutritious medicine of immortality. Due to their determining this method without stopping, and as their response methods succeed, they can walk fast as running. It proves the positive health, quick, and solid of the roaming immortals' bodies.

In Vŭng-tàu Beach, Thì-vải Mount, Bà-rĩa Province, there is a man who lives in a tent, sleeps on the hammock, and eats vegetables which he planted. His job is to carry things for villagers at the mountain foot. Every morning, he goes to the bottom of the mountain to earn money and in the evening, he comes back his tent. From the bottom to the top of the mount, he goes as fast as a running rabbit while normal people feel tired to climb up. Maybe he cultivated the roaming immortal in his past lives, so this life he is quick and can live on the peak alone.

4. The space-acting immortals: The immortals determinedly train in the standard method of body exercise. They practice hard the whole movements without stopping until succeeding, then their bodies become strong and light. At the time, they can walk in space and fly delicately as the passing wind, which we fail to recognize.

5. The heaven-acting immortals: The immortals determinedly make themselves strong by using the whole saliva in a regularly scheduled practice. The saliva is nutritious and good medicine for body. When they have perfected the response method of this liquid, they are known as the heaven-traveling immortals.

6. The penetrate-acting immortals: The immortals determinedly make themselves strong with the essence of the sun without stopping. In the morning, noon, and afternoon, they look at the sun without blinking to collect the essence of the sun until it penetrates into their body. Once they have

perfected the inhalation of this sun energy, these immortals are called the penetrate-traveling immortals.

7. The way-acting immortals: The immortals determinedly train themselves with reciting wholly mantras and spells. As this mantra method succeeds, they have some magic powers on movement, known as the way-acting immortals.

8. The illuminate-acting immortals: The immortals determinedly train their whole mind without stopping. When they succeed in this practice, they are transformed into luminous light and is known as the illuminate-acting immortals.

9. The essential-acting immortals: The immortals determinedly train the whole intercourse of water and fire without stopping until their response method succeeds, they become the essential-acting immortals.

10. The absolute-action immortals: The immortals determinedly train the wholly transformations of Dharma tricks without stopping. When they succeed in developing transformations, they become acquainted with the doctrine of creation. Since then, they are called the absolute-action immortals.

In brief, there are many names of the immortals (half deva-human) and many methods of cultivation to be the immortals. Thanks to the Buddha in this sūtra we learn that there are ten kinds of immortals in the world.

At each kind of immortal, the Buddha mentioned that the

resolution or determination without stopping is very necessary for cultivation. They cannot gain their purposes as immortals if they are not devoted with hard training. They must possess the strong spirit, health and long lifespan to maintain their divinity methods. Although they can be everlasting, they must die at the end. Once their merits and virtues are ended, they will fall into the hells (niraya) or low worlds. Thus, the Buddha advises us that we should not follow their cultivation because they still wander round the cycle of three low realms.

THE DESIRE HEAVENLY REALMS **(kāmasugati-bhūmi)**

1) Ānanda, some mundane people do not search for the permanent enlightenment and have not given up the craving for their wives (partners), but they really do not feel interested in sexual intercourse. Due to developing this manner, their mind generates the brightness. At the time of death, they reborn in the place near the sun and moon. Such inhabitants are known as *four heavenly kings (catummahārājika)*.

2) Some mundane people reduce the sexual intercourse with their wives (partners) and do not feel the whole taste of sexuality. At the time of death, they reborn at the top of human (manussa) world and over the sun and moon. Such inhabitants are known as the trayastrimsha heavenly beings (tāvatiṃsa, tettiṃsā).

3) Some mundane people temporarily relate to sexual intercourse with their wives (*partners*) but they do not think

on it after ending. In the human world, they are calm and untroubled. So, at the time of death, they become bright and live serenely in the space where the sun and moonlight fail to reach. Such inhabitants have their own light, known as *the suyama heavenly beings* (yāmā).

4) Some mundane people are calm all the time, but they do not resist touching the flesh intercourse with their wives (partners). At the time of death, they are reborn in the subtle wonderful places where the human and heaven worlds, the destruction kalpa, and three disasters cannot reach. Such inhabitants are known as *the tushita heavenly beings*.

5) Some mundane people do not have sexual lust, but they only respond as the duty with their wives (partners). So, they feel bothered as the flavor of chewing wax. At the time of death, they are reborn in a place of transformations. Such inhabitants are known as *the blissful transformation heavenly beings* (nimmānaratī).

6) Some mundane people are not of the mundane mind, they only do the same as worldly people engaging in five desires. While they get involved, they feel they are transcending it. At the time of death, they are reborn in a place beyond the transformations and without transformations. Such inhabitants are known as *the transforming heavenly beings of the comfort from others* (paranimmitavasavattī).

Ānanda, in such six heavenly realms, their forms are

transcended, but the traces of their minds still have attachment. Counting from these worlds downward, which are called the six desire heavenly realms (kāmasugati-bhūmi).¹²⁷

Living beings in the desire realms (kāmasugati-bhūmi) have not left the craving (*trishna*) and lust (sarāgaṃ). They cultivate ten precepts, practice concentration, and give things to others but they still like the sexual activity. According to the level of sexual desire, living beings will stay in the appropriate realm. The more sexual desire they like, the lower realm they will live in.

From *the transformation heavenly beings of the comfort from others* (paranimmitavasavattī) in the sixth realm to the other beings in low realms—all are still affected three calamities. Three calamities are fire (due to lust, there is a fire), the wind (strongly blows the bodies away), and the storm (causes everything to sink).

The transforming heavenly inhabitants of the comfort from others (paranimmitavasavattī) in the sixth realm have no kind of worldly thoughts while having five desires. For example, they dislike eating but they have to eat with other people and feel without interest. Although they have to fulfill their sexual duty with their wives (partners), they just don't have any thoughts on it, like chewing wax without taste. It means their minds are not devoted to the human (manussa) and

¹²⁷ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 721–722.

heavenly lust (sarāgam). From this pure state, they can step up to the high level of the form heavenly realms without lust.

The Buddha in the form of a white elephant with six beautiful ivories from the Tushita Heaven descended to Kapilvastu Kingdom in the saha world. This is the fourth realm among six desire realms. It was the vow of Hô Minh Bodhisattva (the previous life of Śākyamuni Buddha) to live in Tushita, except his kammic powers. In the future, Maitreya Bodhisattva also manifests in this saha world from the Tushita heaven.

Due to the great vows, the Buddhas often manifest in the world under the forms of the noble warrior clans and high positions in society. For example, the (Kshastriya) royal clan, the Sakya lineage is in the upper class, while poor people are the lower class in society.

Which cause do we cultivate to be born in the Tushita heaven? We have to keep ten precepts, practice concentration, and have less desire.

What is the difference between inner court of the Tusita Heaven and outer court of the Tusita Heaven?

The inner court of the Tusita Heaven is the place where Maitreya Bodhisattva stays to expound Buddhism. Those who live in the inner court of the Tusita Heaven have great affinities with Maitreya Bodhisattva, and listen to his teachings. Shakyamuni Buddha used to preach the Abhidharma for His mother, Maya Queen, in the Tusita heaven for seven days.

Except for the institute of Maitreya Bodhisattva, the rest of the land in Tusita is the outer court of the Tusita Heaven. To the heavenly form, immaterial realms, and other high realms, the Tusita is rather low with heavy karma because it belongs to the desire worlds.

THE FORM REALM

(without desire, rūpāvācāra-bhūmi)

1) Ānanda, all practitioners in the world cultivate their minds but without dhyāna, they will fail to attain wisdom. Whoever can control their bodies without engaging in sexual activity, without thinking of it at any postures of walking or sitting, their craving is totally ended and they definitely do not remain in the desire realm. Such inhabitants can become the Brahma beings and known as *the Brahma Community Heavenly Beings (brahmapārisajjā)*.

2) The practitioners in the world have already transformed five habitual desires. Their mind apart from the lust is manifested. They delightly cultivate the disciplines in accordance with them and they can practice the Brahma virtue at all times. So, such inhabitants are called *the Brahma Minister Heavenly Beings (brahmapurohitā)*.

3) If the practitioners are absolutely pure at their bodies as well as minds, full of great manners, precepts, and insight, then they can govern the Brahma community as the great Brahma lords. Such inhabitants are known as the *Great Brahma Heavenly Beings (mahābrahmā)*.

Ānanda, three above superior inhabitants are not oppressed by any suffering or affliction. Although they have not cultivated the right samādhi, their minds are so pure that they are not disturbed by the outflows of the desire realms. Therefore, this state is called the **FIRST DHYĀNA** (*paṭhamaj-jhānabhūmi*).

Ānanda, moreover as the Brahma heavenly beings govern the Brahma community, they practice the Brahma virtues perfectly in order that their minds are calm without movement. Since then, it generates brightness in profound stillness. Such inhabitants are known as *the Lesser Light Heavenly Beings* (*parittābhā*).

4) The practitioners whose lights illuminate so much that the realms in ten directions become extremely bright like crystals. Such inhabitants are known as *the Limitless Light Heavenly Beings* (*Appamāṇābhā*).

5) The practitioners who maintain the light perfectly to create the teaching nature, develop the pure mission, and apply it at any function without stopping. Such inhabitants are known as *the Light Voice Heavenly Beings* (*ābhassarā*).

Ānanda, the three above superior inhabitants are not subjected by any sadness or worry. Although they have not cultivated the right samādhi, their minds are so pure that they are not disturbed by the coarser outflows of the desire realms. Therefore, this state is called the **SECOND DHYĀNA** (*dutiyaj-jhānabhūmi*).

6) Ānanda, such heavenly beings use the perfect light

for their teaching. Because their mission makes sense of the wonderful truth, develops the diligent conduct, and penetrates to the bliss of stillness, such inhabitants are *the Lesser Purity Heavenly Beings (Parittasubhā)*.

8) The practitioners experience the present purity up to the boundless state, their bodies as well as minds become gentle so that they can attain the bliss of tranquility. Such inhabitants are known as *the Measureless Purity Heavenly Beings (Appamāṇasubhā)*.

9) The practitioners experience the world, body, and mind to be so pure that they accomplish the virtue of purity. Then the superior scene and the bliss of tranquility manifest. Such inhabitants become *the Prevalent Purity Heavenly Beings (Subhakiṇhā)*.

Ānanda, the three above superior inhabitants are full of virtues, the great obeisances, and the inner stillness at their bodies and minds. Although they have not cultivated the right samādhi, their minds are calm and delightful. Therefore, this state is called the **THIRD DHYĀNA** (*tatīyaj-jhānabhūmi*).

10) Moreover, Ānanda, the bodies and minds of heavenly beings are not repressed and the suffering cause (*samudaya*) is ended. However, their ecstasy is not permanent, sooner or later it disappears, so both the feelings of suffering and happiness are also detached. Once their coarse and heavy thoughts are paused, the blessing purity is generated. Such inhabitants are known as *the*

Blessed Birth Heavenly Beings (punyaparsavas).

11) When their renunciation is perfected, the more superior the comprehension is, the more purity they gain. They feel no obstruction in their merit and they obtain a wonderful compliance up to the future. Such inhabitants are called *the Blessed Love Heavenly Beings (Anabhraka)*.

12) Ānanda, from that place, there are two ways to turn. If they use the previous measureless pure bright mind to get enlightenment, they will enjoy the perfect blessings and virtue. Then such inhabitants become *the Abundant Fruit Heavenly Beings (Vehapphalā)*.

13) If they extend the previous thought detaching suffering and bliss to reflect on the renouncing without stopping, their mind and body will become extinguished, their thoughts will be paused. For five hundred kalpas, these beings ignorantly grab production and extinction as the main cause to cultivate, so they fail to discover the neither produced nor extinguished nature. During the first half of these kalpas they will become extinct and the last half they will birth. Such inhabitants are called *the Heavenly Beings Without Thought (Akaniṭṭhā)*.

Ānanda, the four above superior beings are not subjected to any worldly misery and happiness. Although they have not attained the true non-action state, their minds reach some realization and their applications work well. Therefore, this state is called the **FOURTH DHYĀNA (catutthaj-jhāna-bhūmi)**.

FIVE HEAVENLY BEINGS WITHOUT RETURNING (*suddhāvāsa*)

Ānanda, there are five heavenly beings without returning who have totally cut off habits on nine parts of false thoughts in the lower realms, have neither misery nor happiness, and do not stay in the lower levels anymore. Therefore, they are anāgāmī saints. They settle their bodhi place in the community, and achieved the same level of renunciation level.

1) Ānanda, the heavenly beings attain the state of neither misery nor happiness and neither like nor dislike. Such inhabitants are called the *Without Defilements* (kleśa) *Heavenly Beings* (*Avihā*).

2) The heavenly beings attain the state of renunciation without subject and object. Such inhabitants are called the *Without Heat Heavenly Beings* (*Atappā*).

3) The heavenly beings can see the worlds in ten directions and are pure without any terribly tainted external objects. Such inhabitants are called the *Good View Heavenly Beings* (*Sudassā*).

4) The heavenly beings' views are pure without any terrible taints of external objects. Such inhabitants are called the *Good Present Heavenly Beings* (*Sudassī*).

5) The heavenly beings can observe extremely tiny things in all natures of form to enter the boundless emptiness. Such inhabitants are called the *Absolute Form Heavenly Beings* (*Aghaniwiṅha*).

Ānanda, Four Heavenly Kings can only address their respects by hearing the Without Returning Heavenly Beings, but they fail to see them. It is just like the unsubtle mundane people who cannot envision the bodhi places in the wild forest and deep fields where the arhats are abiding.

Ānanda, the heavenly beings in the above eighteen realms often stay in the meditating state without involving the worldly objects; however, they have not gotten rid of their shapes. These beings with five Without Returning Heavenly Beings belong to the Form Heavenly Realm¹²⁸.

We can summarize the Material Heavenly Realms (rūpāvācara-bhūmi) as follows:

- **The first Dhyāna:** the Community Heavenly Beings (brahmapārisajjā), the Brahma Minister Heavenly Beings (*brahmapurohitā*), and the Great Brahma Heavenly Beings (mahābrahmā).

- **The second Dhyāna:** the Lesser Light Heavenly Beings (parittābhā), the Limitless Light Heavenly Beings (appamāṇābhā), and the Light Voice Heavenly Beings (ābhassarā).

- **The third Dhyāna:** the Lesser Purity Heavenly Beings (*Parittasubhā*), the Measureless Purity Heavenly Beings (Appamāṇasubhā), and the Prevalent Purity Heavenly Beings (Subhakiṇhā).

¹²⁸ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 727–732.

- **The fourth Dhyāna:** the Blessed Birth Heavenly Beings (*Punyaparsavas*), the Blessed Love Heavenly Beings (*Anabhraka*), the Abundant Fruit Heavenly Beings (*Vehapphalā*), and the Heavenly Beings Without Thought (*Akaniṭṭhā*).

- **Five Without Returning Heavenly Inhabitants (*Suddhāvāsa*) belong to *Anāgāmiphala* saints:** the Without Defilement (*kleśa*) Heavenly Inhabitants (*Avihā*), the Without Heat Heavenly Beings (*atappā*), the Good View Heavenly Beings (*Sudassā*), the Good Present Heavenly Beings *Sudassī*), and the Absolute Form Heavenly Beings (*Aghaniwīha*).

In the five realms the Without Defilements (*kleśa*) Heavenly Inhabitants (*Avihā*) to the Absolute Form Heavenly Beings (*Aghaniwīha*) are called the pure dwelling (*Suddhāvāsa*) where the never-return sages (*Anāgāmiphala*) are living. In short, although beings attain the first dhyāna which is not the proper samādhi, they detach the craving (*sarāgam*) and offenses (*sātheyya*) of the desire realm, so they are freed from sufferings. They do not race out to find lustful objects (*sight, voice, scent, taste, and touch or money, beauty, fame, food, and sleep*) but they still attach to their shapes; therefore, it is called the form heavenly realms.

In brief, whoever attains the first dhyāna, ends lusting. Whoever attains the second dhyāna, cuts off defilements (*kleśa*), and maintains the pure mind. Even though it is not the proper samādhi, they can be able to control all unsubtle defilements (*kleśa*). Whoever attains the third dhyāna, fades

away of the delightment from second dhyāna to remain the measureless imperturbable, and their body and mind, as well as the world becomes ecstasy. In Buddhism, the ecstasy of the third dhyāna is often used to give an good example. Those who attain the fourth dhyāna, give up the worldly pleasure, pain, gladness, sadness, and so on. It is not the main samādhi, but at this level, it proves the heavenly beings reached the certain realization, their cultivations and merits start to affect higher.

If they detach desire, (sarāgaṃ), anger (sadosaṃ), and ignorance (avijjā), they will obtain arahantship and win the samādhi power. However, if they still attach to the body and Dharma (*phenomenon*), so they are subjected to the rebirth cycle (saṃsāra).

THE IMMATERIAL HEAVENLY REALM

(Detaching their forms and desires, arūpāvacara-bhūmi)
Ānanda, moreover, from the top of the form realm, there are two ways. Whoever is inclined to renunciation can develop wisdom. Once their wisdom is luminous and perfect, they can transcend the mundane worlds, reach arhatship, and enter the bodhisattvayāna. Such inhabitants are the *Returning Mind Great Arhats*.

1. Whoever abides and succeeds in the thought of renunciation, feel that their body is an obstruction. Once the obstacles are extinguished they enter into space. Such heavenly inhabitants attain the *state of infinite space*, (*ākāśānañcāyatana-bhūmi*).

2. Whoever has gotten rid of all barriers, but have not

transformed without obstruction in which the alaya consciousness and half of the subtle functions of the mana consciousness remain. Such heavenly inhabitants attain the state of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana-bhūmi*).

3. Whoever has got rid of the emptiness, form, and even the conscious mind as well, the ten directions become tranquil. Such heavenly inhabitants attain the state of nothingness (*ākāśaññāyatana-bhūmi*).

4. When their conscious natures do not move, they use the extinction to transform comprehensively. In the endless, they think of an end of the nature. Therefore, it seems as if it remains there, but it does not remain; as if it is ended, but it does not end. Such heavenly inhabitants attain the state of neither-discrimination-nor-nondiscrimination (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana-bhūmi*).

These inhabitants are comprehensive of the emptiness, but they have not reached the nature of emptiness. From the Without Returning Heavens down to this state are the dead end to sagehood. They are known as *the Without Returning Mind Great Arhats*, i.e., dull arhats do not turn their minds to the higher level. If the beings in the Thoughtless Heavens and the heretic heavens become interested to be absorbed in emptiness, but they follow the ignorant ways without listening to the right Dharma, they will fall down into the rebirth cycle.

Ānanda, in these heavens, every heavenly inhabitant who is mundane receives the good response of his previous

karmic merits. When his merit is ended, he must rebirth in low realms. However, the lords of these heavens are all bodhisattvas who use samādhi to step upward, gradually progress in their practice, and transfer their merit to the proper cultivation of Buddhism.

Ānanda, in Four Heavens of Emptiness, as their bodies and minds are paused, the meditative nature presents. They do not have the karmic retribution of form. From this to last state which is called the Immaterial Heavenly Realm (arūpāvacara-bhūmi).

The inhabitants, who have not awakened the luminous wonderful enlightened mind, accumulate falseness. It generates false existence in three realms in which they wrongly follow and deluge deeply in seven species. They live together with their own community of each species.”¹²⁹

These inhabitants have neither sensations nor perception, but they still maintain the skandha formation.

The desire realm: the desire and form still remains.

The form heavenly realm: the lust is cut off, but the form still remains.

The immaterial heavenly realm: both the desire and form disappear. They don't possess the physical bodies and minds other than the subtle consciousnesses in a far area in the universe. They are freed of the karmic retribution of form. In

¹²⁹ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 738–740.

their samādhi-power, they are awakened to the voidness and illusion but they fail to experience the nature of the true emptiness (the absolute *śūnyatā*/suññatā). Therefore, they abide for a long time in the dull void states until their meditative energy of voidness is ended, and they will fall to the low realms.

ASURAS (asurakāya)

Furthermore, Ānanda, in the above three heavenly realms, there are four kinds of asuras (asurakāya) as follows:

1) The beings come from ghosts (pittivisaya) who use their strength to protect Dharma, can have their spiritual superpower enter the space. These asura species are born from eggs and belong to ghosts (preta).

2) The beings come from heavenly inhabitants who have less merit and must stay in the places near the sun and moon. These asura (asurakāya) species are born from wombs and belong to human beings (manussa).

3) There are asura kings who control the world with strong power and fearlessness, compete for positions with the Brahma Lord, the Shakra Lord, and Four Heavenly Kings. These asura (asurakāya) species are born from transformation and belong to heaven (deva).

4) Ānanda, especially there are some low asuras who are born in the great seas, diving deeply in underwater graves. In daytime, they travel in space. In nighttime, they sleep in water.

These asura species come into being from moisture and belong to animals.¹³⁰

Asura (asurakāya) is a kind of ghost (pittivisaya) or non-heavenly being. They are totally different from the above heavenly inhabitants (devas). They have physical super power but their characteristics are much anger, competition, fighting, and killing.

Four kinds of birth of asuras are below:

1. The heavenly asuras (asurakāya) from womb born.
2. The human asuras (asurakāya) from egg born.
3. The ghost asuras (asurakāya) from moisture born.
4. The animal (tiracchānayoni) asuras (asurakāya) from transformation born.

In the painting of the *Cycle of Life*¹³¹, the Buddha describes asura by providing a good image of a ghost group who hold the bow, sword, and knife and fight and kill one another in battle.

This is the particular karmic cause but its consequence is illusory, so they are subjected to the forever rebirth wheel.

¹³¹ *The Cycle of Life*, pp. 33–34.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER XIV

Chapter XIV mentions the realms of immortals, heavens, and asuras. The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* holds that there are seven worlds, such as heaven (*deva*), immortal (half deva-human), asura (asurakāya), human (manussa), hell (niraya), hungry ghosts (pittivisaya), and animals (tiracchānayani).

I. Ten kinds of immortals:

1. The earth-acting immortals
2. The fly-acting immortals
3. The roam-traveling immortals
4. The space-acting immortals
5. The heaven-acting immortals
6. The penetrate-acting immortals
7. The way-acting immortals
8. The illuminate-acting immortals
9. The essential-acting immortals
10. The absolute-acting immortals

Heavens

- 1) The desire heaven (remain lust and form, kāmasugati-bhūmi)
 - a. Four Heavenly Kings (catummahārājika).
 - b. The Trayastrimsha Heavenly Beings (tāvatiṃsa, tettiṃsā).
 - c. The Suyama Heavenly Beings (yāmā).

d. The Tushita Heavenly Beings (tusita).

e. The Blissful Transformation Heavenly Beings (nimmānaratī).

f. The Transformation Heavenly Beings of the Comfort from Others (paranimmitavasavattī).

2) The material heaven (without lust but retains form; rūpāvācara-bhūmi)

- The first dhyāna: the Community Heavenly Beings (Brahmapārisajjā), the Brahma Minister Heavenly Beings (*Brahmapurohitā*), and the Great Brahma Heavenly Beings (Mahābrahmā).

- The second dhyāna: the Lesser Light Heavenly Beings (Parittābhā), the Limitless Light Heavenly Beings (Appamāṇābhā), and the Light Voice Heavenly Beings (Ābhassarā).

- The third dhyāna: the Lesser Purity Heavenly Beings (*Parittasubhā*), the Measureless Purity Heavenly Beings (*Appamāṇasubhā*), and the Prevalent Purity Heavenly Beings (*Subhakiṇhā*).

- The fourth dhyāna: the Blessed Birth Heavenly Beings (*Punyaparsavas*), the Blessed Love Heavenly Beings (*Anabhraka*), the Abundant Fruit Heavenly Beings (*Vehapphalā*), and the Heavenly Beings Without Thought (*Akaniṭṭhā*).

- Five Without Returning Heavenly Inhabitants (*Suddhāvāsa*) belong to the Anāgāmiphala saints: the Without Defilements Heavenly Inhabitants (*Avihā*), the Without Heat

Heavenly Beings (*Atappā*), the Good View Heavenly Beings (*Sudassā*), the Good Present Heavenly Beings (*Sudassī*), and the Absolute Form Heavenly Beings (*Aghaniwiha*).

- Five realms Without Defilement (*kleśa*) Heavenly Inhabitants (*Avihā*) to the Absolute Form Heavenly Beings (*Aghaniwiha*) are called the pure dwelling (*suddhāvāsa*) where the no-return sages (*anāgāmiṃphala*) are living.

3) The immaterial heavenly realm (detaching their bodies and desire; *arūpāvacara-bhūmi*)

- The state of infinite space, (*ākāsānañcāyatana-bhūmi*).

- The state of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana-bhūmi*).

- The state of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana-bhūmi*).

- The state of neither-discrimination-nor-nondiscrimination (*nevasañ-ñānāsaññāyatana-bhūmi*).

Asura (*asurakāya*)

Four kinds of birth of asuras:

1. The heavenly asuras from womb born.
2. The human asuras from egg born.
3. The ghost asuras from moisture born.
4. The animal asuras from transforming born.

This is the particular karmic cause but its consequence is illusory, so they are subjected to the rebirth wheel forever.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. List the cause-effect of ten realms of immortals.
2. List the cause-effect of the desire heavenly realms.
3. List the cause-effect of the material heavenly realms.
4. List the cause-effect of the immaterial heavenly realms.
5. Interpret this sentence: “This is the particular karmic cause but its consequence is illusory, so they are subjected to the rebirth wheel forever.”



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CHAPTER XV

CONCLUSION

The Buddha taught that we must be aware of seven species: hell (niraya), ghosts (pittivisaya), animals (*tiracchānayani*), humans (manussa), immortals (*half deva-human*), heavenly (*deva*), asura (asurakāya) in order to encourage us to cultivate sincerely. Such seven species are dark false conditions. They do not experience the inherent wonderful enlightened mind and do not realize that seven realms are illusory (samohaṃ) arising-falling according to the karma, without any root as the sky-flowers.

PROCLAIMING THE KAMMIC CAUSE

Ānanda, these living beings who have not realized the original mind, undergone reincarnations from measureless kalpas, have not been enlightened to the absolute nature, because they keep committing killing, stealing, and lusting. In contrast, if they restrain themselves from killing, stealing, and lusting, if they execute these three sinful karmas, they will reborn in the form of ghosts. If they do not engage in these three karmas, they will reborn in the shape of heavenly beings. The ceaseless shifts between having and voidness on these terrible karmas must force rising up in the cycle of transmigration (saṃsāra).

1. Pointing out the Right Cultivation

Whoever practices samādhi will realize that in their introspective permanent essence, there is neither the having nor the voidness of these karmas and even the non-having, non-voidness are also ended. So if they are definitely without non-killing, non-stealing, and non-lusting, how can it be able to have the actual involvement of killing, stealing, and lusting?

2. Summarize the Community Karmic Retributions

Ānanda, whoever has not cut off three sinful karmas, each of them has his/her own karma. Due to the private karmic shares, it leads the community karmas, making accumulated portions. Their locations are not unpredictable. These things all come from their own false views to manifest out. Since they are illusory and generated without a reasonable cause, they cannot be traced to the source.

3. Advice to Transform Three Ignorances (avijjā)¹³²

Ānanda, you should advise practitioners that if they hope to attain the bodhi way, they must transform three ignorances. If they have not transformed three ignorances, then even if they obtain the spiritual superpower which is only a function for the sake of the conditioned world. These ignorant habits have not paused; they will fall into the path of ghosts. Although they want to get rid of the illusion, instead they become involved with the deception instead.

¹³² Three Ignorances (avijjā): killing, stealing, and lusting.

The Tathāgata exclaims that such practitioners are really pitiful. All things come from your false views (micchā-ditthi); it is not the fault of bodhi essence.

Such declaration is the proper word. Any other declaration is the one of demon kings.¹³³

In the section of proclaiming the kammic cause, the Buddha kindly explains the having and absence of three sinful karmas (killing, stealing, and lusting) are exchanged to produce the life cycle. The meaning of the saṃsāra depends on two aspects, such as an internal aspect (killing, stealing, and lusting) that is evil and an external aspect (non-killing, non-stealing, non-lusting) that is good, which is the proper cause for the transmigrating nature. These are the primary ideas of this book, *Rebirth Views in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

i. Why are living beings caught in saṃsāra?

Living beings are caught in saṃsāra because they wrongly consider the enemies as their real blood children. After admiring thirty-two perfect marks of the Buddha, Venerable Ānanda turns his mind and moves from being a royal prince to be a homeless monk. Once he meets Maganti, a beautiful prostitute, he turns and moves to nearly break his important precepts. His mind is moved. In fact, this is the false thought or consciousness. Instead he forgets his true bodhi mind which is the permanent original mind without turning. Once he wrongly considers the like-dislike thought or the

¹³³ The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, pp. 745–750.

turning as his real mind, he forgets his forever luminous unchangeableness bodhi mind.

He wrongly receives the changeability to be his selfness. He respects the Buddha and is moved by the Buddha's marks. His mind is turned by Maganti's beauty. That is reason why there is the cycle of rebirth for Ānanda's life.

Ānanda grasps good things for being good, such as non-killing, non-stealing, and non-lusting, the thirty-two perfect marks of the Buddha and so on, which makes him turn his mind and life. In the process of cultivation, we should know that a bad or good thing is also a turn, so please do not turn by each of them. Avoid the evil thing. Do good things without attachment. We depend on the condition and cause (pratīyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) to do good things. If there is not the smooth cause-condition for doing good things, we won't do it. Do not turn by it because it is pratīyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda. We try to cultivate it. We cannot be moved by good causes, much less the bad causes.

Suddenly, we meet good causes, our good mind arises. Suddenly, we encounter bad causes, our bad mind appears. Thus, our mind is turning all the time. We must be mindful to control it. Be calmed down. Do not allow it to follow external objects.

If we do not control our mind, we will arise up to wholesomes which make us rejoice. Then, we must take precautions, because in another time, we meet other conditions,

and our mind will move in various situations of crying, laughing, sadness-happiness, up-down, and so on. As the mind always wanders, if it experiences evil, it will change to the evils (*following Maganti's beauty*). If it experiences wholesome things, it will turn to the wholesome things (*following the Buddha's good marks*). Be aware of it! We must prevent the movement of this consciousness. Our true bodhi mind is without turning or moving, neither evil nor wholesome.

ii. What are the auspicious superior things?

Even at the time we practice meditation, if we detach from all kinds of sounds, forms, seeings, hearings, feelings, knowing, non-killing, non-stealing, non-lusting, and so on, we only attain the inward dark stillness which is not our true bodhi mind. It is the discrimination at one of two aspects of worldly objects.

To the eye organ, if we leave brightness, we grasp darkness.

To the ear organ, if we leave movement, we grasp stillness.

To the nose organ, if we leave clearance, we grasp disturbance.

To the tongue organ, if we leave flavor, we grasp non-flavor.

To the body organ, if we leave touching, we grasp non-touching.

To the brain organ, if we leave existence, we grasp non-

existence.

It is the attachment on both aspects of worldly objects.

Thus, if we leave behind six movements, we will grasp at six stillnesses. It means we still cling to the discrimination on the subtle sides of two objective aspects. For example, although we attain up to four dhyanas (*material heavenly realms*) and four emptiness (*immaterial heavenly realms*), we still fall into the lower realms because we still cling to the subtle illusory consciousness of the dark stillness. Once it ends, we will turn on the wheel of saṃsāra.

Therefore, we do not attach much on the auspicious superior phenomena because such auspicious phenomena changes constantly. We must not close our eyes to chase after either the suddenly evil or suddenly wholesome things. If we still grasp our heavenly superior meditations or wholesome things in human (manussa) world, we still maintain the up-downward in the cycle of birth and death, because we still live with it and consider it as ours.

Leading an impermanent life, we receive changeability and consider it as our characteristic of body and mind. If it is moveable, increased and decreased continuously, how can we live peacefully, calmly, permanently without appearance-disappearance? So, the cycle of rebirth is consecutive and ceaseless.

For a long time, we have lived in and used the wrong false application. Now we recognize our essence substance so that we stand up to live according to the virtue of our true

nature.

Whenever we are purified, we become the bodhisattvas. Whenever we are impurified, it means we are mundane people.

Thanks to the Buddha's and patriarchs' explanations, we know how to win the noble absolute spiritual. This is called *the ideal or external aspect* because the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and saints expound it in order that we can understand, admire, and pray for it. Hence, it belongs to the ideal, i.e., an external aspect.

The emotions are greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), lust (sarāgam), anger (byāpāda, dosa), love (trishna), sorrow (soka), lamentation (parideva), and so forth. They have belonged to us for a long time, so it is called an internal aspect.

Those who live in their inward emotion will go down in the way of misery.

Those whose emotions are less than ideal—they are freed from defilements (kleśa) and become the liberated saints going upward.

The ideals are intermingled with the emotions; thus seven realms, such as hell (niraya), ghosts (pittivisaya), animals (tiracchānayani), humans (manussa), immortals (half deva-human), heaven (deva), asura (asurakāya) appear in the world. According to the level of thought or emotion, living beings will be born in an appropriate realm. It all comes from only mind.

iii. What are the cause-effect for living beings to be born in the heavens?

Whoever has to cultivate ten wholesomes and concentration (cause), will be born in heaven (effect). The origin is the cause, the branch is the effect. The cause is the invisible essence “root,” the mind cultivating ten wholesomes and meditation, so the result is the appearance of a heavenly inhabitant in the heavenly realm which is the meaning of the letter “branch,” the result of a cause. In fact, the fundamental cause is to cultivate ten wholesomes and the resulting mind is Tathāgatagarbha (*the source of all phenomena*). The heavenly beings and heavenly realms are transformed from the Thus-Come One (Tathāgatagarbha). Thus, both the origin-branch and the cause-effect (pratītyasamutpāda, paṭiccasamuppāda) come finally from the wonderful suchness of Tathāgatagarbha. All things are from the extremely absolute essence. All phenomenon from beginning to ending are to manifest in the universe by the function of Tathāgatagarbha which is the true form as mentioned in the *Ten Suchnesses of Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*).

The heaven realm is an unenlightened world of enjoying the joyfulness because the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, body, minds and so forth are engaged fondly in the delusion and entertainment all day and night. The delusion (sarāgam) leads to ignorance (avijjā) which is the root of suffering. Thus, the Buddha advises his disciples to avoid rebirth in the heaven realm.

To show the true absolute, the Buddha preaches the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. The cause-effect (pratītyasamutpāda,

paṭīccasamuppāda) in the heaven realm up to the hell (niraya) all come out of the mind. Therefore, it is said that all phenomena come out of the only mind.

All the cause-effect, the root-branch, and so on, are finally the supreme enlightenment or the true substance. The Flower Sūtra (*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*) holds that from only mind, all phenomena present in the universe. Now, we can see mountain, river, earth, grass, rope, knot, human (manussa), animal (tiracchānāyoni), and so forth which come out from our only mind. The mind invades and penetrates not only in our small body (of earth, water, wind and fire) but also over the Dharma realm.

Cultivation means returning to our original nature, letting go off the false emotion to admire and follow the ideals.

The wind is presented by association with the movement of mind.

The earth is manifested due to being ignorant and becomes an obstruction.

The water reveals the substance due to craving. Water is going down, running down; it never flows up because craving is heavy and never ascends.

The sexual craving (sarāgaṃ), self-craving (māna), self-view (egoness), and self-attachment (ahankāra) all are the root of falling down which come out of our mind.

We must live with our straight mind, letting go of the ego, then our mind will be peaceful, tranquil, blissful forever.

If we live with our illusory body and thought, we must wander around in the delusion world from this to another eon. From beginningless time, we have kept and accepted our low destiny in the ignorant frame. Since then, the Buddha kindly reminds us of awareness. The greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), lust (sarāgaṃ), anger (byāpāda, dosa), love (trishna), sorrow (soka), lamentation (parideva), and so forth are illusory and we avoid insisting foolishly to follow it anymore.

We must be mindful to recognize how valuable the Śūraṅgama Sūtra is! It is the most precious thing existing in the world.

Let flexibility with the conditioning cause to us to live with everyone, but all the time we ourselves must aware that these circumstances are illusory.

How can we be freed from the cycle of birth and death?
Please do not push our heads into the sea of birth and death.

Many people are unawakened and living in the cycle of birth and death (saṃsāra). We must firstly care for our liberation from saṃsāra. Let us be sure that we know how to swim before we save others from the flood.

Having not given up the ignorance (avijjā), having not recognized the fundamental bodhi mind means we are still alive in the delusion (samohaṃ).

Having not gotten rid of the delusion, i.e., we have not awakened the truth and have not received the truth yet. Therefore, we must study the Śūraṅgama Sūtra many times

and to try to absorb it as well as digest it in order to find the true lifestyle for us.

We are monks and nuns leaving home and family in order to join the Buddhist Saṅgha for cultivating and keeping the precepts. This is the necessary cause to cut off the saṃsāra way and to motivate and purify our body, speech and mind.

The evils in society are numberless and the retributions of greed (abhijjhā, visamalobha), hatred (byāpāda, dosa), and ignorance (avijjā) in seven realms are endless. We are lucky that our duties are to learn Buddhism and to abstain from killing, stealing, lusting, lying, and develop the qualities of virtue, morality, the Buddha nature, and so forth to liberate ourselves from saṃsāra. Having the human body means we possess the awakened substance to go upward. For the sake of many, we must attempt to overcome the negative minds and the rebirth cycle.

Seven realms always rotate. We just come out from our mother's womb. Now six organs are contacted with six objects, and we must practice the awakened method, learn from the Buddha to master the mind, and return to the immeasurable nature of Amitābha Buddha and stop forever the cycle of reincarnation. It is now that we are having the habit to create the cycle of saṃsāra. So, the ignorance demands us to turn out twelve species of beings.

Unenlightenment is the mundane being while enlightenment is the Buddha. As long as there is a wrong view (micchā-ditthi), a false thought (samohaṃ), a defilement

(kleśa), there are crazy, insane or mundane beings. In contrast, as long as there is mindfulness, meditation, awakening, there is a Buddha or a bodhisattva. This is both kinds of different people.

In the previous Chapter V of *Two Hard Questions* of Venerable Purna,¹³⁴ the Buddha compassionately interrogates us to help us reflect on ourselves.

iv. The Buddha has revealed the great meaning. Why do we not go back?

We have just escaped these species in order that we can enter the human fetus. Now temporarily we have a human body. The human body (manussa) is a gateway to get out of these dangerous realms. Getting out is the liberation. Otherwise, we must go back to hell (niraya), hungry demons (preta), animals (tiracchānayani), and then we will be reborn as human shapes (manussa) again. The previous and later karmas are tied to one another.

Now luckily we have enough good conditions to have a healthy body and mind, which we can awaken and learn Buddhism, while cats and dogs cannot be awakened. Thus, in our daily lives, we must practice the penetrating, hearing nature of Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva or reciting the name of Amitābha Buddha as the Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva (the Great Bodhisattva) to get out of this saṃsāric circle. We have just escaped these species in order that we can present here.

¹³⁴ *Two Hard Problems of Venerable Purna*, Chapter V, p 102.

We, who have to pay attention to this human (manussa) place, look down into the deep pit of three suffering realms and pray to be born in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha to be liberated forever.

In the Buddha land, we not only enjoy purity and tranquility, but also have the good opportunities to be near Buddhas, bodhisattvas and other saints to develop continually the further liberation. Mindfully getting out the low realms, our spirit definitely goes upward to ensure the release. Falling down into any one of seven realms is still on the path of ignorance (avijjā) and is still in the dangerous wanderings. We must be freed from the dark cloud of delusion in order that we can lean on the śamatha finger pointing to the Buddha nature.

The Buddha reminds us of it to help us be awakened. It is important that we must always turn introspectively to master ourselves. Three worlds and reincarnations in seven realms are generated due to just a word of “illusion” (samohaṃ). Our bodhi essence (bodhicitta) is originally neither illusion nor trueness.

*The sky is clear
Moon or non-moon
The shadow of moon presents
Where is not the moon?
Tired of finding the moon
The sunset's light pervades
Do not wait for the full moon
The moonlight has ever shined.*

Phước Hậu Temple, 2008

Thích Nữ Giới Hương

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Glossary

Ābhassarā: A class of Brahma deities that shine or radiate light

Abhijjhā: Covetousness, in meaning almost identical with lobha

Abhūtavādi: A liar

Aghaniwiha: Absolute form heavenly beings

Ahankāra: Ego or ego-consciousness

Akanitṭhā: The great ones or highest gods

Ākiñcaññāyatana-bhūmi: The state of nothingness

A-lai-ya: The eighth consciousness

Amahaggataṃ: Polluted or infected virtue

Anabhraka: The blessed love heavenly beings

Anāgāmiphala: Fruition of non-returners, the never-returning sages

Anutpattika-dharmakshanti: Uncreated-Dharma patience

Anuttaraṃ: Bad habits

Appamāṇābhā: Without measure; endless

Appamāṇasubhā: The measureless purity heavenly beings

Appamañña: Boundlessness; immeasurable

Apramāṇa: Unlimited, immeasurable

Arahant: One who is worthy or a perfected person who has attained Nirvana

Aravas: Cry, sound, noise

Arbuda: Womb beings
Ariya-saccāni: Four Noble Truths
Arūpāvacara-bhūmi: The immaterial heaven
Āryasatyāni: The entire teachings of Buddhism; the
Noble Truths
Āsravas: The outflows
Asurakāya: The nation or an assembly of asuras
Atappā: Ardor, zeal, exertion
Atimāna: Arrogance
Avīci niraya: The unintermittent hell
Avihā: A class of devas in the rupa worlds; not falling
from prosperity
Avijjā: Ignorance
Avimuttam: Sadness, dissatisfaction
Bhikṣu: A Buddhist monk
Bhikṣuṇī: A Buddhist nun
Bjava: Becoming or existence; the insistent holding
Bodhisattva-yāna: Bodhisattva vehicle
Brahmapārisajjā: The Brahma community heavenly
beings
Byāpāda: Hatred
Cattāri ariyasaccāni: The truths of the Noble Ones
Catummahārājika: Four heavenly kings
Catutthaj-jhāna-bhūmi: The fourth dhyāna
Chādeti: Falsehood, cover

Danapati: An almsgiver or a person who offers alms to others, including the Buddha and the Buddhist Order

Devas: Heavenly beings

Deva-yāna: The heaven vehicle

Dhyāna: Meditative absorption

Dosa: Hatred

Duḥkhanirodhagāminī: The transmundane cause

Duḥkhanirodhāryasatya: The transmundane effect

Duḥkhāryasatya: The mundane effect

Dukkha: Pain and suffering

Dutiyaj-jhānabhūmi: The second dhyāna

Ghanas: Warrior king

Heaven-yāna: Ten precepts

Hīnayāna: The small vehicle

Ichchantikas: The most base and spiritually deluded of all types of beings

Issā: Jealousy, ill will, envy

Jaramaranam: Birth, old age, illness, and death

Jhāna: A meditative state of profound stillness and concentration

Kalal: Dark, black

Kalpas: An aeon, or a relatively long period of time

Kāmasugati-bhūmi: The desire heaven

Karma: The sum of a person's actions

Karuṇā: Compassion

Kleśa: Includes anxiety, fear, anger, jealousy, desire, and depression
Kodha: Anger
Mada: Pride, stubbornness
Mahābrahmā: Great Brahmā
Mahāyāna: Great Vehicle
Maitrī: Benevolence, loving-kindness, friendliness, amity, goodwill
Māna: Selfness, craving views
Manussa: Human
Manussa-yāna: Human vehicle
Maras: Demons
Matna: The seventh consciousness
Māyā: Fraud
Mettā: Loving-kindness
Micchā-ditthi: Wrong view
Milhakupa niraya: The filthy hells
Muditā: Joy
Musāvāda: Lying
Nevasañ-ñānāsaññāyatana-bhūmi: Neither-discrimination-nor-nondiscrimination
Nibbāna/Nirvana: The unconditional state beyond the round of birth-death; the goal of Buddhist teachings
Nimmānaratī: The blissful transforming heavenly beings
Niraya: Purgatory or hell

Pacceka: Pratyeka
Palāsa: Bad habits
Pamāda: Entertainment
Pañca-khandha: Five skandhas
Paranimmitavasavattī: The transforming heavenly beings
of the comfort from others
Parideva: Sadness
Parinirvana: The realm of the eternal true self of the
Buddha
Parittābhā: A class of devas included among the ābhā
gods
Parittasubhā: The lesser purity heavenly beings
Paṭiccasamuppāda: Dependent origination or dependent
arising, the principle that all dharmas (phenomena)
arise in dependence upon other dharmas
Pettivisaya: The world of ghosts
Prajñā: Wisdom
Prajñā-pāramitā: Perfection of wisdom
Prajñā-pāramitā: The turning point of transformation
from this state to that state
Pratipad: Causes
Pratipad: Disagreeable
Praṭītyasamutpāda: Cause and conditions
Praṭītyasamutpāda: The causes and conditions; the twelve
links of dependent origination

Pratyeka: A silent Buddha who enters into Nirvana without teaching others

Pratyeka: Pacceka

Pratyeka-yāna: The middle vehicle

Pretas: Hungry ghosts

Punyaparsavas: The blessed birth heavenly beings

Rakshasas: Man eaters, a kind of heavenly beings

Rūpā: Material or form

Rūpāvācara-bhūmi: The material heavenly realms

Sadosaṃ: Anger

Sahā world: This world (full of suffering)

Samādhi: The perfect concentration

Sāmaṇera vinaya: The disciplines of a novice

Samāpatti: The practice of the truth; the fundamental bodhi or basic wisdom

Śamatha: The Buddhist practice of calming the mind; serenity

Sambhoga kaya: One kind of Buddha body

Samjñā: Perceive

Samohaṃ: Delusion

Saṃsāra: The cycle of rebirth

Saṃskāra: Volition

Samudaya: The suffering cause

Samudayāryasatya: The mundane cause; the origin of suffering

Saṅghas: The monk or nun community that is the third of the Three Gems

Sanjiva: Repeated birth and death

Sanjna: Ideation

Saṅkhāra: Volitional activity; conditioned phenomenon

Saññā: Sense, consciousness, perception

Sarāgaṃ: Lustful thoughts; craving

Sārambha: Fighting, competition, litigation, provocation

Siksamana: Probationary ordination

Skandhas: Five aggregates

Soka: Pain, grief

Sparsha: Contact, touching, sensation, sense impression

Sramanera: A novice monk

Śrāvaka-yāna: The voice-hearer vehicle

Sravas: Inflows

Subhakiṇhā: The prevalent purity heavenly beings

Suññatā: The true emptiness

Tathāgatagarbha: The source of all phenomena

Tatīyaj-jhānabhūmi: The third dhyāna

Tāvatiṃsa: Name of a heavenly abode

Thambha: Annoying, stubbornness, obstinacy

Theravāda-yāna: The Hīnayāna

Tiracchānayoni: Animal realms

Trishna: Love
Tusita: Tushita heavenly realm
Upadana: Desire, clinging
Upanāha: Hatred, wickedness, anger
Upekkhā: Equanimity
Varatas: Beings who borrow other substances to create
their bodies
Vedanā: Feeling or sensation
Vehapphalā: The abundant fruit heavenly beings
Vetarani niraya: The blood river
Vijjā: Insight, higher knowledge, science
Vijñāna: Consciousness, life force, mind or discernment
Vimuttam: To wake up
Vinaya: The precepts
Viññāṇa: Consciousness, life force, mind or discernment
Viññāṇañcāyatana-bhūmi: The state of infinite
consciousness
Visamalobha: Greed
Vītadosam: Without hate
Vītarāgam: No lust, no greed, the pure mind
Yakshas: A broad class of nature spirits, usually
benevolent, but sometimes mischievous and sexually
aggressive; capricious caretakers of the natural
treasures hidden in the earth and tree roots

Yāmā : A class of devas, mentioned in lists of devas
between those of Tāvātimsa and those of Tusita

Yāna: Vehicle; there are three Buddhist yānas

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