

The King  
Ajātaśatru  
Sūtra

A Mahāyāna Sūtra

*Translated by  
Shaku Shingan*



# The King Ajātaśatru Sūtra

A Translation of the  
*Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana Sūtra*  
from the Chinese of Lokakṣema

Together with  
three short sūtras on Ajātaśatru

Translated by Shaku Shingan

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

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# Principles of Translation

This translation aims to accurately represent the source texts in Chinese without abbreviations or additions. Where additional words are needed to make sense of the source text, they are, however, provided in square brackets. Nothing is excised, but occasionally, where the speaker of continual speech is mentioned repeatedly, the instances after the first mention of the speaker's name are not translated to avoid tediousness and maintain distinct blocks of text for different speakers.

This book is intended to provide translations for a general readership and should not be seen as an academic or critical translation. There are four versions of the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana* (hereafter, the *Dispelling of Ajātaśatru's Doubts*) sūtra in Chinese, the latter of which have many additional terms and even verses that are entirely lacking in Lokakṣema's translation. A complete understanding of the development of this sūtra from an academic perspective would require a critical comparison between these versions (along with Sanskrit fragments and the Tibetan). The present translation intends to provide English readers with a first impression of what the sūtra on the *Dispelling of Ajātaśatru's Doubts* contains from a doctrinal and narrative perspective.

Chapter titles are not found in the original translation by Lokakṣema but are from the later translation (T 627) by Dharmarakṣa. These should help readers orient themselves around a text that would otherwise be continuous and not signposted.

To provide some additional content from a Mahāyāna perspective on the topic of King Ajātaśatru and his destiny, three translations of other sūtras are provided in this book: *The Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's Questions on the Five Heinous Crimes* (T 508), *The Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's Reception of his Prediction* (T 509), and the similar *Sūtra on the Flower Picker who, Contradicting the King, Scattered Flowers upon the Buddha and Received a Prediction of his Buddhahood as a Buddha by the name of Supuṣpa* (T 510).

# Acknowledgements

These translations would not be possible without access to the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (DDB) edited by A. Charles Muller, and the parsing and lookup tool for DDB and CJKV, DDB Access created by Jean Soulat. Most definitions and Sanskrit equivalents are sourced from (or started from) these, unless otherwise stated.

This publication also relies upon some prior scholarship on the *Dispelling of Ajātaśatru's Doubts*. The leading scholar of the sūtra is Tenshō Miyazaki, whose work is primarily in Japanese.<sup>1</sup> I mainly consulted his translations for his rendering of Sanskrit names. Secondly, I consulted translations of the Sanskrit fragments edited by Paul Harrison.<sup>2</sup> These were limited in scope but nonetheless helpful.

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<sup>1</sup> Miyazaki, Tenshō, 2019, 蔵訳『阿闍世王経』第I章前半部分訳注研究, 佛教学セミナー 110: 29–54. (Referred to with I.1 below)

Id., 2020, 蔵訳『阿闍世王経』第I章後半部分訳注研究, 真宗総合研究所研究紀要 37: 157–174. (Referred to with I.2 below)

Id., 2017, 蔵訳『阿闍世王経』第II章訳注研究, 真宗総合研究所研究紀要 34: 77–97.

Id., 2019, 蔵訳『阿闍世王経』第III章前半部分訳注研究, 真宗総合研究所研究紀要 36: 103–122.

Id., 2018, 蔵訳『阿闍世王経』第XI章前半部分訳注研究, 真宗総合研究所研究紀要 通号 35: 163–184.

<sup>2</sup> Harrison, Paul, 2000, “Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanāsūtra,” in *Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection I: Buddhist Manuscripts, Volume I* edited by Jens Braarvig (Oslo: Hermes Publishing): 167–216.



# Introduction

## The History of the *Dispelling of Ajātaśatru's Doubts*

I am pleased to present the first complete English translation of the *Dispelling of Ajātaśatru's Doubts*, along with some lesser-known sūtras on Ajātaśatru for supplemental reading.

Despite being one of the earliest attested Mahāyāna sūtras, the *Dispelling of Ajātaśatru's Doubts* is not well known in contemporary Buddhist circles. Despite this, it was translated wholly or in part four times into Chinese, once into Tibetan, and Sanskrit fragments exist from Afghanistan and Kashmir, attesting to its historical recognition among Mahāyāna Buddhists.

In brief, the sūtra relates:

1. Mañjuśrī's pre-eminent place among bodhisattvas and even buddhas as an embodiment of perfect wisdom.
2. King Ajātaśatru's guilt over causing his father's death and overcoming his doubts.
3. The assurance of the future buddhahood of the King and his son.

Tenshō Miyazaki notes that the transmission of the sūtra followed two lineages. The first lineage includes Lokakṣema (T 626) and Dharmarakṣa's (T 627) translations and parallels the extant Sanskrit fragments. The second lineage includes Fatian's translation (T 628) and the Tibetan translation, which may be a translation from Fatian's Chinese rather than Sanskrit.<sup>1</sup>

The title of Lokakṣema's version of the *Dispelling of Ajātaśatru's Doubts* is simply *The King Ajātaśatru Sūtra*, which is the title I adopt here.

## Ajātaśatru's Predicament

Buddhist listeners of this sūtra at the time of its transmission would have well known the story of Ajātaśatru, and so it receives no introduction in any of the sūtras translated here. In this spirit, I would primarily direct readers to other places to get a full version of the story of Ajātaśatru, and then use the sūtras here to fill in one version of the Mahāyāna approach to explaining Ajātaśatru's fate. However, I will provide a brief account of Ajātaśatru's predicament as contextualisation for the texts in this publication.

According to accounts accepted by both the Nikāya-Āgama traditions and the Mahāyāna tradition, Ajātaśatru was the son of the King of Magadha, Bimbisāra. As an impressionable youth, the Buddha's half-

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<sup>1</sup> Miyazaki, Tenshō, 2012, 阿闍世王経の研究—その編纂過程の解明を中心として, Tōkyō: Sankibō Press.

cousin Devadatta decided to use Ajātaśatru as a powerful tool in his quest to usurp the Buddha as the leader of the saṅgha. Employing supernormal powers to win over Ajātaśatru, he soon received the prince's patronage. Inciting the prince to usurp his father's position as King to help him displace the Buddha, Devadatta even suggested the Ajātaśatru kill his father, Bimbisara. When his father heard of this, he voluntarily abdicated, but Bimbisara, fearing his father's power while still alive, had his father starved to death.

The occasion of his father's starvation became the inciting event of the *Contemplation Sūtra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*. To keep Bimbisara alive, Queen Vaidehī secretly fed him without the prince's knowledge. When Ajātaśatru found out, he initially attempted to kill Queen Vaidehī but was prevented by his ministers, who instead allowed him to imprison her. Whilst in prison, Vaidehī called out to the Buddha and his disciples, who appeared before her to teach her the method of contemplation of Amitābha Buddha's Buddha-field, the Land of Bliss (Sukhāvātī) and how to attain birth there.<sup>1</sup>

After his father's death and securing the throne, Ajātaśatru assisted Devadatta in his attempts to kill the Buddha. Eventually, he is informed of the gravity of these deeds by his physician Jīvaka and how he will most assuredly suffer in hell for his deeds. Suffering great remorse, shame, and fear, Ajātaśatru rejects Devadatta and seeks the Buddha's guidance. In each account of Ajātaśatru's consultation with the Buddha, he repents his deeds. After that, he becomes a loyal devotee of the Buddha and takes care of the distribution of his relics after he enters parinirvāṇa. The Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* suggests that upon repenting to the Buddha and recognising the gravity of his crimes, Ajātaśatru ultimately can take refuge in the Buddha only due to power aroused by the light of the Buddha—thus his faith is described as rootless. The idea of rootless faith is closely tied to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra's* teaching of Buddha-nature, wherein it is seen as a recognition of the connection between the mind of the limited saṃsāric being and the timeless and infinite mind of the Buddha.

Eventually, after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, one of Ajātaśatru's sons, Udaya, killed him and usurped the throne. While all accounts of his fate after his death agree that he entered hells and eventually will attain buddhahood (or pratyekabuddhahood), the traditions disagree on how long

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<sup>1</sup> For a translation of a parallel of this narrative (T 507), which would also serve as a helpful preface to this volume, please see Lo, Yuet-Keung and Jonathan A. Silk, trans., "The Composition of the Guan Wuliangshoufo-jing: Some Buddhist and Jaina Parallels to Its Narrative Frame," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 25 (1997): 224–229.

he will spend in hell and what the cause of the length of his time in hell will be.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Contribution of the *King Ajātaśatru Sūtra***

The *King Ajātaśatru Sūtra* incorporates prajñāpāramitā (perfection of wisdom) logic into the story of the King's repentance. The teaching that ultimately allows the King to overcome his doubts about his fate is given by the male embodiment of wisdom, the youth bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, who is also the embodiment of the Prajñāpāramitā. The Prajñāpāramitā takes on a separate female iconographic form in later tantric developments. However, this sūtra shows that its sūtric equivalent is the youth bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. He surpasses all disciples and bodhisattvas, and the awakening of buddhas depends on him.

Mañjuśrī teaches the King to see that he has no self and that his thoughts and mind are ultimately the same as space and emptiness. Attaining patience regarding the non-arising of all Dharmas, the King can gain assurance of his eventual buddhahood and establishment of a buddha-field, and a significant shortening of the time he must spend in hell (niraya). This sūtra, therefore, along with those that follow it in this volume, do not contradict fundamental Buddhist doctrine on the crime of patricide, which holds that one who commits the heinous crimes (of which patricide is one of five) must enter hell. It does, however, suggest that practitioners can lighten the suffering of such hells by learning and practising the Mahāyāna.

This sūtra, if read alongside the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, will be seen as presenting realisation of emptiness and wisdom as being equivalent to rootless faith. Rootless faith, being a connection to Buddha-nature in the mind of a limited being, then, is the recognition of emptiness granted by the grace of a buddha. Ajātaśatru continues to be a flawed being; he does not immediately attain awakening even in the *King Ajātaśatru Sūtra*, but he has a recognition that allows him to gain assurance of buddhahood within his life. While narratively these sūtras differ, they agree on this familiar point. They may therefore be seen as telling the same underlying story about the benefits of listening to the Dharma and having faith to overcome unsettling doubts about one's afterlife.

### **A Few Words on the Supplemental Ajātaśatru Sūtras**

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<sup>1</sup> The above account relies to a large extent upon Malalasekera, GP, "Ajātasattu," Dictionary of Pali Proper Names, 1938, [https://www.palikanon.com/english/pali\\_names/am/ajatasattu.htm](https://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/am/ajatasattu.htm).

The sūtras in this volume that follow *The King Ajātaśatru Sūtra* are all on the same theme: the King consults the Buddha and receives an assurance of his buddhahood upon repentance.

The *Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's Questions on the Five Heinous Crimes* (T 508) essentially acts as a preface to the account of Ajātaśatru's encounter with the Buddha in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. It relates how the Buddha informs Ajātaśatru's doctor Jīvaka that eventually Ajātaśatru will come to the Buddha and attain rootless faith. This faith will allow him to shorten the time he spends in hell, such that he will descend into hell and back out again like a bouncing ball.

The *Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's Reception of his Prediction* (T 509) presents the same scenario for the King's fate. However, the method whereby he receives his prediction involves the realisation (with the aid of Jīvaka's explanation) that the Buddha's body neither perishes nor abides and allows him to make offerings with sincerity to the Buddha even after he has entered parinirvāṇa. This sūtra neither touches upon rootless faith nor a realisation of emptiness. Instead, it emphasises offering with a sincere mind and an understanding that the Buddha is not the same as his physical body. The implications of this doctrine naturally can be thought to be equivalent to the Buddha-nature teachings of the *Parinirvāṇa Sūtra* and the emptiness of the *King Ajātaśatru Sūtra*, but these implications are not spelt out.

Finally, the *Sūtra of the Flower Pickers* (T 510) has interesting narrative parallels to the *Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's Reception of his Prediction*. Rather than relating to the King's patricide or predictions of his buddhahood, the sūtra presents an opportunity for the Buddha to bring the King to repent a potentially more significant transgression.

There are countless more themes and features that all of these sūtras display, but we hope that the readers will be able to draw connections and find significance in them for themselves.

**The King Ajātaśatru Sūtra**  
(Taishō No. 626)

*Translated into Chinese by the Tokharian Tripiṭaka Master Lokakṣema  
in the Latter Han Dynasty*

*Translated into English by Shaku Shingan*



# 1. The Bodhisattvas<sup>1</sup>

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Buddha was dwelling in Rājagṛha, on Mount Gṛdhṛakūṭa, together with twelve thousand bhikṣus and eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas, each of whom was honoured and venerable.

All those bodhisattva mahāsattvas had all obtained many dhāraṇīs, had all obtained non-obstruction by hindrances and desires and had all obtained the Dharma of non-arising. They had also thus obtained the wisdom of samādhis, had obtained knowledge of the mental activities of all people, and taught the Dharma according to people's inclinations so that each could obtain their appropriate place.

Moreover, each of the four great kings, Śakra, Lord of the Devas and the devaputras of Śakra's heaven, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kiṃnaras, mahoragas, and humans and non-humans all came to the assembly.

At that time, Mañjuśrī was seated on the other side of the mountain together with twenty-five great people. Who were the twenty-five people? They were all bodhisattvas, and each of them by name was:<sup>2</sup> Jñānaśrī, Jñānadattaśrī, Saṃbhavaśrī, Garbhaśrī, Padmaśrī, Padmaśrīgarbha, Jagatīṃdhara,<sup>3</sup> Dharaṇīṃdhara, Ratnapāṇi, Ratnamudrāhastā, Siṃhamati, Siṃhavrāntāgarjitasvara,<sup>4</sup> Gaganagaṇja, Sahacittot-pādadharmacakrapravartin, Sarvapada, Pratibhānakūṭa, Sāgaramati, Mahāprabhā,<sup>5</sup> Priyadarśa, Anantadarśa, Prāmodyarāja, Anantārambaṇavihāra, Māradṣṭisamudgata, Aśokadatta,<sup>6</sup> and Sarvārthasiddha. These are the names of the twenty-five great people.

Four devaputras of Tuṣita Heaven came to where Mañjuśrī was, wishing to hear the Dharma. The names of those four devaputras were Samantakusuma, Rāsmikusuma, Mandāravakusumagandha, and Sadodyuktadharmavihāra. Other devaputras gathered little by little, coming to

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<sup>1</sup> T15.626.389a10 f1.

<sup>2</sup> Miyazaki (I.1 and I.2) suggests names here, favouring the naming scheme found in the Tibetan and in T627 and T628, but I will give them here as can be determined by T626 alone. Where I defer to Miyazaki's interpretation, it is noted.

<sup>3</sup> The character 劫 is added before this Bodhisattva's name, but seems to be unconnected. It is not remarked upon by Miyazaki (I.1:49).

<sup>4</sup> Miyazaki suggests Siṃhavrāntābhaya here, which I cannot quite see (I.1:51).

<sup>5</sup> This is an uncertain transliteration, but suggested by Miyazaki (I.2:161)

<sup>6</sup> According to the *Aśokadattavyākaraṇa* (T310(62); T337), Aśokadatta is the daughter of Ajātaśatru.

where Mañjuśrī was, wishing to hear the Dharma. The great people and all the devaputras sat and said to each other:

The Buddha's wisdom is profound and excellent. It is unlimited and inconceivable. It is incalculable and immeasurable. But ordinary beings cannot arm themselves [with the armour of the great bodhisattva vow].

They all said:

How should we practice the Dharma and know the skilful-means to attain unlimited wisdom and attain the Buddha's inconceivable omniscience?

Jñānaśrī Bodhisattva said:

Due to the merit of indefatigability and the merits of freedom from longing, a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Jñānadattaśrī Bodhisattva said:

Due to having an even mind and a tamed mind, being joyful, flexible, self-controlled, and firmly armed with the armour of a mind of omniscience that verifies the teachings directly, a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Sambhavaśrī Bodhisattva said:

For incalculable kalpas, one must be armed [with the armour of the great bodhisattva vow], even for countless future kalpas beyond reckoning. If being so armed, one does not give rise to arrogance, then one can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Garbhaśrī Bodhisattva said:

Not being concerned with one's comfort, one can obtain unlimited wisdom. Why? Because all beings wish for comfort. So, one who thinks like this, not seeking anything other than the comfort of all, is a practitioner who will obtain unlimited wisdom.

Padmaśrī Bodhisattva said:



One who cannot subdue one's mind is unable to subdue the minds of others. But one who can subdue one's own mind can subdue the minds of others and is a practitioner who will obtain unlimited wisdom.

Padmaśrīgarbha Bodhisattva said:

One who follows desire cannot transcend desire. One who does not follow desire attains the transcendence of desire. Such a bodhisattva is indifferent to profit and loss. They are unattached whether there is suffering or comfort, slander or praise, evil or good. Why? Because they neither have sorrow nor delight. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Jagatīndhara Bodhisattva said:

Do not think that one can gain merits by the merits performed by others; such a practitioner does not obtain unlimited wisdom.<sup>1</sup> You should think of yourself as alone and friendless. Why? Because one should think of all beings, and that one should be capable of doing deeds which others are not capable of doing; being diligent and not indolent, even for a moment, in teaching all beings. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Dharaṇīndhara Bodhisattva said:

Consider the earth. There are no grasses, trees, herbs, houses, or cities that do not depend and abide upon the earth, yet they do not burden the earth. All are upon it and obtain life from it, yet it does not regard them as troublesome or cumbersome. A bodhisattva should also have such a mind. Like the earth, you should have a mind that neither delights nor sorrows. You should cause each being to obtain what is suited to them but not think of getting anything in return. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is an edificatory injunction to encourage one to avoid negligence in one's practice, merits can, indeed, be transferred, but one should not expect that this will happen and do nothing.

<sup>2</sup> This is slightly paralleled in the *Kāśyapaṭṭiparivarta*, translated in Garma C. C. Chang, *A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtra: Selections from the Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*, Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park and London, 1983, 392–3:

Ratnapāṇi Bodhisattva said:

One should have a mind that is noble and not disgrace oneself. Have a non-dual mind even in dreams. Why? Because one should intend to be neither an arhat nor pratyekabuddha. Such a practitioner is not separate from a jewel-like bodhisattva if they do not forsake their intention [to liberate] all. One should neither crave nor spare the precious treasure of their intention and guide all followers who seek it to the Mahāyāna. Why? Because no-mind<sup>1</sup> is equal to that mind;<sup>2</sup> the wisdom of no-mind is equal to that mind; neither increasing nor decreasing, that mind neither craves nor spares. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Ratnamudrāhastā Bodhisattva said:

Seeing beings being born and dying in the five realms as like those drowning in the ocean, the bodhisattva, having given rise to a mind of pity, should offer them his hand. Why? For it makes one without knowledge into the chief among the knowledgeable, it makes one who is greedy into the chief among the generous, it makes one who is immoral into the chief among the moral, it makes one who is wrathful into the chief among the patient, it makes one who is indolent into the chief among the diligent, it makes one who is distracted into the chief among the single-minded, it makes one who is ignorant into the chief among the wise, it makes one who is meritless into the chief among the meritorious. The three Dharma treasures mark the chief among the meritorious. What are the three? To teach all beings to cause them to be fully endowed with the Buddha's wisdom; to make them understand that their very body is a meritorious precious jewel; to have them regard all dharmas as equal to space. These three are

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Furthermore, Kāśyapa, the virtues of a Bodhisattva are innumerable and endless; they can only be illustrated by parables and similes.

Kāśyapa, just as the great earth, used by all sentient beings, does not discriminate or seek rewards, so a Bodhisattva benefits all sentient beings from the time he engenders bodhicitta until the time he attains Buddhahood, but does not discriminate or seek rewards.

<sup>1</sup> *Acitta* or *acetana* which is taught by the Mahāyāna.

<sup>2</sup> I.e., their intention: *bodhicitta*. Their intention to attain buddhahood to liberate all sentient beings.

the chief of Dharma treasures. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Siṃhamati Bodhisattva said:

One who arms their body [with the armour of the bodhisattva vow] is neither afraid nor fearful, neither apprehensive nor retreating, and their hair does not stand on end. Why? Because they do not hate birth and death. They also do not enter nirvāṇa; abiding equanimously amidst suffering and joy, they do not give rise to a scattered mind. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Siṃhavikrāntāgarjitasvara Bodhisattva said:

One who is of weak and inferior capacities cannot attain it; it is that which is done by a mahāsattva.<sup>1</sup> Why? Because they are free from many evils, without flattery, they are pure, without pride, have a mind free from aversion, and do not act contrary to the Dharma. Why? Because they are governed by sincerity and are without lust and envy and do not have an evil mind, whereas a foolish person is shrouded in darkness. By practising equanimity in body, speech, and mind just as was instructed, and not losing their intention, the person lacking these qualities will be deeply honoured and attain the goal. How? By cultivating sincerely, enjoying the Dharma, and acting in accord with the Dharma, one should neither crave nor be sparing for the rest of one's life. Why? By not craving for the rest of one's life, one will not forsake all beings. By giving<sup>2</sup> without craving or sparing, one can cause beings to obtain that which is suited to them. One who enters in this correct manner will not proceed by the wrong path.

A storehouse for the poor, a physician for the sick, a protector for the fearful, a path for those of inferior capacities, a righteous guide for those who have gone astray: give rise to wisdom for those who are ignorant. For all who practice this way, what kind of hostilities can arise?

A mahāsattva liberates others by enduring this practice and abiding in the original Dharma, just as it was received. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

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<sup>1</sup> A great being, i.e., a great bodhisattva.

<sup>2</sup> T15.626.390a.

Gaganagañja Bodhisattva said:

One's thoughts are like space. Why? Because there is nowhere they do not pervade. Not concealing great compassion, one's mind will always rejoice, and one's face will be pleasant. One who enjoys many pleasures is of a vain heart. But giving is equal to space, thus are morality, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Sahacittotpādadharmacakrapravartin Bodhisattva said:

If someone has newly set out on the path, he should not allow Māra to gain an entry to his mind so that he does not lose consideration of the buddhas and devas; he should maintain his intention to turn the Wheel of the Dharma. How? By arousing a good state of mind. Why? By [considering] that all dharmas are non-arisen. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Sarvapada Bodhisattva said:

One should have a mind that can enter anywhere. Why? Because all dharmas are by their nature inherently empty, and all words are empty like space, so, like space, there is nowhere the mind cannot enter. In this way, the bodhisattva should have a mind that can enter anywhere. He should act just as spoken and know that his wisdom can make anything known. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva said:

Since all sounds are non-sounds, the voices of all beings cannot be obtained. One who knows this neither delights nor sorrows nor is negligent. Why? Just as the wind does not move a large mountain, agreeable sounds or unpleasant sounds neither please nor agitate the bodhisattva's mind. Why? Because they have no attachment. As there is no attachment, the Buddha's words and the words of tūrthikas are equally empty and do not exist. Everything done in the desire realm is seen to be finite, and since their limit is known, they do not give rise to arrogance. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Sāgaramati Bodhisattva said:

One's mind should be like the sea that accepts all things, and one's wisdom should be limitless. Just as the sea receives all rivers, which combine to become of one taste, a bodhisattva unites all beings to become one with the Dharma.<sup>1</sup> Why? This is very subtle: one must not be swept away by the twelve links of dependent origination. Contemplating the Dharma-body, which neither increases nor decreases, one will cultivate merits for all beings. By the merits created, one wishes that all may obtain them: this is regarded as the inexhaustibility of merits. One should protect these [merits], and neither be attached to them nor cut them off. Using the power of one's mind to govern the body, all beings' deeds will be equal and without distinction. By practising thus, one gives rise to wisdom and can be endowed with unlimited wisdom.

Mahāprabhā Bodhisattva said:

The wisdom and light of the Buddha are not attainable by ordinary people. One should cultivate with one's mind so that there is nowhere one's light does not illuminate. Why? Because, to make the Dharma known to the world, there should be nowhere that its light of generosity does not illuminate, and there should be nowhere that the light of morality does not illuminate, and there should be nowhere that the lights of patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom do not illuminate. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Priyadarśa Bodhisattva said:

If one's mind has merit and wisdom, then one's eyes will be purified, and when one looks at form, there will not be any bad. Sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental dharmas are also the same, and six things

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<sup>1</sup> Another parallel from the *Kāśyapa-parivarta*, translated in Chang, *A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtras*, 393:

Kāśyapa, just as the streams flowing from all directions assume a uniform taste when they join the ocean, so the numerous good roots accumulated in different ways by a Bodhisattva become uniform in taste when they are dedicated to the attainment of supreme enlightenment.

are purified. What six? The eye, ear, nose, tongue,<sup>1</sup> body, and mind. Someone who can [purify] them all will not rejoice in them because their mind is pure. In looking, one will wish to enter the Buddha-Dharma to instruct those who are not upright in the Dharma. If one has a good thing and someone comes, one will not be stingy and give it generously without regrets. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Prāmodyarāja Bodhisattva said:

Even if someone slanders and reviles, beats and hits one, one should not be angry but think only about the Dharma. How should one think about the Dharma? Consider: who is being slandered? At what are you angry? Likewise with being beaten and hit, internally their objects are empty with nothing to be obtained, externally their objects are empty. Without any doubt, one's own body cannot be seen, and one also cannot see another's body. So, if someone seeks one's hands and feet, they will be offered with joy; if someone seeks to take one's head, one's mind will be doubly joyous; if someone seeks one's city and jewels, one will not be stingy with them; if someone seeks one's wife and children, one will likewise give them with an indifferent mind.

If one recites this sūtra, one will obtain joy with one sentence, but not delight in the revelry of a gold cakravartin.<sup>2</sup> One should recite the Dharma for all people without ceasing, wishing that even one person might give rise to the intention to become a bodhisattva. Not wishing to become a brahmā, one should wish to see the Buddha. One should not crave the jewels of the trichiliocosm.<sup>3</sup> Such a practitioner, who is always without indolence, will be joyous and can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Anantadarśa Bodhisattva said:

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<sup>1</sup> Literally this reads mouth in Chinese, but clearly the sense organ associated with the mouth is intended.

<sup>2</sup> A cakravartin is a wheel-turning sage king who gains dominion over the entire world without force. There are four kinds: iron, copper, silver, and gold. The golden cakravartin has dominion over the world's four continents.

<sup>3</sup> A collection of three thousand collections of a thousand great worlds, like a galaxy.

In looking at all beings, one must not think that they are yours. In all pure lands, one must neither think they exist nor do not exist. In seeing all buddhas, you must not conceptualise their form or seek it. Why? Because they are a function of the Dharma-body. In looking at all peoples' minds, do not seek the existence of all people. Why? When you reach purity with the eye of merit,<sup>1</sup> you will directly be endowed with the divine eye<sup>2</sup> and supernormal powers. By attaining the eye of wisdom,<sup>3</sup> you will directly know that there is nothing which can be desired. One will then directly attain the Buddha-eye<sup>4</sup> and the eighteen dharmas.<sup>5</sup> By attaining the Dharma-eye,<sup>6</sup> one will be endowed with the ten powers,<sup>7</sup> and thus armed with the armour [of the great vow] and directly attain unlimited wisdom.

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<sup>1</sup> This corresponds to the human eye, Skt. māṃsacakṣus. Human eye whereby one can accumulate merit and develop purity.

<sup>2</sup> Skt. devacakṣus. The eye associated with supernormal powers.

<sup>3</sup> Skt. prajñācakṣus. The eye associated with wisdom about emptiness and suchness.

<sup>4</sup> Skt. buddhacakṣus. The eye which is associated with the ten dharmas.

<sup>5</sup> These are described in Charles Muller, ed. and trans., *The Exposition of the Sutra of Brahma's Net*, Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, Vol. 11, Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism: Seoul, 2012, 91 (Chinese text removed for ease of reading):

They belong only to the Buddha, not to śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, or bodhisattvas. In East Asian Buddhism these are: (1) unmistaken action; (2) unmistaken word; (3) unmistaken mindfulness; (4) mind of equality toward all beings; (5) stable mind in meditation; (6) all-embracing mind which rejects nothing; (7) the power of non-retrogression in terms of aspiration; (8) the power of non-retrogression in terms of diligence; (9) the power of non-retrogression in terms of mindfulness; (10) the power of non-retrogression in terms of wisdom towards the salvation of all beings; (11) the power of not falling back from freedom into bondage; (12) not falling back from the vision attained in liberation; (13) the manifestation of wisdom power in thought; (14) the manifestation of wisdom power in word; (15) the manifestation of wisdom power in deed; (16) immediate total knowledge of all affairs of the present; (17) immediate total knowledge of all affairs of the past; (18) immediate total knowledge of all affairs of the future. In Indian Buddhism these are the ten powers, the four kinds of fearlessness, the three bases of mindfulness, and great compassion.

<sup>6</sup> Skt. Dharmakṣus. The eye associated with the ten powers.

<sup>7</sup> These differ depending upon the source. According to Muller, *The Exposition of the Sutra of Brahma's Net*, 90:

Ten kinds of powers of awareness specially possessed by the Buddha, which are perfect knowledge of the following: (1) distinguishing right and wrong; (2) knowing one's own karma, as well as knowing the karma of every being, past, present, and future; (3) knowing all stages of dhyāna liberation, and samādhi; (4) knowledge of the relative capacities of sentient beings; (5) knowledge of the desires, or moral direction of every being; (6) knowledge of the varieties of causal factors; (7) knowledge

Anantārambaṇavihāra Bodhisattva said:

All that you do should be done with omniscience. Why? Because there is no place to abide. As there is no place to abide, one should think only of the Dharma. The bodhisattva who practices thus, does not go along with the stream [of saṃsāra], so where is reborn? He is not reborn due to faults, and he is not reborn due to Māra's deeds. Why? Because he does not reject the Dharma and he does not commit crimes against the Dharma. Thus, he crosses beyond faults and the deeds of Māra. One with these conditions can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Māradr̥ṣṭisamudgata Bodhisattva said:

All that exists does not come from another but is directly created by oneself and possessed by the māras. One should know for oneself that there is neither existence nor that which is done. By the knowledge that nothing is done, one directly restrains the five aggregates. By knowing the five aggregates, there are no more deeds of Māra. By transcending Māra's realm, one practices the Middle Way without any obstruction. Having transcended obstructions, the bodhisattva mahāsattva can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Aśokadatta Bodhisattva said:

If one has any thought contrary to the Dharma and should have remorse, one's mind should be in accord with and not different from the Dharma. Why? One should always do good with a focused mind, do good with one's body, not wishing to cause people to do wrong. Whether with the mouth or with the mind, one should not wish to cause people to do wrong. If someone is distressed, generously using the Dharma, one should remove their distress. Such a practitioner is a bodhisattva mahāsattva and can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Sarvārthasiddha Bodhisattva said:

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of the gamut of courses and paths pursued by sentient beings; (8) knowledge of remembrance of past lives; (9) knowledge of where people will die and be reborn; (10) knowledge of the methods of destroying all evil afflictions.



One should have pure precepts and fulfil one's vows. By having pure precepts, one will not again commit worldly faults. Not committing worldly faults, one should cultivate the forest of the thirty-seven factors of awakening<sup>1</sup> and thus attain omniscience. One with such pure precepts will not contradict the thirty-seven factors of awakening. By such a bodhisattva mahāsattva's deeds, one will obtain unlimited wisdom.

The Devaputra Samantakusuma said:

Just like a tree in bloom, there are none who do not enjoy observing its flowers. Likewise, there is no one who does not enjoy the fruits of meritorious deeds. Just like the kovidāra tree in Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, which flourishes with flowers, there are no devas who do not delight viewing it. The eye of the bodhisattva entirely cultivated by Dharmic activity is just like one of those flowers. It is also just like a spotlessly immaculate heavenly maṇi gem. The pure mind of the bodhisattva is also just like that. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

<sup>2</sup>The Devaputra Raśmikusuma said:

Just like when the sun rises, the darkness disappears, and all colours become visible; likewise, there is nothing that the bodhisattva's wisdom does not illuminate, opening the darkness of the delusion of all foolish beings. Why? Because there is no limit to light. So, those who are in darkness can see the light and directly attain the right path. A bodhisattva abides on the right path and shows the way to those who have lost their way. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.<sup>3</sup>

The Devaputra Mandāravakusumagandha said:

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<sup>1</sup> These are the four bases of mindfulness, the four kinds of right effort, the four supernormal powers, the five roots, the five powers, the seven limbs of awakening, and the Noble Eightfold Path.

<sup>2</sup> T15.626.391a.

<sup>3</sup> Miyazaki points out that the analogy of this address can be found in other Buddhist texts, though the direct equivalence of light to wisdom and darkness to ignorance is not always found. In the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, for instance, at one point light represents wisdom, but at another point, light represents the bodhisattva himself. (I:2, 168)

Just like a mandārava flower, whose scent spreads a yojana<sup>1</sup> in length, breadth, upwards, downwards, and the four intermediate directions, there is no one in the trichiliocosm who does not smell the scent of the bodhisattva's listening, pure precepts, samādhi, and wisdom. Countless peoples' illnesses are cured by smelling the scent of their listening, pure precepts, samādhi, and wisdom. The bodhisattva who thus abides directly obtains unlimited wisdom.

The Devaputra Sadodyuktadharmavihāra said:

One who would abide in the Dharma should practice in accord with the Bodhisattva Dharma and never again fall into indolence. Never again being indolent, one will cease conceptualisation and directly attain ten things: (1) the cultivation of the six perfections,<sup>2</sup> (2) the practice of the four immeasurables,<sup>3</sup> (3) the five supernormal knowledges,<sup>4</sup> (4) the four means of conversion,<sup>5</sup> (5) to benefit from the patience of the three gates of liberation,<sup>6</sup> (6) have the intention to benefit others, (7) not to be separated from the body, (8) to teach using skilful means, (9) to bear all the essential points of the Dharma, and (10) have faith without changing. These are the ten things. Such a practitioner can obtain unlimited wisdom.

Mañjuśrī then addressed all those great people and all the devaputras:

The bodhisattva abides with nowhere to abide. What is meant by abiding with nowhere to abide? Even if one abides in the three realms,<sup>7</sup> one should not practice relying on the three realms: one nei-

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, "forty li," or approximately 8.5 kilometres.

<sup>2</sup> The six pāramitās: the perfection of generosity, morality, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom.

<sup>3</sup> The immeasurable minds of loving kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Also called the four noble abodes (brahmavihāra).

<sup>4</sup> The divine eye, divine ear, knowledge of other's minds, knowledge of prior existences of self and others, and the power to be anywhere or do anything.

<sup>5</sup> Four methods of approaching and winning over sentient beings: Giving, loving words, helpfulness, and having a common goal.

<sup>6</sup> The three gates are: meditation on emptiness, meditation on signlessness, and meditation on wishlessness.

<sup>7</sup> The whole cosmos: the desire realm (including lower devas, asuras, humans, animals, pretas, and the nirayas), the form realm, and the formless realm (the latter two of which are more and more refined deva realms).

ther practices inside nor seeks to practice outside. Even if they practice outside, they should not fall to the level of the śrāvaka and should not fall to the level of the pratyekabuddha.

If the practitioner relies on birth and death, ignorance is that which should be learned. If the practitioner relies on name, form is that which should be learned. If the practitioner relies on causes and conditions, that which is seen is that which should be learned. If the practitioner relies on attachment, the faculties are that which should be learned. If the practitioner relies on self, no-self is that which should be learned. If the practitioner relies on desire, then indifference regarding giving is that which should be learned. If the practitioner relies on immorality, then not being arrogant towards the precepts is that which should be learned. If the practitioner relies on anger, then patience and humility should be learned. If the practitioner relies on non-diligence, then diligence and non-arrogance should be learned. If the practitioner relies on confusion, then single-mindedness and non-arrogance should be learned. If the practitioner relies on ignorance, then wisdom and humility should be learned. If the practitioner relies on meritlessness, then accumulating merits and humility should be learned. If the practitioner relies on worldly dharmas, then the way of the Dharma and non-arrogance should be learned. If the practitioner relies on non-liberation, then attaining liberation and being endowed with humility should be learned. If the practitioner relies on fault, then faultlessness and humility should be learned. If the practitioner relies on being with remainder,<sup>1</sup> then being without any remainder and humility should be learned.

If the bodhisattva practices with no object and protects all while neither attaching nor severing, such a practitioner directly attains unlimited wisdom. In all dharmas, there is nothing to be attained. Why? Because there is nowhere to enter and nowhere not to enter. Knowing all these things, one directly attains omniscience—knowing fully that there is nothing to be attained.

One cannot obtain omniscience by any measure of form, affliction, worry, conception, birth and death, and knowledge is just the same. Neither by the Dharma nor by non-Dharma, nor by any measure of generosity can one obtain omniscience. Why? Because generosity is

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<sup>1</sup> Skt. śeṣa. The state wherein, while one is free from mental affliction, one still has physical defilement.

not separate from omniscience.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, by any measure of morality, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom. Why? Because wisdom flows from omniscience.

There is no place that omniscience does not enter; it is neither in the past, future, nor present. Why? Because it transcends the three times. Omniscience cannot be seen with the eyes. The ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are also the same. Why? Because it transcends the sense realms.<sup>2</sup>

If a man or woman wants to seek omniscience, they should abide in omniscience. How should they so abide? By not abiding in any dharmas, thus they abide in omniscience. By not regarding any dharmas as “mine,” thus they abide in omniscience. All people, dharmas, and buddhas are equal, and so do not have any differences: this is omniscience.

If one seeks to obtain omniscience, it follows from [proper] apprehension regarding the four great elements. How? Do not calculate<sup>3</sup> regarding the body as being a body. Why? Because it does not come about by causes and conditions. Therein, dharmas which are endowed with merits are dharmas that are not endowed with merits; that which is regarded as being “mine,” is entirely devoid of being “mine;” the self is non-arisen, and being non-arisen, there is nothing that can be calculated. That which is calculated is also unarisen, and that which is indicated or seen is also entirely unarisen. This is because [omniscience] is the wisdom that knows that there is no arising and nothing that arises. Practising in this way is regarded as omniscience.

When Mañjuśrī spoke in this way, two thousand devaputras all attained patience of the non-origination of dharmas, and twelve-thousand people aroused the utmost mind of the path of equanimity.

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., the generosity that is not measured, i.e., not understood with a calculative mind, is inherent in omniscience itself. Thus, any measured generosity or other such qualities, are not ways to obtain omniscience, which is nothing is to be obtained.

<sup>2</sup> I.e., the eighteen realms of the six sense faculties, six sense objects, and six sense consciousnesses.

<sup>3</sup> I.e., engage in calculative or discriminative thinking.

## 2. The Manifestation Buddha

**T**hereupon, Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva addressed Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva:

Let us go together to the Buddha and inquire about how the bodhisattva should abide.

Immediately, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva manifested as the Tathāgata and sat in the assembly. His clothes and form were the same as those of Śākyamuni Buddha. Mañjuśrī addressed Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva, saying:

Now the Buddha is before you. You can ask how a bodhisattva should abide.

Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva, not knowing this was a manifestation buddha, went before him, kneeled, and asked:

Tathāgata! How should a bodhisattva abide?

The manifestation buddha said:

Just as I do, so the bodhisattva should abide.

He again asked:

How does the Buddha abide?

That buddha said:

Neither depending on giving, nor depending on morality, patience, discipline, meditation, wisdom, nor depending on desire, nor depending on form, nor depending on formlessness, nor depending on bodily practice, nor depending on words, nor depending on thoughts—because, in all practice, there is nothing to which to attach.

That buddha asked Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva:

Is there any basis for the practice of a manifestation body?

He answered, saying:

There is no basis for its practice.

That buddha said:

Just as there is no basis for the practice of a manifestation, thus the bodhisattva should practice.

Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva again asked Mañjuśrī:

Is not this Buddha a manifestation Buddha?

Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva replied:

Do you not know for yourself that all dharmas are like manifestations?

He answered, saying:

All dharmas indeed are like manifestations.

Mañjuśrī said:

Even though you know that all dharmas are like manifestations, why do you ask whether this tathāgata is a manifestation?

Kind sir! Is it not said that all buddhas are entirely manifestations?

He then again asked Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva:

How does the Buddha manifest?

Mañjuśrī said:

Based on inherent purity.<sup>1</sup> Is it that [purity], then, which transforms?

It is because buddhas have no “I,” have no self, no person, no soul, no life, and neither rely upon the abiding of a buddha nor upon the abiding of an ordinary person.

Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva again asked the manifestation buddha:

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<sup>1</sup> Skt. prakṛtipariśuddhi. That is, on the basis of being unconditioned.

Fundamentally, what must we learn to attain buddhahood ourselves?

That buddha said:

That there is nothing to learn is the bodhisattva's learning. Why? Because one should neither think to oneself that "I seek this," nor "I don't seek this," also, there should be neither sorrow nor rejoicing, neither the unconditioned nor the untransformed, neither the unseen nor the ungrounded. There should be neither thoughts nor words, nor should there be form. Not seeking anything at all is the bodhisattva's learning. Such a learner is regarded as one with equal learning. Such a learner has no attachment and no fetters. Such a learner has no greed, has no anger, and has no delusion. Such a learner has nothing that is desired and nothing that is hated. Such a learner does not think to oneself, "I am learning," or "learning is done in this way." Such a learner does not fall into bad destinies.

If you seek the mind of anuttara-samyak-sambodhi and wish to attain buddhahood, you should practice as I have taught.

He again inquired:

What is the Buddha's learning?

That buddha said:

It is neither<sup>1</sup> doing bad nor falling into the bad; it is neither the given nor the maintained, nor the not maintained; it is neither not observing precepts nor observing precepts; it is neither impatience nor bad intentions; it is neither indolence nor laziness; it is neither meditation nor mental confusion; it is neither wisdom nor ignorance; it is neither that which is learned nor not having something to learn; it is neither accomplishment nor not having accomplishment; it is neither the bodhisattva nor the Buddha-Dharma; it is neither thinking that one has a body nor thinking that other people have a body. One who sees this has no conception; he has neither conceptualisations of the Dharma nor no conceptualisations of the Dharma and does not conceptualise non-conceptualisation.

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<sup>1</sup> T15.626.392a.

As one who has thoroughly understood in this way, the bodhisattva should practice learning. Why? Because all dharmas are like illusions, thus the characteristics of all dharmas are united. Why? Because no matter how many immeasurable things one can think of, they are all empty, and there is nothing that constitutes them. Thus, as they are empty, all dharmas cannot be seen. Why? Because all dharmas are equal and without any difference. All dharmas are silent. Why? Because [in them] there is no speaking and no words. Thus, they have no abode. Why? Because all dharmas are non-arising. One who believes this neither thinks that there is something practised, nor thinks about liberation, nor gives rise to arrogance about being a bodhisattva.

If the learner hears this and is neither apprehensive, afraid, nor fearful, then they are regarded as a bodhisattva. Just like space is neither afraid of fire, nor afraid of the wind, nor afraid of the rain, nor afraid of smoke, nor afraid of the clouds, nor afraid of thunder, nor afraid of lightning. Why? Because it is an empty dharma. The bodhisattva should thus not have any fear. The bodhisattva, whose mind is thus like space, eventually subdues Māra's armies and can then directly attain buddhahood and can work to protect all [beings].

When that manifestation buddha finished speaking these words, he immediately disappeared. Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva then asked Mañjuśrī:

Where did that tathāgata just go now?

[Mañjuśrī] replied:

Where he came from is where he went, and where he went is from where he came.

Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva said to Mañjuśrī:

This manifestation has no place from where it came, and there is nowhere to which it went. So why did it come?

Mañjuśrī replied:

Just like it manifested: it came with nowhere to go and went with nowhere to go. All dharmas are the same as this: there is nowhere from which they come and nowhere to which they go.



Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva again asked:

Where is the location of all dharmas?

He again replied:

In the location of their natural abiding.

He again asked:

Where is that location for all things?

[Mañjuśrī answered:]

It is the place in which they undertake activity.

He again asked:

Are not all dharmas without action and without wrong deeds?

Mañjuśrī said:

That is so. All dharmas are without action and without wrong deeds. So all dharmas of activity are also without action and without wrong deeds; they are all included in the Dharma-body.

Then again, he asked Mañjuśrī:

If there is no action and there are no wrong deeds, then why do you speak as if there is a person who undertakes actions?

Mañjuśrī said:

Just as you have said, a person is also without actions and without wrong deeds. Why? Because the dharmas of such a person are in the Dharma-body. Also, as there are no actions and no wrong deeds, as one practices, thus one attains: these three things are equal.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Actions, wrong deeds, and attainments.

Pratibhānakūṭa Bodhisattva again asked:

How are the three equal?

Mañjuśrī said:

As the Tathāgata is equal, thus these three things are also equal.

He again asked:

For what reason is the Tathāgata equal to no action, no wrong, and no attainment?

Mañjuśrī said:

The Tathāgata does not act, does not do wrong, and does not attain. That action, that wrong, and that attainment are all therefore equal. By entirely surpassing the wrong, one does not see wrong.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is said that when one has passed it, one will also, in the future, not be separated from the Tathāgata.

Thereupon, at the spot where Śākyamuni Buddha was sitting, the Venerable Śāriputra, Ānanda, and many honoured bhikṣus were all listening to Mañjuśrī words by the supernatural power of the Buddha. Then, Śāriputra said:

Excellent! Excellent! This great person's deeds, by whose Dharma teaching there is nothing that is not impressive, are not separated from the Dharma-body. Any wise person who hears it cannot help but give rise to bodhicitta.

The Buddha said:

Just as he has said: that there is nothing to learn is the bodhisattva's learning. His words are equal and without discrimination; as they plant, they shall reap truth. This bodhisattva [Mañjuśrī] learned wisdom, and thus what he speaks is wisdom.

If you learn in this way, you will give rise to this wisdom.

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<sup>1</sup> This non-seeing applies equally to action and attainment. Thus they are equal.

Prabhāvyyūha Bodhisattva said to the Buddha:

What is learned by a śrāvaka and what is learned by a bodhisattva?

The Buddha said:

Learning with attachment to limits is the śrāvaka's learning and learning without limits and without obstructions is the bodhisattva's learning. Thus, as the śrāvaka's learning is small, their wisdom is small; as the bodhisattva's learning is extensive, their knowledge is without limit, and their speech is without any obstruction.

Prabhāvyyūha Bodhisattva said to the Buddha:

O Tathāgata, please grant it that Mañjuśrī comes to this assembly. Why? So that all in this assembly will not lose out in hearing [his teaching]. Why? Because Mañjuśrī's teachings are incredibly profound and subtle. Those who wish to hear them can each hear them as they wish.

The Buddha immediately granted that Mañjuśrī, together with the twenty-five great people and all the devaputras, come to the Buddha's location. They went before him, paid homage, and sat.

Prabhāvyyūha Bodhisattva then asked Mañjuśrī:

The Buddha is here, so why did you teach the Dharma elsewhere?

Mañjuśrī said:

I did not come here because the Buddha is profoundly honoured, and perhaps if I spoke, my meaning might not fit with the Tathāgata's meaning, so I stayed to one side.

That bodhisattva again asked:

What kind of Dharma do you think might be [in line with the meaning intended by] the Tathāgata?

Mañjuśrī replied:

That is known by the Buddha.

[That bodhisattva] said:

Even so, I think your meanings are in harmony.

Mañjuśrī again said:

If you ask me what I know, I will explain a little.

[That bodhisattva] said:

What will you say?

Mañjuśrī said:

The Dharma I explain must not be different from what has already been explained. As the Tathāgata [explains], its original essence<sup>1</sup> must be ineffable, and thus the Dharma that abides<sup>2</sup> is the Dharma that is taught.

For the sake of conforming to the Tathāgata's intended meaning, it must not be interrupted; it must not be cut off; it must be neither a condition nor that which is conditioned; it must neither increase nor decrease. Explaining in this way would not contradict the Tathāgata's intended meaning.

One must also neither abandon the body, nor must one cause others to have abandonment, nor must one abandon the Dharma, nor must one abandon saṃsāra, nor must one abandon nirvāṇa. Explaining in this way would not contradict the Tathāgata's intended meaning.

The Buddha said:

Excellent! Excellent! What you have said, Mañjuśrī, conforms to the Tathāgata's intended meaning. Why? Because it neither surpasses nor falls short. You abide on the middle path without conceptualisation. Why? Because Mañjuśrī abided in samādhi when giving his explanation, and he did not see an increase nor a decrease in dharmas.

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<sup>1</sup> Skt. bhūtakoti. This actually means the end of the path, i.e. nirvāṇa, but here is just used to refer to an essential nature or absolute truth.

<sup>2</sup> Skt. dharmasthiti. This indicates a kind of thusness, tathatā.

Thus, what Mañjuśrī has explained does not contradict the Tathāgata's intended meaning.

While this was being said, eight hundred devaputras all attained patience regarding the non-origination of dharmas.



### 3. Raising the Bowl

**A**t that time, there were two hundred devaputras in the assembly. They had all previously aroused bodhicitta, but it was not yet firm. They all descended to the level of their desires, and each thought:

The Buddha-Dharma is without limit, so it is difficult to attain buddhahood. We should stop abiding in the training of the bodhisattva. It would be better to achieve arhatship or pratyekabuddhahood and enter nirvāṇa.

The Buddha was fully aware that these people could fulfil the bodhisattva path and wished to change their minds. The Buddha immediately conjured up the appearance of a kulapati<sup>1</sup> holding an alms bowl filled with a hundred flavours. [The kulapati] went to the Buddha, paid homage before him, and while holding the bowl up to the Buddha, said:

Please take pity upon me and accept this offering.

The Buddha took the bowl. Mañjuśrī immediately arose from his seat, clasped his hands together, and said to the Buddha:

Even though you may eat, please remember the favour.

Śāriputra then thought:

Formerly, what kind of favour did the Buddha receive that Mañjuśrī says: please remember?

He then asked the Buddha:

What former meritorious deed did Mañjuśrī perform for the Buddha in the past?

The Buddha said:

Please be patient. I will now remove your doubts.

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<sup>1</sup> In Chinese, 迦羅越 is a transliteration of the Sanskrit kulapati and means the head of a household, i.e. a layperson.

He then lowered the alms bowl to the ground, and the alms bowl directly sunk through the earth and went past many buddha-fields. It went down<sup>1</sup> past buddha-fields equal to the grains of sand in seventy-two Ganges Rivers. It went to a world called Avabhāsa, whose buddha's name was Raśmirāja; he currently abides there. That bowl stopped and was floating in the air in that buddha-field without anyone supporting it. That buddha's attendants, seeing that bowl which passed all buddha-fields, all asked that buddha:

From where did this bowl come?

[Raśmirāja] Buddha said to them all:

In the zenith, there is a world called Sahā. Its buddha's name is Śākyamuni. The bowl came from there. Why? Because he created this as an impressive manifestation to save and protect the minds of fallen bodhisattvas.

[Śākyamuni] Buddha said to Śāriputra:

Go and find the alms bowl and come back.

Śāriputra immediately received the supernormal power of the Buddha, and by the power of his own wisdom, he entered ten thousand samādhis and passed ten thousand buddha-lands, but could neither see nor obtain it. He emerged from samādhi and reported to the Buddha:

I searched, but I could neither see nor obtain it.

The Buddha said:

Wait for a while.

The Buddha then said to Mahāmaudgalyāyana:

Please seek out the alms bowl.

He then received the supernormal power of the Buddha, and thinking it was his own supernormal power, he entered eight thousand samādhis,

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<sup>1</sup> T15.626.393a.



passed eight thousand buddha-lands, and neither saw it nor obtained it. He then emerged from samādhi and reported to the Buddha:

I searched but could neither see nor obtain it.

The Buddha said to Subhūti:

Go and find the alms bowl and come back.

[Subhūti] then entered twelve thousand samādhis, went past twelve thousand buddha-lands, but could neither see it nor obtain it. He then emerged from samādhi and reported to the Buddha:

I searched but could neither see it nor obtain it.

Then each of the five hundred honoured bhikṣus, by their supernormal powers, sought the alms bowl, but none could see it nor obtain it.

Subhūti then arose from his seat and said to Maitreya Bodhisattva:

You are exceedingly learned and are limited to only one more birth. You are the future buddha of this world. We searched for the alms bowl but could not obtain it. Please go and find it!

Maitreya then replied:

As you have explained, I am truly limited to only one more life. But I have not yet reached the samādhi practised by Mañjuśrī, and I do not even know its name. So, listen very well to what I shall say. When I have become a Buddha, Mañjuśrī will still work for the sake of beings as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges, but just like someone who does not know how to walk or raise and lower my feet, I genuinely have not become equal to him. So, there is no one like Mañjuśrī who can go and seek it.

Then Subhūti said to the Buddha:

O Tathāgata! Please have Mañjuśrī go and find the alms bowl.

The Buddha then said to Mañjuśrī:

Go and find the alms bowl and come back.

Mañjuśrī then, having heard his instructions in a quiet voice, thought to himself that he will, without getting up from his seat, without being separated from the Buddha, without abandoning the assembly, from his present location directly procure the alms bowl. He immediately entered a samādhi wherein there was no place he could not enter, and while still in the assembly, he pointed his hand towards the earth, and his hand went down. As it went past buddha-fields, he touched his hand to the feet of all their buddhas [as an honourable salutation]. In the nadir direction, there was nowhere on the way where one could not hear:

We inquire after Śākyamuni Buddha's health!

And from each hair on his hand, a hundred thousand koṭis of rays of light were released, and from each ray of light, there were a hundred thousand koṭis of lotus flowers, and on each lotus flower were bodhisattvas. Those bodhisattvas were each honouring Śākyamuni Buddha. Each world that it passed all shook in six ways, and those worlds all were adorned with various kinds of hanging banners and so on.

In those places it passed, everyone saw that Mañjuśrī's right hand touched every buddhas' foot [in honourable salutation], and every one of them inquiring after the health of Śākyamuni Buddha. It went past more worlds equal to the sands in seventy-two Ganges Rivers, reaching the world Avabhāsa. It went right to the location of Raśmirāja Buddha and paid obeisance to him, and he, in turn, inquired after the health of Śākyamuni Buddha. There, from each pore on his hand, a hundred thousand koṭis of rays of light were released, and a hundred thousand koṭis of lotus flowers; seated on each lotus flower was a bodhisattva, all of them praising Śākyamuni Buddha's merits. The light of those bodhisattvas and the light of the Buddha were dissimilar so that each could see one another.

To the side of Raśmirāja Buddha was an attendant who was an honoured Bodhisattva called Prabhāśrī. He asked that Buddha:

Whose hand is this, of such beautiful form? From the light of this hand spring forth lotuses, sitting on which bodhisattvas sing praises of their Buddha's merits.

That Buddha said:

In the zenith direction, past lands equal to the grains of sand in seventy-two Ganges Rivers, there is a land called Sahā, where there is a

Buddha called Śākyamuni Buddha, who now stays and abides. There is a bodhisattva [from that land] called Mañjuśrī, who is armed with the inconceivable armour, and whose wisdom does not lead him to enter nirvāṇa. While he still abides before that buddha, he cast down his hand to this place, for the alms bowl [floating] where I am seated.

Those bodhisattvas all then considered the matter, and they all said to that buddha:

Just as a thirsty person wishes to obtain water, we wish to be able to see Śākyamuni Buddha and Mañjuśrī's world.

That buddha then released a light from the mark between his two eyebrows, which penetrated past lands equal to the sands of seventy-two Ganges Rivers, and it reached that Sahā world and illuminated it. Everyone who saw that light each attained calm tranquillity just like a Cakravartin Rāja,<sup>1</sup> and all the bhikṣus attained the state of a srotāpanna.<sup>2</sup> All those who had mastered the Three Vehicles and all those meditating on the eight liberations<sup>3</sup> at that time attained arhatship. Those bodhisattvas whose bodies that light touched all attained the Sunlight Samādhi. So, all the bodhisattvas in the buddha-land of Raśmirāja Buddha saw the śrāvakas and bodhisattvas [in the Sahā World]. In seeing this land, they wept and immediately said:

Just as if pure lapis lazuli or a maṇi gem were to fall into mud, it is truly pitiable. Why is that land like that? The bodhisattvas of the Sahā World are truly pitiable for arising there.

Raśmirāja Buddha then said to Prabhāśrī Bodhisattva:

Not knowing them well, you should not say such things. Why? The merits of practising meditation for a thousand kalpas in this buddha-land do not equal even half those of a human practising loving-kindness from sunrise to mealtime in that land. Even if those bodhisattvas have karma stored from prior existences, they can practice the

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<sup>1</sup> A wheel-turning monarch.

<sup>2</sup> A stream-winner.

<sup>3</sup> Skt. aṣṭavimokṣa. Eight stages of meditation leading to meditative cessation (nirodhasamāpatti).

Dharma and exhaust their crimes in the time it takes to snap the fingers.

The bodhisattvas of this world all asked the Buddha:

From where does this light come that makes our bodies all calmly tranquil?

The Buddha replied:

In the nadir direction, past buddha-lands equal in number to the grains of sand in seventy-two Ganges Rivers, there is a world called Avabhāsa. Who is its Buddha? His name is Raśmirāja, and this light was released from the mark between his eyebrows.

The bodhisattvas all said to the Buddha:

We wish to hear and desire to see the world Avabhāsa and its tathāgata, Raśmirāja.

Immediately, Śākyamuni released a light from the sole of his foot. It illuminated the nadir-direction past worlds equal to the grains of sand in seventy-two Ganges Rivers, and it illuminated the Avabhāsa world and Raśmirāja Buddha. That land's bodhisattvas saw that light enter their bodies, and they all attained the Meru Light Samādhi. The bodhisattvas of this land all saw that buddha's land. It was just like someone standing on this earth, looking downwards and seeing the sun, moon, stars, and constellations. They looked to the nadir-direction and, in just that manner, saw Raśmirāja's Avabhāsa world.

Mañjuśrī's right hand was then holding the bowl, and it was escorted by countless koṭis of nayutas of hundreds of thousands of bodhisattvas. It passed all the buddha-lands, and the lotus flowers springing from the light emerging from each hair gradually began to diminish. Then, with his hand holding that alms bowl, in this world, Mañjuśrī immediately arose from his seat, made obeisance to the Buddha, offered the alms bowl to the Buddha, and the Buddha accepted it. Then the bodhisattvas who had come from below all made obeisance, and each one thanked Śākyamuni Buddha with the name of their own buddha. The Tathāgata then invited them all to sit on seats, and they all, as instructed, sat down.

The Buddha then said to Śāriputra:

Since you earlier asked about Mañjuśrī,<sup>1</sup> I will now tell you. In the past, countless, incalculable, asaṃkhyas of kalpas ago, there was a Buddha called Aparājitadhvaḥ, whose world was called Anindya. At that time, there were eighty-four thousand śrāvakas and twelve thousand bodhisattvas in his assembly, and that Buddha taught the Dharmas of the Three Vehicles.

At that time, when the Tathāgata Aparājitadhvaḥ became a Buddha in the five unwholesome realms, there was a bhikṣu called Jñānarāja who was knowledgeable about the Dharma of the sūtras. He took up his bowl, entered the city of Vistārika for the sake<sup>2</sup> of collecting alms, and obtained various kinds of food of the hundred flavours. At that time, there was a noble child called Vimalabāhu who was being held by his wet nurse, who was standing just outside the city gates. That boy saw that bhikṣu who was learned in the sūtras from afar. He jumped out of his wet nurse's embrace and went directly to seek some food from him, and the bhikṣu immediately offered him some honeyed rice cakes. After that boy ate, he found the taste to be sweet, and followed the bhikṣu. Not thinking of his wet nurse, he directly went to where Aparājitadhvaḥ Tathāgata was, made obeisance, and sat to one side. Jñānarāja Bhikṣu gave some food from his alms bowl to the child, saying:

Offer this to the Buddha.

The boy then offered it to the Tathāgata. The Buddha accepted the food from that alms bowl, which was full. Even though he continued to eat from the alms bowl, it remained the same as before. So, similarly, the eighty-four thousand bhikṣus and twelve-thousand bodhisattvas were all made full by that food. That bowl, being held by the child, continued to be full as before. By his supernormal power, the Buddha thus caused that boy to give rise to joy, and he also acquired a full share of faith along with his acquisition of the original merits of the deed.

The boy went before the Buddha and admired him. Holding the bowl still, he offered it up to him. When he was satisfied, that which was in the bowl did not decrease. All the bhikṣus and bodhisattvas continued to eat there until it was known that the honourable Buddha

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<sup>1</sup> "What former meritorious deed did Mañjuśrī perform for the Buddha in the past?"

<sup>2</sup> T15.626.394a.

truly would neither make those offerings exhaust nor increase. The merit of offering to the Buddha would just accumulate and increase.

With the food in that one alms bowl, that boy made offerings for seven days, and the food did not decrease but remained as before. That Buddha Aparājitadhvaṃja instructed that boy in going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha of bhikṣus, and conferred on him the five precepts, so he could repent transgressions and help him cultivate merit. He then aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

That boy's mother and father searched for their child, not finding him anywhere. They finally came to the Tathāgata's residence, went before him, paid obeisance, and stayed there. When that child saw his mother and father, he went before them, paid homage to them, and then uttered these words:

I have now embarked upon practicing bodhisattva conduct, and I gave rise to an intention to work for the benefit of all beings. Why? Because of the Buddha, who is so difficult to encounter.

See the Buddha's characteristics and marks! His wisdom, which reaches everywhere, is the way to liberation. I now wish to become a śramaṇa. Why? Because I have encountered the Tathāgata, who is so difficult to encounter.

His mother and father said:

Excellent! Excellent! We rejoice in our child's wishes. We also desire all which our good child seeks. We, too, arouse that aspiration and shall follow you for the sake of the Dharma. We shall now give up our home and follow you as śramaṇas.

After that boy spoke, his mother, father, and five hundred people aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. They all went to the residence of Aparājitadhvaṃja Buddha, and all became śramaṇas.

Concerning your doubts, that Jñānarāja Bhikṣu was Mañjuśrī, and the boy, who was the honourable man Vimalabāhu's son was none other than me. Mañjuśrī gave me that food so that I would be brought to arouse the aspiration by the merits. So, he was originally the favourable teacher of my aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbuddha.

Now, you should know that Mañjuśrī compelled the Buddha to first give rise to the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, and the inconceivable wisdom. How? By having that aspiration as their root.

With a body just like mine, there are uncountable asaṃkhyas of worlds with buddhas who all were compelled to aspire by Mañjuśrī, and they are all called Śākyamuni Buddha. Just like those buddhas, there are also such buddhas called Tiṣya Buddha, Śikhin Buddha, and Vipaśyin Buddha.

If I were to recount all those buddhas' names, I would not finish so recounting from one kalpa to the end of another. All those buddhas were compelled to aspire by Mañjuśrī. All those who currently turn the Wheel of the Dharma, who enter parinirvāṇa, who practice the bodhisattva path, who are in Tuṣita Heaven, who are in the wombs of their mothers, who are born, who leave home to seek Buddhahood, who sit beneath the bodhi tree, and who attain buddhahood, [were also so compelled to aspire and] are inexhaustible.

Mañjuśrī is the mother and father of bodhisattvas because he is their good friend.<sup>1</sup> Concerning your question regarding what conditions were provided for the Tathāgata: everything I have attained is due to having received the favour of Mañjuśrī.

Two hundred devaputras, at that time, thought to themselves:

If all the Dharma we are studying can be accomplished, we can do it. Why? Even Śākyamuni Buddha was compelled to aspire by Mañjuśrī, and then himself attained buddhahood, so why are we indolent?

Because of reflecting in this way, their minds became firm, and they all attained full faith in the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

There was no one who was not impressed by Mañjuśrī's manifestation with his hand whereby he retrieved the bowl. So, this is called the "original teaching." His hand passed countless people from this world to the worlds below, and all aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. All the Buddhas presently residing in the ten directions then made offerings of jewelled flower canopies, each covered a trichiliocosm. Those flower canopies each issued forth sound, which had the voice of Śākyamuni Buddha. All declared how they were impressed by Mañjuśrī.

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<sup>1</sup> Skt. kalyāṇamitra. I.e., their spiritual teacher.





## 4. Children

The Buddha said to Śāriputra:

If a man or woman wishes to enter nirvāṇa quickly, they should arouse the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Why? Because some people are afraid of saṃsāra, when they are not able to arouse the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, they wish to seek to attain arhatship through śrāvaka practices to attain parinirvāṇa quickly. I continue to see people who express [this wish] presently remaining within saṃsāra. However, there are bodhisattvas who, through diligence, have attained buddhahood. Why?

In an uncountable, incalculable, asaṃkhyā of kalpas ago, there was a buddha called Sarvottaraṇa,<sup>1</sup> whose lifespan was ten thousand years, and who had ten billion disciples. Among them was the honourable bhikṣu Ajita<sup>2</sup> who was endowed with profound wisdom. There was also the honourable bhikṣu Praṇidhānaprāpta,<sup>3</sup> who was endowed with great supernormal powers.

At one time, that tathāgata took up his robes and alms bowl and together with the bhikṣu saṅgha entered the city Śravanagara<sup>4</sup> for alms. The honourable bhikṣu endowed with wisdom was attending on that buddha's right side, and the honourable bhikṣu endowed with supernormal powers was attending on that buddha's left side, and there was a bhikṣu called Kaukṛtyajñāna<sup>5</sup> who was attending behind that buddha. Eight thousand bodhisattvas led the way in front, and among them were bhikṣus whose clothes were like those of devaputras, like those of devas, and like those of the four heavenly kings, so that all people would make the path clear for that tathāgata.

As that buddha passed through the city towards the market, there were three children there of noble families. They were still young, were dressed in extremely beautiful clothes, and were sitting together playing. One of the children saw that buddha coming from afar, together with the bhikṣus and the bodhisattvas' extremely great radi-

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<sup>1</sup> Reconstructed name: 一切度, "all transcending."

<sup>2</sup> Reconstructed name: 莫能勝, this is usually used as an epithet for Maitreya.

<sup>3</sup> Reconstructed name: 得大願, "obtained the vow."

<sup>4</sup> Reconstructed name: 聞國, "listening city."

<sup>5</sup> Reconstructed name: 悔智, "knowledge of repentance."

ance. That child told the other two children, pointing into the distance with his hand, indicating that tathāgata coming together with a light of which nothing was more remarkable. Those two boys said:

We see!

The first boy said:

Among all people, he is the most revered and unequalled. We should make offerings. Why? Because the merits will be incalculable.

The second boy replied:

We do not have any flowers or incense, with what shall we offer?

The first boy then took off a string of white pearls and held them in his hand, and said to the other two boys:

This is suitable for making offerings to the wise Buddha. If you see a Tathāgata, you must not have greed.

Then the other two boys followed and took off strings of white pearls that were around their heads and held them in their hands, and each said with joy:

Let us go to the Buddha. It will feel like<sup>1</sup> crossing a river. Why? Because his mind is pure and equanimous.

One boy asked the other two boys:

What will you seek with the merit you will gain?

One boy said:

I wish to become like the honourable bhikṣu on the right side of the Buddha.

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<sup>1</sup> T15.626.395a.

The other boy said:

I wish to become like the bhikṣu with supernormal powers on the left side.

Then the two boys, each having made these wishes, then asked the other boy:

What do you wish?

He replied:

I wish to become like the Buddha, with unequalled light, the gait of a lion, and always accompanied by a saṅgha.

When that boy said this, eight thousand devaputras in the sky said:

Excellent! Excellent! Both heaven and earth will receive your compassion if you do as you say.

Then the three boys together went before that buddha. That tathāgata then addressed his attendant Svāgata:

Do you see the three boys coming holding white pearls? The child who comes in the middle comes with diligence and a mind of joy, eliminating faults of a hundred past kalpas with each raising of his feet. For each lowering of his feet, he will later ascend to the position of a hundred cakravartin rājas.<sup>1</sup> Practising in this manner, he will also become an Indra and become equal to Brahmā. From the merits of one footstep, he will be able to encounter hundreds of future buddhas.

When he finished speaking, those three boys had arrived, went before that tathāgata, and made obeisance to him. Each one sprinkled their white pearls upon that buddha. The pearls scattered by the two boys who made śrāvaka aspirations landed upon that buddha's shoulders, but the white pearls scattered by the boy who aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi were suspended above that buddha's head and were floating in the air. Those pearls

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<sup>1</sup> Wheel-turning monarchs.

then transformed into a jewelled flower net which was perfect on four sides. That tathāgata was sitting within that net. Then that buddha smiled. Svāgata<sup>1</sup> then asked that buddha:

The Tathāgata smiled, which always has a meaning. I wish to hear you explain it!

That buddha said:

Do you see the two boys who aroused the śrāvaka aspirations? Why did they do that? They did not arouse bodhicitta because of their fear of saṃsāra. Why? Because they wished to enter parinirvāṇa quickly.

His attendant asked:

What about the other boy?

That buddha said:

The boy in the centre will later, himself, attain Buddhahood. The other two boys will become śrāvakas. One will be revered as endowed with profound wisdom, and the other will be so revered for his supernormal powers.

Śākyamuni Buddha then asked Śāriputra:

Do you know who the boy in the middle was?

Śāriputra said:

I do not.

[The Buddha said:]

That was me. Do you know who the boy on the right was?

Śāriputra said:

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<sup>1</sup> That Buddha's attendant, mentioned earlier.

I do not.

[The Buddha said:]

At that time, that boy was Śāriputra. The boy on the left was Mahāmaudgalyāyana.

Because you both were originally afraid of saṃsāra, you did not arouse bodhicitta and wished to enter parinirvāṇa quickly. Consider the one boy who aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. It is now I, who has, myself, attained Buddhahood. Thus you have not separated from the Dharma and me. Having become śrāvakas, you have attained liberation.

So, if you wish to enter parinirvāṇa quickly, you should arouse the aspiration to seek buddhahood just like me. I declare this as the direct way to attain unsurpassed omniscience. Why? Because the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi has no obstruction, it is honoured, it is inexhaustible; it is peerless, it is pleasing to the mind, and it surpasses all śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. One who wishes to practice this way will directly attain the mind of omniscience in just the same way.

When this section of this Mahāyāna sūtra was uttered, ten thousand people all aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. All the honoured bhikṣus—Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Ānanda, Sīvali,<sup>1</sup> Mahākāśyapa, Revata, Nanda, Upāli,<sup>2</sup> Pūrṇa,<sup>3</sup> honourable Subhūti, and so forth—all bowed their heads to the feet of the Buddha, and said in praise:

If a man or woman seeks the Path, they should give rise to the noble aspiration. Why? Because even if the Buddha explains the Dharma for them in a hundred thousand ways, they will regret becoming an arhat and not having been able to arouse bodhicitta.

But if they still have fault from committing the five heinous crimes in a prior existence, having been liberated from that fault, they can then arouse the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. But now, such people have no benefit. Why? Because they burned the

<sup>1</sup> Conjecture: 舍比, unclear, possibly Sīvali.

<sup>2</sup> Conjecture: 耶和致, T627 has 律毖利.

<sup>3</sup> After Pūrṇa comes 頭陀, which transliterates dhūta and does not seem to correspond to any disciple name known to me. T627 has 文陀尼子, which is Pūrṇa's full matronymic name, Mairāyanīputra.

seeds of buddhahood and are not a receptacle that can bear bodhi-citta. Why? Just like a dead person cannot benefit a living person, if we now attain liberation, we will not bring benefit to the devas and humans.

Just as beings with either two legs or four legs all rely on the earth for their lives, if someone arouses the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, all the devas and humans will benefit from their compassion.

## 5. No-Self

**T**hereupon, King Ajātaśatru came to the Buddha's residence on a four-horsed chariot, together with his retainers. He went before the Buddha, made obeisance, and sat. He then said to the Buddha:

What are the causes and conditions whereby all people commit faults?

The Buddha said to Ajātaśatru:

Due to abiding in "I" and "mine," one commits faults. Due to bodily desire and bodily existence, one is thus not able to be separated from faults.

King Ajātaśatru, again, asked:

What is the root of greed and attachment?

The Buddha said:

It is ignorance.

He again asked:

What is the root of ignorance?

The Buddha said:

Its root is that what comes about is different from one's thoughts.

He again asked:

Why are one's thoughts different?

The Buddha said:

That is to say that what comes about is different in its essence.

He again asked:

What does it mean to be different in its essence?

The Buddha said:

There is nothing in illusory transformations, therefore it differs.

He again asked:

Who makes transformations?

The Buddha said:

There is no maker, therefore there is transformation.

He again asked:

If nothing arises and nothing exists, how can there be calculation?

The Buddha said:

Nothing arises, and nothing exists, therefore nothing can be calculated.

He again asked:

Due to what causes and conditions do doubts arise?

The Buddha said:

They arise due to a lack of belief.

[He again asked:]

What does lack of belief mean?

The Buddha said:

If someone hears something explained but then doubts it, that is called lack of belief.

He again asked:



What is the path and what is faith?

The Buddha said:

Liberation from greed, anger, and ignorance is the path. What is faith? It is that even though one has not attained the origin of all dharmas, one's mind does not waver. That is regarded as faith.

King Ajātaśatru immediately said:

Excellent! Excellent! Just as the Tathāgata has said. If all people practice thus, is there anyone who would not have faith? [Lack of faith] is one's own doing. Now, I believed the words of a bad man<sup>1</sup> and ordered that my retainers kill my own father because of coveting the kingdom, because of coveting riches, because of coveting rule over the populace, and because of coveting honour.

Now, because I had my retainers harm my father, I cannot liberate myself from the fearful doubts<sup>2</sup> that wrack my body due to covetousness. Whether I am drinking, eating, or listening to music, whether I am in court and listening to the affairs of state, whether I

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., Devadatta.

<sup>2</sup> Doubt is a key term in the sūtra. While the presumable Sanskrit equivalent, *kaukṛtya*, more normally carries the meaning of regret or remorse over one's past bad deeds, the Chinese is clearly interpreting the term as doubt. That doubt is still, apparently, something that arises because of one's bad deeds, and are thus understood as difficulties of conscience. Since we are translating from Chinese, we are retaining the interpretation of "doubt," but the reader can bear in mind that this is understood as "doubts" regarding one's fate and difficulties of conscience.

This understanding of the term can be accepted based on its usage in the *Saddharma-piṇḍarīka*:

*bhikṣūṇāṃ kaukṛtyavinodanārthaṃ yathā bhagavannetāścatasraḥ paśado niṣkāṅkṣā nirvicikitsā bhaveyuḥ* (Vaidya ed., 51)

The meaning of the dispelling of *kaukṛtya* for bhikṣus, O Bhagavān, is that the four assemblies should be free from doubts (*niṣkāṅkṣā*) and free from excessive suspicion (*nirvicikitsā*).

Other examples of this interpretation can be found elsewhere. Alternative understandings, of regret and remorse, are more etymologically related: that regarding bad deeds. Edgerton suggests "difficulties of conscience." (Edgerton, 195)

am in the palace craving after the five pleasures,<sup>1</sup> whether I am alone or in a crowd, day and night, I cannot forget. Eating and drinking cannot stop it, I cannot go to sleep, and my face has lost its pleasant colour. My heart is constantly pounding with fear that I cannot part from going to niraya.<sup>2</sup>

If the blind rely on the Buddha, they will gain sight. If a drowning person takes refuge in the Buddha, they can be rescued. The Buddha causes those who are suffering from pain to obtain peace. The Buddha protects those who are trembling in fear. The Buddha can also provide precious jewels to the poor and wretched. He can point the way to those who have lost the path.

The Buddha uses great compassion and does not regard it as a burden—equally supporting all beings—to always endure pain and pleasure in not abandoning anyone. Now my body is trembling in fear. Please, O Buddha, grant me your supernormal protection and cause my fear to be pacified. I cannot protect myself, and I only wish to obtain safe passage. I have no one on whom to rely and only wish to take refuge.

I am just like a blind person and only wish to obtain vision. I am just like a falling person, wishing to obtain somewhere to stand. Now I must go to Avīci and other great nirayas, but I do not wish to go there.

Please, O Tathāgata, teach me now, due to my doubts, so that when I meet with death, I shall not have any doubts in my mind, and so that my grave crimes can become small and light.

The Buddha thought regarding King Ajātaśatru that what he said<sup>3</sup> was incredibly profound and subtle. He was like a sick person who could not be cured. Only a Buddha and Mañjuśrī could feel and respond [out of compassion] to him. Śāriputra then, through the Buddha's supernormal power, said to King Ajātaśatru:

If you wish to resolve your doubts, prepare a food offering at day-break and invite Mañjuśrī. If he comes to your palace to accept it, then your retinue will all immediately obtain merit, and that act of merit will set an example for all the people in Rājagṛha together.

<sup>1</sup> I.e., the pleasures of the five senses.

<sup>2</sup> Transliterated in Chinese: 泥犁, Skt. niraya, i.e. “hell” in general. To avoid the non-Buddhist connotations with “hell,” the term niraya is preferred.

<sup>3</sup> T15.626.396a.

Ajātaśatru then said to Mañjuśrī:

Please have great compassion and deign to come to my palace at day-break to accept an offering.

Then Mañjuśrī answered, saying:

Only what is sufficient can be regarded as an offering. The Buddha-Dharma does not use food and clothes.

Ajātaśatru asked:

Then what should I offer?

[Mañjuśrī] replied:

If you deeply enter into what is subtle and verify matters without defilement, and without attachment, and without doubts, and without difficulties, and without trembling, and without a single fear, then that would be sufficient for you to obtain sympathy.

Consider all dharmas, neither think that they exist nor think that they do not exist, that would be sufficient for you to obtain sympathy.

Neither think about past thoughts, nor think about future thoughts, nor think about present thoughts, that would be sufficient for you to obtain sympathy.

You should not think that all can be seen. By genuinely not doing these things, you can obtain sympathy.

King Ajātaśatru again said to Mañjuśrī:

What you have said does not differ at all from what is spoken in the Dharma [of the Buddha]. I will reflect upon this so that I can ask to receive sympathy.

Mañjuśrī again said:

Stop! The Path is not one wherein there is eating and drinking. If the king does not think that there is a self, or there is an “I,” or there is a soul, or there is a lifespan and personhood, then by thinking thus, he can obtain sympathy. If your mind is neither borne nor conditioned,

if you neither think of the four great elements or the five aggregates, if you neither rely on the six senses nor on the three realms, if you neither think of merits nor that there are no merits, neither the worldly nor the Path, neither fault nor non-fault, neither remainder nor non-remainder, neither liberation nor non-liberation, neither saṃsāra nor nirvāṇa, then by practicing this, you can obtain sympathy.

King Ajātaśatru again said to Mañjuśrī:

Having heard this Dharma teaching, I am even more joyous. Therefore, I wish to request that you please condition me to obtain calm tranquillity.

Mañjuśrī again said:

You yearn to be conditioned to obtain calm tranquillity; therefore, you will not be conditioned to have calm tranquillity. Why? Because the Dharma is unconditioned and does not have tranquillity. Thus, do not think this and do not be proud. Only when nothing is thought is there the condition for tranquillity. Only if there are no bad intentions are there no future calamities. If there are future calamities, then one is not tranquil. Only when there is no difference from beginning to end is there tranquillity.

Ajātaśatru again asked:

Please teach me the Dharma of no difference so that I may obtain tranquillity.

Mañjuśrī said:

In emptiness, there is no doer, no doing, no conceptualisation, no desire, nothing done, and no one who did. If one thinks I have done something, or I have not done something, then there is difference. But not seeking that which is unconditioned, one must act with body, speech, and mind. Why? Because then there will be conceptualisations that arise and disappear. Therefore, even though all dharmas are conditioned, one should not conceive of anything being conditioned.

Ajātaśatru again asked:

What is meant by arising and disappearing and yet not arising and disappearing?

[Mañjuśrī] said:

Do not think that the past is gone, do not think that the future is coming, and do not think that now the present is impermanent. Regarding all dharmas, do not think that they have increased or decreased, or that these things have arisen and disappeared or not arisen and disappeared.

Ajātaśatru again asked:

How can one who is not yet liberated be in harmony with the Path?

Mañjuśrī said:

Do you think the light of the sun is in harmony with darkness?

Ajātaśatru said:

It is not in harmony. Why? Because when the sun rises, all darkness ceases.

Mañjuśrī said:

O King! Do you know where the darkness has gone?

[Ajātaśatru] replied:

It has gone, but I do not know where it has gone.

Mañjuśrī said:

Just as when the sun rises, we do not know where the darkness has gone, thus when knowledge of the Path comes, we also do not know where one who was not yet liberated has gone.

One who has harmonised with the Path is the same as one who is not yet liberated, and one who is not yet liberated is the same as one

who has harmonised with the Path. Why? Because they are both empty. Therefore, one who is not yet liberated is the same as one who has harmonised with the Path. All dharmas are equal, therefore you should know that one who is not yet liberated is one who practices on the Path. Why? Because even if one searches for liberation, one will not find a location, therefore we say “Path.” Thus, if one seeks for the location of non-liberation, one can also not see it: that is also the Path.

King Ajātaśatru again asked:

Why do you say that non-liberation is the same as the Path?

Mañjuśrī said:

Because non-liberation is the Path inasmuch as a non-practitioner is practicing the Path.<sup>1</sup>

Ajātaśatru again asked:

What should a practitioner of the Path learn?

[Mañjuśrī] answered, saying:

They should learn all dharmas.

Ajātaśatru again asked:

How can there be a place where one can learn all dharmas?

Mañjuśrī said

One who practices learning the Path will never reach it.<sup>2</sup>

Ajātaśatru again asked:

Will one who practices that way be able to attain nirvāṇa?

Mañjuśrī said:

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., one who does not conceive of oneself as practicing.

<sup>2</sup> I.e., who conceptualises that one is learning the Path.

If a dharma came from nirvāṇa, would you say, “I came from nirvāṇa?”

Ajātaśatru immediately said:

Nothing goes and nothing comes.

Mañjuśrī said to Ajātaśatru:

In learning the Path, one knows there is no place, therefore it is the Path.

Ajātaśatru again asked:

How can I abide on the Path and learn it?

[Mañjuśrī] replied:

Learn the Path by abiding nowhere.

Ajātaśatru again asked:

Should not someone who learns the Path practice in the pure precepts, samādhi, and abiding in wisdom?

[Mañjuśrī] again said:

The practitioner of the Path does not rely on precepts, does not seek samādhi, and is not proud of abiding in wisdom.

If one relies on precepts, seeks samādhi, and is proud of their wisdom, do they thereby have a place to abide?

Ajātaśatru said:

They do not.

Mañjuśrī said:

Therefore, there is no abiding on the Path.

Ajātaśatru again asked:

What should a man or woman do if they want to enter the Path?

Mañjuśrī said:

If one wants to learn the Path, they should not view dharmas as permanent or impermanent. They should not view dharmas as liberated or not liberated, they should also not view dharmas as bliss or suffering. They should also not view dharmas as being oneself or any person, and they should not view dharmas as abiding in saṃsāra or attaining nirvāṇa. Thus one learning the Path enters it.

Ajātaśatru immediately said:

Excellent! Excellent! Just as Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva has said. Please accept my request now. Why? Because of my doubts. I have come to reflect personally that all dharmas are without self, without “I,” without soul, without life, without lifespan, but I still have doubts.

Mañjuśrī said:

There is nothing that can be done because there is nothing that is neither liberated nor not liberated. Even if I say I have liberation, because there is no liberation nor non-liberation, there is thus nothing liberated. Why? Because all dharmas are liberated.

The Buddha said to Mañjuśrī:

Accept King Ajātaśatru’s request since it will benefit countless people.

Mañjuśrī immediately said:

I accept the Tathāgata’s request. Why? Because I do not contradict his teachings.

Ajātaśatru immediately rejoiced, directly got up from his seat, and paid obeisance to the Buddha, the bhikṣus, and Mañjuśrī, and then departed. As Ajātaśatru was going, he stopped and asked Sāriputra:

How many companions does Mañjuśrī have?



Śāriputra said:

Five hundred. They will all accept alms in your palace.

He then directly continued on the road to return to the city. He ordered the great palace staff to prepare an offering of a hundred flavours. On the same day, he ordered that in the palace where the offering will take place, hanging banners be installed, along with curtains and floral canopies; flowers were to be spread on the floor, all issuing forth a fine scent. They set up five hundred high seats, whose cloth was inlaid with beautiful pearls, ornaments, and various colours. The interior of that palace was fully adorned, and the scent of flowers pervaded everywhere. He then ordered all the city streets, markets, and villages to be swept and sprinkled with flowers and incense. Banners were to be hung on the side<sup>1</sup> of all the roads everywhere. Flowers were hung on either side of every door in the villages. He made it known to all the populace that they should all go to the path to make offerings at daybreak.

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<sup>1</sup> TT15.626.397a.



## 6. Dhāraṇī

In the first watch of the night, Mañjuśrī thought to himself:

He will not be significantly moved if I accept his request with just a few companions. Let me go to another land and invite many bodhisattvas to accompany me in accepting his request so that they will all listen well when I teach the Dharma.

When he thought this, and as long as it takes to stretch out one's arm, he instantly disappeared from this world and reached a land past eighty-two thousand buddha-lands in the east, called Nityakīrti.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha's name there was Śuddhamanaśīrṣa,<sup>2</sup> and he presently teaches there together with many bodhisattvas. There were no other paths in that world [than the Buddha-Dharma], and the Dharma Wheel there was always irreversible.<sup>3</sup> All the trees in that land were made of jewels; their leaves and flowers were indeed of countless colours. Whenever the wind shakes any of those trees, one only hears the sound of the Buddha, only hears the sound of the Dharma, and only hears the sound of the irreversible<sup>4</sup> Saṅgha. Because those there always hear the sound of the Triple Gem, that land is called Śabdavigāḍha.<sup>5</sup>

Mañjuśrī, having arrived there, paid obeisance to that buddha, and said to that tathāgata:

I came here with a request: that you send these bodhisattvas to the Sahā World so that they may receive the offerings of Ajātaśatru.

That Buddha immediately said:

Let the practitioners who wish to go, go directly.

### End of Fascicle 1

<sup>6</sup>Immediately, twenty-two thousand bodhisattvas together uttered:

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<sup>1</sup> Reconstruction: Ch. 常名聞.

<sup>2</sup> Reconstruction: Ch. 惟淨首

<sup>3</sup> Transliterated in Chinese: 阿惟越致.Skt.: avaiartika.

<sup>4</sup> Transliterated in Chinese, as above.

<sup>5</sup> Reconstruction: 沙陀惟瞿吒. Sound flowing copiously.

<sup>6</sup> T15.626.397a.

We wish to go together with Mañjuśrī!

Thereupon, many bodhisattvas went together with Mañjuśrī and instantly arrived in the Sahā World and sat down. They were in Mañjuśrī’s room, which can accommodate such a number of bodhisattvas due to his supernormal power. After they all sat down, Mañjuśrī taught the Dharma, and his Dharma teaching was called “Dhāraṇī.” Mañjuśrī said to the bodhisattvas:

Do you know the Dharma teaching called “Dhāraṇī?”<sup>1</sup> Since it expresses understanding of all dharmas, there is no expectation in such a state of mind, and that which is done is beyond differentiation. When one has sufficient time to contemplate, one’s knowledge is the same as wisdom. When one fully knows all the fundamentals of the Dharma, one will speak in accordance with the truth. With oneself thus protected, one will not descend but will continue to ascend [on the Path], coming to a complete understanding of all practices in accord with the Dharma.

Dhāraṇī, then, is the root of the Path. It is not cutting off the root of the Buddha; it is bearing the root of the Dharma; it is supporting the root of the Saṅgha. Thus, there will be no danger in any dharmas. Then, whatever people ask, one will be able to reply knowledgeably, and whatever sentient beings one sees, one will not reject them. Why? Because one will have nothing to fear.

If you wish to teach the devas, teach according to the wishes of the devas, causing each one to attain understanding. Similarly, with nāgas, yakṣas, asuras, garuḍas, kiṃnaras, mahoragas, humans and non-humans, all the way up to Indra and Brahmā and all the way down to all the insects, animals, birds, and beasts, so that each one will know the meaning of the Dharma, and according to their wishes, they will all be taught and caused to attain that which is suited to them.

Having understood fully that there are those with merit and without merit, one should exhaustively know everyone’s level of practice. One’s mind will then be like the earth [in bearing all equally], and

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<sup>1</sup> Dhāraṇī, while commonly understood as referring to long mantra-like incantations, also simply means “bearing.” This is a teaching of “bearing” the Dharma, hence it has the following qualities enumerated here.

the eight worldly affairs will not shake one.<sup>1</sup> According to whatever merits they have generated, without straying from the Path, one should teach and enlighten people so that, according with their preferences, one can cause all to receive compassion.

Having upheld the precepts, one causes all to abide in them, and there will be no place that one's wisdom will not reach. All will respect one, and one will not thereby suffer under a burden but instead have a mind that does not change.

The Dharma that you know should be taught from its essence. Having received teachings, one should always use that Dharma to give without wearying and teach the Dharma impartially so that it can be understood. Moreover, do not sever your wholesome roots as a bodhisattva. Why? Because by diligently cultivating them, one trains one's faculties.

Having cultivated giving without wearying, one will cultivate omniscience. One must also not be weary of the precepts. Why? Because they are maintained out of respect and reverence for all. One must also not be weary with patience because, by it, one can directly attain the Buddha's body. By not wearying with diligence, one accumulates all merits. By not wearing with dhyāna, one has no desires. One should not weary with wisdom. Why? Because then there will be nothing that one does not know. Having received the blessing of the Dharma, living with self-reliance, one will be completely carefree. For these reasons, this teaching is called "Dhāraṇī."

Dhāraṇī is the bearing of all dharmas. Why? It is empty, without perception, wishless, desireless, without attachments, and with nothing to be seen. Therefore, it bears non-arising and non-creation.

Thus, the Dharma of bearing neither comes nor goes, neither abides nor ceases, neither increases nor decreases, nothing is held, and nothing is released. Thus, in liberation, there is no conceptualization of liberation; there is nowhere to abide and no abiding. There is also no self, no "I," no soul, and no person. There is also nothing to be grasped and nothing to be released; there is nothing that is true and nothing that is false, there is nothing heard, and also nothing seen. Just like space, there is nothing to be praised, nothing to be touched, and nothing to be known. Because it bears all dharmas like this, it is called "Dhāraṇī."

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<sup>1</sup> Also known as the eight worldly dharmas or the eight winds. Skt. aṣṭalokadharmāḥ. These are (1) gain and (2) loss, (3) defamation and (4) eulogy, (5) praise and (6) blame, (7) pain and (8) joy.

Dhāraṇī is bearing all dharmas as illusions. They are like a dream, like a mirage, like foam in water, like bubbles, like a manifestation. Bearing all dharmas in this way is called “Dhāraṇī.”

Dhāraṇī is bearing all dharmas as impermanent. If one observes them, they have no self and are quiescent. In all dharmas, there is no origin, and all dharmas are thus without contradiction; they have no disappearance and no period of abiding. Bearing all dharmas in this way is called “Dhāraṇī.”

Just as there is nothing the earth does not bear, but it does not regard it as a burden, the bodhisattva, by attaining this dhāraṇī, is the reliance for all beings. Having practised of an asaṃkhyā of kalpas, and having accumulated merit, he can combine them and arouse omniscience, and there is nothing his mind does not bear; he neither releases anything nor regards it as a burden. Why? Because just like the earth, all beings can rely on and respect him. The bodhisattva who has attained this dhāraṇī confers benefit on all, just like the earth acts as a condition for the arising of trees and all beings. The bodhisattva who has attained this dhāraṇī gives rise to the merits of all, just like the earth neither moves nor shakes, it does not get pleased and does not get irritated. Just like the earth receives all rains and does not get exhausted by it, the bodhisattva who has attained this dhāraṇī receives the Dharma inquiries of all buddhas, bodhisattvas, śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas without getting exhausted, and explains the Dharma to them all without wearying.

Just like the earth provides an opportune moment for all seeds to come to fruition, the bodhisattva who has attained this dhāraṇī does not lose the opportunity to allow the fruits of Dharma practice's merits to come to fruition. Thus, they are endowed with all the Dharma at the right time when they are seated beneath the Bodhi Tree and are not separated from omniscience. The bodhisattva who has attained this dhāraṇī has the will of a brave general who never fails to subdue an enemy with his army. Thus, the bodhisattva who has attained this dhāraṇī, when seated beneath the Bodhi-tree, subdues the armies of Māra; therefore, it is called “Dhāraṇī.”

All dharmas, moreover, are not borne by this dhāraṇī. Why? Because there is permanent and impermanent, there is the non-blissful and the non-suffering, there is the self and no-self: it does not have a self, it does not have permanence, and so forth, so all dharmas are not borne by this dhāraṇī. Why? Because there is no discrimination. Just as the earth does not bear space, all dharmas are not borne by this dhāraṇī. Just as space does not bear anything, all dharmas are

also not borne by this dhāraṇī. Just as water does not bear all impurities, all dharmas are also not borne by this dhāraṇī. <sup>1</sup>Those are things that have no basis; therefore this dhāraṇī does not bear them.

This dhāraṇī is inexhaustible, boundless, incalculable, and there is nowhere it does not enter. Since there is nowhere, it does not enter; therefore, it is like space and this dhāraṇī is equal to emptiness.

When the teaching “Dhāraṇī” was explained, five hundred bodhisattvas attained the Dhāraṇī Dharma.

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<sup>1</sup> T15.626.398a.





## 7. The Three Piṭakas

**T**hen, in the second watch of the night, Mañjuśrī taught on the Bodhisattva Piṭaka:

There is no Dharma teaching that does not come forth from this [Bodhisattva Piṭaka]. Whether it is a Dharma teaching on merit, or lack of merit, whether on the worldly or on the Path, whether on faults or lack of faults, whether with defilements remaining or without defilements remaining, whether on liberation or non-liberation, all are included in this [Bodhisattva] Piṭaka. Why? Because there is nothing that all Dharma teachings cannot obtain. Just as in a trichiliocosm, ten billion lands, ten billion suns and moons, ten billion Mount Sumerus, and ten billion great oceans are all included in that trichiliocosm. Likewise, both extraordinary Dharma teachings and teachings not on the Path are included in [the Bodhisattva Piṭaka]. Also, the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha Dharma teachings, as well as the bodhisattva's Dharma teachings, all are included in [the Bodhisattva Piṭaka]. Why? Because it contains all practices: whether those of the śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, or those of the bodhisattva. Just like a tree, if it has firmly planted roots, its trunk, stalks, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits will all grow well. There is nothing that the Bodhisattva Piṭaka does not bear, it fully bears all merits, and its Dharma teachings fully bear the mind of omniscience.

Moreover, the Bodhisattva Piṭaka is like a vessel called “Incalculable Reception.”<sup>1</sup> Just as the ocean can receive many different waters and bears many treasures, and there are no nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, kiṃnaras, or mahoragas that it does not embrace; it becomes suitable residence for them all.

Also, that Piṭaka, in this manner, through incalculable causes and conditions, has received countless precepts, and contains samādhi, and having made wisdom visible, there is no case in which what that vessel received cannot be seen. Therefore, it is called the Bodhisattva Piṭaka.

It is just like the ocean, beings who live there do not want to drink other water. Why? Because they are all conditioned by the ocean [and so only drink sea water]. Therefore, those who practice this Piṭaka are all conditioned by its Dharma and do not practice on other

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., it can receive endlessly.

paths. Why? Because they have all tasted the flavour of the Dharma of omniscience, therefore it is called the Bodhisattva Piṭaka.

There are three Piṭakas. What are the three? The Śrāvaka Piṭaka, the Pratyekabuddha Piṭaka, and the Bodhisattva Piṭaka.

The Śrāvaka Piṭaka is that which is heard from another. Why? Because it is based on sounds that were heard. The Pratyekabuddha Piṭaka is based on the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination and causing the exhaustion of causes and conditions. The Bodhisattva Piṭaka contains countless Dharma teachings and is about naturally attaining buddhahood. If you consider the three piṭakas from the perspective of the śrāvaka or pratyekabuddha, the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do not possess them. When the Dharma is taught, the three piṭakas are each obtained according to what is practised [by the listener]. Why? Because when the Dharma is taught, śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas each obtain their practice; hence there are three Piṭakas.<sup>1</sup> But when one obtains the Dharma of the Bodhisattva, one directly has all three piṭakas. Why? Because śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are not separate from the Buddha-Dharma.<sup>2</sup>

There are also three piṭaka trainings. What are the three? They are the śrāvaka training, the pratyekabuddha training, and the bodhisattva training.

The śrāvaka training is used to obtain liberation, and it is realisation for oneself alone. The pratyekabuddha training is considered a middling training, but it does not have great compassion. The bodhisattva's Dharma is incalculable because it allows one to attain the Dharma-body and has great compassion.

The śrāvaka does not train in the pratyekabuddha's Dharma and does not comprehend the pratyekabuddha's Dharma. The pratyekabuddha does not train in the śrāvaka's Dharma and does not comprehend the bodhisattva's Dharma. The bodhisattva knows that which is trained in by the śrāvaka but does not delight in it, they do not long for it and do not seek liberation in it. They also know that which is trained in by the pratyekabuddha but do not delight in it, and they also do not seek liberation in it. But, knowing that which is trained in by the bodhisattva, they like to train in it and fully rejoice

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., rather than one. This is to say, those who are practicing as a śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, or bodhisattva, each obtain the Dharma that is suited to them.

<sup>2</sup> I.e., the Dharma of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are included within the Dharma by which one attains buddhahood.

in it, and based on its causes, they fully attain liberation in it. In teaching the śrāvakas, they instruct them in and teach them the practices of the śrāvakas; the same is so with the pratyekabuddhas. This is bodhisattva practise, and this is called the Bodhisattva Piṭaka.

Just as a glass<sup>1</sup> receiving lapis lazuli will take on the colour of that lapis lazuli, likewise for the bodhisattva, in entering the [Bodhisattva] Piṭaka, all dharmas that are seen are not separate from the Buddha. For the bodhisattva who attains that piṭaka, all dharmas that are seen are Buddha-dharmas. So, there is no case where the bodhisattva does not train in all dharmas. Why? Because what they can see is not different from any of the dharmas that the Buddha has realised.

The Bodhisattva Piṭaka has incalculable letters and is taught in incalculable places. Why? Because it neither increases nor decreases. It illuminates all darkness with the radiance of inconceivable light, its practitioners are intelligent and unlimited, and there is no case in which they do not attain omniscience. This training is the training by which all who enter the Piṭaka directly attain great knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Great knowledge is the supreme wisdom, and one who has attained it guides those who have not yet attained it to attain it.

At that time, Mañjuśrī finished teaching on the piṭakas to all the bodhisattvas.

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<sup>1</sup> The Chinese simply reads “vessel” (器), but the analogy would only make sense if the vessel is transparent.

<sup>2</sup> Transliteration of mahājñāna (摩訶若那), easily confused with mahāyāna. This is synonymous with the prajñāpāramitā.



## 8. Non-Retrogression

**T**hen, in the third watch of the night, he taught on the diamond practice of the non-retrogressing<sup>1</sup> Dharma Wheel. When he was teaching it, all those listening also understood that the Dharma Wheel does not retrogress. [He taught thus:]

The non-retrogressing Dharma Wheel does not have any expectations, and its mind is without any differences. Why? Because it does not think of good or bad. It studies the Dharma with an even mind and sees all Buddha-lands as equal. It does not attach to the attractive and ugly and is identical and not different from all buddhas.

There is no place that the Dharma Wheel does not enter. Why? Because it is the indestructible Dharma-Body. Therefore, it is called the non-retrogressing Dharma Wheel. There is nowhere that can cut off the Dharma Wheel. Why? Because it is the mind of non-duality. That wheel can be seen thus. Why? Because one can attain buddhahood by the Dharma Wheel. This is what is termed the non-retrogressing Dharma Wheel.

One who follows the non-retrogressing Dharma Wheel is liberated from all conceptuality. Those who have faith in it will all attain buddhahood by not employing duality. One is thus said to be liberated by a unity and thus is caused to be liberated as a Tathāgata. One who is liberated does not conceptualise non-conceptualisation; therefore, no Dharmas are conceptualised as having liberation. Why? Because liberation is non-dual. Why? Because it has no body, speech, or mind. Why? Because liberation is not said to be following body, speech, or mind. Such a practitioner is regarded as a follower of oneself and not others. This is what is termed the non-retrogressing Dharma Wheel.

That wheel is not a wheel with form. Why? Its form is naturalness. Feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness also are not in that wheel. Why? Its consciousness is naturalness. No dharmas are that wheel. Why? Because the Dharma-Body is not a wheel of dharmas. This is what is termed the non-retrogressing Dharma Wheel.

That wheel does not reach any limit. Why? It does not have any interruption. That wheel does not have attachment; it also does not have detachment. Why? Because that wheel does not have any gate. Why? Because it is the mind of non-duality. In truth, it is also a non-wheel. Why? Because it is inexpressible. That wheel also is not able

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<sup>1</sup> Transliteration of avaiartika (阿惟越致).

to be understood. Why? Because it does not have any sound, what form would one be able to see in it? Therefore, in truth, it is empty and can bring about liberation. It cannot be obtained. It is just like there is no place that empty space does not enter. Why is there no place that it does not enter? Because its foundation is liberation.

That wheel can also move and can also walk. What is meant by move, and what is meant by walk? It is like how a diamond can drill a hole in all kinds of jewels. How can [the Dharma Wheel] drill a hole in dharmas? It is like how space drills a hole anywhere; therefore, [the Dharma Wheel] is called a non-conceptual dharma and is like a diamond. Why? Because it pierces all things one seeks. One without any desire thus causes those who have not yet been liberated to attain liberation just like a diamond-drill. One with the Dharma-Body is like the diamond; all confused beings are the empty [dharmas]. The Tathāgata is thus the diamond which drills all non-existent [dharmas]. Therefore, those who are liberated like a diamond surpass those who are not liberated; having attained nirvāṇa they naturally see all dharmas.

When Mañjuśrī gave this teaching on the non-retrogressing Dharma Wheel to all the bodhisattvas, the bodhisattvas<sup>1</sup> all attained the Prabha-kusuma<sup>2</sup> Samādhi. Having attained that samādhi, each hair on those bodhisattvas' bodies released one hundred million and one hundred thousand rays of light. One could see hundred million and one hundred thousand buddhas sitting on each ray of light. Each of those buddhas reached other lands and taught those seeking the Buddha-Dharma.

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<sup>1</sup> T15.626.399a.

<sup>2</sup> Light-Flower. T626 gives 日光明花 and T627 gives 光明華 as a translation. As a transliteration, T262 gives 羅毘拘速. The conjecture of Prabhakusuma is reasonable based on the possible Middle Chinese pronunciation: rabhakusu.

## 9. Transformations

The next morning, King Ajātaśatru dispatched an envoy to Mañjuśrī's residence, [with the message]:

The time has come. Please have compassion and deign to come to me to accept my offerings.

At that time, Mahākāśyapa, together with five hundred bhikṣus, wished to enter the city for alms. They proceeded halfway down the path and thought it was too early and turned back. While returning with the bhikṣus they met Mañjuśrī, they went outside the gates at his practice residence. Mañjuśrī then asked Mahākāśyapa:

Where are you going so early now?

He replied:

We were on the way to collect alms.

Mañjuśrī responded to Mahākāśyapa, saying:

I now would like to receive alms with you.

Mahākāśyapa replied:

Your offer is sufficient. Why? We have come only for the Dharma, not to eat.

Mañjuśrī said to Mahākāśyapa together with all the bhikṣus:

Both shall be so because you will hear the Dharma and receive food. Why? Because now we shall not be lacking in Dharma, and we shall also not be lacking in food. Together both shall be made one.

Mahākāśyapa replied:

Even if we must tolerate not eating, we should listen well to the Dharma. Why? Because each profound Dharma teaching in your assembly should be heard.

Mahākāśyapa then asked:

Are you going to receive food today together with all the mahāsattvas?

Mañjuśrī said:

Now at our dining hall, the people therein are not separated from saṃsāra, they do not enter nirvāṇa, they do not go beyond desires, and they do not realise the Path. In our dining hall, their food neither increases nor decreases and regarding all dharmas there is neither any attachment nor any detachment.

Mahākāśyapa said:

That which is offered must be a limitless offering.  
I consent to accept your invitation.

Mañjuśrī then thought to himself:

Now, as you enter the city, you should be impressed just as you would if it were the work of the Buddha.

When he thought in this way, immediately he attained the samādhi called “There are None who are Not Impressed.” Thereupon the Sahā World became flat like a mirror, and all the hills and mountains were invisible. There was nowhere that the light [of that samādhi] did not reach, and those suffering in niraya had their pain relieved. In this world, all the people at that time had no greed, anger, or ignorance; their minds were free from jealousy, free from pride, and free from conceptualisation. Thereupon, all people had a mind of compassion and mutually saw one another as being like their own fathers or mothers.

Then, the earth quaked in six ways, and all the devaputras of the desire realm, and the devaputras of the form realm, with hundreds of kinds of music, made offerings to Mañjuśrī by raining down divine flowers upon him.

Mañjuśrī reached the city gates, having left his residence, and they were entirely clean and adorned. Many kinds of intersecting flowers were tied at the crossroads, and brave soldiers were on both sides of the road. All well-known types of flowers were spread throughout the land, and many kinds of cut gems were inlaid in curtains that canopied the road. The width of



the road was six vyāmas<sup>1</sup> and three vitastis,<sup>2</sup> and both sides had railings, between which were trees made by jewelled manifestation, which were neatly arranged in rows on both sides of the road. The trees were tied with jewelled ropes which intersected and connected to each tree. Each tree had a scent that reached a yojana<sup>3</sup> in all four directions.

Between each tree, ponds manifested. The circumferences of the ponds were adorned retaining walls inlaid with all kinds of jewels and decorated with lapis lazuli. The sands of the ponds were all gold. Their waters had eight flavours, and many flowers arose from them. Cranes, geese, mandarin duck hens and drakes played within the ponds.

The base of each tree had a pedestal made of all kinds of jewels, and upon each pedestal of jewels was a bejewelled incense burner which was burning all types of excellent incense. There were also a hundred women on each pedestal, each of whom was holding a lotus flower and wonderful sandalwood incense.

When Mañjuśrī was in that samādhi, there was nothing which his supernatural power did not transform. Mañjuśrī arose from his seat, put on his monastic robe, and said to Mahākāśyapa:

Go ahead of me. I will follow. Why? Because of respect for seniority. You became a śrāmaṇa before the Buddha. Therefore you should go first.

Mahākāśyapa immediately replied, saying:

The Dharma has no front or back, it does not calculate age in years, and thus there can be respect for a youth.

Mañjuśrī said:

What must one do to be regarded as a respected elder?

Mahākāśyapa answered:

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<sup>1</sup> A vyāma is about ten feet or three metres.

<sup>2</sup> A vitasti is about nine inches or 23 cm. The road therefore is about 61.5 feet wide, or 18.75 metres.

<sup>3</sup> Approximately nine miles or 14.5 km.

Wisdom is respected. Profound and abundant learning is respected. One who has practised is respected. One who knows everyone's actions is respected.

Mañjuśrī also has wisdom. He is endowed with learning; he has practised and has awoken to the actions of all people. Therefore, he should be respected. Moreover, regarding years, you are also older, so you should go ahead, and I gladly wish to go behind.

I now wish to use a simile; I only wish that you listen to it well. If a lion has a cub, its courage, power, and energy is not like that of the adult lion, but it exudes the scent it got from the adult lion, and of all the birds and beasts, when they scent that smell, none is not afraid. Suppose there is a great elephant with six molars, who is sixty years of age. If someone were to tie that elephant up with a taut rope, and that lion cub were to come near that taut rope, the great elephant, upon smelling it, will immediately run into the mountains [breaking the rope].

Even if a bodhisattva who has aroused bodhicitta but has not yet fully attained power is not dwelling with śrāvakas or pratyekabuddhas, there is no māra which would not be startled by them, with their hips trembling out of fear. When the lion cub sees the adult lion, it calls out; it stays in place and is not fearful or afraid. Why? Because it becomes delighted. Now, in just this manner, when a bodhisattva sees the buddha, they stay in place; they are not fearful or afraid. Why? Because they become delighted. I, myself, am also like that.

Śāriputra said:

If you consider this matter of respect, a śrāvaka or pratyekabuddha will treat one who has aroused bodhicitta with respect. Why? Because everything one seeks can be found after arousing bodhicitta.

Mahākāśyapa said:

For this reason, Mañjuśrī should be respected, so he should go ahead, and we should go behind.

Mañjuśrī then directly went ahead, and all bodhisattvas went behind him, followed by all the śrāvakas. As they went on the path, the devas rained down flowers, the earth quaked in six ways, and all the devas played

music and delighted. At that time, no one was not illuminated by light, and they soon reached Rājagṛha.

They had not yet reached the city gates, when King Ajātaśatru heard that Mañjuśrī had arrived at dawn, followed by twenty-two thousand five hundred bodhisattvas, and five hundred bhikṣus. He thought to himself:

I have only prepared for five hundred people. What shall I offer?  
Where shall they sit?

At that time, the deva king called Praśāntacitta, together with an honoured yakṣa called Suvarṇavāṇāgra<sup>1</sup> following, appeared before King Ajātaśatru and said:

Do not be afraid, to not be frightened, do not feel troubled.

He replied:

Why should I not feel troubled?

They answered:

Mañjuśrī has cultivated skilful means<sup>2</sup> and unlimited wisdom. He has come to be fully equipped with the radiance of merit. By the merit of his supernormal power, if you offer one meal to Mañjuśrī's assembly, or if you offer food to all people in the trichiliocosm, they will all be satisfied, and that food will not diminish. So, why should you have anxiety about whether there is enough for these twenty-two thousand five hundred people? Therefore, do not feel troubled. Why? Now, there is enough for all. Mañjuśrī's merits are extremely and profoundly honoured and inexhaustible.

Thereupon, King Ajātaśatru rejoiced; his mind was elated. He made preparations and immediately, with music playing and holding up a flower and incense, himself went out to meet Mañjuśrī's assembly and invite them into his palace.

At that time, there was a bodhisattva called Samantālocana.<sup>3</sup> Mañjuśrī ordered Samantālocana to adorn and purify the palace so that everyone

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<sup>1</sup> Conj. 金鉞, "Golden Arrowhead."

<sup>2</sup> Chinese has a transliteration of upāyakauśalya (漚和拘舍羅).

<sup>3</sup> T15.626.400a.

could enter. When that bodhisattva received that order, he immediately looked in the four directions and prepared it for everyone.

There was also a bodhisattva called Dharmodgata, who was immediately ordered to prepare seats in that assembly. He instantly made three thousand seats flick off his finger when he received that order. They were covered with cloths of assorted colours, had marvellous pearls, were beautifully embroidered with silk, and had many different colours and patterns. Mañjuśrī then had all the bodhisattvas and śrāvakas take their seats.

King Ajātaśatru went before Mañjuśrī and addressed him:

The offerings are extremely few. If you wait a moment, I should now wish to prepare more.

He replied:

What you have prepared is sufficient; do not worry about it any longer.

The Deva King Vaiśravaṇa,<sup>1</sup> together with his family and retainers, all came to visit. They all paid homage from the left and right. Śakra, Lord of the Devas, together with his principal queen called Śrīyā and with deva maidens. They were all carrying offerings of excellent incense, which they scattered upon Mañjuśrī and the assembly of bodhisattvas and bhikṣus. But all the bodhisattvas were unmoved by the deva maidens, by the music, or by the flowers and incense.

Brahmā then transformed himself into a young brāhmaṇa who was extremely handsome and charming. Holding a fan, he went to the right side of Mañjuśrī and fanned him. All the devaputras of Brahmā's heaven were attending upon the saṅgha of bodhisattvas and bhikṣus, standing to their right and fanning them.

The Nāga King Anavatapta was above the assembly but could not be seen. He was holding threads of pearls and was suspending them above the assembly. Water trickled down from the pearls, which was the water of the eight tastes; they could obtain that water if anyone wanted it. Mañjuśrī and the saṅgha of all the bodhisattvas and bhikṣus each had pearls suspended before them from which water emerged, and each was provided with what they needed.

Ajātaśatru again thought:

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<sup>1</sup> 天王惟沙門.

No one who came to this assembly is holding an alms bowl. From what receptacle will they now eat?

Mañjuśrī, knowing the king's thoughts, said:

These bodhisattvas do not carry alms bowls. Wherever they eat, they think of an alms bowl, and an alms bowl directly rises from the earth and is placed in their hands.

Ajātaśatru again asked Mañjuśrī:

From what land do all these bodhisattvas come? What is the name of their buddha?

Mañjuśrī replied:

Their world is called Nityakīrti, and their Buddha is called Śuddhamanaśīrṣa. They came from there to accept your offerings. Why? Because they wished to hear the Dharma and to hear about your doubts.

Those bodhisattvas then thought of an alms bowl, and immediately alms bowls appeared. They flew in a row to Lake Anavatapta, and they all filled with water to rinse themselves. Then, nāga maidens lifted the twenty-three thousand alms bowls and came, they then offered them to the bodhisattvas of the Nityakīrti World, and each one took them into their hands.

Ajātaśatru then stood to attend upon Mañjuśrī, and Mañjuśrī addressed Ajātaśatru:

You may distribute the food.

Then, having received that order, he distributed the food everywhere, but the food did not decrease and remained as before.

Ajātaśatru again thought:

This food has been distributed everywhere, but it has not decreased and is just as before!

Mañjuśrī then said:

Has it run out now?

[The King] replied:

It has not run out!

[Mañjuśrī said]:

It has not run out because it is like your doubts.

When the bodhisattvas finished eating, they threw the bowls up into the air, and they floated into a row, and they neither fell nor swayed.

Ajātaśatru again asked:

How do these bowls stay still? What is their support?

Mañjuśrī replied:

These bowls stay still, just like your doubts stay still.

Ajātaśatru again said:

But these bowls have nowhere to abide. They are not on the ground; they are unsupported; they do not have anywhere to rest!

Mañjuśrī again said:

Likewise, your doubts have nowhere to abide. All dharmas are just like these bowls; they have nowhere to abide and nowhere to fall.

# 10. Resolution of Doubt

**W**hen the meal had finished, Ajātaśatru took a seat before Mañjuśrī and addressed him, saying:

I wish for you to resolve my doubts.

Mañjuśrī replied:

Even as many buddhas as the grains of sand in the Ganges River could not explain away your doubts.

Ajātaśatru was suddenly terrified, and he started to fall from his chair just like a great tree tumbling to the earth. Mahākāśyapa then said to Ajātaśatru:

Do not be fearful, do not be afraid! Why? Mañjuśrī has attained extremely profound skilful means, and he can explain away doubts if you slowly question him.

Ajātaśatru then asked:

Why did you say that even as many buddhas as the grains of sand in the Ganges River could not explain away my doubts?

Mañjuśrī said:

Would you say that you could see the Buddha if you had the right causes and conditions in your mind?

The King answered:

Not using my mind because my mind does not give rise to him.

[Mañjuśrī asked]:

Can it see the Buddha?

The King said:

No.

[Mañjuśrī asked]:

If you use your mind, can you see the Buddha?

The King said:

No.

[Mañjuśrī again asked]:

If you are attached to both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, will you become a Buddha?

The King said:

No.

[Mañjuśrī again asked]:

And can an existing dharma be said to follow from another dharma?

The King said:

No.

[Mañjuśrī again asked]:

And can such a dharma be said to cut off another?

The King said:

No.

[Mañjuśrī said]:



Therefore I said, even as many buddhas as the grains of sand in the Ganges River could not explain away your doubts. Why? If someone says I can defile space, would they be able to?

The King said:

No.

[Mañjuśrī asked]:

And if someone said I could remove impurities from space, could they be removed?

The King said:

They could not.

Mañjuśrī said:

Thus the buddhas know that all dharmas are like space. Why? Because all dharmas are originally liberated, they also do not see any dharmas as originally liberated. Therefore I said, O King, even as many buddhas as the grains of sand in the Ganges River could not explain away your doubts.

Tathāgatas do not obtain either internal or external thoughts, so they have nothing to do with doubts. Why? Because all dharmas are fundamentally liberated. So again, what doubts can there be?

That which is liberated in its fundamentals cannot again attach to that which is empty. Because they fundamentally do not exist, all dharmas are said to be “liberated.”<sup>1</sup> They also do not have self-nature; they are uncreated and cannot be seen. All dharmas have existence and non-existence; as all dharmas are invisible, nothing can be seen; as all dharmas are ineffable, their conceptualisation cannot be known. That all dharmas are inconceivable, they transcend self-nature and thus cross to the other shore.

Thus, “all dharmas” means the elimination of birth and death. All dharmas have no support and have no desire. Since all dharmas have

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<sup>1</sup> This term as it is used regarding dharmas (phenomena) thus means separated, isolated, and neither arising nor ceasing.

no desire, the term expresses freedom from birth and death. Equanimous, all dharmas are without attachment, which expresses their purity. That all dharmas are pure expresses how they are fundamentally pure both inside and outside. No dharmas have pairs, which expresses that they have no companions. That all dharmas have no companions expresses that they are one mind. That all dharmas are one mind expresses liberation.

All dharmas have no limit, which expresses that they cannot be cut off. That all dharmas are boundless expresses that they do not have transcendence. That all dharmas are invisible is their transcendence, this expresses how they work differently. That all dharmas are said to work differently is wisdom, this expresses how peace cannot be attained. That all dharmas are impermeant expresses that there is no discrimination. That all dharmas are entirely peaceful expresses their surpassing purity. That all dharmas are fully decided expresses that there is nothing to seek. That dharmas have no self-existence expresses that a body cannot be obtained. That all dharmas are without doubt expresses that they are internally quiescent. The extraordinariness of dharmas expresses their non-truth. That all dharmas are quiescent expresses their stability and tranquillity. That all dharmas are without self expresses that there is no mine. That all dharmas are without remainder expresses liberation. That all dharmas are above the non-retrogressing assembly expresses that they have no thought. That all dharmas are complete faith expresses that there is no attachment to non-existence. That all dharmas are of one taste expresses liberation. That all dharmas are calm and tranquil expresses that they are inconceivable. That all dharmas are inconceivable expresses that they are undeteriorated. Since all dharmas are entirely empty, they transcend all desire. That all dharmas have no desire expresses the three worlds. That all dharmas have eliminated the three worlds expresses non-attachment to the past, the future, or the present. That all dharmas are the same as nirvāṇa expresses that they give rise to what has not yet arisen.

Mañjuśrī then said to Ajātaśatru:

Nothing has arisen. As nothing has arisen, can it be purified?

The King said:

<sup>1</sup>No.

Mañjuśrī said:

The Buddha knows that all dharmas are the same as nirvāṇa, so doubts cannot be eliminated. Why? He observes all dharmas. Observing all dharmas, there is nothing to cling to and nothing to abandon. He also does not abide among any dharmas. Not abiding, all dharmas are thus peaceful. Being peaceful, he is entirely free from doubts. Not having any doubts, there is also no doer. As there is no doer, there is no ownership of deeds. This is practising patience. Why? Since one does not think to oneself that “I am using any dharmas.” So one is patient regarding non-action, which means that what can be done is something that cannot be done. In all dharmas, there is no doing; there is no done; that nothing is done is therefore nirvāṇa. One who has faith in this can be regarded as equal to one who is liberated and as that which neither increases nor decreases.

Since all dharmas are fundamentally non-existent, there is no action, and doers are all fundamentally non-existent. That which is fundamentally non-existent is neither “this” nor not “this.” Therefore, that which fundamentally does not exist has no change. If one has faith that there is no change, then all doubts are entirely exhausted.

The eye is neither defiled nor pure. The eye’s self-nature is also, thus, fundamentally non-existent. Since its self-nature is fundamentally non-existent, it is termed “eye.” The ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are also neither defiled nor pure. The mind’s self-nature is also, thus, fundamentally non-existent.

Form likewise is fundamentally non-existent. Form’s self-nature is fundamentally non-existent. Feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness are also neither defiled nor pure. Consciousness’s self-existence is also fundamentally non-existent. Since its self-nature is fundamentally non-existent, it is termed “consciousness.”

All dharmas are neither defiled nor pure. The self-nature of all dharmas is also fundamentally non-existent. Since their self-nature is fundamentally non-existent, they are termed “all dharmas.”

The mind cannot see, nor can it possess form. Why? Like an illusion, it cannot be said to have an inside, and it cannot be said to have an outside. Why? It is fundamentally pure. Therefore it is not defiled. The foundation of the mind is non-feeling, non-increase, non-worry,

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<sup>1</sup> T15.262.401a.

non-sorrow, and non-anguish. One who hears this Dharma teaching also has no doubt. There is defilement because one's foundation differs [from one's mentation], and one thinks of difference. You should understand that fundamental difference and thinking of a difference are existent and cannot be made to exist. O King, you should not think like that. That would be just like someone saying that they can defile space with the dust from smoke. If they did that, could they cause space to be defiled?

The King said:

No.

Mañjuśrī said:

Thus, since the mind is fundamentally pure, how can one say that greed, anger, and delusion do not come into it? It is just like if five things appear in the air: ash, dust, smoke, mist, and clouds. All these can be seen, but they cannot be said to adhere and create impurity.

Similarly, even though a person may say "I performed a deed," or "I didn't perform a deed," and have greed, anger, and delusion, their mind is fundamentally without defilement and doubt. Why? Because even if the mind really performed a deed, it cannot influence a later mind-moment. If the later mind moment performed a deed, it does not possess the prior mind-moment. The mind in the present also does not have any support. The wise person is already aware that nothing is expected in what is done, not expecting anything; they are characterised by purity. All dharmas are undefiled, free from ignorance, unarisen, and without any support.

The place without any support is the Buddha's birthplace. The Buddha's birthplace is equivalent to all dharmas. Since all dharmas are thus the Buddha's birthplace, they are ineffable.

The wise one thus, not having separated from all dharmas, is liberated from all doubts by dharmas. Transcendence is by that which is not possessed, which are non-existent dharmas: thus doubt is the Dharma-Body. Therefore it is said that the Dharma-Body is non-entry into all dharmas, but it cannot be seen where the Dharma-Body enters. Why? All dharmas are the Dharma-Body. Just as all dharmas are equal, the Dharma-Body is also equal; thus, all dharmas are said to enter the Dharma-Body.

At that time, King Ajātaśatru rejoiced and obtained faith and patience, he delighted, and then said:

Excellent! Excellent! You have cleared my doubts.

Mañjuśrī replied:

There is still great doubt. The Dharma teaching that I just spoke is without any foundation. So, from where did you obtain doubts? What did you hear about which you had doubts?

King Ajātaśatru again said

I received great compassion and obtained a slight improvement. Now, when I die, I will not be sad, even if I do not attain nirvāṇa.

Mañjuśrī said:

Even though the King has hope, it is without any foundation. Why? Because all Dharmas are fundamentally in nirvāṇa, therefore they are non-arising.

King Ajātaśatru then immediately arose from his seat and grasped a splendid robe which was worth one hundred million, one hundred thousand [coins]. He draped it over Mañjuśrī's body. Immediately, Mañjuśrī's body disappeared, and that robe was suspended in space. He could only hear his voice but could not see his form. His voice then said:

Just as you see Mañjuśrī's body, the King sees his own doubts. Just as you cannot see doubts, thus you see all dharmas. What, then, is visible?

Then, another voice was heard from the sky, saying:

O King, offer the robe to one who can be seen.

There was a bodhisattva sitting next to Mañjuśrī's seat, called Varapṛaṇidhānaprāpta.<sup>1</sup> Ajātaśatru then wished to present him with the robe. That bodhisattva said:

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<sup>1</sup> Reconstruction from 得上願, Best-Vow-Attained.

Since I seek liberation and nirvāṇa, I cannot receive this. It can also not be received by ordinary people who have existence. Why? Because ordinary people are said to be concerned with worldly affairs, so they cannot receive it. I also cannot be received by those who seek pratyekabuddhahood, and it cannot be received by those who have the dharmas of a Tathāgata. If you neither approach those dharmas nor separate from those dharmas, then I can accept this. There should be no discrimination between giver and receiver. This is referred to as accepting that which surpasses liberation.

The King then wished to put the robe upon the bodhisattva, and suddenly, he was invisible, and the King did not know where he was. He could only hear his voice but could not see his form. His voice then said:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

Then, on the next bodhisattva's seat, there was a bodhisattva called Sarvamāyādarśana.<sup>1</sup> Ajātaśatru then offered that robe to him. That bodhisattva said:

If you have the view that others have a self, then I cannot receive this article. I can also neither accept this article from someone who has defilements nor from someone who attained liberation. I can also neither accept this article from someone who has a meditative mind nor from someone who has a confused mind. I can also neither accept this article from someone who is wise nor from someone who is not wise.

Ajātaśatru immediately threw the robe onto that bodhisattva's chair, but he was suddenly invisible. Again he heard his voice but could not see his form. He said:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

Then, on the next bodhisattva's seat, there was a bodhisattva called Māyādarśanarnirvāṇaprāpta.<sup>2</sup> Ajātaśatru held up the robe and went towards him:

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<sup>1</sup> Reconstruction from 見諸幻, All-Illusion-Seeing.

<sup>2</sup> Reconstruction from 不見幻至泥洹, Nirvāṇa-Obtained-by-Not-Seeing-Illusion

O elder venerable, you can accept this.

That bodhisattva said:

If you are attached to yourself or others, I cannot receive this article. One should not attach to the five aggregates, the four great elements, and the six sense-objects. One should also not cling to the Buddha, should not cling to the Dharma, and should not cling to the Saṅgha. Why? Because all dharmas are nothing to which to be attached.

King Ajātaśatru then immediately, while holding the robe, wished to put it on the bodhisattva, but he was suddenly invisible. He heard his voice but could not see his form. He said:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

Then, on the next seat, there was a bodhisattva called Siṃhamati.<sup>1</sup> Ajātaśatru then offered the robe to him. That bodhisattva said:

If you cannot observe, then I cannot receive this article. Now, you must arouse bodhicitta and restrain your mind like a bodhisattva. That mind is equal to all dharmas, and it is equal to all buddha-dharmas. It is nothing to be clung to and nothing to abandon. Concerning all dharmas, you should be free from doubt and suspicion. You should not think that any dharmas have a self, and you should not think that any dharmas are liberated. If you think in this way, then I can receive this article.

King Ajātaśatru immediately tried to put the robe on that bodhisattva, but he was suddenly invisible. He could only hear his voice, and he said:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

Then, on the next bodhisattva's seat, there was a bodhisattva called Samādhikujoma.<sup>2</sup> Ajātaśatru held the robe and wished to offer it. That bodhisattva said:

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<sup>1</sup> Reconstruction from Chinese transcription 私呵末.

<sup>2</sup> Reconstruction from 三昧拘遯摩, correspondence to 拘遯摩 is unclear.

If you have the samādhi of freedom from doubt, then I will accept this article. If you know in that samādhi that fundamentally there is no object of liberation, then I will accept this article.

King Ajātaśatru immediately tried to put the robe on that bodhisattva, but he was suddenly invisible. Only his voice could be heard, saying:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

Then, on the next seat, there was a bodhisattva called Vīryapramāṇa,<sup>1</sup> who said:

I accept this article only if you do not apprehend any sound, word, or speech.

King Ajātaśatru again held the robe and offered it. [That bodhisattva] was suddenly invisible. Only his voice could be heard, saying:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

On the next seat, there was a bodhisattva called Malavarjita.<sup>2</sup> Ajātaśatru wished to offer him the robe. That bodhisattva said:

You should neither think to yourself that “I, myself, am offering this,” nor think that “there is someone who takes it from me,” nor should you think that there is a benefit. If you do not think this way, I will receive this article.

The King again tried to put the robe on him, but he was suddenly invisible. Only his voice could be heard, saying:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

<sup>3</sup> On the next seat, there was a bodhisattva called Dharmavikurvaṇarāja.<sup>4</sup> Ajātaśatru again offered him the robe. That bodhisattva said:

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<sup>1</sup> Reconstruction from 量精進, Measure-of-Diligence.

<sup>2</sup> Reconstruction from 離所作垢, Separated from Stains.

<sup>3</sup> T15.262.402a.

<sup>4</sup> See Harrison, Paul and Jens-Uwe Hartmann, eds. “Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanāsūtra,” in *Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection 1: Buddhist Manuscripts*, Vol. 1, 167–217, edited by Jens Braarvig, Hermes Publishing: Oslo, 2000, 184.



If you can manifest as a śrāvaka and yet not undergo parinirvāṇa, if you can manifest as a pratyekabuddha and yet not undergo parinirvāṇa, and if you neither abide within saṃsāra nor attain nirvāṇa, then I will receive this article.

King Ajātaśatru immediately tried to put the robe on him. Suddenly he also became invisible, and only his voice was heard, saying:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

In this manner, one by one, he offered the robe, and immediately they were invisible, and their seats were also invisible. Again, a voice was heard, saying:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

Ajātaśatru then said to Mahākāśyapa:

I have heard from the Buddha that you are incredibly honoured. Now, I offer you this robe. Please accept it!

Then, Mahākāśyapa said:

I do not assent to receive it. Why? I cannot accept it because I have not yet extinguished greed, anger, and delusion. I have not eliminated ignorance, I have not eliminated unwholesome states, and I know that I have not eliminated suffering. I have not eliminated suffering, I also do not see its cause, I do not see its cessation, and I do not see its path. I also have not attained full realisation, and I do not have mindfulness of the Path. I do not see the Tathāgata, I have not heard the Dharma, and I do not belong to the bhikṣu saṅgha. I also have not given rise to wisdom, do not have the pure eye, and do not abide or act using knowledge. One who gives to me cannot give rise to great merit, and they cannot thereby attain noble liberation.

If you thus act and think in this way, like me, then I will accept it.

King Ajātaśatru immediately tried to put the robe on him, but he suddenly became invisible. Only his voice was heard, saying:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

He then offered the robe to all the bhikṣus, and one by one, they became invisible; all five hundred of them became invisible. Only their voices were heard, saying:

Offer the robe to one who can be seen.

King Ajātaśatru then came to think to himself:

The bodhisattvas and bhikṣu saṅgha are all gone. To whom can I give the robe?

He then turned to his palace's own highest queen, and likewise, that queen became invisible. Immediately, King Ajātaśatru directly attained samādhi and could not see any forms: he could not see the women, he could not see the men, he could not see his sons, he could not see his daughters, he could not see the walls, he could not see the trees, he could not see any buildings, he could not see the city. His only remaining thought was that he had a body; then, all knowledge of forms ceased. Thereupon he heard a voice:

Just as you cannot see anything, thus you should see your own doubt. Just as you see your own doubt, you should see that all dharmas are similar. Having seen in that which sees that there is nothing seen, you should see that no dharmas are seen—this is seeing dharmas. Thus, you should offer it to one who can be seen.

Understanding that he could not see anything, the King immediately took the robe and wished to put it on himself, but he could not see his own body. His mind, thought, and consciousness were all without any conceptualisation. That [samādhi] was called “Liberation from Conceptualisation,” and he was liberated from his doubt. He immediately left that samādhi and saw that all the bodhisattvas, the bhikṣu saṅgha, all his retainers, and all that existed was as before. Ajātaśatru again addressed Mañjuśrī:

Just now, I could not see the entire assembly.

Mañjuśrī said:

Just where your doubt was, there was this assembly. Do you see the assembly?

Ajātaśatru replied:

I see it.

[Mañjuśrī asked:]

What do you see?

[Ajātaśatru said:]

Just as I saw my doubts, thus I saw the assembly.

Mañjuśrī again asked:

Then you did see the assembly?

Ajātaśatru replied:

I did see it.

[Mañjuśrī asked:]

What was there?

[Ajātaśatru said:]

Just as I saw my doubts, thus I saw the assembly.<sup>1</sup>

Mañjuśrī again asked:

How did you see your doubts?

[Ajātaśatru said:]

Just as I could not see the assembly earlier, I also could neither my doubts internally nor externally.

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<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this repetition is not entirely clear, but it has been represented here in the translation.

Mañjuśrī said:

Did you hear that the Buddha said that those who commit heinous crimes would enter a great niraya?

The King said:

I heard that.

Mañjuśrī again said:

O King, do you yourself know if you will enter niraya?

Ajātaśatru asked in turn:

Did the Buddha awaken to any dharma which goes to a deva realm or to niraya, or to a calm tranquillity by which one can attain nirvāṇa?

Mañjuśrī replied:

He did not.

The King said:

I know that all dharmas are entirely empty. Why? Because niraya is empty, and the tranquil deva realms are empty. All dharmas are indestructible. Therefore, they all enter the Dharma-Body. The Dharma-Body is neither in a deva realm, nor in a human realm, nor in a niraya, animal, or preta realm. One who commits the heinous crimes is also not separate from the Dharma-Body, and the body of one who has committed the heinous crimes is entirely within the Dharma-Body. The foundation of all crimes is the foundation of all dharmas. As the past and future neither go nor come, all dharmas neither come nor go. Having understood this, I will neither enter niraya, nor will I reach the deva realms, nor will I reach nirvāṇa.

Mañjuśrī again asked:

The Buddha has said that there are crimes. So, why are you now saying that there are none?

The King replied:

I do not contradict what the Buddha has said.

[Mañjuśrī asked]:

How?

The King said:

The Buddha has said that there is no self. The truth is that there is no self, so there is no person, and there is no one who has committed a crime, and there is no one who experiences a crime.

Mañjuśrī again asked:

O King, have you been liberated from your doubts?

He replied:

Since they were fundamentally liberated, they are liberated.

Mañjuśrī asked:

Have your doubts been entirely eliminated?

The King said:

They have been eliminated in the distant past.

Mañjuśrī again asked:

Why does the assembly consider the King to have committed a crime and not to have been liberated from his crimes?

The King said:

Since I maintain the good Dharma, I know that there is no crime. Just like a bodhisattva who has already attained patience, if they fully maintain it amidst evils, that bodhisattva will give rise to good wishes.

Jñānaketurāja<sup>1</sup> said to Ajātaśatru:

If all crimes are pure, how is that patience attained?

The King replied:

Since all dharmas are entirely pure and are undefiled, that dharma [of patience] also cannot be defiled. Why? There is not the slightest defilement on the Path. A person who enters the Path with great crimes neither departs from saṃsāra nor realises nirvāṇa. Why? Because the Path can neither be passed beyond nor approached.

After speaking in this way, King Ajātaśatru immediately attained faith and patience. Then, thirty-two people before Mañjuśrī all aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, and five hundred retainers all attained the path of the srotāpanna.

Then, the people of Rājagṛha were gathered around the palace gate, wishing to see Mañjuśrī teach the Dharma. Mañjuśrī then pressed the ground with his big toe and the palace walls and ground all turned into crystal, and everyone outside could see all the bodhisattvas and the bhikṣu saṅgha within the palace, just like someone looking at their own form in a mirror. Everyone was watching as all was perfectly clear, and everyone listened to Mañjuśrī teach the Dharma.

Eighty-four thousand people there all attained the path of the srotāpanna, and another five hundred people all aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

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<sup>1</sup> Reconstruction from 那羈頭梁耶.

# 11. The Original Purity of the Mind

**M**añjuśrī thus taught the Dharma to the king and the palace retainers and all the people and caused each to abide in calm tranquillity.

He then directly arose from his seat, and together with the bodhisattvas and the bhikṣu saṅgha, went out through the palace gates.<sup>1</sup> King Ajātaśatru, together with his retainers, followed him.

When they went outside the city gates, they saw a man under a tree who was shouting:

I killed my mother!

That man was imminently able to attain liberation. So, Mañjuśrī conjured up another man with his mother and father. Those parents said:

This is the right way; we should go in this direction.

The son said:

That is not the right way!

In this way, he quarrelled with his mother and father two or three times. He became angry and quickly killed his parents. The man who previously was crying that he had killed his mother saw that man who had killed his parents and immediately went to his side to speak with that illusory man who had killed his parents, who confessed to him:

I, myself, have committed an act that is contrary to the Dharma. Out of enmity, I killed my parents.

The real man thought to himself:

I only killed my mother. This man killed both his parents: that crime is heavier. My retribution will be lighter than that which this son will receive.

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<sup>1</sup> T15.262.403a.

The conjured man, in turn, said to the real man:

It would be best for me to visit the Buddha. The Buddha is a refuge for those who have no refuge; he protects those who have no protector. As the Buddha speaks, I shall accept his teachings and shall not act contrary to them.

That conjured man directly went on his way, and the real man went right after him, thinking:

If that man can receive the Dharma, I can do likewise. Even so, I would rather not be him.

Together they went weeping and arrived before the Buddha. They paid homage, and while standing, they directly confessed:

I have acted contrary to the Dharma and have recklessly killed my parents.

The Buddha said:

Excellent! Excellent! You sons have spoken with perfect sincerity and without lying. Why? Because you do not conceal your wrongdoings but confess them before the Tathāgata precisely as they are.

Do not be afraid, do not be frightened, and follow what I say.

The conjured man said:

I will do just as the Buddha has instructed, only have compassion and protect me.

The Buddha said:

Reflect and observe your own mental dharmas. Do you among your thoughts<sup>1</sup> in the past, future, or present which thought killed your parents?

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<sup>1</sup> The reader not familiar with Chinese or Sanskrit should bear in mind that citta (चित्त) corresponds both to what we refer to in English as “thought” and “mind.” In this sense,



Past thoughts have already ceased and are exhausted, their location cannot be found, and their abiding cannot be found.

Future thoughts are ineffable. Why? Because they are unarisen and not yet existent, they do not exist, their conceptualisation does not exist, and they do not have any thought.

A present thought also has no place to abide; if a thought arises, it immediately ceases, and it does not accumulate; it cannot be known going somewhere or coming from somewhere, and cannot be known as blue, it cannot be known as red, white, yellow, or black.

Thought is invisible; it has no form, cannot be apprehended, cannot have accompaniment, and is like an illusion. It cannot be seen inside the body, it cannot be seen outside, and it cannot be seen in-between.

Thought can neither be seen by following desire nor can it be seen by following anger. Just as when you emerge from sleep, the dream that may be seen in your thoughts, regardless of what was done or not done, the thought itself has neither done nor attained anything. This is because thought is originally pure and is neither defiled nor purified.

Thought is neither here nor there, and just like an illusion, it cannot be held. Why? Because it has no companion.<sup>1</sup> Someone who knows this does not conceptualise and does not think there is a self or not-self; they also do not think there is that which is seen, they do not think there is that which abides, as all dharmas are quiescent and conditioned.

Someone who believes this will not again be born in the unfortunate realms. Why? Because nothing is defiled. Since mental dharmas do not arise, there is also no attachment.

That conjured man said:

Excellent! Excellent! The Tathāgata himself attained buddhahood with the Dharma-Body. I now understand what the Tathāgata has taught. I believe without a doubt that there is no doer and no receiver of crimes, neither one who arises nor one who ceases. Thus are all dharmas. I gladly wish to go forth as a śramaṇa.

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to make it simple, mind can be understood as thought. Thoughts that arise can be understood as mental dharmas/phenomena. It does not, however, correspond to what we would refer to as a “soul” or “self.”

<sup>1</sup> I.e., illusion has no “real” companion, it is thus solitary.

The Buddha said:

You may do so as you wish.

At that time, that conjured man transformed into a śramaṇa, and immediately addressed the Buddha:

I, who have committed the crime of killing my parents, have attained liberation as an arhat. I now wish to attain nirvāṇa.

The Buddha said:

As you intend, you may do as you wish.

That conjured bhikṣu then flew twenty vyāmas<sup>1</sup> above the ground. While floating in the air, he directly entered parinirvāṇa after his body spontaneously burst into flames, and his body was burnt. The real man who killed his mother saw that person enter parinirvāṇa, and having carefully heard what the Tathāgata had said, he then thought to himself:

That man committed a grave offence, and now, after becoming a śramaṇa, he attained liberation and parinirvāṇa. My crime was lighter than his, so why should I not now take refuge in the Buddha and be able to reach that state also?

He then directly went before the Buddha, paid obeisance, and made the confession:

I have acted contrary to the Dharma, and I have killed my own mother! I now myself take refuge in the Buddha.

The Buddha said:

Excellent! Excellent! Your words were perfectly sincere, and you spoke without lying. Even after seeing the Tathāgata, you do not con-

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<sup>1</sup> A measurement of about ten feet or three metres (丈). The conjured bhikṣu thus flew about 200 feet or 60 metres.

ceal the crimes you have committed. Now, observe your mental dharmas. Consider your past, future, and present thoughts. Which thought killed your mother?

Your past thoughts have ceased, they are neither outside nor within, and they have no dwelling place.

Your future thoughts are ineffable; they are unarisen and not yet existent, their conceptualisation does not exist, and they do not have any thought.

Your present thoughts also have no place to abide; if a thought arises, it immediately ceases and does not accumulate; it cannot be known going somewhere or coming from somewhere. Thought also is not blue, red, white, or black.

Thought has no form and is invisible; it cannot be apprehended and cannot be heard. Why? Because it does not make noise. It also cannot be caught; it has no accompaniment; it is like an illusion. It cannot be seen outside the body, it cannot be seen inside the body, and it cannot be seen in the space in-between.

Thought also cannot be defiled, it does not have unwholesomeness, and it does not have any doubt. Thought neither does action nor receives action; it neither is that which is given nor that which is attained. This is because thought is originally pure and is neither defiled nor purified. Thought is neither that which abides nor is it not that.

Thought is like space, and it can neither be apprehended nor does it have any companion. Someone who knows this and does not conceptualise it, does not become entangled in it, does not purify it, does not hold views about it, neither fabricates a location for it nor a place in which it can abide, is a person without attachment. That person's mind becomes liberated, and because they are unobstructed, they do not arise in a bad realm. Why? Because they have no attachment to mental dharmas, have nowhere to accumulate, and do not abide dwelling in saṃsāra.

Then, the fires of niraya immediately erupted from each pore on the body of that man who killed his mother. The pain was indescribable, and he immediately said to himself:

I now go for refuge to the Tathāgata! Please grant me your supernatural protection and cause me to attain calm tranquillity!

The Buddha then touched that man's head with his golden-coloured hand, and immediately the fire was extinguished, and the pain was taken

away. The man then knelt before the Buddha and expressed his wish to become a śrāmaṇa. The Buddha said:

As you wish.

Immediately that man became a śrāmaṇa. The Tathāgata then taught him the Dharma teaching of the Four Truths, and he at once attained the Dharma-Eye. He deeply penetrated that teaching and then attained arhatship. He immediately addressed the Buddha, saying:

I now wish to enter parinirvāṇa.

The Buddha said:

As you wish.

He then rose into the air, 140 vyāmas above the ground, and, while floating in the air, his body spontaneously burst into flames and was burnt. All the hundreds of thousands of koṭis of devas flew after him in the sky and made offerings to him.

Śāriputra then said to the Buddha:

The Tathāgata is genuinely remarkable. Why? Because he caused the liberation of those who performed such crimes. Who can liberate such a person? Only the Buddha, as well as Mañjuśrī and the other bodhisattvas who profoundly attain the armour of the great vow, and who know these matters. No arhat or pratyekabuddha would be able to know these matters. Even if all of them practised, they would not be able to attain such knowledge together.

The Buddha said to Śāriputra:

The state of the Tathāgata can be patiently endured by those bodhisattvas, but not by those on the stage of the arhats or pratyekabuddhas, even if they were to practice together. Why? Because if one person committed an unusual [crime], the [retribution] he obtains is also unusual. If you see one who committed such a crime, you will know that he must enter niraya, but I can cause him not to enter niraya but rather to attain nirvāṇa.<sup>1</sup> Just as someone known as one

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<sup>1</sup> T15.262.404a.

who should enter parinirvāṇa, I may know that they should enter niraya. Why? Because you are not aware of the actions performed by all beings.

Did you see the man who killed his mother enter parinirvāṇa?

[Śāriputra] replied:

I saw that.

The Buddha said:

This person made offerings to five hundred past buddhas. From each buddha, he heard about the original purity of mental dharmas. Why? If a person hears this Dharma teaching and enters parinirvāṇa, then they know the profound Dharma and entered that which is subtle. Rejoicing and being blissful, their mind was free of anxiety. Even if a person commits a misdeed having been misled by a bad teacher with a downtrodden mind, they can still indeed be liberated. If they believe in the original purity of mental dharmas, then that person will not fall into unfortunate realms. Why? Because they will be unobstructed.

Mañjuśrī then, together with all the bodhisattvas, Mahākāśyapa, the bhikṣu saṅgha, King Ajātaśatru and his ministers and retainers, all arrived at the Buddha's location.

Then Śāriputra asked Ajātaśatru:

Have you heard about your doubts and resolved them?

[Ajātaśatru] replied:

I have heard about them. What did I hear? When the Dharma was taught, I heard that there was neither anything obtained nor not obtained; nothing was borne and abandoned. From the moment I heard that I went beyond and did not have defilement.

Then Śāriputra asked the Buddha:

How many remaining crimes does Ajātaśatru have?

The Buddha said:

Even if the Dharma were heard equivalent to a single mustard seed, it would exhaust crimes as great as Mount Sumeru.

Śāriputra asked the Buddha:

Will King Ajātaśatru not enter niraya?

[The Buddha said:]

Just like a devaputra of Trāyastrimśa heaven, clothed in robes of many fine jewels, descending to this world and then returning to his residence, Ajātaśatru likewise will, clothed in robes adorned with jewels, descend from above like that devaputra, and even though he will enter a niraya—that niraya will be called Puṇḍarīka—he will enter without any suffering from any pains. Then, like that devaputra, he will return.

Śāriputra said to the Buddha:

That is extremely remarkable! So, the crimes of Ajātaśatru have been lightened?

The Buddha said to Śāriputra:

Do you know about this king?

He replied:

I do not know.

[The Buddha said:]

This King Ajātaśatru made offerings to seventy-three koṭis of buddhas. He followed each of those buddhas and always listened to the profound Dharma, and his mind was not separated from the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

The Buddha then asked Śāriputra:

Do you see Mañjuśrī?

[Śāriputra replied]:

I do see him.

[The Buddha said:]

He initially caused Ajātaśatru to arouse the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. At that time, in the distant past, there was a buddha called Subāhu,<sup>1</sup> and his kalpa was called Vimalānana.<sup>2</sup> In that kalpa, there were three koṭis of koṭis of people who all were persuaded by Mañjuśrī to turn the Dharma Wheel.

Even if Tathāgatas equal in number to the sands of the Ganges were to teach the Dharma to Ajātaśatru, they would not resolve his doubts. Why not? Because Mañjuśrī gave rise to the intention to do this, so he must resolve them. World after world, he always followed Mañjuśrī and listened to the profound Dharma.

If a bodhisattva initially sets out to do something, that person must certainly resolve it based on having given rise to the original intention to do so.

Now, even though Ajātaśatru will enter niraya, he will return and be born as a deva. Five hundred and forty-five world systems away from here, there is a world called Viśuddha,<sup>3</sup> whose buddha is called Ratnakūṭa.<sup>4</sup> He will there, again, encounter Mañjuśrī, and in that world, he will seek to hear the Dharma taught, and he will directly attain patience regarding the non-arising of dharmas.

When Maitreya comes here and attains Buddhahood, Ajātaśatru will come from that world and be born here. He will then be called Ākhyātāvi Bodhisattva.<sup>5</sup> According to his causes and conditions, Maitreya Buddha will teach all the bodhisattvas. He will teach the Dharma to all equally, neither excessively nor with anything lacking.

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<sup>1</sup> On back-translation, Paul Harrison and Jens-Uwe Hartmann, eds.

“Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanāsūtra,” 207. Meaning, good hands.

<sup>2</sup> Back translation from 無塵垢, Immaculate.

<sup>3</sup> Back translation from 惟位惟位者(漢言為嚴淨), Gloriously Pure.

<sup>4</sup> Back translation from 羅陀那羈頭(漢言寶好) and consulting Paul Harrison and Jens-Uwe Hartmann, eds. “Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanāsūtra,” 208.

<sup>5</sup> Name as found in the Sanskrit, provided in Paul Harrison and Jens-Uwe Hartmann, eds. “Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanāsūtra,” 209. The Chinese transcription in T 262 appears to be quite close: 阿伽佉鉗.

At that time, [Maitreya] will explain about Ākhyātāvi, that in the past, at the time of Śākyamuni Buddha, there was a king called Ajātaśatru, who heard the words of the bad man [Devadatta] and killed his father. After hearing the Dharma taught by Mañjuśrī, he attained joyful patience and faith, and the crimes that he committed were then exhausted. When Maitreya explains this, eight thousand bodhisattvas will attain patience regarding the non-arising of dharmas.

After that, for eight asaṃkhyā kalpas, Ākhyātāvi will continue to practice the bodhisattva path, and he will also instruct people and will purify a world system. Those people who follow him will hear the Dharma, and whether they practice as śrāvakas, whether they practice as pratyekabuddhas, or whether they practice in the bodhisattva dharma, they will all become immaculate; they will be without any obstruction, all of them will have an understanding based in wisdom, and they will not have any doubts.

Thus, as explained, King Ajātaśatru, passing eight asaṃkhyā kalpas, will attain buddhahood. His kalpa will be called Priyadarśana.<sup>1</sup> His land will be called Akardama, where there will be no sicknesses that are not cured, and that Tathāgata's name will be Suviśud-dhaviṣaya. At that time, his lifespan will be four intermediate kalpas. He will have seven hundred thousand śrāvakas who will all follow him and attain understanding, and they will all know the eight liberations.<sup>2</sup> At that time, there will be twelve koṭis of bodhisattvas. They will all awaken to wisdom and upāyakauśalya.<sup>3</sup>

After that buddha enters parinirvāṇa, his Dharma will abide for ten thousand koṭis of years, after which it will disappear. All people in that land will be free from doubts until they die, and after death,

<sup>11</sup> Names in this paragraph as found in the Sanskrit, provided in Paul Harrison and Jens-Uwe Hartmann, eds. "Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanāsūtra," 211–2.

<sup>2</sup> These are explained by Paul Swanson in the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism as follows: Eight abandonments, or renunciations (Skt. *aṣṭā-vimokṣa*). Eight stages of 'liberation' leading to complete cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*): (1) remove desires by concentration on a certain external object; (2) cultivate total concentration by focusing the mind internally; (3) maintain calm while freeing the mind from external objects; (4) attain a state of mental and physical purity; (5) focus on unlimited space and dissolve the distinctions of the external world; (6) attain both physically and mentally a realm without limits; (7) attain the foundation that transcends space and the mental realm; and (8) attain a state in with this foundation is constantly manifested. Some explanations add a ninth 'liberation': complete nothingness (*nirodha-samāpatti*?).

<sup>3</sup> Transliterated in T 262 as: 漚憩拘舍.



they will not be born in any of the eight unwholesome states of existence.<sup>1</sup> Why? Because, after hearing that buddha's profound Dharma, they will no longer cling to any of their defilements.

Do not treat anyone lightly. Why? Because treating someone lightly incurs a fault. I know what people have done, and I know what is not known, including where they are destined. Only a buddha knows these things.

Śāriputra then faced the assembly and said:

This matter is very subtle, but I have finally understood it. From now and hereafter, I dare not again say that such and such a person is a bad person or that such and such a person is a meritorious person. Why? Because we cannot conceive of all the actions that have been performed by someone, in the way the Buddha explained, such that we would know what results will come to Ajātaśatru.

Thereupon, twelve thousand devaputras all aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Each had the same wish:

When Suviśuddhaviṣaya attains buddhahood, I wish to be born in that land.

The Buddha then confirmed that when [Ajātaśatru] attains buddhahood, they will indeed be born in his land.

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<sup>1</sup> These are 1. birth in niraya, 2. birth as a preta, 3. birth as an animal, 4. birth in a long-life heaven, 5. birth in Uttarakuru (northern continent), 6. birth as one who is deaf, blind, or dumb, 7. birth as a worldly philosopher, 8. or born at a time between the appearance of a buddha and the time of the next buddha.



# 12. The Assurance of Candragrīva's Buddhahood

**K**ing Ajātaśatru had an eight-year-old son called Candraśrī. At that time, he took the jewel ornaments off his body and scattered them over the Buddha. He then said:

With this, I arouse the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. When Suvīśuddhaviṣaya attains buddhahood, I want to become a cakravartin,<sup>1</sup> and after that buddha has entered parinirvāṇa, I wish to become a buddha.

Then, the jewels that were strewn [on the Buddha] were transformed into a seven-jewelled curtain, which was even in length and breadth, and the seat beneath the curtain was adorned with various jewels, and its cloth was the same as the curtain. The Buddha sat upon that seat, and immediately he smiled, and countless multicoloured lights came out of his mouth and went throughout the ten directions. The lights then returned, circled him three times, and entered his head.

Ānanda then arose from his seat and said to the Buddha:

The Tathāgata does not smile arbitrarily; it must have a meaning.

Ānanda then praised the Buddha:

Your wisdom is profound and excellent; it is unimpeded and fully knows all beings' mental activities. According to their inclinations, thus he teaches, causing each to attain their proper place. You are the most especially honoured among the heavens and below the heavens. I only wish to hear the reason why you smiled. All people from the ten directions are present before you, and every one of the hundreds of thousands of koṭis of niyutas of them asks about this matter, but he does not abandon them or consider it difficult. They only wish to hear an explanation as to the matter of this smile.

The Buddha knows all things in the past, future, and present without impediment. Please resolve my doubts as to why you smiled. With a light entirely surpassing that of the sun and moon, surpassing that

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<sup>1</sup> A wheel-turning monarch.

of Indra and Brahmā, destroying all the Cakravāda Mountains<sup>1</sup> causing all [in dark realms beyond] to behold his radiance. When those beings saw that light, they no longer had any attachments. Why? Because the Buddha used his stainlessness. We only wish to know why the Buddha smiled.

<sup>2</sup>The Buddha addressed Ānanda:

This Candrasī has offered to me and has aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. Bit by bit, until the time that Suvisuddhaviṣaya attains buddhahood, he will be born in that land and will become a cakravartin. Together with his whole family and retinue, he will make offerings to that buddha and his bhikṣu saṅgha without ceasing. After that buddha attains parinirvāṇa, this boy will then practice after him, and when his lifespan as a cakravartin is exhausted, he will arise in Tuṣita Heaven. After his long life finishes there, he will descend and be born in his buddha field and attain buddhahood. His name will be Candragrīva, and everything will be the same as the prior buddha: his lifespan will be the same length, and all his śrāvakas and bodhisattvas will be of the same amount.

All the other bodhisattvas near Ajātaśatru said:

Mañjuśrī is in every direction, and just like the buddhas, he does not spend his time in vain. Why? Because what he does is no different from what the Buddha does. If there is a bodhisattva who follows the teachings of Mañjuśrī, they also will not be different. Why? Because they will not again be born in an unfortunate realm, they will not be afraid of māras, will not be afraid of crimes, and will not have any defilements. If in cities, countries, regions, towns, and villages, there are people who study this Dharma, and if there are people who uphold this sūtra and recite it, or who write it, we will see them as our equals, and we should see them as being no different from the buddhas. Wherever we hear this Dharma, we will always think of it as the place where the Buddha resides.

The Buddha said to those bodhisattvas:

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<sup>1</sup> The iron encircling mountains at the edge of the world.

<sup>2</sup> T15.262.405a.

It is indeed just as you have said. Why? An uncountable asaṃkhyā of kalpas in the past, there was a buddha called Dīpaṅkara. At that time, he said that I shall arouse the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi and attain buddhahood. I then laid my hair on the ground and allowed the Tathāgata to tread upon it. Verily, at that point, he predicted:

After an asaṃkhyā of kalpas, you will become a buddha by the name of Śākyamuni.

Thereupon, Dīpaṅkara Buddha said to his entire bhikṣu saṅgha:

This is the place where a prediction has been received. You must not tread upon this spot. Why? Because it is a revered and supernormal spot, so, all devas and humans will make offerings to this spot. Is there anyone who would build a stūpa here?

Then, eighty koṭis of devas thought:

I will do so!

There was a kulapati<sup>1</sup> called Bhadradeva who immediately addressed [that buddha], saying:

I wish to build a stūpa here.

Thereupon, he directly undertook to build a seven-jewelled stūpa, adorned and profoundly beautiful. When he had finished building it, he went to Dīpaṅkara's residence and addressed him, saying:

I have finished building the stūpa. May I hear, O Tathāgata, what kind of merits accrue from this act?

Dīpaṅkara said:

Even though the location on which this bodhisattva attained patience regarding dharmas is as small as the circumference of

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<sup>1</sup> The head of a household.

a carriage wheel, you have built a stūpa there. If one goes beneath that spot to pātāla,<sup>1</sup> all the devas, yakṣas, and divine beings there pay homage to that spot of earth [from below], which is not different from śarīras.<sup>2</sup>

If there were a bodhisattva who received his prediction and attained patience regarding dharmas, and if on a spot which is just as small as the circumference of a carriage wheel he were to accumulate the seven treasures up to Trāyastriṃśa Heaven and offer them to the Buddha, the merits which come from this stūpa that you have built exceed that.

Just as I gave a prediction to that māṇavaka,<sup>3</sup> that later you will attain buddhahood as Śākyamuni, you, because of the merits of having built this stūpa, will follow that Śākyamuni Buddha and receive from him a prediction that after an asaṃkhyā of kalpas you will also attain buddhahood.

The Buddha then addressed the assembly:

Do you know who the kulapati Bhadradeva was at that time?

The assembly did not know. The Buddha then said:

Here in this assembly, that kulapati boy is now called Raticāra.<sup>4</sup>

At that time, the Tathāgata gave him his prediction, saying:

You will become a buddha called Sudarśana.

The Buddha then said:

If a bhikṣu, bhikṣuṇī, upāsaka, or upāsikā writes this sūtra, or if they recite it and explain it for others, from the place of that Dharma teaching, which is as small as the circumference of a carriage wheel, in the region going down to pātāla and up to Trāyastriṃśa Heaven,

<sup>1</sup> An underworld, sometimes synonymous with hells, but also the abode of non-hell beings including nāgas.

<sup>2</sup> Śarīras are relics, in this case it means the relics of the Buddha, but the term literally means body.

<sup>3</sup> Transcription, 摩納, which means a brāhmaṇa youth, i.e. Śākyamuni at that time.

<sup>4</sup> Name as suggested by Paul Harrison and Jens-Uwe Hartmann, eds. "Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanāsūtra," 216.

then a wise person would make an offering of even a single particle to that spot. Why? Because a bodhisattva will obtain patience from this Dharma teaching.

If a man or woman were to fill the buddha-lands in the trichilio-cosm with the seven treasures and were to offer in this way all day and in the three watches of the night, and if one is single-mindedly devoted to this task, and one again acts in the same manner for a hundred kalpas, a thousand kalpas, or a hundred thousand kalpas, and if on the other hand, one were to recite a section of this teaching on Ajātaśatru, and revere it, and recite it while fully explaining it and the wisdom within it, and if one's mind has faith in and does not disagree with it, then the merit from that is greater than the merit of the former offering.

If a man or woman were to uphold the pure precepts for a hundred kalpas, and if they suddenly hear this Dharma teaching and rejoice in faith, the merit of that exceeds the merit of upholding the pure precepts.

Even though someone may be beaten and reviled for a hundred kalpas without giving rise to a thought of anger while maintaining patience, if he hears this Dharma teaching and believes in it, then the patience it creates will be superior to the former patience.<sup>1</sup>

Even if someone were to practice with diligence for a hundred kalpas, and regarding all things he were to never give rise to suffering from exertion and were indifferent regarding his own life, and if he were to hear this Dharma teaching with faith and were to explain its contents to all people, then the merits of that would exceed the merits of that diligence.

And if a person were to remain in dhyāna for a hundred kalpas, it would not be similar to teaching this Dharma teaching to all people, the merits of which would exceed those of one who remained in dhyāna.

And if someone were to cultivate wisdom for a hundred kalpas and hear this Dharma teaching about liberation through the originally pure nature of mind, the merits of that would be superior.

The bodhisattvas all addressed the Buddha:

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., it will be patience in regard to the non-origination of dharmas.

We will all practice with reverence. Regardless of which buddha-land in which we are born, we will undoubtedly teach this Dharma teaching to people.

The Buddha said to the bodhisattvas:

If you teach this Dharma teaching wherever you are born, your deeds will not be different from those of the Buddha. Why? Because this Dharma teaching fully explains the Buddha's work.

All the bodhisattvas in the assembly offered flowers and scattered them upon the Tathāgata and everywhere in the worlds of the trichiliocosm. The bodhisattvas each remarked to themselves:

This Dharma teaching is honoured and true and has been taught by Śākyamuni Buddha. That it should be revealed in the land of Jambudvīpa and remain for a long time is thanks to Mañjuśrī's constant abiding here. Why? Because he always follows in order to hear this profound and sublime Dharma teaching.

The bodhisattvas said:

Even if our bodies were ground to dust, it would not repay this compassion.

The Buddha said:

If a man or woman hears this Dharma teaching from another, they cannot repay this compassion with their bodies. Someone who wishes to see the Tathāgata should make offerings to the spot where that man or woman heard this Dharma teaching like it is the Buddha. When one sees that person who thus has faith in this Dharma teaching, it is like seeing the Buddha.

The bodhisattvas then arose from their seats and paid obeisance to Śākyamuni Buddha, and then they disappeared and could not be seen. Each one returned to their lands. They taught this Dharma teaching in their own dwelling places, and all people there were endowed with understanding and wisdom. The countless people who heard this Dharma teaching aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.



## 13. Entrustment

The Buddha then said to Maitreya Bodhisattva:

One should uphold this Dharma teaching, recite it, explain it in detail for all, and have compassion for all those in the heavens and below the heavens.

Maitreya Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha:

I have heard this Dharma teaching from buddhas in the past, and I have upheld and recited it. Now, again, I have come to listen to this Dharma teaching, and now again, I shall expound this Dharma teaching broadly for all. Even after the Tathāgata has entered parinirvāṇa, while I abide in Tuṣita heaven, if there are men or women who wish to learn this Dharma teaching, I shall assist, encourage, and protect them. In the latter period of the Dharma replete with desire when it is about to be exhausted, in the place where this sūtra is heard and kept, you should know that I will protect that place. Even if Māra wishes to destroy it midway, I will be sure to protect it so he cannot obtain it.

The Buddha said to Śakra, Lord of the Devas:

You should uphold this Dharma teaching and recite it so that you can resolve many doubts. Even if the asuras raise an army and wish to bring about the injury of Indra, if you remember this sūtra, then at that time you will obtain victory, and their armies will immediately retreat.

The Buddha again said:

If there are people in cities, countries, regions, towns, and villages, who worship this sūtra, you should go and protect them all. Even if they are apprehended by the government officials and are imprisoned, they should think of this sūtra. If a person encounters thieves, they should think of this sūtra; if they are bound by thieves and beaten, they should think of this sūtra. If they enter the wilderness, they should think of this sūtra. If they see an enemy or encounter an

enemy, they should think of this sūtra. If one pays close attention to this Dharma teaching, they will not obtain a point of attack.<sup>1</sup>

The Buddha said to Ānanda:

Uphold this Dharma teaching and recite it; you should explain this Dharma teaching for all. If any man or woman hears this Dharma teaching, they will have no doubts. With all their doubts exhausted, they will no longer be obscured by their crimes, will no longer be obscured by saṃsāra, and will no longer be obscured by not being on the path and being separated from the Dharma. All those who are practising on other paths will immediately stop proceeding down those paths, and they will, in the end, stop encountering the works of Māra. Why? Because they heard this Dharma teaching. Even if someone has already committed a misdeed, if they hear this Dharma teaching and joyfully rejoice with faith, they will immediately be without that misdeed. They will not receive retribution for their crime.

Mahākāśyapa addressed the Buddha:

I attest to this Dharma teaching. Earlier, when Mañjuśrī spoke this Dharma teaching to Ajātaśatru during mealtime, he was liberated from his misdeeds and immediately obtained joyful faith and patience, and all his doubts were resolved. I now declare this: if there is someone who has committed a misdeed, through patience from this Dharma teaching, they will obtain liberation, just like Ajātaśatru.

Mahākāśyapa further said:

All people are originally pure, but they fabricate to the contrary that there is a “mine,” or a “not mine,” and they do not themselves know their original purity. If one is fully awakened to original purity, they will immediately be liberated from the crimes they have committed, which will not exist, just as it was with Ajātaśatru. But every foolish person acts to the contrary and, in turn, brings about their death; because of this, they obtain suffering and directly enter niraya.

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<sup>1</sup> 得其便, avatāraṃ + labh. This construction is a Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit peculiarity which literally means obtaining an entry. By entry could be understood a weak point or point of attack.

If one receives and has faith in this Dharma teaching, we confirm that they will not again fall into unfortunate realms.

The Buddha said:

Just as you have said. All buddhas and bodhisattvas are undefiled in mind.

Ānanda again addressed the Buddha:

O Tathāgata, please allow people of future generations to encounter this Dharma teaching.

The Tathāgata then immediately released a light from his body, which illuminated countless buddha-lands, and all fences and trees then had a voice and said:

It shall be so with this Dharma teaching. Why? Because, when the kalpa-ending conflagration occurs, those who should hear it will encounter this Dharma teaching. If there are those who should listen to this Dharma teaching, even if they are in the ocean, they will be able to listen to this Dharma teaching.

The Buddha said to Ānanda:

Just as the words which were heard coming from the fences and trees. In later generations, those who have accumulated merit or practised the Mahāyāna will all hear this Dharma teaching.

When this sūtra was spoken, ninety-six thousand devas and humans attained the path of the srotāpanna, seventy-eight thousand people aroused the aspiration to attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, two thousand bodhisattvas attained joyful patience at the non-origination of dharmas, and eighty thousand people attained the path of arhatship. Moreover, the worlds in the trichiliocosm quaked in six ways, and all dark places were opened and illuminated. The devaputras of the desire realm and the devaputras of the form realm made offerings with various kinds of music and scattered divine flowers and divine incense, saying:

That which is said to be the Dharma Wheel is the Dharma. Those who hear it then turn the Wheel of the Dharma again. Those on

other paths who hear this Dharma teaching will learn it for themselves; they are then subdued, and being verified as bodhisattvas, they then go to sit under the Bodhi Tree.

When the Buddha finished teaching this sūtra, King Ajātaśatru, all the bodhisattvas who take Mañjuśrī as their example, all the śrāvakas, including Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, and Ānanda, who also took Mañjuśrī as their example, all the devas, asuras, and all the humans, who heard it, went before him, bowed their heads in obeisance, and departed.

**The Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's  
Questions on the Five Heinous Crimes**  
(Taishō No. 508)

*Translated into Chinese by the Śramaṇa Fǎjù of the Western Jīn Dynasty (265–316)*

*Translated into English by Shaku Shingan*



Thus have I heard:

At one time the Bhagavān was residing at Rājagṛha, on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa, together with a great assembly of five hundred monks.

Devadatta went to King Ajātaśatru's palace, and having arrived, he at once took his seat. Then, King Ajātaśatru immediately arose from his seat, bowed his head to the feet of Devadatta, and then returned and sat back down.

At that time, Ajātaśatru addressed Devadatta, saying:

I have heard, O Venerable Devadatta, that the Śramaṇa Gautama often says:

There are five heinous crimes. If a son of good family or a daughter of good family commits these five unrepairable crimes, they will, without doubt, certainly enter hell. What are the five? They are killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat,<sup>1</sup> disrupting the saṅgha, and giving rise to evil intent towards the Tathāgata [and shedding his blood].<sup>2</sup> These are five unrepairable crimes. If there is a man or woman who offers alms to such a person, they will, without doubt, certainly enter hell.

Devadatta! I have just now killed my father the king! Will I too enter hell?

Thereupon, Devadatta replied to King Ajātaśatru:

Great King! Do not be agitated.<sup>3</sup> What crime was there? What fault was there? Who committed a crime and who will receive retribution? One who does a crime will receive retribution, but the Great King did not do heinous evil. [Only] one who does evil will necessarily receive retribution.

At that time, many bhikṣus donned their robes and took up their bowls and entered Rājagṛha for alms. Then, many bhikṣus, having entered Rājagṛha for alms, heard that King Ajātaśatru had said to Devadatta:

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<sup>1</sup> The term 害 can also be translated simply as harm, which contrasts with the 殺 used for the mother and father. But for consistency with other texts, it is translated as kill here.

<sup>2</sup> This usually contains "shedding the blood of a Buddha" (出佛身血). I have inserted it here for consistency.

<sup>3</sup> Skt. *saṃvigna*.

Venerable Devadatta! I have heard that the Śramaṇa Gautama speaks thus:

There are five unrepairable crimes, and if there is a man or woman who offers alms to a person who does these five things, they will, without doubt, certainly enter hell.

And that at that time Devadatta answered:

Do not fear, Great King! Who committed a crime, and based on what did a crime arise? One who does evil will later receive retribution, but the king, did not perform a crime. [Only] one who commits a crime will necessarily receive retribution.<sup>1</sup>

When the many bhikṣus had returned from Rājagṛha for alms, after eating, they put away their robes and bowls, they took their niṣīdana mats<sup>2</sup> upon their shoulders, and came to the Bhagavān. Having bowed their head to the Buddha's feet, they sat to one side. They then discussed the deliberations in King Ajātaśatru's palace, and then faced towards the Bhagavān for an explanation.

Then, the Bhagavān spoke this gāthā on what they discussed:

The fool is recognized in this situation:  
He says the crime is without retribution.  
I now, observing the future,  
See that there is a determined retribution.<sup>3</sup>

Thereupon, the Bhagavān addressed the bhikṣus:

This King Ajātaśatru of Magadha, although he killed his father the king, will, before long, come to me and will have the same faith in me [as he now has for Devadatta]; after his life ends, he will fall into hell like a bouncing ball.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The wording differs slightly from the earlier quote.

<sup>2</sup> Rectangular sitting mats for sitting on.

<sup>3</sup> The first two verses are referring to Devadatta. The second two verses refer to Ajātaśatru's determined retribution.

<sup>4</sup> I.e., his stay will not be long, falling and then bouncing back out, as if to suggest merely the minimum needed as recompense for his crime.



Thereupon, a certain bhikṣu addressed the Bhagavān, asking:

After his life in that niraya ends,<sup>1</sup> where will he next be born?

The Bhagavān replied:

After his life in that niraya ends, he will next be born in the abode of the four heavenly kings.

The bhikṣu asked:

After his life there ends, where will he next be born?

The Bhagavān replied:

After his life there ends, he will next be born in Trāyastrimśa Heaven.

The bhikṣu asked:

Bhagavān! After his life in Trāyastrimśa Heaven ends, where will he next be born?

The Bhagavān replied:

Bhikṣu! After his life in Trāyastrimśa Heaven ends, he will next be born in the Yāma Heaven.

The bhikṣu asked:

Bhagavān! After his life there ends, where will he next be born?

The Bhagavān replied:

After his life in the Yāma Heaven ends, he will next be born in Tuṣita Heaven.

The bhikṣu asked:

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<sup>1</sup> This is transliterated here. Niraya means joyless but is another term for hell.

Bhagavān! After his life in Tuṣita Heaven ends, where will he next be born?

The Bhagavān replied:

After his life in Tuṣita Heaven ends, he will next be born in the Nirmāṇarati Heaven.

The bhikṣu asked:

After his life in the Nirmāṇarati Heaven ends, where will he next be born?

The Bhagavān replied:

Bhikṣu! After his life in the Nirmāṇarati Heaven ends, he will next be born in the Paranirmitavaśavartin Heaven.

The bhikṣu asked:

Bhagavān! After his life in the Paranirmitavaśavartin Heaven ends, where will he next be born?

The Bhagavān replied:

Bhikṣu! After his life in the Paranirmitavaśavartin Heaven ends, he will next be born in the Nirmāṇarati Heaven, Tuṣita Heaven, Yāma Heaven, Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, the heaven of the four great kings, and then he will again come to be born as a human.

The bhikṣu asked:

Bhagavān! After that life ends, where will he next be born?

The Bhagavān replied:

Bhikṣu! Ajātaśatru, the King of Magadha, for twenty kalpas, will not be born in the three evil destinies, but continue to be born among devas and humans. Finally, he will receive a human body, he will shave his hair and beard, don the three Dharma robes, and with firm

faith, he will go forth from home and pursue the Path. He will become a pratyekabuddha called Viraja.<sup>1</sup>

The bhikṣu asked:

How wonderful! How wonderful! Bhagavān! Having performed such an evil crime, he will receive such joy and become a pratyekabuddha called Viraja.

The Bhagavān replied:

Ajātaśatru, King of Magadha, will acquire the arousal of aspiration,<sup>2</sup> and will broadly attain many virtues. Bhikṣu! If one can acquire the arousal of aspiration, it will save one from hell. If one does not acquire the arousal of aspiration, but acquires [appropriate] causes and conditions, even if one has not yet been born in hell, it is possible to devise an expedient whereby one will not arrive in hell.

The bhikṣu asked:

If one acquires both together, where will one next be born?

The Bhagavān replied:

If one acquires both, one [can] be born in two places. What are the two? Birth in a deva realm and birth as a human.

The bhikṣu asked:

If one acquires the arousal of aspiration, but the [appropriate] causes and conditions are not acquired, what is the difference between these two?

The Bhagavān replied:

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<sup>1</sup> 無穢. Also can be “Akalmaṣa” or “Akalmāṣa.”

<sup>2</sup> 發意. Cittotpāda. The arousal of bodhicitta, in short. In this case his aspiration is for pratyekabuddhahood rather than full buddhahood.

Bhikṣu! If one acquires the arousal of aspiration, but the [appropriate] causes and conditions are not acquired, one is of weak faculties.<sup>1</sup> If one does not acquire the arousal of aspiration but does acquire the [appropriate] causes and conditions, one is of sharp faculties.

The bhikṣu asked:

Dull faculties and sharp faculties: what are the differences?

The Bhagavān replied:

One of dull faculties, O bhikṣu, is one who does not make progress [on the Path]. One with sharp faculties, O bhikṣu, is someone who is learned and has worldly wisdom.

The bhikṣu asked:

What is the difference between these two? What karma will return to them?

At that time, the Bhagavān uttered this gāthā:

The wise are foremost in the world;  
They will reach a place of calm tranquillity.  
All who can know right conduct,  
Eliminate the states of birth and death.<sup>2</sup>

This, O bhikṣu, expresses the difference.

Then, that bhikṣu, having heard the Buddha’s teachings, rejoiced, and having accepted [and resolved to] practice [accordingly], arose from his

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<sup>1</sup> Further down it uses 鈍根, which is strictly speaking “dull faculties.” This is 濡根, which is literally wet faculties.

<sup>2</sup> If the question on the difference is about the difference between the two kinds of people with sharp faculties: being learned and having worldly wisdom then the first two lines possibly refer to the “learned” and the second two possibly refer to one who has “worldly wisdom.” The first is the wisdom that sets one in a safe place, i.e. not in hell. The second is wisdom that ends saṃsāra. If this is just asking for a further refinement about the difference between the sharp and dull, then all of these qualities are describing the sharp.

seat, bowed his head to the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him three times, and directly departed.

Thereupon, that bhikṣu, on that same day, donned his robe and took up his bowl, and entered Rājagṛha for alms, and reached the outer gate of the palace of the King of Magadha. Then, King Ajātaśatru seeing that bhikṣu enter from the distance, directly admonished the gatekeeper:

What, O gatekeeper? I have previously commanded that the Śākya-seed bhikṣus are not to enter here, except for the Venerable Devadatta!

Thereupon, the gatekeeper, grasped that bhikṣu by the hand, and drove him away from the gate. Then that bhikṣu rose his right hand and addressed the King of Magadha, saying:

I am the Great King's good and virtuous friend; there is a place of calm tranquillity without any vexations!

Then the king replied:

What, O bhikṣu! Explain what you mean in saying:

I am the Great King's good and virtuous friend; there is a place of calm tranquillity!

Then that bhikṣu replied to King Ajātaśatru, saying:

The Bhagavān spoke about the king in the following manner:

The King of Magadha, even though he killed his father the king, having done this evil, after his life ends, will be born in hell like a bouncing ball. After his life there ends, he will be born in the palace of the four heavenly kings. After his life there ends, he will be born in Trāyastrimśa Heaven. After his life there ends, he will be born in Yāma Heaven, Tuṣita Heaven, Nirmāṇarati Heaven, and Paranirmitavaśavartin Heaven. After his life there ends, he will again be born in the Nirmāṇarati Heaven, Tuṣita Heaven, Yāma Heaven, Trāyastrimśa Heaven, the palace of the four heavenly kings, and will then again be born here and receive a human form. In this

way, the Great King, for twenty kalpas, will not fall into the three evil destinies, continuing to [be born] as a [deva and] human,<sup>1</sup> until he will finally receive a human body, will shave his hair and beard, don the three Dharma robes, and with firm faith, he will go forth from home and pursue the Path. He will become a pratyekabuddha called Viraja.

For this reason, Great King, you will attain rootless faith!<sup>2</sup>

Thereupon, that bhikṣu, having said this, at once departed. At that time, King Ajātaśatru, having heard what that bhikṣu said, did not rejoice, was not free from anger, and also did not understand what he had said. At once he addressed Prince Jīvaka, saying:

Jīvaka! A śrāmaṇa came to me and spoke thus:

The Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha has predicted that as [the king has] killed and performed a heinous evil. After his life ends, he will be born in hell like a bouncing ball. After his life there ends, he will be born in the palace of the four heavenly kings, Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, Yāma Heaven, Tuṣita Heaven, Nirmāṇarati Heaven, and Paranirmitavaśavartin Heaven. After his life there ends, he will again be born in the Nirmāṇarati Heaven, Tuṣita Heaven, Yāma Heaven, Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, and the palace of the four heavenly kings. After his life there ends, he will be born as a human. Finally receiving a human body, he will shave his hair and beard, don the three Dharma robes, and with firm faith, he will go forth from home and pursue the Path. He will become a pratyekabuddha called Viraja.

<sup>1</sup> Deva is excluded in this repetition.

<sup>2</sup> Rootless faith is described in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* as being how those who do not have the seed of Buddha-nature and do not have faith in the Three Jewels, and thus have no roots from which to give rise to Buddhahood on their own, may give rise to faith that is bestowed in them by the Buddha. Hence, in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* Ajātaśatru describes himself as being like a foul-smelling eraṇḍa seed which has sprouted into a fragrant candana (sandalwood) tree. In particular, Icchantikas are described as being without the seeds of Buddhahood, but that they can be redeemed by faith. For someone who slanders the Dharma, icchantikas, or someone who commits the five heinous crimes, giving rise to faith through self-cultivation may be impossible—in this case rootless faith can be bestowed. As this sūtra demonstrates, karmic one still undergoes karmic recompense up until the attainment of nirvāṇa.

Will you go, O Jīvaka, to that Śramaṇa Gautama, and verify his words?

[Jīvaka] replied:

Yes, O Great King!

Thereupon, Prince Jīvaka, having received the King of Magadha's instructions, at once left Rājagṛha, reached Mount Gr̥dhra-kūṭa, and approached the Bhagavān. Having arrived, he bowed his head to the Buddha's feet and sat to one side. Then Prince Jīvaka explained what the King of Magadha had instructed him to say. After finishing, the Tathāgata spoke. The Bhagavān addressed him, saying:

Thus it is, Jīvaka. The Buddha Bhagavān said nothing different and spoke as was proper. Why? Jīvaka, that King Ajātaśatru will attain rootless faith. Jīvaka, all men and women with [that faith] will all, also, attain that destiny, not having any differences.<sup>1</sup>

Then, Prince Jīvaka, having received the Tathāgata's teaching, at once arose from his seat, bowed his head to the Buddha's feet, and immediately departed and reached the palace of the King of Magadha. Having arrived, he at once went to King Ajātaśatru and addressed him, saying:

The Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha truly spoke those words. Why? All who attain rootless faith do not have any differences. I wish for the king to go to the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha.

Thereupon, the King answered:

Jīvaka! I have heard that the Śramaṇa Gautama has mantras which are able to subdue common people, the afflicted, tīrthikas, heterodox

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<sup>1</sup> Many things are unstated: do only those who commit the five heinous crimes receive rootless faith or can anyone receive it? Does the "destiny" mean having a short stay in hell, passing through the deva realms, and then attaining pratyekabuddhahood, or does it simply refer to the final state of pratyekabuddhahood? Finally, is that final destiny only pratyekabuddhahood, or can it include full buddhahood? In the Jōdo Shinshū tradition, it is held that anyone can receive rootless faith and come to attain full buddhahood thereby.

teachers,<sup>1</sup> and those who have not understood his teaching. Therefore, I would not be suited to going to see the Śramaṇa Gautama. Wait, Jīvaka! I want to investigate as to whether the Śramaṇa Gautama has omniscience or not. Supposing that he is an omniscient one, then I will, at last, go to see the Śramaṇa Gautama.

Then Prince Jīvaka, following what he heard from the King of Magadha, left Rājagṛha, reached Mount Gṛdhṛakūṭa, and approached the Bhagavān. Having arrived, he bowed his head to the Buddha's feet and sat to one side and explained what [King Ajātaśatru] had said to the Bhagavān.

Thereupon, the Bhagavān said:

Jīvaka! The King of Magadha, before long, will come to me, he will attain rootless faith, and after the day that I attain nirvāṇa, he will arrange for the worship of my śarīras.<sup>2</sup>

Prince Jīvaka rose and danced with joy, not able to control himself. Then, the Bhagavān expounded the True Dharma to Prince Jīvaka, causing him to give rise to joy.

Thereupon, Prince Jīvaka, having heard the Tathāgata's profound Dharma, at once arose from his seat, bowed his head to the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him three times, and immediately departed. Prince Jīvaka having heard the Buddha's teachings, rejoiced, and practiced with sincerity.

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<sup>1</sup> Skt. *parivrājakas*.

<sup>2</sup> 舍利. A transliteration of the Sanskrit term for the bodily relics of the Buddha.



**The Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's  
Reception of his Prediction**

(Taishō No. 509)

*T 509 Translated into Chinese by the Śramaṇa Fǎjù of the Western Jīn Dynasty  
(265–316)*

*Translated into English by Shaku Shingan*

**T**hus have I heard:

At one time the Buddha was dwelling in Rājagṛha, on mount Gṛdhrakūṭa. At that time, King Ajātaśatru had invited the Buddha, and after he had finished his meal, the Buddha went to Jetavana. The king then said to Jīvaka:

Today I invited the Buddha, and the Buddha finished his meal. Is there anything more I need to do?

Jivaka replied:

Only the lighting of many lanterns.

Thereupon, the king ordered hundreds of lanterns to be filled with hemp-seed oil and installed them from the palace gates up to Jetavana Vi-hāra.

At that time, there was a poor old woman who always had it as her heart's desire to make offerings to the Buddha, but she had no wealth. When she saw the king cultivating such merits, she was deeply affected. After begging, she obtained two coins and brought them to an oil store to buy hemp-seed oil. The oil seller said:

O lady, you are very poor and only have two coins. Why don't you buy food for your self-sustenance instead of buying this oil?

The lady said:

I have heard that it is difficult to encounter the arising of a Buddha once even in a hundred kalpas. I have the fortune of being in a Buddha-age, but I have not made offerings. Today, I saw the king accumulating great merits which were lofty and immeasurable. I was moved and thought, even though I am poor, I only wish to offer a single lamp so that after this life, I will be endowed with good karmic roots.

Then the oil seller, knowing that she had given rise to this intention took the two coins which would have bought two measures of oil, and gave her an additional three, bringing the total to five. The woman then immediately left and went before the Buddha. She thought that this oil would not be enough for even half the evening, and she wished to herself:

If, in a future life, I shall attain the Path like the Buddha, this oil will allow the light to shine throughout the night and not be extinguished.

She then paid obeisance and left.

Some of the lanterns outside the king's palace were exhausting, and some were exhausted. Even though there was someone to maintain them, they could not maintain them all. The old lady's single lamp, however, remained bright and was extraordinarily brighter than all the other lamps. As the night passed, it was not extinguished, and the oil was not used up but was bright until the morning. The lady again returned before [the Buddha], paid obeisance to him with her head, and stood there with her palms joined.

The Buddha then said to Maudgalyāyana:

It is now morning, please extinguish the lamps.

Maudgalyāyana did as was instructed and extinguished the lamps in order. All the lamps were extinguished, but although he attempted to extinguish that lady's single lamp three times, it was not extinguished. He raised his *kāṣāya* and fanned it, but the light of that lamp only increased. Then, using his supernormal power to create the wind of a ranging storm to blow that lamp, that old woman's lamp became more powerful. The light rose up and illuminated the *Brahmā Heaven* and illumined all the worlds of the *trichiliocosm*, and everyone saw it.

The Buddha then said to Maudgalyāyana:

Stop! Stop! This is the light of the merit of a future *Tathāgata*. You cannot destroy it even using supernormal power. This woman made offerings to eighteen *koṭis* of buddhas in her past lives, and before those buddhas, she received the prediction that she would strive to teach the *Dharma* with the *sūtras* to common people. She has not yet ceased in her practice of charity, so that now she is poor and has no wealth.

However, after three *kalpas*, her merits will fill up and she will attain buddhahood, and her name will be *Sumerupradīpa*<sup>1</sup> *Tathāgata*, *Arhat*, etc. Her world will not have a sun or moon, but the people there will all have a great radiance, her inner-chamber will be made of radiant jewels and be characterised by luminosity just like *Trāyastriṃśa Heaven*.

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<sup>1</sup> Lamp light of Sumeru.

When the old woman received this prediction, she was happy, and immediately her body became light and rose up to the sky, she went one hundred and eighty vyāmas<sup>1</sup> into the sky, and then returned back. She then bowed down and paid obeisance with her head and left.

When the king heard of this, he asked Jīvaka:

Even though I have accumulated lofty merits like that, I have not received a prediction from the Buddha. This lady only gave one lantern and then received a prediction. Why is this so?

Jīvaka said:

Even though the king performed many deeds, he was not single-minded, unlike that lady who had the Buddha on her mind.

He then sent an invitation to the Buddha. That night he ordered all his gardeners each to select the choicest flowers at dawn and to quickly send them into the palace.

At dawn, the Buddha left Jetavana and proceeded slowly together with the common people while teaching the Dharma, until midday when they reached the palace. At that time, a single gardener carrying flowers went out of the garden to the road, he encountered the Buddha teaching the assembly on the main road, and listening to the Buddha teach a sūtra, he single-mindedly rejoiced. He took the flowers that he held and scattered them upon the Buddha. Those flowers all floated in the sky above the Buddha's head. The Buddha then gave him a prediction, saying:

You have already made offerings to ninety koṭis of buddhas. One hundred and forty kalpas from now, you will become a Buddha by the name of Bodhipuṣpa<sup>2</sup> Tathāgata.

That man then rejoiced, and immediately light body became light and rose up to the sky, and then returned back. He finally paid obeisance to the Buddha, and the following thought occurred to him:

Our king is a man of an extremely strict and impatient character. Last night he ordered me to observe the precepts and select flowers for offering to the Buddha, but I, myself, have scattered them all over

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<sup>1</sup> A measurement of about ten feet or three metres.

<sup>2</sup> Flower of Awakening.

the Buddha. I will go to him empty handed, and so I shall surely be put to death.

He then took a shortcut and returned home and placed his empty flower box outside the door. He entered and said to his wife:

This morning I did not return to eat, but now the king will kill me, so let me quickly have a meal!

His wife, having heard this, was extremely frightened. Being agitated, she said:

Why is the king going to kill you?

He explained the roots and branches of his story to his wife. His wife then went out, as she did not yet have food for the oven. Indra, then, filled his empty flower box with divine flowers. When his wife returned with the food, she thus saw the flower box outside the door filled with flowers, and their colour was extraordinary. She then told her husband. Her husband looked out of the door and when he saw the divine flowers his mind was greatly elated. He decided not to eat and directly took the flowers and brought them to the palace.

The king was going out to meet the Buddha, and the man met him on the road. When the king saw the flowers, which were extremely beautiful and exceedingly rare in the world, he confronted the man, saying:

If in my garden there were such beautiful flowers as these, and you did not earlier or later send them to me, you have committed a crime that deserves death! Do you understand?

The gardener said:

O great king! There are no such flowers in the garden. Earlier in the morning, I met the Buddha on the road with flowers from the garden. I had unsurpassed joy, so I scattered them upon the Buddha. Then I received a prediction of my buddhahood. Knowing that I should die, I returned home to eat my last meal, and the moment I looked out to see the empty box, I saw these flowers. They are certainly divine flowers and do not belong to the garden.

Now, because I was born inferior and of lowly station, I have served as the king's gardener. Because I am constrained by government office, it is impossible for me to practice the Path. But I have already received a prediction of my buddhahood. Although it is correct that I should die, I will certainly attain birth as a deva, and I will have no constraint to go before buddhas of the ten directions and I will be able to freely practice the Path according to my intentions. So, even if the king were to kill me, I have no objections.

The king, having heard that he received a prediction became ashamed and his hair stood on end. He immediately arose, bowed down, kneeled, and repented.

After the Buddha arrived at the palace, he took his meal, and when he finished, he recited a mantra and left. The king then asked Jīvaka:

Earlier, I invited the Buddha, and the old lady received her prediction. Today, I arranged to accumulate merits, and the gardener received a prediction. Now, only I have not received one. My mind is extremely melancholy. What else can I do to accumulate merits properly?

Jīvaka said:

O King! Even if you frequently arranged to accumulate merits every day, you would only exhaust the kingdom's wealth, and waste the energy of the populace. Your mind is proud, your intentions are hostile: that is why you have not yet received a prediction. Now, it would be suitable for you to remove the offerings you have made to your own body: take off your jewelled necklace with the seven jewels and your pearl bracelet, turn them into jewelled flowers, and, together with your wife and sons, join your palms and offer them single-mindedly to the Buddha. The Buddha will illuminate you, O King, if you have perfect sincerity, and then you will certainly receive a prediction.

Thereupon the king decreased the amount of food that his kitchen prepared, day and night he observed the precepts. He took all the ornaments off his body and brought them together to several master jewellers to make them into flowers. And the king, after ninety days had passed, carried the flowers in his hands together with his wives and children. He ordered his charioteers to take them to the Buddha. However, his retainer said:

I heard that the Buddha earlier reached Kuśināgara and has just entered parinirvāṇa.

The king was then extremely grieved, and choked with tears he said:

I crafted these flowers with heart and hand, and even though the Buddha has entered parinirvāṇa, I shall bring them to Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa and place them upon the Buddha's seat in order to fulfil my intention.

Jīvaka said:

The Buddha does not have a body and does not enter nirvāṇa, he both abides impermanently, and neither perishes nor abides. Only with a sincere mind can one see the Buddha. Even if the Buddha abides in the world, one without a sincere mind cannot see the Buddha. Since the great king gave rise to perfect sincerity, even if the Buddha entered parinirvāṇa, he will still certainly be able to see the Buddha.

As soon as he reached Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa, he saw the Buddha. He was both happy and sad, and moved towards him while crying. He bowed with his head and scattered the flowers of the seven jewels upon the Buddha. The flowers all remained floating in the sky and changed into a jewelled canopy which hung over the Buddha. The Buddha then gave the king his prediction:

After eighty thousand kalpas, in a kalpa called Priyadarśana, the king will attain buddhahood. That buddha will be called Suviśuddhaviṣaya Tathāgata, and his land will be called Puṣparāja,<sup>1</sup> and the lifespan of people at that time will be forty intermediate kalpas.

King Ajātaśatru's crown prince, called Candropāli,<sup>2</sup> who at that time was eight years old, when he saw his father receive a prediction was profoundly overjoyed. He immediately removed the jewels from his body and scattered them over the Buddha, and said:

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<sup>1</sup> Flower King. Note that the *King Ajātaśatru Sūtra* appears to give the name Akardama,

<sup>2</sup> The *King Ajātaśatru Sūtra* gives Candrasī.

I wish that at the time of Suviśuddhaviṣaya Buddha, I will become a cakravartin and will make offerings to that Buddha. After that Buddha attains parinirvāṇa, I shall continue practicing and become a Buddha.

Those scattered jewels transformed into a jewelled curtain which properly veiled the Buddha. The Buddha then said:

In accordance with your wishes, after the king has attained buddhahood, you will certainly become a cakravartin, and at the end of your life, you will be born in Tuṣita heaven. At the end of your life in that heaven, you will directly descend and become a Buddha. You will teach in the land called Baiṣajyarāja, and your Buddha name will be Candra,<sup>1</sup> and the lifespan of the people and the qualities of your land will all be the same as those at the time of Suviśuddhaviṣaya.

When the Buddha had finished giving these predictions, the king and Candropāli went before the Buddha and paid obeisance and after a sudden flash of light, the Buddha was nowhere to be seen.

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<sup>1</sup> The *King Ajātaśatru Sūtra* seems to suggest the full name Candragrīva.



**Sūtra on the Flower Pickers who, Contradicting the King, Scattered Flowers upon the Buddha and Received a Prediction of their Buddhahood as Buddhas by the name of Supuṣpa**

(Taishō No. 510)

*Translated into Chinese by the Indian Tṛepiṭaka Dharmaratna  
during the Eastern Jin (317–420)*

*Translated into English by Shaku Shingan*



**F**ormerly, the Bhagavān was wondering in Rājagrha, expounding the sūtras and scattering wisdom. His words were good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end. His doctrine was subtle, his practice of the holy life was pure, and what he said was broad and universal.

At that time, the king's retainers sent dozens of people to collect good flowers for the royal household. One day, from the inner palace, noble retainers, great and small went out of the city to pick flowers. When they wished to return to the city, on the road they encountered the Buddha. From afar they saw that the Bhagavān endowed with the primary and secondary marks and his immeasurable majesty. Just like the moon surrounded by stars at that start of the day, illumining the world, he was surrounded by a crowd of disciples and bodhisattvas, surrounding him in the front and in the rear.

Approaching the Buddha, they bowed their heads in homage, and then thought to themselves:

Human life is hard to protect. The Buddha Bhagavān is hard to encounter. The Dharma sūtras are difficult to find. Today, in meeting the great sage, I am like a sick person who has found a good doctor. I am poor and tied to court office; always bound to my duties, I am not free. The king is stern and impatient, so I always pick flowers for him in haste—if I miss his deadline, I will endure reprimands. But today will not repeat again, and the holy saṅgha is difficult to encounter in a koṭi of generations. Even if I sacrifice my body and life, I will offer flowers to the Buddha and scatter them upon the saṅgha, causing me to receive the sūtras and precepts, and so I can listen to the profound Dharma and its inexhaustible wisdom.

For incalculably many kalpas, I have endured countless harms, but I have not yet prized my life over the Dharma. Now, by the action of offering to the Bhagavān and the triple gem, even though I may encounter harm, I will not fall into a painful realm, but will certainly be born in a peaceful place.

Thereupon, they directly took the flowers and scattered them over the Buddha and the saṅgha, and inge-mindedly and respectfully took refuge for their whole lives.

The Buddha, knowing that they had aroused great bodhicitta, had profound compassion on them. He expounded a discourse on the Dharma of the Mahāyāna, the unlimited six pāramitās, the four kinds of equality, the four compassions, and the three liberations of bodhisattvas. Then, those who had picked the flowers all, having aroused the aspiration for anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi, had their minds liberated by the Buddha's wisdom and

attained non-retrogression and [patience at the] non-origination [of dharmas].

The Buddha then immediately gave them predictions:

After you attain buddhahood, you will all be called Supuṣpa Tathāgata, the Arhat, Samyaksambuddha, the perfect in knowledge and conduct, the Sugata, the knower of the world, the supreme charioteer of the Dharma of humans, the teacher of gods and humans, the Buddha, the Bhagavān.

Among those humans who heard this, there were none who were not pleased, and having received this great Dharma, they made offerings to the triple gem.

At that time, those who picked flowers, offered them, and received predictions, having worshipped the Buddha's feet with their heads, returned home. When they returned home, they said goodbye to their wives and children, saying:

My life will now end; the king will kill me.

Their parents were startled and asked:

What crime have you committed?

Their sons replied:

I was fulfilling the king's orders to pick flowers. But in the distance I saw the Buddha and offered the flowers to him. The king is very strict and impatient. I have already passed the allotted time and I do not have any flowers. My life is certainly in danger. That is why I give you my leave.

Their parents, having heard this, were surprised and wondered what they should do. They then looked at their flower baskets and they saw that they were filled with great flowers which were pleasing to the mind and had various scents. The fragrance perfumed and carried into the distance in four directions. Their parents then said:

Can you offer this to the king?

The sons each said:

Many people saw the act, so it will certainly be communicated to the king. Also, since, time is up, I am afraid I may not attain peace.

Then the king was greatly wroth and he knew that they had not come on time and that they had scattered the flowers. He immediately sent ministers and many soldiers to bring them back. Then, having received the king's orders, they were returned into the palace bound. Even though the punishment for their crime was public execution, they were not afraid and their faces did not change. The king asked curiously:

Because of your crimes, do you not realise that your life is in peril? You have been brought bound for execution. Why are you not afraid? Why doesn't your face change colour?

They immediately said to the king:

A person who is born, inevitably dies. Things that are created must be destroyed. We have been indifferent regarding our lives for countless kalpas in the face of that which is contrary to the Dharma. So, early in the morning, having selected flowers, we met with the Bhagavān. We offered the flowers, bowed our heads, and took refuge. At that time, we knew that we would surely die. But we would rather die with virtue, than to live without virtue. When we returned, we saw that our baskets of flowers were full of flowers as before. We all knew that this was bestowed upon us by the Tathāgata's compassion.

The king was exceedingly curious, and he did not believe this matter. So he went to the Buddha, bowed at his feet, sat to one side, joined his palms, and asked the Buddha:

Did that happen?

The Buddha said:

It happened, O King. These people gave rise to the intention to save beings in the ten directions. They are indifferent regarding their lives, and so they scattered flowers upon the Buddha. They did not think of the consequences, and by that, they received a prediction that they will, in the future, become buddhas by the name of Supuṣpa, the Arhat, Samyaksambuddha. Because they aroused great bodhicitta and

received predictions, there is no one who did not know that their flower boxes were filled with flowers whose sent is that of the mind of compassion.

The king then greatly rejoiced and quickly freed those people from their bonds and repented his transgressions:

Because of my naïve thoughts, I was not aware, and I bound bodhisattvas. I accept that this was a fault.

The Buddha said:

Excellent! Excellent! One who can rectify oneself and go beyond ordinary beings.

When they Buddha said this, there were none among the king and his retainers who were not contented. They all made obeisance and departed.

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