དྲི་མེད་གྲགས་པས་བསྟན་པ།

The Teaching of Vimalakīrti

Vimalakīrtinirdeśa

འཕགས་པ་དྲི་མ་མེད་པར་གྲགས་པས་བསྟན་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་theg pa chen po'i mdo

’phags pa dri ma med par grags pas bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Teaching of Vimalakīrti”

Āryavimalakīrtinirdeśanāmamahāyānasūtra

· Toh 176 ·

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For referencing Tibetan sources, please see our Scholar’s Edition

TRANSLATED INTO TIBETAN BY

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Summary

s.1 While the Buddha is teaching outside the city of Vaiśālī, a notable householder in the city—the great bodhisattva Vimalakīrti—apparently falls sick. The Buddha asks his disciple and bodhisattva disciples to call on Vimalakīrti, but each of them relates previous encounters that have rendered them reluctant to face his penetrating scrutiny of their attitudes and activities. Only Mañjuśrī has the courage to pay him a visit, and in the conversations that ensue between Vimalakīrti, Mañjuśrī, and several other interlocutors, Vimalakīrti sets out an uncompromising and profound view of the Buddha's teaching and the bodhisattva path, illustrated by various miraculous displays. Its masterful narrative structure, dramatic and sometimes humorous dialogue, and highly evolved presentation of teachings have made this sūtra one of the favorites of Mahāyāna literature.

Acknowledgments

ac.1 Translated by Robert A. F. Thurman and first published, under the title *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture*, by the Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park and London, in 1976.

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From the Preface to the original edition:

I sincerely thank my friend and benefactor, Dr. C. T. Shen, both for his sponsorship of the work and for his most helpful collaboration in the work of comparing the Tibetan and Chinese versions. We were sometimes joined in our round-table discussions by Drs. C. S. George, Tao-Tien Yi, F. S. K. Koo, and T. C. Tsao, whose helpful suggestions I gratefully acknowledge. My thanks also go to Ms. Yeshe Tsomo and Ms. Leah Zahler for their invaluable editorial assistance,

and to Ms. Carole Schwager and the staff of The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Preface to this electronic edition:

I earnestly thank Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche for his great efforts in creating the 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha project, to present in English the many great works of the Buddha's teachings freely to the world.

I also thank John Canti, of 84000, for his careful, creative, and very learned translating and editorial work on this electronic edition, without which this improved translation would not have materialized. I thank Mr. Patrick Alexander, of the Penn State University Press, who was the one who informed me that the copyright to my original translation done for the Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions had reverted to me upon the termination of that Institute, to which I had previously conveyed my rights.

I intend to publish in print form a further update of that original version at a future time. Since there have been a number of free-floating electronic forms of this text on the internet for some years now, I am happy that the sūtra in its current revision is now available in the 84000 Reading Room, among the many other translations on that site.

Sarva maṅgalam!

Introduction

i.1 Among Buddhist sūtras, *The Teaching of Vimalakīrti* stands out like a masterfully faceted diamond, so located between the heaps of gold, silver, and pearls of the *Transcendent Wisdom* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) *Sūtras* and the array of sapphires, rubies, emeralds, and other gems of the *Buddha Garland* (*Buddhāvataṃsaka*), or *Inconceivable Liberation* (*Acintyavimokṣa*) *Sūtras* as to refract the radiances of all, beaming them forth to the beholder in a concentrated rainbow-beam of diamond light.

i.2 I elaborate upon this traditional metaphor here to convey a sense of how the *Vimalakīrti* is truly unique among Buddhist sūtras. Unmatched in its content—a quintessence of Mahāyāna doctrines, both of the *profound* and of the *extensive* categories—its aesthetic virtue, too, makes it an object of the connoisseur's delight. This helps us understand how a hundred generations of Mahāyāna Buddhists in India, Central Asia, China, Japan, and South East Asia were disposed to study, revere, and enjoy this sūtra, finding enlightenment, inspiration, and the grace of pleasant humor.

i.3 The sūtra starts with the Buddha, in the presence of a large assembly of monks and bodhisattvas gathered before him in Āmrapālī's grove outside Vaiśālī, receiving offerings from five hundred youths from the city, headed by the Licchavi bodhisattva Ratnākara, and in response revealing the entire universe as a vast buddhafield in a miraculous display, seen by all present. After pronouncing a notable praise to the Buddha in verse, Ratnākara asks him to explain what is meant by a bodhisattva purifying his buddhafield. The Buddha's response to this request, together with further descriptions in the fifth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters, constitute one of the most complete and profound teachings on the subject of buddhafields to be found in the canonical literature.

i.4 The second chapter introduces the great Licchavi bodhisattva Vimalakīrti, master of the liberative art, who lives as a layman but transcends all categorization. Manifesting himself as if sick, he teaches all the notables and citizens of Vaiśālī, as they come to inquire about his health, on the insubstantial and unsatisfactory nature of the ordinary body, and compares it to the body of a tathāgata. In the third chapter, the Buddha asks his principal disciples, one by one, to visit Vimalakīrti on his sickbed. All of them in turn, however—first the great disciples, and then the bodhisattvas—feel reluctant to do so and decline on the grounds that previous encounters with him (recounted in detail) have left them astonished and somewhat discomfited by the profundity and transcendent nature of his views, often on topics or practices of which they had themselves hitherto been considered peerless masters.

i.5 Mañjuśrī, despite his own reluctance, is the only bodhisattva to assent to the Buddha's request, and the fourth and subsequent chapters describe the conversations between him, Vimalakīrti, and a number of other interlocutors from the large assembly accompanying Mañjuśrī to Vimalakīrti's house in the eager anticipation of hearing the Dharma expressed in the exchange between these two high-level bodhisattvas. Their discussion starts with what is meant by sickness, how a bodhisattva should comfort another bodhisattva who is sick, and how a sick bodhisattva should control his own mind, with most of the dialogue consisting of long passages spoken by Vimalakīrti in response to brief questions by Mañjuśrī. In the fifth chapter, Vimalakīrti performs the miraculous feat of bringing to his house in Vaiśālī millions of enormous thrones belonging to the entourage of a buddha from another, vastly distant universe, the Tathāgata Merupradīparāja, and explains how such apparently impossible transformations of time, space, and other phenomena become possible for a bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation. In the sixth chapter—after a discussion with Mañjuśrī on sentient beings and compassion—he leaves it to a goddess living in his house to demonstrate graphically to the hapless

great disciple Śāriputra the dualistic notions he holds on attainment, vehicle, and even gender.

i.6 The seventh chapter opens with Vimalakīrti answering Mañjuśrī's leading questions to explain that whatever ways a bodhisattva might follow, including those conventionally considered the most negative and harmful, will cause him to attain the qualities of the buddhas. This leads to a discussion on the family of the tathāgatas (*tathāgatagotra*) and a long speech in verse by Vimalakīrti extolling the ways in which the actions of bodhisattvas correspond to worldly activities, but transcend and surpass them by far. All of this is made possible by bodhisattvas' freedom from dualistic thinking, and in the eighth chapter Vimalakīrti individually questions the bodhisattvas present about how each of them practices non-duality, receiving thirty-one different replies all of which Mañjuśrī finds laudable, but nevertheless still tinged with dualism. He requests Vimalakīrti to add his own point of view, to which Vimalakīrti's responds with his famous silence.

i.7 Śāriputra again becomes an object of mind-opening critique when, at the opening of the ninth chapter, Vimalakīrti catches him wondering how everyone present is going to eat before noon. Vimalakīrti miraculously makes everyone perceive another distant buddhafield, where the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa and his bodhisattvas are about to take their meal. Vimalakīrti emanates a bodhisattva, a messenger who goes to that buddhafield and invites all the bodhisattvas there back to the house in Vaiśālī, bringing a vessel of their miraculous, highly fragrant food for the assembly to enjoy. Vimalakīrti elicits from the visiting bodhisattvas an account of how Gandhottamakūṭa teaches the Dharma only through perfumes, and explains to them how the Buddha Śākyamuni has to use much grosser expedients to tame the wild and difficult beings of his own buddhafield, the Sahā world. The visitors are surprised and impressed by the Buddha's compassion. They express the wish to pay him their respects and Vimalakīrti, in the tenth chapter, magically transports the entire assembly, including the visiting bodhisattvas, into the Buddha's presence in Āmrapālī's

grove so that they may do so. A discussion between the Buddha, Vimalakīrti, and Ānanda of the great variety of methods used to express the Dharma in different buddhafields ensues, and the Buddha gives the visitors, before they depart for their own buddhafield, a long teaching on "the destructible and indestructible," explaining how bodhisattvas should neither destroy what is compounded nor rest in what is uncompounded.

i.8 In the penultimate chapter, prompted by the Buddha, Vimalakīrti describes how he sees the Tathāgata. When Śāriputra asks where Vimalakīrti was before manifesting in this world, the Buddha tells him it was in Abhirati, the buddhafield of Akṣobhya. Everyone present wants a glimpse of that buddhafield, so at the Buddha's request Vimalakīrti physically miniaturizes Abhirati, brings it to Vaiśālī to show and inspire them all, and then replaces it where it was. In a dialogue with Śakra in the final chapter the Buddha explains, as in many other sūtras, the extraordinary merit of studying and understanding this teaching, and recounts how in one of his own former lives he was taught the importance of Dharma-worship by the Tahāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja. He then entrusts his own enlightenment along with this sūtra to Maitreya, explaining the importance it will have in conveying the profound principles of the Dharma to beings in the future, as well as asking Ānanda to memorize it and giving it several different names.

i.9 In keeping with an alternative title of the sūtra (*Inconceivable Liberation*),[1] Vimalakīrti lays great emphasis on the theme of inconceivability, that is, the ultimate incomprehensibility of all things, relative or absolute. He thus spells out the furthest implication of the application of voidness: that the finite, ego-centered mind cannot even conceive of the ultimate nature of things and, hence, as far as such minds are concerned, their ultimate reality is itself inconceivability. This accords with the degree of attainment of the bodhisattva, so frequently reached by Vimalakīrti's audiences, called "the tolerance of the birthlessness of all things" (*anutpattikadharmakṣānti*). It is extremely significant that the term "tolerance" (*kṣānti*) is used here, rather than "conviction,"

"understanding," or "realization"; it emphasizes the fact that where the ultimate is concerned, the mind is unable to grasp anything in the pattern of dualistic knowledge, for there is no finite object in this case and only relative objects can be grasped with relative certainty in the mundane sense. Yet that is not to say that the student's task is to simply put a label of "inconceivability" on all things and rest complacent with a sense of having reached a high state. Indeed, there are three stages of this tolerance: the verbal (*ghoṣānugā*), conforming (*anulomikī*), and true tolerance of the birthlessness of things. This indicates the difficulty of attainment of true tolerance, which occurs only at the eighth stage of bodhisattvahood.[2] Inconceivability as a verbal concept is only a principle to be applied to the mind, just like the verbal concept of voidness, or even of infinity.

i.10 When we reflect intensively on any of these concepts, our minds open gradually in an ever widening sphere whose limits proceed from preconceived limitation to preconceived limitation. We discover to our surprise that there is always something further, and we logically discard the possibility of any limit being ultimate because any limit serves as the near boundary of the next larger space or dimension or time. If we adhere rigorously to this process, we soon find ourselves lost in the stars, as it were, with less and less security about ever having started from anywhere.

i.11 The Buddha gave this type of deepest teaching only to disciples able to deal with it. Nāgārjuna himself rarely spelled it out explicitly, restricting himself to providing the means whereby the disciplined intellect can strip away its own conceptualizations and habitual notions. But Vimalakīrti felt that such a message should be available to a much larger circle of people, for he expressed himself definitively on all occasions, as recorded in this sūtra.

i.12 The main technique Vimalakīrti uses that is of interest here—dichotomy—is found in his discourse, which relates to another alternative title of the sūtra, "Reconciliation of Dichotomies" (*Yamakapuṭavyatyastanihāra*).[3] This is in keep-

ing with the traditional method of the Middle Way masters, who had great skill in pitting polar opposites against each other to eliminate the fixedness of each and to free the mind of the student who applies himself to the polarities to open into a middle ground of reality beyond concepts. The mahāsiddhas of first-millennium India refined this art to a consummate degree in their songs and extraordinary deeds, and the Great Ch'an and Zen Masters wielded the same "double-edged sword" in their earthshaking statements and their illuminating activities. The singular quality of such teachers' use of dichotomies lies in the fact that they relate them to the actual practice of the hearers, forcing them to integrate them in their minds and actions. Thus, they expect them to be liberated inconceivably, while being totally engaged in the work of helping other living beings. They recommend their full cultivation of great love and great compassion while maintaining total awareness of the total absence of any such thing as a living being, a suffering being, a being in bondage. In short, they show the way to the full nonduality of wisdom and great compassion, the latter being expressed as skill in liberative art—the integrated approach acknowledged by all the masters as the essence of the Mahāyāna.

i.13 Vimalakīrti's reconciliation of dichotomies is so thoroughgoing that he shocks the disciples by his advocacy of the most horrible things as being part of the bodhisattva's path. The bodhisattva may commit the five deadly sins, follow the false outsider teachings, entertain the sixty-two false views, consort with all the passions, and so on. Even the māras, or devils, that plague the various universes are said to be bodhisattvas dwelling in inconceivable liberation—playing the devil, as it were, in order to develop living beings.

i.14 It is an extraordinary fact that Vimalakīrti's method in integrating the intellectual and behavioral dichotomies is one of many blatant hints of tantric ideas in the background of his teaching method. Futher research is needed to determine whether these connections prove the existence of tantrism at a time earlier than modern scholars generally believe or whether later tantrics found Vimalakīrti's teachings a source of inspiration. However, the concept of the ad-

ept using paths generally considered evil for the attainment of enlightenment and the buddha-qualities is basic in tantric doctrine and practice; Śākyamuni's revelation of the Sahā world as a jeweled buddhafield accords with tantric method; and Vimalakīrti's discussion of how a bodhisattva in inconceivable liberation can transfer Mount Sumeru, or an entire universe, into a mustard seed is reminiscent of the yogic practices for transmuting dimensions of time and space found in the *Guhyasamāja*.[4] The description of Vimalakīrti as versed in "esoteric practices";[5] the description of the "family of the tathāgatas";[6] Vimalakīrti's verse identifying wisdom as the mother and liberative art as the father, exactly corresponding with the central tantric symbolism of male and female as vajra and bell, and the like;[7] the yogic powers ascribed to the bodhisattva in inconceivable liberation, such as the ability to take fire in his stomach;[8] the mention of the appearance of many tathāgatas—including Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Ratnavyūha, Sarvārthasiddha, and others—in the house of Vimalakīrti, teaching the esotericisms of the tathāgatas (*tathāgata-guhyaka*);[9] and the culmination of the sūtra in the vision of the Buddha Akṣobhya:[10] all these lend the sūtra a certain aura of tantra. Whatever the "historical" relationship may be, there is no doubt that the mahāsiddhas of later times would have felt at home in the house of Vimalakīrti.

i.15 Nothing concrete is known about the "original text" of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*. It purports to record events that took place during Gautama Buddha's time (sixth to fifth century B.C.), but no text was apparent in India until after Nāgārjuna (c. first century B.C. to first century A.D.) had revived the Mahāyāna traditions, discovering the Mahāyāna Sanskrit sūtras, the *Vimalakīrti* text among them. This text was subsequently translated into Chinese seven different times, starting in the second century with Yan Fodiao[11] (A.D. 188), the version of Kumārajīva (A.D. 406) being the most popular, and that of Xuanzang (A.D. 650) the most technically accurate. It was translated into Tibetan at least twice, the definitive version completed in the early ninth century by the well-known Tibetan translator Chönyi Tsültrim (*chos nyid tshul khrims*), also known as Dharmatāśīla, who was one of the compilers of the *Mahāvyutpatti*.[12] It was also

translated into Sogdian, Khotanese, and Uighur. For many years it was thought that all Sanskrit texts of the work had been lost, except for some fragments quoted in Mahāyāna philosophical works. In 1998, however, a Sanskrit manuscript was found in the Potala Palace, Lhasa, of which edited versions were published in 2004 and 2006 by the Taishō University Study Group on Sanskrit Buddhist Literature.[13]

i.16 The Japanese chose Kumārajīva's version for their translation, and the majority of modern translations have been based on this text. In 1962, Dr. E. Lamotte set forth to rectify this situation by basing his fine French translation on the Tibetan and the Xuanzang versions. The history comes full circle finally, as the Rev. E. Bangert first translated the Tibetan into modern Thai and then into current Sanskrit.

i.17 My translation is based on the Tibetan version, as I am most at home in that language, although at times the simplicity of the Kumārajīva, the psychological precision of Xuanzang, or the elegance of Lamotte may have clarified the Tibetan, provided an alternative, or given me another reference point from which to find a middle way. Any significant departures from the basic Tibetan have been duly noted. The recently discovered Sanskrit text of the sūtra only came to light thirty years after the first edition of this translation was published, but was consulted for this new edition and has helped to make some of the revisions, including the updating of a number of Sanskrit proper names.

The Translation

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra

The Teaching of Vimalakīrti

Chapter 1 Purification of the Buddhafield

1.1 Reverence to all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, noble disciples, and pratyekabuddhas, in the past, the present, and the future.

1.2 Thus did I hear on a single occasion. The Lord Buddha was in residence in the garden of Āmrapālī, in the city of Vaiśālī, attended by a great gathering. Of bhikṣus there were eight thousand, all arhats. They were free from impurities and afflictions, and all had attained self-mastery. Their minds were entirely liberated by perfect knowledge. They were calm and dignified, like royal elephants. They had accomplished their work, done what they had to do, cast off their burdens, attained their goals, and totally destroyed the bonds of existence. Their true knowledge had made their minds entirely free. They all had attained the utmost perfection of every form of control over their minds.[14]

1.3 Of bodhisattvas there were thirty-two thousand, great spiritual heroes who were universally acclaimed. They were dedicated through the penetrating activity of their great superknowledges and were sustained by the grace of the Buddha. Guardians of the city of Dharma, they upheld the true doctrine,[15] and their great teachings resounded like the lion's roar throughout the ten directions. Without having to be asked, they were the natural spiritual benefactors of all living beings. They maintained unbroken the succession of the Three Jewels, conquering devils and foes and overwhelming all critics.

1.4 Their mindfulness, intelligence, realization, meditation, retention, and eloquence all were perfected. They were free of all obscurations and emotional

involvements, living in liberation without impediment. They were totally dedicated through the transcendences of generosity; subdued, unwavering, and sincere morality; tolerance; effort; meditation; wisdom; skill in liberative art; commitment; power; and gnosis.[16] They had attained the intuitive tolerance of the ultimate incomprehensibility and unborn nature[17] of all things. They turned the irreversible wheel of the Dharma. They were stamped with the insignia of signlessness.

1.5 They were expert in knowing the spiritual faculties of all living beings. They were brave with the confidence that overawes all assemblies. They had gathered the great stores of merit and of wisdom, and their bodies, beautiful without ornaments, were adorned with all the auspicious signs and marks. They were exalted in fame and glory, like the lofty summit of Mount Sumeru. Their high resolve as hard as diamond, unbreakable in their faith in the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, they showered forth the rain of ambrosia that is released by the light rays of the jewel of the Dharma, which shines everywhere.

1.6 Their voices were perfect in diction and resonance, and versatile in speaking all languages. They had penetrated the profound principle of relativity and had destroyed the persistence of the instinctual mental habits underlying all convictions concerning finitude and infinitude.[18] They spoke fearlessly, like lions, sounding the thunder of the magnificent teaching. Unequaled, they surpassed all measure. They were the best captains for the voyage of discovery of the treasures of the Dharma, the stores of merit and wisdom.

1.7 They were expert in the way of the Dharma, which is straight, peaceful, subtle, gentle, hard to see, and difficult to realize. They were endowed with the wisdom that is able to understand the thoughts of living beings, as well as their comings and goings. They had been consecrated with the anointment of the peerless gnosis of the Buddha. With their high resolve, they approached the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, and the eighteen special qualities of the Buddha.

1.8 They had crossed the terrifying abyss of the bad migrations, and yet they assumed reincarnation voluntarily in all migrations for the sake of disciplining living beings. Great Kings of medicine, understanding all the sicknesses of passions, they could apply the medicine of the Dharma appropriately.

1.9 They were inexhaustible mines of limitless virtues, and they glorified innumerable buddhafields with the splendor of these virtues. They conferred great benefit when seen, heard, or even approached. Were one to extol them for innumerable hundreds of thousands of myriads of eons, one still could not exhaust their mighty flood of virtues.

1.10 These bodhisattvas were named: Samadarśin, Samaviṣamadarśin, Samādhi vikurvaṇarāja, Dharmeśvara, Dharmaketu, Prabhāketu, Prabhāvyūha, Ratnavyūha, Mahāvyūha, Pratibhānakūṭa, Ratnakūṭa, Ratnapāṇi, Ratnamudrāhasta, Nityotkṣiptahasta, Nityotpalakṛtahasta, Nityotkaṇṭhita, Nityaprahasitapramuditendriya, Prāmodyarāja, Devarāja, Praṇidhiprayātaprāpta, Pratisaṃvitpraṇādaprāpta, Gaganagañja, Ratnolkādhārin, Ratnavīra, Ratnananda, Ratnaśrī, Indrajāla, Jālinīprabha, Anārambaṇadhyāyin, Prajñākūta, Ratnajaha, Mārapramardin, Vidyuddeva, Vikurvaṇarāja, Lakṣaṇakūṭasamatikrānta, Siṃhaghoṣābhigarjitaśvara, Śailaśikharasaṃghaṭṭanarāja, Gandhahastin, Gaja gandhahastin, Satatodyukta, Anikṣiptadhura, Sumati, Sujāta, Padmaśrīgarbha, Padmavyūha, Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Brahmajāla, Ratnayaṣṭin, Mārajit, Kṣetralaṃkṛta, Maṇiratnacchattra, Suvarnacūḍa, Maṇicūḍa, Maitreya, Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, and so forth, with the remainder of the thirty-two thousand.[19]

1.11 There were also gathered there ten thousand Brahmās, at their head Brahmā Śikhin, who had come from the Aśoka universe with its four sectors to see, venerate, and serve the Buddha and to hear the Dharma from his own mouth. There were twelve thousand Śakras from various four-sector universes. And there were other powerful gods: Brahmās, Śakras, Lokapālas, devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas. Finally, there

was the fourfold community, consisting of bhikṣus, bhikṣuṇīs, laymen, and laywomen.

1.12 The Lord Buddha, thus surrounded and venerated by these multitudes of many hundreds of thousands of living beings, sat upon a majestic lion-throne and began to teach the Dharma. Dominating all the multitudes, just as Sumeru, the king of mountains, looms high over the oceans, the Lord Buddha shone, radiated, and glittered as he sat upon his magnificent lion-throne.

1.13 Thereupon, the Licchavi bodhisattva Ratnākara,[20] with five hundred Licchavi youths, each holding a precious parasol made of seven different kinds of jewels,[21] came forth from the city of Vaiśālī and presented himself at the grove of Āmrapālī. Each approached the Buddha, bowed at his feet, circumambulated him clockwise seven times, laid down his precious parasol in offering, and withdrew to one side.

1.14 As soon as all these precious parasols had been laid down, suddenly, by the miraculous power of the Lord, they were transformed into a single precious canopy so great that it formed a covering for this entire billion-world galaxy.[22] The surface of the entire billion-world galaxy was reflected in the interior of the great precious canopy, where the total content of this galaxy could be seen: limitless mansions of suns, moons, and stellar bodies; the realms of the devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas, as well as the realms of the four Mahārājas; the king of mountains, Mount Sumeru; Mount Himavat, Mount Mucilinda, Mount Mahāmucilinda, Mount Gandhamādana, Mount Ratnaparvata, Mount Kālaparvata, Mount Cakravāḍa, and Mount Mahācakravāḍa;[23] all the great oceans, rivers, bays, torrents, streams, brooks, and springs; and finally, all the villages, suburbs, cities, capitals, provinces, and wildernesses. All this could be clearly seen by everyone. And the voices of all the buddhas of the ten directions could be heard proclaiming their teachings of the Dharma in all the worlds, the sounds reverberating in the space beneath the great precious canopy.

1.15 At this vision of the magnificent miracle effected by the supernatural power of the Lord Buddha, the entire host was ecstatic, enraptured, astonished, delighted, satisfied, and filled with awe and pleasure. They all bowed down to the Tathāgata, withdrew to one side with palms pressed together, and gazed upon him with fixed attention. The young Licchavi Ratnākara knelt with his right knee on the ground, raised his hands, palms pressed together in salute of the Buddha, and praised him with the following hymn:

1.16 “Pure are your eyes, broad and beautiful, like the petals of a blue lotus.
Pure is your thought, having discovered the supreme transcendence of all trances.[24]
Immeasurable is the ocean of your virtues, the accumulation of your good deeds.
You affirm the path of peace. O Great Ascetic, obeisance to you!

1.17 “Leader, bull of men,[25] we behold the revelation of your miracle.
The superb and radiant fields of the sugatas appear before us,
And your extensive spiritual teachings that lead to immortality[26]
Make themselves heard throughout the whole reach of space.

1.18 “Dharma-King, you rule with the Dharma your supreme Dharma-kingdom,
And thereby bestow the treasures of the Dharma upon all living beings.
Expert in the deep analysis of things, you teach their ultimate meaning.[27]
Sovereign Lord of Dharma, obeisance to you!

1.19 “All these things arise dependently, from causes,
Yet they are neither existent nor nonexistent.
Therein is neither ego, nor experiencer, nor doer,
Yet no action, good or evil, loses its effects.[28] Such is your teaching.

1.20 “O Śākyamuni, conquering the powerful host of Māra,

You found peace, immortality, and the happiness of that supreme enlightenment
That is not realized by any among the outsiders,[29]
Though they arrest their feeling, thought, and mental processes.

1.21 “O Wonderful King of Dharma, you turned the wheel of Dharma before men and gods,
With its threefold revolution, its manifold aspects,[30]
Its extreme peace, and its purity of nature;
And thereby the Three Jewels were revealed.

1.22 “Those who are well disciplined by your precious Dharma
Are free of vain imaginings and always deeply peaceful.
Supreme doctor, you put an end to birth, decay, sickness, and death.
Immeasurable ocean of virtue, we bow to you!

1.23 “Like Mount Sumeru, you are unmoved by honor or scorn.
You love moral beings and immoral beings equally.
Poised in equanimity, your mind is like the sky.
Who would not honor such a precious jewel of a being?[31]

1.24 “Great Sage, in all these multitudes gathered here,
Who look upon your countenance with hearts sincere in faith,
Each being beholds the Victor, as if just before him.
This is a special quality of the Buddha.[32]

1.25 “Although the Lord speaks with but one voice,
Those present perceive that same voice differently,
And each understands in his own language according to his own needs.
This is a special quality of the Buddha.[33]

1.26 “From the leader’s act of speaking in a single voice,

Some merely develop an instinct for the teaching, some gain realization,
Some find pacification of all their doubts.
This is a special quality of the Buddha.

1.27 “We bow to you who command the force of leadership and the ten powers!
We bow to you who are dauntless, knowing no fear!
We bow to you, leader of all living beings,
Who fully manifests the special qualities!

1.28 “We bow to you who have cut the bondage of all fetters!
We bow to you who, having gone beyond, stand on firm ground!
We bow to you who save the suffering beings!
We bow to you who do not remain in the migrations!

1.29 “You associate with living beings by frequenting their migrations,
Yet your mind is liberated from all migrations.
Just as the lotus, born of mud, is not tainted thereby,
So the lotus of the Buddha preserves the realization of voidness.

1.30 “You nullify all signs in all things everywhere.
You are not subject to any wish for anything at all.[34]
The miraculous power of the buddhas is inconceivable.
We bow to you, who stand nowhere, like infinite space.”

1.31 Then, the young Licchavi Ratnākara, having celebrated the Buddha with these verses, further addressed him, “Lord, these five hundred young Licchavis are truly on their way to unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, and they have asked what is the bodhisattvas’ purification of the buddhafield.[35] Please, Lord, explain to them the bodhisattvas’ purification of the buddhafield!”

1.32 Upon this request, the Buddha gave his approval to the young Licchavi Ratnākara. “Good, good, young man! Your question to the Tathāgata about the purification of the buddhafield is indeed good. Therefore, young man, listen

well and remember! I will explain to you the purification of the buddhafield of the bodhisattvas."

"Very good, Lord," replied Ratnākara and the five hundred young Licchavis, and they set themselves to listen.

1.33 The Buddha said, "Noble son, a buddhafield of bodhisattvas is a field of living beings. Why so? A bodhisattva embraces a buddhafield to the same extent that he causes the development of living beings. He embraces a buddhafield to the same extent that living beings become disciplined. He embraces a buddhafield to the same extent that, through entrance into a buddhafield, living beings are introduced to the buddha-gnosis. He embraces a buddhafield to the same extent that, through entrance into that buddhafield, living beings increase their noble spiritual faculties. Why so? Noble son, a buddhafield of bodhisattvas springs from the aims of living beings.

1.34 "For example, Ratnākara, should one wish to build in empty space, one might go ahead in spite of the fact that it is not possible to build or to adorn anything in empty space. In just the same way, should a bodhisattva, who knows full well that all things are like empty space, wish to build a buddhafield in order to develop living beings, he might go ahead, in spite of the fact that it is not possible to build or to adorn a buddhafield in empty space.[36]

1.35 "Yet, Ratnākara, a bodhisattva's buddhafield is a field of positive thought. When he attains enlightenment, living beings free of hypocrisy and deceit will be born in his buddhafield.

"Noble son, a bodhisattva's buddhafield is a field of high resolve. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who have harvested the two stores and have planted the roots of virtue will be born in his buddhafield.

1.36 "A bodhisattva's buddhafield is a field of virtuous application. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who live by all virtuous principles will be born in his buddhafield.

"A bodhisattva's buddhafield is the magnificence of the conception of the spirit of enlightenment. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are actually participating in the Mahāyāna will be born in his buddhafield.[37]

1.37 "A bodhisattva's buddhafield is a field of generosity. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who give away all their possessions will be born in his buddhafield.

"A bodhisattva's buddhafield is a field of morality. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who follow the path of the ten virtues with positive thoughts will be born in his buddhafield.

1.38 "A bodhisattva's buddhafield is a field of tolerance. When he attains enlightenment, living beings with the transcendences of tolerance, discipline, and the superior trance—hence beautiful with the thirty-two auspicious signs—will be born in his buddhafield.

"A bodhisattva's buddhafield is a field of effort. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who devote their efforts to virtue will be born in his buddhafield.

1.39 "A bodhisattva's buddhafield is a field of meditation. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are evenly balanced through mindfulness and awareness will be born in his buddhafield.

"A bodhisattva's buddhafield is a field of wisdom. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are destined for the ultimate will be born in his buddhafield.

1.40 "A bodhisattva's buddhafield consists of the four immeasurables. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who live by love, compassion, joy, and impartiality will be born in his buddhafield.

"A bodhisattva's buddhafield consists of the four means of unification. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are held together by all the liberations will be born in his buddhafield.

1.41 “A bodhisattva’s buddhafield is skill in liberative art. When he attains enlightenment, living beings skilled in all liberative arts and activities will be born in his buddhafield.

“A bodhisattva’s buddhafield consists of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment. Living beings who devote their efforts to the four foci of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of magical power, the five spiritual faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the eight branches of the holy path will be born in his buddhafield.

1.42 “A bodhisattva’s buddhafield is his mind of total dedication. When he attains enlightenment, the ornaments of all virtues will appear in his buddhafield.

“A bodhisattva’s buddhafield is the doctrine that eradicates the eight adversities. When he attains enlightenment, the three bad migrations will cease, and there will be no such thing as the eight adversities in his buddhafield.

1.43 “A bodhisattva’s buddhafield consists of his personal observance of the basic precepts and his restraint in blaming others for their transgressions. When he attains enlightenment, even the word ‘crime’ will never be mentioned in his buddhafield.

“A bodhisattva’s buddhafield is the purity of the path of the ten virtues. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are secure in long life, great in wealth, chaste in conduct, enhanced by true speech, soft-spoken, free of divisive intrigues and adroit in reconciling factions, enlightening in their conversations,[38] free of envy, free of malice, and endowed with perfect views will be born in his buddhafield.

1.44 “Thus, noble son, just as is the bodhisattva’s production of the spirit of enlightenment, so is his positive thought. And just as is his positive thought, so is his virtuous application.

"His virtuous application is tantamount to his high resolve; his high resolve is tantamount to his determination; his determination is tantamount to his practice; his practice is tantamount to his total dedication; his total dedication is tantamount to his liberative art; his liberative art is tantamount to his development of living beings; and his development of living beings[39] is tantamount to the purity of his buddhafield.

1.45 "The purity of his buddhafield reflects the purity of living beings; the purity of the living beings reflects the purity of his gnosis; the purity of his gnosis reflects the purity of his doctrine; the purity of his doctrine reflects the purity of his transcendental practice; and the purity of his transcendental practice reflects the purity of his own mind."

1.46 Thereupon, magically influenced by the Buddha, the venerable Śāriputra[40] had this thought: "If the buddhafield is pure only to the extent that the mind of the bodhisattva is pure, then, when Śākyamuni Buddha was engaged in the career of the bodhisattva, his mind must have been impure. Otherwise, how could this buddhafield appear to be so impure?"

1.47 The Buddha, aware of venerable Śāriputra's thoughts, said to him, "What do you think, Śāriputra? Is it because the sun and moon are impure that those blind from birth do not see them?"

Śāriputra replied, "No, Lord. It is not so. The fault lies with those blind from birth, and not with the sun and moon."

1.48 The Buddha declared, "In the same way, Śāriputra, the fact that some living beings do not behold the splendid display of virtues of the buddhafield of the Tathāgata is due to their own ignorance. It is not the fault of the Tathāgata. Śāriputra, the buddhafield of the Tathāgata is pure, but you do not see it."

1.49 Then, the Brahmā Śikhin said to the venerable Śāriputra, "Reverend Śāriputra, do not say that the buddhafield of the Tathāgata is impure. Reverend Śāriputra, the buddhafield of the Tathāgata is pure. I see the splendid expanse of the

buddhafield of the Lord Śākyamuni as equal to the splendor of, for example, the abodes of the highest deities."

Then the venerable Śāriputra said to the Brahmā Śikhin, "As for me, O Brahmā, I see this great earth, with its highs and lows, its thorns, its precipices, its peaks, and its abysses, as if it were entirely filled with ordure."

1.50 Brahmā Śikhin replied, "The fact that you see such a buddhafield as this as if it were so impure, reverend Śāriputra, is a sure sign that there are highs and lows in your mind and that your positive thought in regard to the buddha-gnosis is not pure either. Reverend Śāriputra, those whose minds are impartial toward all living beings and whose positive thoughts toward the buddha-gnosis are pure see this buddhafield as perfectly pure."

1.51 Thereupon the Lord touched the ground of this billion-world galactic universe with his big toe, and suddenly it was transformed into a huge mass of precious jewels, a magnificent array of many hundreds of thousands of clusters of precious gems, until it resembled the universe of the Tathāgata Ratnavyūha, called Anantaguṇaratnavyūha. Everyone in the entire assembly was filled with wonder, each perceiving himself seated on a throne of jeweled lotuses.

1.52 Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Śāriputra, "Śāriputra, do you see this splendor of the virtues of the buddhafield?"

Śāriputra replied, "I see it, Lord! Here before me is a display of splendor such as I never before heard of or beheld!"

1.53 The Buddha said, "Śāriputra, this buddhafield is always thus pure, but the Tathāgata makes it appear to be spoiled by many faults, in order to bring about the maturity of inferior living beings. For example, Śāriputra, the gods of the Trayastriṃśa heaven all take their food from a single precious vessel, yet the nectar that nourishes each one differs according to the differences of the merits each has accumulated. Just so, Śāriputra, living beings born in the same

buddhafield see the splendor of the virtues of the buddhafields of the buddhas according to their own degrees of purity."

1.54 When this splendor of the beauty of the virtues of the buddhafield shone forth, eighty-four thousand beings conceived the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment, and the five hundred Licchavi youths who had accompanied the young Licchavi Ratnākara all attained the conformative tolerance of ultimate birthlessness.

1.55 Then, the Lord withdrew his miraculous power and at once the buddhafield was restored to its usual appearance. Then, both men and gods who subscribed to the Disciple Vehicle thought, "Alas! All constructed things are impermanent."

1.56 Thereby, thirty-two thousand living beings purified their immaculate, undistorted Dharma-eye in regard to all things. The eight thousand bhikṣus were liberated from their mental defilements, attaining the state of nongrasping. And the eighty-four thousand living beings who were devoted to the grandeur of the buddhafield, having understood that all things are by nature but magical creations, all conceived in their own minds the spirit of unexcelled, totally perfect enlightenment.[41]

Chapter 2 Inconceivable Skill in Liberative Art

2.1 At that time, there lived in the great city of Vaiśālī a certain Licchavi, Vimalakīrti by name. Having served the ancient buddhas, he had generated the roots of virtue by honoring them and making offerings to them. He had attained tolerance as well as eloquence. He played with the great superknowledges. He had attained the power of retention and the fearlessnesses. He had conquered all demons and opponents. He had penetrated the profound way of the Dharma. He was liberated through the transcendence of wisdom. Having integrated his realization with skill in liberative art, he was expert in knowing the thoughts and actions of living beings. Knowing the strength or weakness of their faculties, and being gifted with unrivaled eloquence, he taught the Dharma appropriately to each. Having applied himself energetically to the Mahāyāna, he understood it and accomplished his tasks with great finesse. He lived with the deportment of a buddha, and his superior intelligence was as wide as an ocean. He was praised, honored, and commended by all the buddhas and was respected by Śakra, Brahmā, and all the Lokapālas. In order to develop living beings with his skill in liberative art, he lived in the great city of Vaiśālī.

2.2 His wealth was inexhaustible for the purpose of sustaining the poor and the helpless. He observed a pure morality in order to protect the immoral. He maintained tolerance and self-control in order to reconcile beings who were angry, cruel, violent, and brutal. He blazed with energy in order to inspire people who were lazy. He maintained concentration, mindfulness, and meditation in order to sustain the mentally troubled. He attained decisive wisdom in order to sustain the foolish.[42]

2.3 He wore the white clothes of the layman, yet lived impeccably like a religious devotee. He lived at home, but remained aloof from the realm of desire, the realm of pure matter, and the immaterial realm. He had a son, a wife, and female attendants, yet always maintained continence. He appeared to be sur-

rounded by servants, yet lived in solitude. He appeared to be adorned with ornaments, yet always was endowed with the auspicious signs and marks. He seemed to eat and drink, yet always took nourishment from the taste of meditation. He made his appearance at the fields of sports and in the casinos, but his aim was always to mature those people who were attached to games and gambling. He visited the fashionable outsider teachers, yet always kept unswerving loyalty to the Buddha. He understood the mundane and transcendental sciences and esoteric practices,[43] yet always took pleasure in the delights of the Dharma. He mixed in all crowds, yet was respected as foremost of all.[44]

2.4 In order to be in harmony with people, he associated with elders, with those of middle age, and with the young, yet always spoke in harmony with the Dharma.[45] He engaged in all sorts of businesses, yet had no interest in profit or possessions. To educate living beings, he would appear at crossroads and on street corners, and to protect them he participated in government. To turn people away from the Individual Vehicle and to engage them in the Mahāyāna, he appeared among listeners and teachers of the Dharma. To develop children, he visited all the schools. To demonstrate the evils of desire, he even entered the brothels. To establish drunkards in correct mindfulness, he entered all the drinking-houses.

2.5 He was honored as the merchant among merchants because he demonstrated the priority of the Dharma. He was honored as the landlord among landlords because he renounced the aggressiveness of ownership. He was honored as the warrior among warriors because he cultivated endurance, determination, and fortitude. He was honored as the brahmin among brahmins because he suppressed pride, vanity, and arrogance. He was honored as the official among officials because he regulated the functions of government according to the Dharma. He was honored as the prince of princes because he reversed their attachment to royal pleasures and sovereign power.[46] He was honored as a chamberlain in the royal harem because he brought the young ladies to spiritual maturity.

2.6 He was compatible with ordinary people because he appreciated the excellence of ordinary merits. He was honored as the Śakra among Śakras because he showed them the temporality[47] of their lordship. He was honored as the Brahmā among Brahmās because he showed them the special excellence of gnosis. He was honored as the Lokapāla among Lokapālas because he fostered the development of all living beings.

Thus lived the Licchavi Vimalakīrti in the great city of Vaiśālī, endowed with an infinite knowledge of skill in liberative arts.

2.7 At that time, out of this very skill in liberative art, Vimalakīrti manifested himself as if sick. To inquire after his health, the king, the officials, the lords, the youths, the brahmins, the householders, the businessmen, the townfolk, the countryfolk, and thousands of other living beings came forth from the great city of Vaiśālī and called on the invalid. When they arrived, Vimalakīrti taught them the Dharma, beginning his discourse from the actuality of the four main elements:

2.8 “Friends, this body is so impermanent, fragile, unworthy of confidence, and feeble. It is so insubstantial, perishable, short-lived, painful, filled with diseases, and subject to changes. Thus, my friends, as this body is only a vessel of many sicknesses, wise men do not rely on it. This body is like a ball of foam, unable to bear any pressure. It is like a water bubble, not remaining very long. It is like a mirage, born from the appetites of the passions. It is like the trunk of the plantain tree, having no core. Alas! This body is like a machine, a nexus of bones and tendons. It is like a magical illusion, consisting of falsifications.[48] It is like a dream, being an unreal vision. It is like a reflection, being the image of former actions. It is like an echo, being dependent on conditioning. It is like a cloud, being characterized by turbulence and dissolution. It is like a flash of lightning, being unstable, and decaying every moment. The body is ownerless, being the product of a variety of conditions.

2.9 “This body is inert, like the earth; selfless, like water; lifeless, like fire; impersonal, like the wind; and nonsubstantial, like space. This body is unreal, being a collocation of the four main elements. It is void, not existing as self or as self-possessed. It is inanimate, being like grass, trees, walls, clods of earth, and illusions. It is insensate, being driven like a windmill. It is filthy, being an agglomeration of pus and excrement. It is false, being fated to be broken and destroyed, in spite of being anointed and massaged. It is afflicted by the four hundred and four diseases.[49] It is like an ancient well, constantly overwhelmed by old age. Its duration is never certain—certain only is its end in death. This body is a combination of aggregates, elements, and sense-media, which are comparable to murderers, poisonous snakes, and an empty town, respectively.[50] Therefore, you should be repelled by such a body. You should despair of it and should arouse your admiration for the body of the Tathāgata.

2.10 “Friends, the body of a tathāgata is the body of Dharma, born of gnosis. The body of a tathāgata is born of the stores of merit and wisdom.[51] It is born of morality, of concentration, of wisdom, of the liberations, and of the knowledge and vision of liberation.[52] It is born of love, compassion, joy, and impartiality. It is born of charity, discipline, and self-control. It is born of the path of the ten virtues. It is born of patience and gentleness. It is born of the roots of virtue planted by solid efforts. It is born of the concentrations, the liberations, the meditations, and the absorptions. It is born of learning, wisdom, and liberative art. It is born of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment. It is born of mental quiescence and transcendental analysis.[53] It is born of the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, and the eighteen special qualities. It is born of all the transcendences. It is born from sciences and superknowledges. It is born of the abandonment of all evil qualities, and of the gathering of all good qualities. It is born of truth.[54] It is born of reality. It is born of conscious awareness.

2.11 “Friends, the body of a tathāgata is born of innumerable good works. Toward such a body you should turn your aspirations, and, in order to eliminate the

sicknesses of the passions of all living beings, you should conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.”

2.12 While the Licchavi Vimalakīrti thus taught the Dharma to those who had come to inquire about his sickness, many hundreds of thousands of living beings conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

Chapter 3 The Disciples' and the Bodhisattvas' Reluctance to Visit Vimalakīrti

3.1 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti thought to himself, "I am sick, lying on my bed in pain, yet the Tathāgata, the arhat, the perfectly accomplished Buddha, does not consider me or take pity upon me, and sends no one to inquire after my illness."

3.2 The Lord knew this thought in the mind of Vimalakīrti and said to the venerable Śāriputra, "Śāriputra, go to inquire after the illness of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti."

Thus addressed, the venerable Śāriputra answered the Buddha, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant[55] to go to ask the Licchavi Vimalakīrti about his illness. Why? I remember one day, when I was sitting at the foot of a tree in the forest, absorbed in contemplation, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came to the foot of that tree and said to me, 'Reverend Śāriputra, this is not the way to absorb yourself in contemplation. You should absorb yourself in contemplation so that neither body nor mind appear anywhere in the three realms. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you can manifest all ordinary behavior without forsaking cessation. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you can manifest the nature of an ordinary person without abandoning your cultivated spiritual nature. You should absorb yourself in contemplation so that the mind neither settles within nor moves without toward external forms. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment are manifest without deviation toward any convictions. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you are released in liberation without abandoning the passions that are the province of the world.[56]

3.3 " 'Reverend Śāriputra, those who absorb themselves in contemplation in such a way are declared by the Lord to be truly absorbed in contemplation.'

"Lord, when I heard this teaching, I was unable to reply and remained silent. Therefore, I am reluctant to go to ask that good man about his sickness."

3.4 The Buddha then said to the venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, "Maudgalyāyana, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness."[57]

Maudgalyāyana replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness. Why? I remember one day when I was teaching the Dharma to the householders in a square in the great city of Vaiśālī, and the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came along and said to me, 'Reverend Maudgalyāyana, that is not the way to teach the Dharma to the householders in their white clothes. The Dharma must be taught according to reality.

3.5 "'Reverend Maudgalyāyana, the Dharma is without a living being, because it is free of the dust of living beings. It is selfless, because it is free of the dust of desire. It is lifeless, because it is free of birth and death. It is without a person, because it dispenses with past origins and future destinies.

3.6 "'The Dharma is peace and pacification, because it is free of desire. It does not become an object, because it is free of words and letters; it is inexpressible, and it transcends all movement of mind.[58]

3.7 "'The Dharma is omnipresent, because it is like infinite space. It is without color, mark, or shape, because it is free of all process. It is without the concept of "mine," because it is free of the habitual notion of possession. It is without ideation, because it is free of mind, thought, or consciousness. It is incomparable, because it has no antithesis. It is without presumption of conditionality, because it does not conform to causes.

3.8 "'It permeates evenly all things, because all are included in the ultimate realm.[59] It conforms to reality by means of the process of nonconformity. It abides at the reality-limit, for it is utterly without fluctuation. It is immovable, because it is independent of the six objects of sense. It is without coming and going, for it never stands still. It is comprised by voidness, it is remarkable

through signlessness, and because of wishlessness it is free of presumption and repudiation. It is without establishment and rejection, without birth or destruction. It is without any fundamental consciousness, transcending the range of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and thought. It is without highness and lowness. It abides without movement or activity.[60]

3.9 "'Reverend Mahāmaudgalyāyana, how could there be a teaching in regard to such a Dharma? Reverend Mahāmaudgalyāyana, even the expression "to teach the Dharma" is presumptuous, and those who listen to it listen to presumption. Reverend Maudgalyāyana, where there are no presumptuous words, there is no teacher of the Dharma, no one to listen, and no one to understand. It is as if an illusory person were to teach the Dharma to illusory people.

3.10 "'Therefore, you should teach the Dharma by keeping your mind on this. You should be adept in regard to the spiritual faculties of living beings. By means of the correct vision of the wisdom-eye, manifesting the great compassion, acknowledging the benevolent activity of the Buddha, purifying your intentions, and understanding the definitive expressions[61] of the Dharma, you should teach the Dharma in order that the continuity of the Three Jewels may never be interrupted.'

3.11 "Lord, when Vimalakīrti had discoursed thus, eight hundred householders in the crowd conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, and I myself was speechless. Therefore, Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness."

3.12 The Buddha then said to the venerable Mahākāśyapa,[62] "Mahākāśyapa, you go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness."

"Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness. Why? I remember one day, when I was in the street of the poor begging for my food, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came along and said to me, 'Reverend Mahākāśyapa, to avoid the houses of the wealthy, and to favor the

houses of the poor—this is partiality in benevolence.[63] Reverend Mahākāśyapa, you should dwell on the fact of the equality of things, and you should seek alms with consideration for all living beings at all times. You should beg your food in awareness of the ultimate nonexistence of food. You should seek alms for the sake of eliminating the materialism of others. When you enter a town, you should keep in mind its actual voidness, yet you should proceed through it in order to develop men and women. You should enter homes as if entering the family of the Buddha. You should accept alms by not taking anything. You should see form like a man blind from birth, hear sounds as if they were echoes, smell scents as if they were like wind, experience tastes without any discrimination, touch tangible objects without there being in gnosis any contact, and know things with the consciousness of an illusory creature. That which is without a state of being self and a state of being other does not burn. And what does not burn will not be extinguished.[64]

3.13 "'Elder Mahākāśyapa, if, equipoised in the eight liberations without transcending the eight perverse paths, you can enter the sameness of reality by means of the sameness of perversity, and if you can make a gift to all living beings and an offering to all the noble ones and buddhas out of even a single measure of alms, then you yourself may eat. Thus, when you eat, after offering, you should be neither affected by afflictions nor free of afflictions, neither involved in concentration nor free of concentration, neither living in the world nor abiding in liberation. Furthermore, those who give such alms, reverend, have neither great merit nor small merit, neither gain nor loss. They should follow the way of the buddhas, not the way of the disciples. Only in this way, Elder Mahākāśyapa, is the practice of eating by alms meaningful.'

3.14 "Lord, when I heard this teaching, I was astonished and thought, 'Reverence to all bodhisattvas! If a lay bodhisattva may be endowed with such eloquence, who is there who would not conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment?' From that time forth, I no longer recommend the vehicles of the

disciples and of the solitary sages but recommend the Mahāyāna. And thus, Lord, I am reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness."

3.15 The Buddha then said to the venerable Subhūti,[65] "Subhūti, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness."

Subhūti replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness. Why? My Lord, I remember one day, when I went to beg my food at the house of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti in the great city of Vaiśālī, he took my bowl and filled it with some excellent food and said to me, 'Reverend Subhūti, take this food if you understand the sameness of all things through the sameness of material objects, and if you understand the sameness of the qualities of the Buddha through the sameness of all things. Take this food if, without abandoning desire, hatred, and folly, you can avoid association with them; if you can follow the path of the single way without ever disturbing the egoistic views; if, neither conquering ignorance and the craving for existence, nor producing knowledge and liberation, your liberation being the same as the equality of the uninterruptible sins, you are neither liberated nor bound; if you do not see the four noble truths, yet are not one who "has not seen the truth"; if you are also neither "one who has attained fruition,"[66] nor "an ordinary person," while not having eliminated the qualities of "an ordinary person"; if you are not a noble one, and not a non-noble one; and if, though you are in the presence of all things, you are free of any notion of "all things."[67]

3.16 "'Take this food, reverend Subhūti, if, without seeing the Buddha, hearing the Dharma, or serving the Saṅgha, you undertake the religious life under the six outsider masters—namely, Purāṇa Kāśyapa, Māskārin Gośāliputra, Saṃjāyin Vairaṭiputra, Kakuda Kātyāyana, Ajita Keśakambala, and Nirgrantha Jñātiputra, and follow the ways they prescribe.

3.17 "'Take this food, reverend Subhūti, if, entertaining all false views, you find neither extremes nor middle; if, bound up in the eight adversities, you do not obtain favorable conditions; if, assimilating the passions, you do not attain

purification; if the dispassion[68] of all living beings is your dispassion, reverend; if those who make offerings to you are not thereby purified; [69] if those who offer you food, reverend, still fall into the three bad migrations; if you associate with all māras; if you entertain all passions; if the nature of passions is the nature of a reverend; if you have hostile feelings toward all living beings; if you despise all the buddhas; if you criticize all the teachings of the Buddha; if you do not rely on the saṅgha; and finally, if you never enter ultimate liberation.'

3.18 "Lord, when I heard these words of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, I wondered what I should say and what I should do, but I was totally in the dark. Leaving the bowl, I was about to leave the house when the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to me, 'Reverend Subhūti, do not fear these words, and pick up your bowl. What do you think, reverend Subhūti? If it were an incarnation[70] created by the Tathāgata who spoke thus to you, would you be afraid?'

3.19 "I answered, 'No indeed, noble sir!' He then said, 'Reverend Subhūti, the nature of all things is like illusion, like a magical incarnation. So you should not fear them. Why? All words also have that nature, and thus the wise are not attached to words, nor do they fear them. Why? All language does not ultimately exist, except as liberation. The nature of all things is liberation.'[71]

3.20 "When Vimalakīrti had discoursed in this way, two hundred gods obtained the pure doctrinal vision in regard to all things, without obscurity or defilement, and five hundred gods obtained the conformative tolerance. As for me, I was speechless and unable to respond to him. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness."

3.21 The Buddha then said to the venerable Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra,[72] "Pūrṇa, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness."

Pūrṇa replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day, when I was teaching the

Dharma to some young monks in the great forest, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came there and said to me, ‘Reverend Pūrṇa, first concentrate yourself, regard the minds of these young bhikṣus, and then teach them the Dharma! Do not put rotten food into a jeweled bowl! First understand the inclinations of these monks, and do not confuse priceless sapphires with glass beads!

3.22 “‘Reverend Pūrṇa, without examining the spiritual faculties of living beings, do not presume upon the one-sidedness of their faculties; do not wound those who are without wounds; do not impose a narrow path upon those who aspire to a great path; do not try to pour the great ocean into the hoof-print of an ox; do not try to put Mount Sumeru into a grain of mustard; do not confuse the brilliance of the sun with the light of a glowworm; and do not expose those who admire the roar of a lion to the howl of a jackal!

3.23 “‘Reverend Pūrṇa, all these monks were formerly engaged in the Mahāyāna but have forgotten the spirit of enlightenment. So do not instruct them in the Disciple Vehicle. The Disciple Vehicle is not ultimately valid, and you disciples are like men blind from birth, in regard to recognition of the degrees of the spiritual faculties of living beings.’

3.24 “At that moment, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti entered into such a concentration that those monks were caused to remember their various former lives, in which they had produced the roots of virtue by serving five hundred buddhas for the sake of perfect enlightenment. As soon as their own spirits of enlightenment had become clear to them, they bowed at the feet of that good man and pressed their palms together in reverence. He taught them the Dharma, and they all attained the stage of irreversibility[73] from unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. It occurred to me then, ‘The disciples, who do not know the thoughts or the inclinations of others, are not able to teach the Dharma to anyone. Why? These disciples are not expert in discerning the superiority and inferiority of the spiritual faculties of living beings, and they are not always in a state of concentration like the Tathāgata, the arhat, the perfectly accomplished Buddha.’

Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his health."

3.25 The Buddha then said to the venerable Mahākātyāyana,[74] "Kātyāyana, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness."

Kātyāyana replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day when, after the Lord had given some brief instruction to the monks, I was defining the expressions of that discourse by teaching the meaning of impermanence, suffering, selflessness, and peace,[75] the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came there and said to me, 'Reverend Mahākātyāyana, do not teach an ultimate reality endowed with activity, production, and destruction! Reverend Mahākātyāyana, nothing was ever destroyed, is destroyed, or will ever be destroyed. Such is the meaning of "impermanence." The meaning of the realization of birthlessness, through the realization of the voidness of the five aggregates, is the meaning of "suffering."[76] The fact of the nonduality of self and selflessness is the meaning of "selflessness." That which has no intrinsic substance and no other sort of substance does not burn, and what does not burn is not extinguished;[77] such lack of extinction is the meaning of "peace." '

3.26 "When he had discoursed thus, the minds of the monks were liberated from their defilements and entered a state of nongrasping. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

3.27 The Buddha then said to the venerable Aniruddha,[78] "Aniruddha, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness."

"My Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? I remember, Lord, one day when I was taking a walk, the great Brahmā named Śubhavyūha and the ten thousand other Brahmās who accompanied him illuminated the place with their radiance and, having bowed their heads at my feet, withdrew to one side and asked me, 'Reverend Aniruddha, you have been proclaimed by the Buddha to be the foremost among those who

possess the divine eye. To what distance does the divine vision of the venerable Aniruddha extend?' I answered, 'Friends, I see the entire billion-world galactic universe of the Lord Śākyamuni just as plainly as a man of ordinary vision sees a myrobalan nut on the palm of his hand.' When I had said these words, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came there and, having bowed his head at my feet, said to me, 'Reverend Aniruddha, is your divine eye compounded in nature? Or is it uncompounded in nature? If it is compounded in nature, it is the same as the superknowledges of the outsiders. If it is uncompounded in nature, then it is not constructed and, as such, is incapable of seeing.[79] Then, how do you see, O elder?'

3.28 "At these words, I became speechless, and Brahmā also was amazed to hear this teaching from that good man. Having bowed to him, he said, 'Who then, in the world, possesses the divine eye?'

"Vimalakīrti answered, 'In the world, it is the buddhas who have the divine eye. They see all the buddhafields without even leaving their state of concentration and without being affected by duality.'

3.29 "Having heard these words, the ten thousand Brahmās were inspired with high resolve and conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Having paid homage and respect both to me and to that good man, they disappeared. As for me, I remained speechless, and therefore I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

3.30 The Buddha then said to the venerable Upāli,[80] "Upāli, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness."

Upāli replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day there were two monks who had committed some infraction and were too ashamed to appear before the Lord, so they came to me and said, 'Reverend Upāli, we have both commit-

ted an infraction but are too ashamed to appear before the Buddha. Venerable Upāli, kindly remove our anxieties by absolving us of these infractions.'[81]

3.31 "Lord, while I was giving those two monks some religious discourse, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came there and said to me, 'Reverend Upāli, do not aggravate further the sins of these two monks. Without perplexing them, relieve their remorse. Reverend Upāli, sin is not to be apprehended within, or without, or between the two. Why? The Buddha has said, "Living beings are afflicted by the passions of thought, and they are purified by the purification of thought."

3.32 " 'Reverend Upāli, the mind is neither within nor without, nor is it to be apprehended between the two. Sin is just the same as the mind, and all things are just the same as sin. They do not escape this same reality.

3.33 " 'Reverend Upāli, this nature of the mind, by virtue of which your mind, reverend, is liberated—does it ever become afflicted?'

" 'Never,' I replied.

3.34 " 'Reverend Upāli, the minds of all living beings have that very nature. Reverend Upāli, conceptualization is total affliction, and not conceptualizing and not discriminating is their true nature. Misapprehension is total affliction, and non-misapprehension is their true nature. The presumption of self is total affliction, and selflessness is their true nature. Reverend Upāli, all things are without production, destruction, and duration, like magical illusions, clouds, and lightning; all things are evanescent, not remaining even for an instant; all things are like dreams, hallucinations, and unreal visions; all things are like the reflection of the moon in water and like a mirror-image; they are born of mental construction. Those who know this are called the true upholders of the discipline,[82] and those disciplined in that way are indeed well disciplined.' "

3.35 “Then the two monks said, ‘This householder is extremely well endowed with wisdom. The reverend Upāli, who was proclaimed by the Lord as the foremost of the upholders of the discipline, is not his equal.’

“I then said to the two monks, ‘Do not entertain the notion that he is a mere householder! Why? With the exception of the Tathāgata himself, there is no disciple or bodhisattva capable of competing with his eloquence or rivaling the brilliance of his wisdom.’

3.36 “Thereupon, the two monks, delivered from their anxieties and inspired with a high resolve, conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Bowing down to that good man, they made the wish: ‘May all living beings attain eloquence such as this!’ Therefore, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness.”

3.37 The Buddha then said to the venerable Rāhula,[83] “Rāhula, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness.”

Rāhula replied, “Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day many young Licchavi gentlemen came to the place where I was and said to me, ‘Reverend Rāhula, you are the son of the Lord, and, having renounced a kingdom of a universal monarch, you have left the world. What are the virtues and benefits you saw in leaving the world?’

3.38 “As I was teaching them properly the benefits and virtues of renouncing the world, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came there and, having greeted me, said, ‘Reverend Rāhula, you should not teach the benefits and virtues of renunciation in the way that you do. Why? Renunciation is itself the very absence of virtues and benefits. Reverend Rāhula, one may speak of benefits and virtues in regard to compounded things, but renunciation is uncompounded, and there can be no question of benefits and virtues in regard to the uncompounded. Reverend Rāhula, renunciation is not material but is free of matter. It is free of the extreme views of beginning and end.[84] It is the path of liberation. It is praised by

the wise, embraced by the noble ones, and causes the defeat of all māras. It liberates from the five states of existence, purifies the five eyes, cultivates the five powers, and supports the five spiritual faculties. Renunciation is totally harmless to others and is not adulterated with evil things. It disciplines the outsiders, transcending all denominations. It is the bridge over the swamp of desire, without grasping, and free of the habits of "I" and "mine." It is without attachment and without disturbance, eliminating all commotion. It disciplines one's own mind and protects the minds of others. It favors mental quiescence and stimulates transcendental analysis. It is irreproachable in all respects and so is called renunciation. Those who leave the mundane in this way are called "truly renunciant." Young men, renounce the world in the light of this clear teaching! The appearance of the Buddha is extremely rare. Human life endowed with leisure and opportunity is very hard to obtain. To be a human being is very precious.'[85]

3.39 "The young men complained, 'But, householder, we have heard the Tathāgata declare that one should not renounce the world without the permission of one's parents.'

"Vimalakīrti answered, 'Young men, you should cultivate yourselves intensively to conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. That in itself will be your renunciation and high ordination!'[86]

3.40 "Thereupon, thirty-two[87] of the Licchavi youths conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

3.41 The Buddha then said to the venerable Ānanda,[88] "Ānanda, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness."

Ānanda replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day when the body of the Lord manifested some indisposition and he required some milk; I took the bowl and went to the door of the mansion of a great brahmin family.[89] The Licchavi

Vimalakīrti came there, and, having saluted me, said, ‘Reverend Ānanda, what are you doing on the threshold of this house with your bowl in your hand so early in the morning?’

3.42 “I replied, ‘The body of the Lord manifests some indisposition, and he needs some milk. Therefore, I have come to fetch some.’

“Vimalakīrti then said to me, ‘Reverend Ānanda, do not say such a thing! Reverend Ānanda, the body of the Tathāgata is tough as a diamond, having eliminated all the instinctual traces of evil and being endowed with all goodness. How could disease or discomfort affect such a body?

3.43 “ ‘Reverend Ānanda, go in silence, and do not belittle the Lord. Do not say such things to others. It would not be good for the powerful gods or for the bodhisattvas coming from the various buddhafields to hear such words.

“ ‘Reverend Ānanda, a universal monarch, who is endowed only with a small root of virtue, is free of diseases. How then could the Lord, who has an infinite root of virtue, have any disease? It is impossible.

3.44 “ ‘Reverend Ānanda, do not bring shame upon us, but go in silence, lest the outsider sectarians[90] should hear your words. They would say, “For shame! The teacher of these people cannot even cure his own sicknesses. How then can he cure the sicknesses of others?” Reverend Ānanda, go then discreetly so that no one observes you.

3.45 “ ‘Reverend Ānanda, the tathāgatas have the body of the Dharma—not a body that is sustained by material food. The tathāgatas have a transcendental body that has transcended all mundane qualities. There is no injury to the body of a tathāgata, as it is rid of all defilements. The body of a tathāgata is uncompounded and free of all formative activity. Reverend Ānanda, to believe there can be illness in such a body is irrational and unseemly!’

3.46 “When I had heard these words, I wondered if I had previously misheard and misunderstood the Buddha, and I was very much ashamed. Then I heard a voice from the sky: ‘Ānanda! The householder speaks to you truly. Nevertheless, since the Buddha has appeared during the time of the five corruptions, he disciplines living beings by acting lowly and humble. Therefore, Ānanda, do not be ashamed, and go and get the milk!’[91]

3.47 “Lord, such was my conversation[92] with the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, and therefore I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness.”

In the same way, the rest of the five hundred disciples were reluctant to go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, and each told the Buddha his own adventure, recounting all his conversations with the Licchavi Vimalakīrti.[93]

3.48 The Buddha then said to the bodhisattva Maitreya,[94] “Maitreya, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness.”

Maitreya replied, “Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day I was engaged in a conversation with the gods of the Tuṣita heaven, the god Saṃtuṣita and his retinue, about the stage of nonregression of the great bodhisattvas. At that time, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came there and addressed me as follows:

3.49 “ ‘Maitreya, the Buddha has prophesied that only one more birth stands between you and unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. What kind of birth does this prophecy concern, Maitreya? Is it past? Is it future? Or is it present? If it is a past birth, it is already finished. If it is a future birth, it will never arrive. If it is a present birth, it does not abide. For the Buddha has declared, “Bhikṣus, in a single moment, you are born, you age, you die, you transmigrate, and you are reborn.”

“ ‘Then might the prophecy concern birthlessness? But birthlessness applies to the stage of destiny for the ultimate, in which there is neither prophecy nor attainment of perfect enlightenment.

3.50 “‘Therefore, Maitreya, is your reality from birth? Or is it from cessation? Your reality as prophesied is not born and does not cease, nor will it be born nor will it cease.[95] Furthermore, your reality is just the same as the reality of all living beings, the reality of all things, and the reality of all the holy ones. If your enlightenment can be prophesied in such a way, so can that of all living beings. Why? Because reality does not consist of duality or of diversity. Maitreya, whenever you attain buddhahood, which is the perfection of enlightenment, at the same time all living beings will also attain buddhahood. Why? Enlightenment consists of the realizations of all living beings. Maitreya, at the moment when you attain ultimate liberation, all living beings will also attain ultimate liberation. Why? The tathāgatas do not enter ultimate liberation until all living beings have entered ultimate liberation. For, since all living beings are utterly liberated, the tathāgatas see them as having the nature of ultimate liberation.

3.51 “‘Therefore, Maitreya, do not fool and delude these deities! No one abides in, or regresses from, enlightenment. Maitreya, you should introduce these deities to the repudiation of all discriminative constructions concerning enlightenment.[96]

3.52 “‘Enlightenment is perfectly realized neither by the body nor by the mind. Enlightenment is the eradication of all marks. Enlightenment is free of presumptions concerning all objects. Enlightenment is free of the functioning of all intentional thoughts. Enlightenment is the annihilation of all convictions. Enlightenment is free from all discriminative constructions. Enlightenment is free from all vacillation, mentation, and agitation. Enlightenment is not involved in any commitments. Enlightenment is the arrival at detachment, through freedom from all habitual attitudes. The ground of enlightenment is the ultimate realm. Enlightenment is realization of reality. Enlightenment abides at the reality-limit. Enlightenment is without duality, since therein are no minds and no things. Enlightenment is equality, since it is equal to infinite space.

3.53 “‘Enlightenment is unconstructed, because it is neither born nor destroyed, neither abides nor undergoes any transformation. Enlightenment is the complete knowledge of the thoughts, deeds, and inclinations of all living beings. Enlightenment is not a door for the sense-media. Enlightenment is unadulterated, since it is free of the afflictions of the instinctually driven succession of lives. Enlightenment is neither somewhere nor nowhere, abiding in no location or dimension. Enlightenment, not being contained in anything, does not stand in reality. Enlightenment is merely a name and even that name is motionless. Enlightenment, free of abstention and undertaking, is energyless. There is no agitation in enlightenment, as it is utterly pure by nature. Enlightenment is radiance, pure in essence. Enlightenment is without subjectivity and completely without object. Enlightenment, which penetrates the equality of all things, is undifferentiated. Enlightenment, which is not shown by any example, is incomparable. Enlightenment is subtle, since it is extremely difficult to realize. Enlightenment is all-pervasive, as it has the nature of infinite space. Enlightenment cannot be realized, either physically or mentally. Why? The body is like grass, trees, walls, paths, and optical illusions. And the mind is immaterial, invisible, baseless, and unconscious.’[97]

3.54 “Lord, when Vimalakīrti had discoursed thus, two hundred of the deities in that assembly attained the tolerance of the birthlessness of things. As for me, Lord, I was rendered speechless. Therefore, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness.”

3.55 The Buddha then said to the young Licchavi Prabhāvyūha, “Prabhāvyūha, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness.”

Prabhāvyūha replied, “Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day, when I was going out of the great city of Vaiśālī, I met the Licchavi Vimalakīrti coming in. He greeted me, and I then addressed him: ‘Householder, where do you come from?’ He replied, ‘I come from the seat of enlightenment.’ I then inquired, ‘What is meant by “seat of enlightenment”?’ He then spoke the following words

to me: ‘Noble son, the seat of enlightenment is the seat of positive thought because it is without artificiality. It is the seat of effort, because it releases energetic activities. It is the seat of high resolve, because its insight is superior. It is the seat of the great spirit of enlightenment, because it does not neglect anything.

3.56 “‘It is the seat of generosity, because it has no expectation of reward. It is the seat of morality, because it fulfills all commitments. It is the seat of tolerance, because it is free of anger toward any living being. It is the seat of effort, because it does not turn back. It is the seat of meditation, because it generates fitness of mind. It is the seat of wisdom, because it sees everything directly.

3.57 “‘It is the seat of love, because it is equal to all living beings. It is the seat of compassion, because it tolerates all injuries. It is the seat of joy, because it is joyfully devoted to the bliss of the Dharma. It is the seat of equanimity, because it abandons affection and aversion.

3.58 “‘It is the seat of paranormal perception, because it has the six superknowledges. It is the seat of liberation, because it does not intellectualize. It is the seat of liberative art, because it develops living beings. It is the seat of the means of unification, because it brings together living beings. It is the seat of learning, because it makes practice of the essence. It is the seat of decisiveness, because of its precise discrimination. It is the seat of the aids to enlightenment, because it eliminates the duality of the compounded and the uncompounded. It is the seat of truth, because it does not deceive anyone.

3.59 “‘It is the seat of interdependent origination, because it proceeds from the exhaustion of ignorance to the exhaustion of old age and death.[98] It is the seat of eradication of all afflictions, because it is perfectly enlightened about the nature of reality. It is the seat of all living beings, because all living beings are without intrinsic identity. It is the seat of all things, because it is perfectly enlightened with regard to voidness.

3.60 “‘It is the seat of the conquest of all devils, because it never flinches. It is the seat of the triple world, because it is free of involvement. It is the seat of the heroism that sounds the lion’s roar, because it is free of fear and trembling. It is the seat of the strengths, the fearlessnesses, and all the special qualities of the Buddha, because it is irreproachable in all respects. It is the seat of the three knowledges, because in it no passions remain. It is the seat of instantaneous, total understanding of all things, because it realizes fully the gnosis of omniscience.

3.61 “‘Noble son, when bodhisattvas are thus endowed with the transcendences, the roots of virtue, the ability to develop living beings, and the incorporation of the holy Dharma,[99] whether they lift up their feet or put them down, they all come from the seat of enlightenment. They come from the qualities of the Buddha, and stand on the qualities of the Buddha.’

3.62 “Lord, when Vimalakīrti had explained this teaching, five hundred gods and men conceived the spirit of enlightenment, and I became speechless. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness.”

3.63 The Buddha then said to the bodhisattva Jagatindhara, “Jagatindhara, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness.”

Jagatindhara replied, “Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day, when I was at home, the wicked Māra, disguised as Śakra and surrounded with twelve thousand heavenly maidens, approached me with the sounds of music and singing. Having saluted me by touching my feet with his head, he withdrew with his retinue to one side. I then, thinking he was Śakra, the king of the gods, said to him, ‘Welcome, O Kauśika! You should remain consciously aware in the midst of the pleasures of desire. You should often think on impermanence and strive to utilize the essential in body, life, and wealth.’

3.64 “Māra then said to me, ‘Good sir, accept from me these twelve thousand divine maidens and make them your servants.’

“I replied, ‘O Kauśika, do not offer me, who am religious and a son of the Śākya,[100] things which are not appropriate. It is not proper for me to have these maidens.’

3.65 “No sooner had I said these words than the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came there and said to me, ‘Noble son, do not think that this is Śakra! This is not Śakra but the evil Māra, who has come to ridicule you.’

3.66 “Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to Māra, ‘Evil Māra, since these heavenly maidens are not suitable for this religious devotee, a son of the Śākya, give them to me.’

“Then Māra was terrified and distressed, thinking that the Licchavi Vimalakīrti had come to expose him. He tried to make himself invisible, but, try as he might with all his magical powers, he could not vanish from sight. Then a voice resounded in the sky, saying, ‘Evil One, give these heavenly maidens to the good man Vimalakīrti, and only then will you be able to return to your own abode.’

3.67 “Then Māra was even more frightened and, much against his will, gave the heavenly maidens.

“The Licchavi Vimalakīrti, having received the goddesses, said to them, ‘Now that you have been given to me by Māra, you should all conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.’[101]

3.68 “He then exhorted them with discourse suitable for their development toward enlightenment, and soon they conceived the spirit of enlightenment. He then said to them, ‘You have just conceived the spirit of enlightenment. From now on, you should devote yourselves to finding joy in the pleasures of the Dharma, and should take no pleasure in desires.’

3.69 “They then asked him, ‘What is “joy in the pleasures of the Dharma”?’

“He declared, ‘It is the joy of unbreakable faith in the Buddha, of wishing to hear the Dharma, of serving the Saṅgha and honoring the spiritual benefactors without pride. It is the joy of renunciation of the whole world, of not being fixed in objects, of considering the five aggregates to be like murderers, of considering the elements to be like venomous serpents, and of considering the sense-media to be like an empty town.[102] It is the joy of always guarding the spirit of enlightenment, of helping living beings, of sharing through generosity, of not slackening in morality, of control and tolerance in patience, of thorough cultivation of virtue by effort, of total absorption in meditation, and of absence of afflictions in wisdom. It is the joy of extending enlightenment, of conquering the māras, of destroying the afflictions, and of purifying the buddhafield. It is the joy of accumulating all virtues, in order to cultivate the auspicious marks and signs. It is the joy of the liberation of non-intimidation[103] when hearing the profound teaching. It is the joy of exploration of the three doors of liberation, and of the realization of liberation. It is the joy of being an ornament of the seat of enlightenment, and of not attaining liberation at the wrong time. It is the joy of serving those of equal fortune, of not hating or resenting those of superior fortune, of serving the spiritual benefactors, and of avoiding sinful friends. It is the joy of the superior gladness of faith and devotion to the Dharma. It is the joy of acquiring liberative arts and of the conscious cultivation of the aids to enlightenment. Thus, the bodhisattva admires and finds joy in the delights of the Dharma.’

3.70 “Thereupon, Māra said to the goddesses, ‘Now come along and let us return home.’

“They said, ‘You gave us to this householder. Now we should enjoy the delights of the Dharma and should no longer enjoy the pleasures of desires.’

3.71 “Then Māra said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, ‘If it is so that the bodhisattva, the spiritual hero, has no mental attachment, and gives away all his possessions, then, householder, please give me these goddesses.’

“Vimalakīrti replied, ‘They are given, Māra. Go home with your retinue. May you fulfill the religious aspirations of all living beings!’

3.72 “Then the goddesses, saluting Vimalakīrti, said to him, ‘Householder, how should we live in the abode of the māras?’

“Vimalakīrti replied, ‘Sisters, there is a door of the Dharma called “The Inexhaustible Lamp.” Practice it! What is it? Sisters, a single lamp may light hundreds of thousands of lamps without itself being diminished. Likewise, sisters, a single bodhisattva may establish many hundreds of thousands of living beings in enlightenment without his mindfulness being diminished. In fact, not only does it not diminish, it grows stronger. Likewise, the more you teach and demonstrate virtuous qualities to others, the more you grow with respect to these virtuous qualities. This is the door of the Dharma called “The Inexhaustible Lamp.” When you are living in the realm of Māra, inspire innumerable gods and goddesses with the spirit of enlightenment. In such a way, you will repay the kindness[104] of the Tathāgata, and you will become the benefactors of all living beings.’

3.73 “Then, those goddesses bowed at the feet of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and departed in the company of Māra. Thus, Lord, I saw the supremacy of the magical power, wisdom, and eloquence of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, and therefore I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness.”

3.74 The Buddha then said to the merchant’s son, Sudatta,[105] “Noble son, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness.”

Sudatta replied, “Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day in my father’s house when, in order to celebrate a great sacrifice,[106] I was bestowing gifts upon religious

devotees, brahmins, the poor, the wretched, the unfortunate, beggars, and all the needy. On the seventh and final day of this great sacrifice, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came there and said, 'Merchant's son, you should not celebrate a sacrifice in this way. You should celebrate a Dharma-sacrifice. What is the use of the sacrifice of material things?'

3.75 "I then asked him, 'How does one give a Dharma-sacrifice?'

"He replied, 'A Dharma-sacrifice is that which develops living beings without beginning or end, giving gifts to them all simultaneously.[107] What is that? It consists of the great love which is consummated in enlightenment; of the great compassion consummated in the concentration of the holy Dharma on the liberation of all living beings;[108] of the great joy consummated in the awareness of the supreme happiness of all living beings;[109] and of the great equanimity consummated in concentration through knowledge.

3.76 "'The Dharma-sacrifice consists of the transcendence of generosity, which is consummated in peacefulness and self-discipline; of the transcendence of morality, which is consummated in the moral development of immoral beings; of the transcendence of tolerance, consummated through the principle of selflessness; of the transcendence of effort, consummated in initiative toward enlightenment; of the transcendence of meditation, consummated in the solitude of body and mind; and of the transcendence of wisdom, consummated in the omniscient gnosis.

3.77 "'The Dharma-sacrifice consists of the meditation of voidness, consummated in effectiveness in the development of all living beings; of the meditation of signlessness, consummated in the purification of all compounded things; and of the meditation of wishlessness, consummated in voluntarily assuming rebirths.

3.78 "'The Dharma-sacrifice consists of heroic strength, consummated in the upholding of the holy Dharma; of the power of life, consummated in the means of unification; of the absence of pride, consummated in becoming the slave and

the disciple of all living beings; of the gain of body, health, and wealth, consummated by the extraction of essence from the essenceless;[110] of mindfulness, consummated by the six remembrances; of positive thought, consummated through the truly enjoyable Dharma; of purity of livelihood, consummated by correct spiritual practice; of the respect of noble ones, consummated by joyful and faithful service; of soberness of mind, consummated by absence of dislike for ordinary people; of high resolve, consummated by renunciation; of skill in erudition, consummated by religious practice; of retirement in solitary retreats, consummated by understanding things free of afflictions; of introspective meditation, consummated by attainment of the buddha-gnosis; of the stage of the practice of yoga, consummated by the yoga of liberating all living beings from their afflictions.[111]

3.79 " 'The Dharma-sacrifice consists of the store of merit which is consummated by the auspicious signs and marks, the ornaments of the buddhafields, and all other means of development of living beings; of the store of knowledge which is consummated in the ability to teach the Dharma according to the thoughts and actions of all living beings; of the store of wisdom, which is consummated in the uniform gnosis free of acceptance and rejection in regard to all things; of the store of all roots of virtue, consummated in the abandonment of all afflictions, obscurations, and unvirtuous things; and of the attainment of all the aids to enlightenment, consummated in the realization of the gnosis of omniscience as well as in accomplishment of all virtue.

3.80 " 'That, noble son, is the Dharma-sacrifice. The bodhisattva who lives by this Dharma-sacrifice is the best of sacrificers, and, through his extreme sacrifice, is himself worthy of offerings from all people, including the gods.'

3.81 "Lord, as soon as the householder had discoursed thus, two hundred brahmins among the crowd of brahmins present conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. And I, full of astonishment, having saluted this good man by touching his feet with my head, took from around my neck a necklace of

pearls worth one hundred thousand pieces of gold and offered it to him.[112] But he would not accept it. I then said to him, 'Please accept, good man, this necklace of pearls, out of compassion for me, and give it to whomsoever you wish.'

3.82 "Then, Vimalakīrti took the pearls and divided them into two halves. He gave one half of them to the lowliest poor of the city, who had been disdained by those present at the sacrifice. The other half he offered to the Tathāgata Duṣprasaha. And he performed a miracle such that all present beheld the universe called Marīci and the Tathāgata Duṣprasaha. On the head of the Tathāgata Duṣprasaha, the pearl necklace took the form of a pavilion, decorated with strings of pearls, resting on four bases, with four columns, symmetrical, well constructed, and lovely to behold. Having shown such a miracle, Vimalakīrti said, 'The giver who makes gifts to the lowliest poor of the city, considering them as worthy of offering as the Tathāgata himself, and the giver who gives without any discrimination, impartially, with no expectation of reward, and with great love—that giver, I say, totally fulfills the Dharma-sacrifice.'

3.83 "Then the poor of the city, having seen that miracle and having heard that teaching, conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

In the same way, all the bodhisattvas, the great spiritual heroes, told the stories of their conversations with Vimalakīrti and declared their reluctance to go to him.

Chapter 4 The Consolation of the Invalid

4.1 Then, the Buddha said to the crown prince, Mañjuśrī, “Mañjuśrī, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to inquire about his illness.”

Mañjuśrī replied, “Lord, it is difficult to attend upon the Licchavi Vimalakīrti. He is gifted with marvelous eloquence concerning the law of the profound. He is extremely skilled in full expressions and in the reconciliation of dichotomies. His eloquence is inexorable, and no one can resist his imperturbable intellect. He accomplishes all the activities of the bodhisattvas. He penetrates all the secret mysteries of the bodhisattvas and the buddhas. He is skilled in civilizing all the abodes of devils. He plays with the great superknowledges. He is consummate in wisdom and liberative art. He has attained the supreme excellence of the indivisible, nondual sphere of the ultimate realm. He is skilled in teaching the Dharma with its infinite modalities within the uniform ultimate. He is skilled in granting means of attainment in accordance with the spiritual faculties of all living beings. He has thoroughly integrated his realization with skill in liberative art. He has attained decisiveness with regard to all questions. Thus, although he cannot be withstood by someone of my feeble defenses, still, sustained by the grace of the Buddha, I will go to him and will converse with him as well as I can.”

4.2 Thereupon, in that assembly, the bodhisattvas, the great disciples, the Śakras, the Brahmās, the Lokapālas, and the gods and goddesses, all had this thought: “Surely the conversations of the crown prince Mañjuśrī and that good man will result in a profound teaching of the Dharma.”

4.3 Thus, eight thousand bodhisattvas, five hundred disciples, a great number of Śakras, Brahmās, Lokapālas, and many hundreds of thousands of gods and goddesses, all followed the crown prince Mañjuśrī to listen to the Dharma. And the crown prince Mañjuśrī, surrounded and followed by these bodhisattvas,

disciples, Śakras, Brahmās, Lokapālas, gods, and goddesses, entered the great city of Vaiśālī.

4.4 Meanwhile, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti thought to himself, "Mañjuśrī, the crown prince, is coming here with numerous attendants. Now, may this house be transformed into emptiness!"

Then, magically his house became empty. Even the doorkeeper disappeared. And, except for the invalid's couch upon which Vimalakīrti himself was lying, no bed or couch or seat could be seen anywhere.

4.5 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti saw the crown prince Mañjuśrī and addressed him thus: "Mañjuśrī! Welcome, Mañjuśrī! You are very welcome! Here you are, without previously having come, been seen, or been heard.

Mañjuśrī declared, "Householder, it is as you say. Who comes, ultimately comes not. Who goes, ultimately goes not. Why? Coming is not really known in coming, and going is not really known in going. What is seen is not to be seen again, ultimately.

4.6 "Good sir, is your condition tolerable? Is it livable? Are your physical elements not disturbed? Is your sickness diminishing? Is it not increasing? The Buddha asks about you—if you have slight trouble, slight discomfort, slight sickness, if your distress is light, if you are cared for, strong, at ease, without self-reproach, and if you are living in touch with the supreme happiness.

4.7 "Householder, whence came this sickness of yours? How long will it continue? How does it stand? How can it be alleviated?"

Vimalakīrti replied, "Mañjuśrī, my sickness comes from ignorance and the thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would not be sick. Why? Mañjuśrī, for the bodhisattva, the world consists only of living beings, and sickness is inherent in living in the world. Were all living beings free of sickness, the bodhisattva also would be free of sickness. For example, Mañjuśrī,

when the only son of a merchant is sick, both his parents become sick on account of the sickness of their son. And the parents will suffer as long as that only son does not recover from his sickness. Just so, Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva loves all living beings as if each were his only child. He becomes sick when they are sick and is cured when they are cured. You ask me, Mañjuśrī, whence comes my sickness; the sicknesses of the bodhisattvas arise from great compassion."

4.8 *Mañjuśrī*: Householder, why is your house empty? Why have you no servants?

Vimalakīrti: Mañjuśrī, all buddhafields are also empty.

Mañjuśrī: What makes them empty?

Vimalakīrti: They are empty because of emptiness.[113]

4.9 *Mañjuśrī*: What is "empty" about emptiness?[114]

Vimalakīrti: Constructions are empty, because of emptiness.[115]

Mañjuśrī: Can emptiness be conceptually constructed?[116]

Vimalakīrti: Even that concept is itself empty, and emptiness cannot construct emptiness.[117]

4.10 *Mañjuśrī*: Householder, where should emptiness be sought?

Vimalakīrti: Mañjuśrī, emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two convictions.

Mañjuśrī: Where should the sixty-two convictions be sought?

Vimalakīrti: They should be sought in the liberation of the tathāgatas.

4.11 *Mañjuśrī*: Where should the liberation of the tathāgatas be sought?

Vimalakīrti: It should be sought in the prime mental activity of all living beings. Mañjuśrī, you ask me why I am without servants, but all māras and opponents are my servants. Why? The māras advocate this life of birth and death and the bodhisattva does not avoid life. The outsider opponents advocate convictions,

and the bodhisattva is not troubled by convictions. Therefore, all māras and opponents are my servants.

4.12 *Mañjuśrī*: Householder, of what sort is your sickness?

Vimalakīrti: It is immaterial and invisible.

Mañjuśrī: Is it physical or mental?

Vimalakīrti: It is not physical, since the body is insubstantial in itself. It is not mental, since the nature of the mind is like illusion.

4.13 *Mañjuśrī*: Householder, which of the four main elements is disturbed: earth, water, fire, or air?

Vimalakīrti: Mañjuśrī, I am sick only because the elements of living beings are disturbed by sicknesses.[118]

4.14 *Mañjuśrī*: Householder, how should a bodhisattva console another bodhisattva who is sick?

Vimalakīrti: He should tell him that the body is impermanent, but should not exhort him to renunciation or disgust. He should tell him that the body is miserable, but should not encourage him to find solace in liberation; that the body is selfless, but that living beings should be developed; that the body is peaceful, but not to seek any ultimate calm. He should tell him to confess his evil deeds, but not just to escape them.[119] He should encourage his empathy for all living beings on account of his own sickness, his remembrance of suffering experienced from beginningless time, and his consciousness of working for the welfare of living beings. He should encourage him to manifest the roots of virtue, to maintain the primal purity and the lack of craving, and thus to always strive to become the king of healers, who can cure all sicknesses. Thus should a bodhisattva console a sick bodhisattva, in such a way as to make him happy.

4.15 Mañjuśrī asked, “Noble sir, how should a sick bodhisattva control his own mind?”

Vimalakīrti replied, “Mañjuśrī, a sick bodhisattva should control his own mind with the following consideration: Sickness arises from total involvement in the process of misunderstanding from beginningless time. It arises from the afflictions that result from unreal mental constructions, and hence ultimately nothing is perceived which can be said to be sick. Why? The body is the issue of the four main elements, and in these elements there is no owner and no agent. There is no self in this body, and, except for arbitrary insistence on self, ultimately no ‘I’ which can be said to be sick can be apprehended. Therefore, thinking, ‘ “I” should not adhere to any self, and “I” should rest in the knowledge of the root of illness,’ he should abandon the conception of himself as a personality and produce the conception of himself as a thing, thinking, ‘This body is an aggregate of many things. When it is born, only things are born; when it ceases, only things cease. These things have no awareness or feeling of each other. When they are born, they do not think, “I am born”; when they cease, they do not think, “I cease.” ’

4.16 “Furthermore, he should understand thoroughly the conception of himself as a thing by cultivating the following consideration: ‘Just as in the case of the conception of “self,” so the conception of “thing” is also a misunderstanding, and this misunderstanding is also a grave sickness; I should free myself from this sickness and should strive to abandon it.’[120]

4.17 “What is the elimination of this sickness? It is the elimination of egoism and possessiveness. What is the elimination of egoism and possessiveness? It is the freedom from dualism. What is freedom from dualism? It is the absence of involvement with either the external or the internal. What is absence of involvement with either external or internal? It is non-deviation, non-fluctuation, and non-distraction from sameness. What is sameness? It is the sameness of everything from self to liberation. Why? Because both self and liberation are void. How can both be void? As verbal designations, they both are void, and neither is established in reality. Therefore, one who sees such sameness makes

no difference between sickness and voidness; his sickness is itself voidness, and that sickness as voidness is itself void.[121]

4.18 "The sick bodhisattva should recognize that sensation is ultimately nonsensation, but he should not realize the cessation of sensation. Although both pleasure and pain are abandoned when the buddha-qualities are fully accomplished, there is then no sacrifice of the great compassion for all living beings living in the bad migrations. Thus, recognizing in his own suffering the infinite sufferings of these living beings,[122] the bodhisattva correctly contemplates these living beings and resolves to cure all sicknesses.

4.19 "As for these living beings, there is nothing to be applied, and there is nothing to be removed; one has only to teach them the Dharma for them to realize the basis from which sicknesses arise. What is this basis? It is object-perception.[123] To the extent that a basis of object-perception is objectified, it is the basis of sickness. What is it that is objectified? The three realms of existence are objectified. What is the thorough understanding of the basis of that object-perception? It is its nonperception, as one does not objectify a thing that is not perceived. What does one not perceive? One does not perceive the two views, the view of the self and the view of the other. Therefore, it is called nonperception.[124]

4.20 "Mañjuśrī, thus should a sick bodhisattva control his own mind in order to overcome old age, sickness, death, and birth. Such, Mañjuśrī, is the sickness of the bodhisattva. If he takes it otherwise, all his efforts will be in vain. Just as one is called 'hero' when one overcomes all enemies, so, too, one is called 'bodhisattva' when one conquers the miseries of aging, sickness, and death.[125]

4.21 "The sick bodhisattva should tell himself: 'Just as my sickness is unreal and nonexistent, so the sicknesses of all living beings are unreal and nonexistent.' Through such considerations, he arouses the great compassion toward all living beings without falling into any sentimental compassion,[126] but instead, arouses great compassion toward all living beings through striving to eliminate the incidental afflictions. Why? Because great compassion that falls into senti-

mentally purposive views only exhausts the bodhisattva in his reincarnations. But the great compassion that is free of involvement with sentimentally purposive views does not exhaust the bodhisattva in all his reincarnations.[127] He does not reincarnate through involvement with such views but reincarnates with his mind free of involvement. Hence, even his reincarnation is like a liberation. Being reincarnated as if being liberated, he has the power and ability to teach the Dharma that liberates living beings from their bondage. As the Lord declares: 'It is not possible for one who is himself bound to deliver others from their bondage. But one who is himself liberated is able to liberate others from their bondage.' Therefore, the bodhisattva should participate in liberation and should not participate in bondage.

4.22 "What is bondage? And what is liberation? To indulge in liberation from the world without employing liberative art is bondage for the bodhisattva. To engage in life in the world with full employment of liberative art is liberation for the bodhisattva. To experience the taste of contemplation, meditation, and concentration without skill in liberative art is bondage. To experience the taste of contemplation and meditation with skill in liberative art is liberation. Wisdom not integrated with liberative art is bondage, but wisdom integrated with liberative art is liberation. Liberative art not integrated with wisdom is bondage, but liberative art integrated with wisdom is liberation.

4.23 "How is wisdom not integrated with liberative art a bondage? Wisdom not integrated with liberative art consists of concentration on voidness, signlessness, and wishlessness, and yet it fails to concentrate on cultivation of the auspicious signs and marks, on the adornment of the buddhafield, and on the work of development of living beings—and it is bondage.

4.24 "How is wisdom integrated with liberative art a liberation? Wisdom integrated with liberative art consists of concentration on cultivation of the auspicious signs and marks, on the adornment of the buddhafield, and on the work of de-

velopment of living beings, all the while concentrating on deep investigation of voidness, signlessness, and wishlessness—and it is liberation.

4.25 “What is the bondage of liberative art not integrated with wisdom? The bondage of liberative art not integrated with wisdom consists of the bodhisattva’s planting of the roots of virtue without dedicating them for the sake of enlightenment, while living in the grip of dogmatic convictions, passions, attachments, resentments, and their subconscious instincts.

4.26 “What is the liberation of liberative art integrated with wisdom? The liberation of liberative art integrated with wisdom consists of the bodhisattva’s dedication of his roots of virtue for the sake of enlightenment, without taking any pride therein, while forgoing all convictions, passions, attachments, resentments, and their subconscious instincts.[128]

4.27 “Mañjuśrī, thus should the sick bodhisattva consider things. His wisdom is the consideration of body, mind, and sickness as impermanent, miserable, empty, and selfless. His liberative art consists of not exhausting himself by trying to avoid all physical sickness, and of applying himself to accomplish the benefit of living beings, without interrupting the cycle of reincarnations. Furthermore, his wisdom lies in understanding that body, mind, and sickness are neither new nor old, whether considered simultaneously or sequentially. And his liberative art lies in not seeking pacification or cessation of body, mind, or sicknesses.

4.28 “That, Mañjuśrī, is the way a sick bodhisattva should concentrate his mind; he should live neither in control of his mind, nor in indulgence of his mind. Why? To live by indulging the mind is proper for fools and to live in control of the mind is proper for the disciples. Therefore, the bodhisattva should live neither in control nor in indulgence of his mind. Not living in either of the two extremes is the domain of the bodhisattva.

4.29 “Not the domain of the ordinary individual and not the domain of the arhat, such is the domain of the bodhisattva.[129] The domain of the world yet not the domain of the afflictions, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one understands liberation, yet does not enter final and complete liberation, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where the four māras manifest, yet where all the works of māras are transcended, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one seeks the gnosis of omniscience, yet does not attain this gnosis at the wrong time, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one knows the four noble truths, yet does not realize those truths at the wrong time, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain of introspective insight, wherein one does not arrest voluntary reincarnation in the world, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain where one realizes birthlessness, yet does not become destined for the ultimate, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one sees relativity without entertaining any convictions, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one associates with all beings, yet keeps free of all afflictive instincts, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain of solitude with no place for the exhaustion of body and mind, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the triple world, yet indivisible from the ultimate realm, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of voidness, yet where one cultivates all types of virtues, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of signlessness, where one keeps in sight the deliverance of all living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of wishlessness, where one voluntarily manifests lives in the world, such is the domain of the bodhisattva.

4.30 “A domain essentially without undertaking, yet where all the roots of virtue are undertaken without interruption, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the six transcendences, where one attains the transcendence[130] of the thoughts and actions of all living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the six superknowledges,[131] wherein defilements are not exhausted, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of living by the holy Dharma, without even perceiving any evil paths, such is the domain of the

bodhisattva. The domain of the four immeasurables, where one does not accept rebirth in the heaven of Brahmā, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the six remembrances, unaffected by any sort of defilement, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of contemplation, concentration, and absorption, where one does not reincarnate in the formless realms by force of these concentrations and absorptions,[132] such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the four foci of mindfulness, where body, sensation, mind, and things are not ultimately of concern, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the four right efforts, where the duality of good and evil is not apprehended, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the four bases of magical powers, where they are effortlessly mastered, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the five spiritual faculties, where one knows the degrees of the spiritual faculties of living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of living with the five powers, where one delights in the ten powers of the tathāgata, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of perfection of the seven factors of enlightenment, where one is skilled in the knowledge of fine intellectual distinctions, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of living by the eightfold path, without even perceiving any evil paths, such is the domain of the bodhisattva.[133] The domain of the cultivation of the aptitude for mental quiescence and transcendental analysis, where one does not fall into extreme quietism, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the realization of the unborn nature of all things, yet of the perfection of the body, the auspicious signs and marks, and the ornaments of the Buddha, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of manifesting the attitudes of the disciples and the solitary sages without sacrificing the qualities of the Buddha, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of conformity to all things utterly pure in nature while manifesting behavior that suits the inclinations of all living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain where one realizes that all the buddhafields are indestructible and uncreatable, having the nature of infinite space, yet where one manifests the establishment of the qualities of the buddhafields in all their variety and magnitude, such is the domain of the

bodhisattva. The domain where one turns the wheel of the holy Dharma and manifests the magnificence of ultimate liberation, yet never forsakes the career of the bodhisattva, such is the domain of the bodhisattva!”

4.31 When Vimalakīrti had spoken this discourse, eight thousand of the gods in the company of the crown prince Mañjuśrī conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

Chapter 5 The Inconceivable Liberation

5.1 Thereupon, the venerable Śāriputra had this thought: “There is not even a single chair in this house. Where are these disciples and bodhisattvas going to sit?”

The Licchavi Vimalakīrti read the thought of the venerable Śāriputra and said, “Reverend Śāriputra, did you come here for the sake of the Dharma? Or did you come here for the sake of a chair?”

5.2 Śāriputra replied, “I came for the sake of the Dharma, not for the sake of a chair.”

Vimalakīrti continued, “Reverend Śāriputra, he who is interested in the Dharma is not interested even in his own body, much less in a chair. Reverend Śāriputra, he who is interested in the Dharma has no interest in matter, sensation, intellect, motivation, or consciousness. He has no interest in these aggregates, or in the elements, or in the sense-media. Interested in the Dharma, he has no interest in the realm of desire, the realm of pure matter, or the immaterial realm. Interested in the Dharma, he is not interested in attachment to the Buddha, attachment to the Dharma, or attachment to the Saṅgha. Reverend Śāriputra, he who is interested in the Dharma is not interested in recognizing suffering, abandoning its origination, realizing its cessation, or practicing the path. Why? The Dharma is ultimately without formulation and without verbalization. Who verbalizes: ‘Suffering should be recognized, origination should be eliminated, cessation should be realized, the path should be practiced,’ is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in verbalization.[134]

5.3 “Reverend Śāriputra, the Dharma is calm and peaceful. Those who are engaged in production and destruction are not interested in the Dharma, are not interested in solitude, but are interested in production and destruction.[135]

5.4 “Furthermore, reverend Śāriputra, the Dharma is without taint and free of defilement. He who is attached to anything, even to liberation, is not interested in

the Dharma but is interested in the taint of desire. The Dharma is not an object. He who pursues objects is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in objects. The Dharma is without acceptance or rejection. He who holds on to things or lets go of things is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in holding and letting go. The Dharma is not a secure refuge. He who enjoys a secure refuge is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in a secure refuge. The Dharma is without sign. He whose consciousness pursues signs is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in signs. The Dharma is not a society. He who seeks to associate with the Dharma is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in association. The Dharma is not a sight, a sound, a category, or an idea. He who is involved in sights, sounds, categories, and ideas is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in sights, sounds, categories, and ideas. Reverend Śāriputra, the Dharma is free of compounded things and uncompounded things. He who adheres to compounded things and uncompounded things is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in adhering to compounded things and uncompounded things.

5.5 “Thereupon, reverend Śāriputra, if you are interested in the Dharma, you should take no interest in anything.”[136]

When Vimalakīrti had spoken this discourse, five hundred gods obtained the purity of the Dharma-eye in viewing all things.

5.6 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the crown prince, Mañjuśrī, “Mañjuśrī, you have already been in innumerable hundreds of thousands of buddhafields throughout the universes of the ten directions.[137] In which buddhafield did you see the best lion-thrones with the finest qualities?”

5.7 Mañjuśrī replied, “Noble sir, if one crosses the buddhafields to the east, which are more numerous than all the grains of sand of thirty-two Ganges rivers, one will discover a universe called Merudhvaja. There dwells a tathāgata called Merupradīparāja. His body measures eighty-four hundred thousand leagues in height, and the height of his throne is sixty-eight hundred thousand leagues.

The bodhisattvas there are forty-two hundred thousand leagues tall and their own thrones are thirty-four hundred thousand leagues high. Noble sir, the finest and most superb thrones exist in that universe Merudhvaja, which is the buddhafield of the Tathāgata Merupradīparāja."

5.8 At that moment, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, having focused himself in concentration, performed a miraculous feat such that the Lord Tathāgata Merupradīparāja, in the universe Merudhvaja, sent to this universe thirty-two hundred thousand thrones. These thrones were so tall, spacious, and beautiful that the bodhisattvas, great disciples, Śakras, Brahmās, Lokapālas, and other gods had never before seen the like. The thrones descended from the sky and came to rest in the house of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti. The thirty-two hundred thousand thrones arranged themselves without crowding and the house seemed to enlarge itself accordingly. The great city of Vaiśālī did not become obscured; neither did the land of Jambudvīpa, nor the world of four continents. Everything else appeared just as it was before.

5.9 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the crown prince Mañjuśrī, "Mañjuśrī, let the bodhisattvas be seated on these thrones, having transformed their bodies to a suitable size!"[138]

Then, those bodhisattvas who had attained the superknowledges transformed their bodies to a height of forty-two hundred thousand leagues and sat upon the thrones. But the beginner bodhisattvas were not able to transform themselves to sit upon the thrones. Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti taught these beginner bodhisattvas a teaching that enabled them to attain the five superknowledges, and, having attained them, they transformed their bodies to a height of forty-two hundred thousand leagues and sat upon the thrones. But still the great disciples were not able to seat themselves upon the thrones.

5.10 The Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the venerable Śāriputra, "Reverend Śāriputra, take your seat upon a throne."

He replied, “Good sir, the thrones are too big and too high, and I cannot sit upon them.”

5.11 Vimalakīrti said, “Reverend Śāriputra, bow down to the Tathāgata Merupradīparāja, and you will be able to take your seat.”

Then, the great disciples bowed down to the Tathāgata Merupradīparāja and they were seated upon the thrones.

5.12 Then, the venerable Śāriputra said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “Noble sir, it is astonishing that these thousands of thrones, so big and so high, should fit into such a small house and that the great city of Vaiśālī, the villages, cities, kingdoms, capitals of Jambudvīpa, the other three continents, the abodes of the gods, the nāgas, the yakṣas, the gandharvas, the asuras, the garuḍas, the kinnaras, and the mahoragas—that all of these should appear without any obstacle, just as they were before!”

5.13 The Licchavi Vimalakīrti replied, “Reverend Śāriputra, for the tathāgatas and the bodhisattvas, there is a liberation called ‘inconceivable.’[139] The bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can put the king of mountains, Sumeru, which is so high, so great, so noble, and so vast, into a mustard seed. He can perform this feat without enlarging the mustard seed and without shrinking Mount Sumeru. And the deities of the assembly of the four Mahārājas and of the Trayastriṃśa heavens do not even know where they are.[140] Only those beings who are destined to be disciplined by miracles[141] see and understand the putting of the king of mountains, Sumeru, into the mustard seed. That, reverend Śāriputra, is an entrance to the domain of the inconceivable liberation of the bodhisattvas.

5.14 “Furthermore, reverend Śāriputra, the bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can pour into a single pore of his skin all the waters of the four great oceans, without injuring the water-animals such as fish, tortoises, crocodiles, frogs, and other creatures, and without the nāgas, yakṣas, gandhar-

vas, and asuras even being aware of where they are. And the whole operation is visible without any injury or disturbance to any of those living beings.

5.15 “Such a bodhisattva can pick up with his right hand this billion-world galactic universe as if it were a potter’s wheel and, spinning it round, throw it beyond universes as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, without the living beings therein knowing their motion or its origin, and he can catch it and put it back in its place, without the living beings suspecting their coming and going; and yet the whole operation is visible.

5.16 “Furthermore, reverend Śāriputra, there are beings who become disciplined after an immense period of evolution, and there are also those who are disciplined after a short period of evolution. The bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation, for the sake of disciplining those living beings who are disciplined through immeasurable periods of evolution, can make the passing of a week seem like the passing of an eon, and he can make the passing of an eon seem like the passing of a week for those who are disciplined through a short period of evolution. The living beings who are disciplined through an immeasurable period of evolution actually perceive a week to be the passing of an eon, and those disciplined by a short period of evolution actually perceive an eon to be the passing of a week.[142]

5.17 “Thus, a bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can manifest all the splendors of the virtues of all the buddhafields within a single buddhafield. Likewise, he can place all living beings in the palm of his right hand and can show them with the supernatural speed of thought all the buddhafields without ever leaving his own buddhafield. He can display in a single pore all the offerings ever offered to all the buddhas of the ten directions, and the orbs of all the suns, moons, and stars of the ten directions. He can inhale all the hurricanes of the cosmic wind-atmospheres of the ten directions into his mouth without harming his own body and without letting the forests and the grasses of the buddhafields be flattened. He can take all the masses of fire of all

the supernovas that ultimately consume all the universes of all the buddhafields into his stomach without interfering with their functions. Having crossed buddhafields as numerous as the sands of the Ganges downward, and having taken up a buddhafield, he can rise up through buddhafields as numerous as the sands of the Ganges and place it on high, just as a strong man may pick up a jujube leaf on the point of a needle.

5.18 "Thus, a bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can magically transform any kind of living being into a universal monarch, a Lokapāla, a Śakra, a Brahmā, a disciple, a solitary sage, a bodhisattva, and even into a buddha. The bodhisattva can transform miraculously all the cries and noises—superior, mediocre, and inferior, of all living beings of the ten directions, into the voice of the Buddha, with the words of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha, having them proclaim, 'Impermanent! Miserable! Empty! Selfless!' And he can cause them to recite the words and sounds of all the teachings taught by all the buddhas of the ten directions.

5.19 "Reverend Śāriputra, I have shown you only a small part of the entrance into the domain of the bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation. Reverend Śāriputra, to explain to you the teaching of the full entrance into the domain of the bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation would require more than an eon, and even more than that."[143]

5.20 Then, the patriarch Mahākāśyapa, having heard this teaching of the inconceivable liberation of the bodhisattvas, was amazed, and he said to the venerable Śāriputra, "Venerable Śāriputra, if one were to show a variety of things to a person blind from birth, he would not be able to see a single thing. Likewise, venerable Śāriputra, when this door of the inconceivable liberation is taught, all the disciples and solitary sages are sightless, like the man blind from birth, and cannot comprehend even a single cause of the inconceivable liberation. Who is there among the wise who, hearing about this inconceivable liberation, does not conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment? As for us,

whose faculties are deteriorated, like a burned and rotten seed, what else can we do if we do not become receptive to this Great Vehicle? We, all the disciples and solitary sages, upon hearing this teaching of the Dharma, should utter a cry of regret that would shake this billion-world galactic universe![144] And as for the bodhisattvas, when they hear this inconceivable liberation they should be as joyful as a young crown prince when he takes the diadem and is anointed, and they should increase to the utmost their devotion to this inconceivable liberation. Indeed, what could the entire host of māras ever do to one who is devoted to this inconceivable liberation?"

When the patriarch Mahākāśyapa had uttered this discourse, thirty-two thousand gods conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

5.21 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the patriarch Mahākāśyapa, "Reverend Mahākāśyapa, the māras who play the devil in the innumerable universes of the ten directions are all bodhisattvas dwelling in the inconceivable liberation, who are playing the devil in order to develop living beings through their skill in liberative art. Reverend Mahākāśyapa, all the miserable beggars who come to the bodhisattvas of the innumerable universes of the ten directions to ask for a hand, a foot, an ear, a nose, some blood, muscles, bones, marrow, an eye, a torso, a head, a limb, a member, a throne, a kingdom, a country, a wife, a son, a daughter, a slave, a slave-girl, a horse, an elephant, a chariot, a cart, gold, silver, jewels, pearls, conches, crystal, coral, beryl, treasures, food, drink, elixirs, and clothes—these demanding beggars are usually bodhisattvas living in the inconceivable liberation who, through their skill in liberative art, wish to test and thus demonstrate the firmness of the high resolve of the bodhisattvas. Why? Reverend Mahākāśyapa, the bodhisattvas demonstrate that firmness by means of terrible austerities. Ordinary persons have no power to be thus demanding of bodhisattvas, unless they are granted the opportunity. They are not capable of killing and depriving in that manner without being freely given the chance.

5.22 "Reverend Mahākāśyapa, just as a glowworm cannot eclipse the light of the sun, so, reverend Mahākāśyapa, it is not possible without special allowance

that an ordinary person can thus attack and deprive a bodhisattva. Reverend Mahākāśyapa, just as a donkey could not muster an attack on a wild elephant, even so, reverend Mahākāśyapa, one who is not himself a bodhisattva cannot harass a bodhisattva. Only one who is himself a bodhisattva can harass another bodhisattva, and only a bodhisattva can tolerate the harassment of another bodhisattva. Reverend Mahākāśyapa, such is the introduction to the power of the knowledge of liberative art of the bodhisattvas who live in the inconceivable liberation."[145]

Chapter 6 The Goddess

6.1 Thereupon, Mañjuśrī, the crown prince, addressed the Licchavi Vimalakīrti: “Good sir, how should a bodhisattva regard all living beings?”

Vimalakīrti replied, “Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva should regard all living beings as a wise man regards the reflection of the moon in water or as magicians regard men created by magic. He should regard them as being like a face in a mirror; like the water of a mirage; like the sound of an echo; like a mass of clouds in the sky; like the previous moment of a ball of foam; like the appearance and disappearance of a bubble of water; like the core of a plantain tree; like a flash of lightning; like the fifth great element; like the seventh sense-medium; like the appearance of matter in an immaterial realm; like a sprout from a rotten seed; like a tortoise-hair coat; like the fun of games for one who wishes to die; like the egoistic views of a stream-winner; like a third rebirth of a once-returner; like the descent of a nonreturner into a womb; like the existence of desire, hatred, and folly in an arhat; like thoughts of avarice, immorality, wickedness, and hostility in a bodhisattva who has attained tolerance; like the instincts of afflictions in a tathāgata; like the perception of color in one blind from birth; like the inhalation and exhalation of an ascetic absorbed in the meditation of cessation; like the track of a bird in the sky; like the erection of a eunuch; like the pregnancy of a barren woman; like the unproduced afflictions of an emanated incarnation of the Tathāgata; like dream-visions seen after waking; like the afflictions of one who is free of conceptualizations; like fire burning without fuel; like the reincarnation of one who has attained ultimate liberation.

“Precisely thus, Mañjuśrī, does a bodhisattva who realizes ultimate selflessness consider all beings.”[146]

6.2 Mañjuśrī then asked further, “Noble sir, if a bodhisattva considers all living beings in such a way, how does he generate the great love toward them?”

Vimalakīrti replied, “Mañjuśrī, when a bodhisattva considers all living beings in this way, he thinks: ‘Just as I have realized the Dharma, so should I teach it to living beings.’[147] Thereby, he generates the love that is truly a refuge for all living beings; the love that is peaceful because free of grasping; the love that is not feverish, because free of passions; the love that accords with reality because it is the very same in all three times; the love that is without conflict because free of the violence of the passions; the love that is nondual because it is involved neither with the external nor with the internal; the love that is imperturbable because totally ultimate.

6.3 “Thereby he generates the love that is firm, its high resolve unbreakable, like a diamond; the love that is pure, purified in its intrinsic nature; the love that is even, its aspirations being equal; the arhat’s love that has eliminated its enemy;[148] the bodhisattva’s love that continuously develops living beings; the Tathāgata’s love that understands reality; the Buddha’s love that causes living beings to awaken from their sleep; the love that is spontaneous because it is fully enlightened spontaneously;[149] the love that is enlightenment because it is unity of experience; the love that has no presumption because it has eliminated attachment and aversion; the love that is great compassion because it infuses the Mahāyāna with radiance; the love that is never exhausted because it acknowledges voidness and selflessness; the love that is giving because it bestows the gift of Dharma free of the tight fist of a bad teacher; the love that is morality because it improves immoral living beings; the love that is tolerance because it protects both self and others; the love that is effort because it takes responsibility for all living beings; the love that is contemplation because it refrains from indulgence in tastes; the love that is wisdom because it causes attainment at the proper time;[150] the love that is liberative art because it shows the way everywhere; the love that is without formality because it is pure in motivation; the love that is without deviation because it acts from decisive motivation; the love that is high resolve because it is without passions; the love that is without deceit because it is not artificial; the love that is happiness

because it introduces living beings to the happiness of the Buddha. Such, Mañjuśrī, is the great love of a bodhisattva."

6.4 *Mañjuśrī*: What is the great compassion of a bodhisattva?

Vimalakīrti: It is the giving of all accumulated roots of virtue to all living beings.

Mañjuśrī: What is the great joy of a bodhisattva?

Vimalakīrti: It is to be joyful and without regret in giving.

6.5 *Mañjuśrī*: What is the equanimity of a bodhisattva?

Vimalakīrti: It is what benefits both self and others.[151]

Mañjuśrī: To what should one resort when terrified by fear of life?

Vimalakīrti: Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva who is terrified by fear of life should resort to the magnanimity of the Buddha.

6.6 *Mañjuśrī*: Where should he who wishes to resort to the magnanimity of the Buddha take his stand?

Vimalakīrti: He should stand in equanimity toward all living beings.[152]

Mañjuśrī: Where should he who wishes to stand in equanimity toward all living beings take his stand?

Vimalakīrti: He should live for the liberation of all living beings.

6.7 *Mañjuśrī*: What should he who wishes to liberate all living beings do?

Vimalakīrti: He should liberate them from their afflictions.

Mañjuśrī: How should he who wishes to eliminate afflictions apply himself?

Vimalakīrti: He should apply himself appropriately.

6.8 *Mañjuśrī*: How should he apply himself, to "apply himself appropriately"?

Vimalakīrti: He should apply himself to productionlessness and to destructionlessness.

Mañjuśrī: What is not produced? And what is not destroyed?

Vimalakīrti: Evil is not produced and good is not destroyed.

6.9 *Mañjuśrī*: What is the root of good and evil?

Vimalakīrti: Materiality is the root of good and evil.

Mañjuśrī: What is the root of materiality?

Vimalakīrti: Desire is the root of materiality.

6.10 *Mañjuśrī*: What is the root of desire and attachment?

Vimalakīrti: Unreal construction is the root of desire.

Mañjuśrī: What is the root of unreal construction?

Vimalakīrti: The false concept is its root.

6.11 *Mañjuśrī*: What is the root of the false concept?

Vimalakīrti: Baselessness.

Mañjuśrī: What is the root of baselessness?

Vimalakīrti: Mañjuśrī, when something is baseless, how can it have any root? Therefore, all things stand on the root that is baseless.[153]

6.12 Thereupon, a certain goddess who lived in that house, having heard this teaching of the Dharma of the great heroic bodhisattvas, and being delighted, pleased, and overjoyed, manifested herself in a material body and showered the great spiritual heroes, the bodhisattvas, and the great disciples with heavenly flowers. When the flowers fell on the bodies of the bodhisattvas, they fell off on the floor, but when they fell on the bodies of the great disciples, they stuck to them and did not fall. The great disciples shook the flowers and even tried to use their magical powers, but still the flowers would not shake off.

6.13 Then, the goddess said to the venerable Śāriputra, “Reverend Śāriputra, why do you shake these flowers?”

Śāriputra replied, “Goddess, these flowers are not proper for religious persons[154] and so we are trying to shake them off.”

6.14 The goddess said, “Do not say that, reverend Śāriputra. Why? These flowers are proper indeed! Why? Such flowers have neither constructual thought nor discrimination. But the elder Śāriputra has both constructual thought and discrimination.

6.15 “Reverend Śāriputra, impropriety for one who has renounced the world for the discipline of the rightly taught Dharma consists of constructual thought and discrimination, yet the elders are full of such thoughts. One who is without such thoughts is always proper.

6.16 “Reverend Śāriputra, see how these flowers do not stick to the bodies of these great spiritual heroes, the bodhisattvas! This is because they have eliminated constructual thoughts and discriminations.

“In the same way that evil spirits have power over fearful men but cannot disturb the fearless, those intimidated by fear of the world are in the power of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures, which do not disturb those who are free from fear of the passions inherent in the constructive world. Thus, these flowers stick to the bodies of those who have not eliminated their instincts for the passions and do not stick to the bodies of those who have eliminated their instincts. Therefore, the flowers do not stick to the bodies of these bodhisattvas, who have abandoned all instincts.”[155]

6.17 Then the venerable Śāriputra said to the goddess, “Goddess, how long have you been in this house?”

The goddess replied, “I have been here as long as the elder has been in liberation.”

6.18 Śāriputra said, “Then, have you been in this house for quite some time?”

The goddess said, “Has the elder been in liberation for quite some time?”

At that, the elder Śāriputra fell silent.

6.19 The goddess continued, “Elder, you are ‘foremost of the wise!’ Why do you not speak? Now, when it is your turn, you do not answer the question.”

Śāriputra: Since liberation is inexpressible, goddess, I do not know what to say.

6.20 *Goddess*: All the syllables pronounced by the elder have the nature of liberation. Why? Liberation is neither internal nor external, nor can it be apprehended apart from them.[156] Likewise, syllables are neither internal nor external, nor can they be apprehended anywhere else. Therefore, reverend Śāriputra, do not point to liberation by abandoning speech![157] Why? The holy liberation is the equality of all things!

6.21 *Śāriputra*: Goddess, is not liberation the freedom from desire, hatred, and folly?

Goddess: “Liberation is freedom from desire, hatred, and folly”—that is the teaching for the excessively proud.[158] But those free of pride are taught that the very nature of desire, hatred, and folly is itself liberation.

6.22 *Śāriputra*: Excellent! Excellent, goddess! Pray, what have you attained, what have you realized, that you have such eloquence?

Goddess: I have attained nothing, reverend Śāriputra. I have no realization. Therefore I have such eloquence. Whoever thinks, “I have attained! I have realized!” is overly proud in the discipline of the well taught Dharma.

6.23 *Śāriputra*: Goddess, do you belong to the Disciple Vehicle, to the Solitary Sage Vehicle, or to the Great Vehicle?

Goddess: I belong to the Disciple Vehicle when I teach it to those who need it. I belong to the Solitary Sage Vehicle when I teach the twelve links of dependent origination to those who need them. And, since I never abandon the great com-

passion, I belong to the Great Vehicle, as all need that teaching to attain ultimate liberation.[159]

6.24 Nevertheless, reverend Śāriputra, just as one cannot smell the castor plant in a magnolia wood, but only the magnolia flowers, so, reverend Śāriputra, living in this house, which is redolent with the perfume of the virtues of the buddha qualities, one does not smell the perfume of the disciples and the solitary sages. Reverend Śāriputra, the Śakras, the Brahmās, the Lokapālas, the devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas who live in this house hear the Dharma from the mouth of this holy man and, enticed by the perfume of the virtues of the buddha qualities, proceed to conceive the spirit of enlightenment.

6.25 Reverend Śāriputra, I have been in this house for twelve years, and I have heard no discourses concerning the disciples and solitary sages but have heard only those concerning the great love, the great compassion, and the inconceivable qualities of the Buddha.

6.26 Reverend Śāriputra, eight strange and wonderful things manifest themselves constantly in this house. What are these eight?

A light of golden hue shines here constantly, so bright that it is hard to distinguish day and night, and neither the moon nor the sun shines here distinctly. That is the first wonder of this house.

6.27 Furthermore, reverend Śāriputra, whoever enters this house is no longer troubled by his afflictions from the moment he is within. That is the second strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Śāriputra, this house is never forsaken by Śakra, Brahmā, the Lokapālas, and the bodhisattvas from all the other buddhafields. That is the third strange and wonderful thing.

6.28 Furthermore, reverend Śāriputra, this house is never empty of the sounds of the Dharma, the discourse on the six transcendences, and the discourses of the irreversible wheel of the Dharma. That is the fourth strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Śāriputra, in this house one always hears the rhythms, songs, and music of gods and men, and from this music constantly resounds the sound of the infinite Dharma of the Buddha. That is the fifth strange and wonderful thing.

6.29 Furthermore, reverend Śāriputra, in this house there are always four inexhaustible treasures,[160] replete with all kinds of jewels, which never decrease, although all the poor and wretched may partake of them to their satisfaction. That is the sixth strange and wonderful thing.

6.30 Furthermore, reverend Śāriputra, at the wish of this good man, to this house come the innumerable tathāgatas of the ten directions, such as the Tathāgatas Śākyamuni, Amitābha, Akṣobhya, Ratnaśrī, Ratnārcis, Ratnacandra, Ratnavyūha, Duḥprasāha, Sarvārthasiddha, Prabhūtaratna, Siṃhanādanādī,[161] Siṃhaghoṣa, and so forth, and when they come they teach the door of Dharma called *The Secrets of the Tathāgatas*, and then depart.[162] That is the seventh strange and wonderful thing.

6.31 Furthermore, reverend Śāriputra, all the splendors of the abodes of the gods and all the splendors of the fields of the buddhas shine forth in this house. That is the eighth strange and wonderful thing.

Reverend Śāriputra, these eight strange and wonderful things are seen in this house. Who then, seeing such inconceivable things, would believe the teaching of the disciples?

6.32 *Śāriputra*: Goddess, what prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?[163]

Goddess: Although I have sought my "female state" for these twelve years, I have not yet found it. Reverend Śāriputra, if a magician were to incarnate a woman by magic, would you ask her, "What prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?"

6.33 *Śāriputra*: No! Such a woman would not really exist, so what would there be to transform?

Goddess: Just so, reverend Śāriputra, all things do not really exist. Now, would you think, "What prevents one whose nature is that of a magical incarnation from transforming herself out of her female state?"

6.34 Thereupon, the goddess employed her magical power to cause the elder Śāriputra to appear in her form and to cause herself to appear in his form. Then the goddess, transformed into Śāriputra, said to Śāriputra, transformed into a goddess, "Reverend Śāriputra, what prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?"

And Śāriputra, transformed into the goddess, replied, "I no longer appear in the form of a male! My body has changed into the body of a woman! I do not know what to transform!"

6.35 The goddess continued, "If the elder could again change out of the female state, then all women could also change out of their female states. All women appear in the form of women in just the same way as the elder appears in the form of a woman. While they are not women in reality, they appear in the form of women. With this in mind, the Buddha said, 'In all things, there is neither male nor female.' "

6.36 Then, the goddess released her magical power and each returned to their ordinary form. She then said to him, "Reverend Śāriputra, what have you done with your female form?"

Śāriputra: I neither made it nor did I change it.

Goddess: Just so, all things are neither made nor changed, and that they are not made and not changed, that is the teaching of the Buddha.[164]

6.37 *Śāriputra*: Goddess, where will you be born when you transmigrate after death?

Goddess: I will be born where all the magical incarnations of the Tathāgata are born.

6.38 *Śāriputra*: But the emanated incarnations of the Tathāgata do not transmigrate nor are they born.

Goddess: All things and living beings are just the same; they do not transmigrate nor are they born!

6.39 *Śāriputra*: Goddess, how soon will you attain the perfect enlightenment of buddhahood?

Goddess: At such time as you, elder, become endowed once more with the qualities of an ordinary individual, then will I attain the perfect enlightenment of buddhahood.

6.40 *Śāriputra*: Goddess, it is impossible that I should become endowed once more with the qualities of an ordinary individual.

Goddess: Just so, reverend Śāriputra, it is impossible that I should attain the perfect enlightenment of buddhahood! Why? Because perfect enlightenment stands upon the impossible. Because it is impossible, no one attains the perfect enlightenment of buddhahood.

6.41 *Śāriputra*: But the Tathāgata has declared: "The tathāgatas, who are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, have attained perfect buddhahood, are attaining perfect buddhahood, and will go on attaining perfect buddhahood."

Goddess: Reverend Śāriputra, the expression "the buddhas of the past, present, and future" is a conventional expression made up of a certain number of

syllables. The buddhas are neither past, nor present, nor future. Their enlightenment transcends the three times! But tell me, elder, have you attained the state of arhat?

6.42 *Śāriputra*: It is attained, because there is no attainment.

Goddess: Just so, there is perfect enlightenment because there is no attainment of perfect enlightenment.

6.43 Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the venerable elder Śāriputra, “Reverend Śāriputra, this goddess has already served ninety-two million billion buddhas. She plays with the superknowledges. She has truly succeeded in all her vows. She has gained the tolerance of the birthlessness of things. She has actually attained irreversibility. She can live wherever she wishes on the strength of her vow to develop living beings.”

Chapter 7 The Family of the Tathāgatas

7.1 Then, the crown prince Mañjuśrī asked the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “Noble sir, how does the bodhisattva follow the way to attain the qualities of the Buddha?”

Vimalakīrti replied, “Mañjuśrī, when the bodhisattva follows the wrong way, he follows the way to attain the qualities of the Buddha.”

7.2 Mañjuśrī continued, “How does the bodhisattva follow the wrong way?”

Vimalakīrti replied, “Even should he enact the five deadly sins, he feels no malice, violence, or hate. Even should he go into the hells, he remains free of all taint of afflictions. Even should he go into the states of the animals, he remains free of darkness and ignorance. When he goes into the states of the asuras, he remains free of pride, conceit, and arrogance. When he goes into the realm of the lord of death, he accumulates the stores of merit and wisdom. When he goes into the states of motionlessness and immateriality, he does not dissolve therein.

7.3 “He may follow the ways of desire, yet he stays free of attachment to the enjoyments of desire. He may follow the ways of hatred, yet he feels no anger toward any living being. He may follow the ways of folly, yet he is ever conscious with the wisdom of firm understanding.

7.4 “He may follow the ways of avarice, yet he gives away all internal and external things without regard even for his own life. He may follow the ways of immorality, yet, seeing the horror of even the slightest transgressions, he lives by the ascetic practices and austerities. He may follow the ways of wickedness and anger, yet he remains utterly free of malice and lives by love. He may follow the ways of laziness, yet his efforts are uninterrupted as he strives in the cultivation of roots of virtue. He may follow the ways of sensuous distraction, yet, naturally concentrated, his contemplation is not dissipated. He may follow the

ways of false wisdom, yet, having reached the transcendence of wisdom, he is expert in all mundane and transcendental sciences.

7.5 “He may show the ways of sophistry and contention, yet he is always conscious of ultimate meanings and has perfected the use of liberative arts. He may show the ways of pride, yet he serves as a bridge and a ladder for all people. He may show the ways of the passions, yet he is utterly dispassionate and naturally pure. He may follow the ways of the māras, yet he does not really accept their authority in regard to his knowledge of the qualities of the Buddha. He may follow the ways of the disciples, yet he lets living beings hear the teaching they have not heard before.[165] He may follow the ways of the solitary sages, yet he is inspired with great compassion in order to develop all living beings.

7.6 “He may follow the ways of the poor, yet he holds in his hand a jewel of inexhaustible wealth.[166] He may follow the ways of cripples, yet he is beautiful and well adorned with the auspicious signs and marks. He may follow the ways of those of lowly birth, yet, through his accumulation of the stores of merit and wisdom, he is born in the family of the tathāgatas. He may follow the ways of the weak, the ugly, and the wretched, yet he is beautiful to look upon, and his body is like that of Nārāyaṇa.

7.7 “He may manifest to living beings the ways of the sick and the unhappy, yet he has entirely conquered and transcended the fear of death.

“He may follow the ways of the rich, yet he is without acquisitiveness and often reflects upon the notion of impermanence. He may show himself engaged in dancing with harem girls, yet he cleaves to solitude, having crossed the swamp of desire.

7.8 “He follows the ways of the dumb and the incoherent,[167] yet, having acquired the power of retention, he is adorned with a varied eloquence.

“He follows the ways of the outsiders without ever becoming an outsider. He follows the ways of all the world, yet he reverses all states of existence. He

follows the way of liberation without ever abandoning the progress of the world.

"Mañjuśrī, thus does the bodhisattva follow the wrong ways, thereby following the way to the qualities of the Buddha."

7.9 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti asked the crown prince Mañjuśrī, "Mañjuśrī, what is the 'family of the tathāgatas'?"

Mañjuśrī replied, "Noble sir, the family of the tathāgatas consists of all basic egoism; of ignorance and the thirst for existence; of lust, hate, and folly; of the four misapprehensions; of the five obscurations; of the six sense-media; of the seven abodes of consciousness; of the eight perverse paths; of the nine causes of irritation; and of the paths of the ten sins. Such is the family of the tathāgatas. In short, noble sir, the sixty-two kinds of convictions constitute the family of the tathāgatas!"

7.10 *Vimalakīrti*: Mañjuśrī, with what in mind do you say so?

Mañjuśrī: Noble sir, one who stays in the fixed determination of the vision of the uncreated is not capable of conceiving the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment. However, one who lives among created things, in the mines of passions, without seeing any truth, is indeed capable of conceiving the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment.

7.11 Noble sir, flowers like the blue lotus, the red lotus, the white lotus, the water lily, and the moon lily do not grow on the dry ground in the wilderness, but do grow in the swamps and mud banks. Just so, the buddha-qualities do not grow in living beings certainly destined for the uncreated but do grow in those living beings who are like swamps and mud banks of passions. Likewise, just as seeds do not grow in the sky but do grow in the earth, so the buddha-qualities do not grow in those determined for the absolute but do grow in those who, after having produced a Sumeru-like mountain of egoistic views, conceive the spirit of enlightenment, from which all the buddha-qualities then arise.

7.12 Noble sir, through these considerations one can understand that all passions constitute the family of the tathāgatas. Just as, noble sir, without going out into the great ocean, it is impossible to find precious, priceless pearls, so likewise, without going into the ocean of passions, it is impossible to obtain the mind of omniscience.

7.13 Then, the elder Mahākāśyapa applauded the crown prince Mañjuśrī: "Good! Good, Mañjuśrī! This is indeed well spoken! This is right! The passions do indeed constitute the family of the tathāgatas. How can such as we, the disciples, conceive the spirit of enlightenment, or become fully enlightened in regard to the qualities of the Buddha? Only those guilty of the five deadly sins can conceive the spirit of enlightenment and can attain buddhahood, which is the full accomplishment of the qualities of the Buddha!

7.14 "Just as the five desire objects have no impression or effect on those bereft of faculties, in the same way all the qualities of the Buddha have no impression or effect on the disciples, who have abandoned all adherences. Thus, the disciples can never appreciate those qualities.[168]

7.15 "Therefore, Mañjuśrī, the ordinary individual is grateful to the Tathāgata, but the disciples are not grateful. Why? Ordinary individuals, upon learning of the virtues of the Buddha, conceive the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment, in order to ensure the uninterrupted continuity of the heritage of the Three Jewels; but the disciples, although they may hear of the qualities, powers, and fearlessnesses of the Buddha until the end of their days, are not capable of conceiving the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment."

7.16 Thereupon, the bodhisattva Sarvarūpasaṃdarśana, who was present in that assembly, addressed the Licchavi Vimalakīrti: "Householder, where are your father and mother, your children, your wife, your servants, your maids, your laborers, and your attendants? Where are your friends, your relatives, and

your kinsmen? Where are your servants, your horses, your elephants, your chariots, your bodyguards, and your bearers?”

Thus addressed, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti spoke the following verses to the bodhisattva Sarvarūpasaṃdarśana:

7.17 “Of the true bodhisattvas,
The mother is the transcendence of wisdom,
The father is the skill in liberative technique;[169]
The leaders are born of such parents.

7.18 “Their wife is the joy in the Dharma,
Love and compassion are their daughters,
The Dharma and the truth are their sons,
And their home is deep thought on the meaning of voidness.

7.19 “All the passions are their disciples,
Controlled at will.
Their friends are the aids to enlightenment;
Thereby they realize supreme enlightenment.

7.20 “Their companions, ever with them,
Are the six transcendences.
Their consorts are the means of unification,
Their music is the teaching of the Dharma.

7.21 “The incantations make their garden,
Which blossoms with the flowers of the factors of enlightenment,
With trees of the great wealth of the Dharma,[170]
And fruits of the gnosis of liberation.

7.22 “Their pool consists of the eight liberations,
Filled with the water of concentration,

Covered with the lotuses of the seven purities[171]—
Who bathes therein becomes immaculate.

7.23 “Their bearers are the six superknowledges,
Their vehicle is the unexcelled Mahāyāna,
Their driver is the spirit of enlightenment,
And their path is the eightfold peace.

7.24 “Their ornaments are the auspicious signs
And the eighty marks;
Their garland[172] is virtuous aspiration,
And their clothing is good conscience and consideration.

7.25 “Their wealth is the holy Dharma,
And their business is its teaching;
Their great income is pure practice,
And it is dedicated to the supreme enlightenment.

7.26 “Their bed consists of the four contemplations,
And its spread is the pure livelihood.
Their awakening consists of gnosis,
Which is constant learning and meditation.

7.27 “Their food is the ambrosia of the teachings,[173]
And their drink is the juice of liberation.
Their bath is pure aspiration,
And morality their unguent and perfume.

7.28 “Having conquered the enemy afflictions,
They are the invincible heroes.
Having subdued the four māras,
They raise their standard on the field of enlightenment.

7.29 “They manifest birth voluntarily,
Yet they are not born, nor do they originate.
They shine in all the fields of the buddhas,
Just like the rising sun.

7.30 “Though they worship buddhas by the millions,
With every conceivable offering,
They never dwell upon the least difference
Between the buddhas and themselves.

7.31 “They journey through all buddhafields
In order to bring benefit to living beings,
Yet they see those fields as just like empty space,
Free of any conceptual notions of ‘living beings.’[174]

7.32 “The fearless bodhisattvas can manifest,
All in a single instant,
The forms, sounds, and manners of behavior
Of all living beings.

7.33 “Although they recognize the deeds of māras,
They can get along even with these māras;
For even such activities may be manifested
By those perfected in liberative art.

7.34 “They play with illusory manifestations
In order to develop living beings,
Showing themselves to be old or sick,
And even manifesting their own deaths.

7.35 “They demonstrate the burning of the earth
In the consuming flames of the world’s end,

In order to demonstrate impermanence
To living beings convinced about permanence.

7.36 “Invited by hundreds of thousands of living beings,
All in the same country,
They partake of offerings at the homes of all,
And dedicate all for the sake of enlightenment.

7.37 “They excel in all esoteric sciences,
And in the many different crafts,
And they bring forth the happiness
Of all living beings.

7.38 “By devoting themselves as monks
To all the strange sects of the world,
They develop all those beings
Who have attached themselves to dogmatic views.

7.39 “They may become suns or moons,
Śakras, Brahmās, or lords of creatures;
They may become fire or water
Or earth or wind.

7.40 “During the short eons of maladies,
They become the best holy medicine;
They make beings well and happy,
And bring about their liberation.

7.41 “During the short eons of famine,
They become food and drink.
Having first alleviated thirst and hunger,
They teach the Dharma to living beings.

7.42 “During the short eons of swords,
They meditate on love,
Introducing to nonviolence
Hundreds of millions of living beings.[175]

7.43 “In the middle of great battles
They remain impartial to both sides;
For bodhisattvas of great strength
Delight in reconciliation of conflict.

7.44 “In order to help living beings,
They voluntarily descend
Into the hells which are attached
To all the inconceivable buddhafields.

7.45 “They manifest their lives
In all the species of the animal kingdom,
Teaching the Dharma everywhere.
Thus they are called ‘leaders.’

7.46 “They display sensual enjoyment to the worldlings,
And trances to the meditative.
They completely conquer the māras,
And allow them no chance to prevail.

7.47 “Just as displaying a lotus
Amidst a fire is miraculous,
So they display the miracles
Of both pleasures and trances.[176]

7.48 “They intentionally become courtesans
In order to win men over,

And, having caught them with the hook of desire,
They establish them in the buddha.

7.49 “In order to help living beings,
They always become chieftains,
Captains, priests, and ministers,
Or even prime ministers.

7.50 “For the sake of the poor,
They become inexhaustible treasures,
Causing those to whom they give their gifts
To conceive the spirit of enlightenment.

7.51 “They become invincible champions
For the sake of the proud and the vain,
And, having conquered all their pride,
They start them on the quest for enlightenment.

7.52 “They always stand at the head
Of those terrified with fright,
And, having bestowed fearlessness upon them,
They develop them toward enlightenment.

7.53 “They become great holy men,
With the superknowledges and pure continence,
And thus induce living beings to the morality
Of tolerance, gentleness, and discipline.

7.54 “Here in the world, they fearlessly behold
Those who are masters to be served,
And they become their servants or slaves,
Or serve as their disciples.

7.55 “Well trained in liberative art,
They demonstrate all activities,
Whichever possibly may be a method
To make beings delight in the Dharma.

7.56 “Their practices are infinite;
And their spheres of influence are infinite;
Having perfected an infinite wisdom,
They liberate an infinity of living beings.

7.57 “Even for the buddhas themselves,
During a million eons,
Or even a hundred million eons,
It would be hard to express all their virtues.

7.58 “Except for some inferior living beings,
Without any intelligence at all,
Is there anyone with any discernment
Who, having heard this teaching,
Would not wish for the supreme enlightenment?”

Chapter 8 The Dharma-Door of Nonduality

8.1 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti asked those bodhisattvas, “Good sirs, please explain how the bodhisattvas enter the Dharma-door of nonduality!”[177]

8.2 The bodhisattva Dharmavikurvaṇa declared, “Noble sir, production and destruction are two, but what is not produced and does not occur cannot be destroyed. Thus the attainment of the tolerance of the birthlessness of things is the entrance into nonduality.”

8.3 The bodhisattva Śrīgupta declared, “‘I’ and ‘mine’ are two. If there is no presumption of a self, there will be no possessiveness. Thus, the absence of presumption is the entrance into nonduality.”

8.4 The bodhisattva Śrīkūṭa declared, “‘Defilement’ and ‘purification’ are two. When there is thorough knowledge of defilement, there will be no conceit about purification. The path leading to the complete conquest of all conceit is the entrance into nonduality.”

8.5 The bodhisattva Sunakṣatra declared, “‘Distraction’ and ‘attention’ are two. When there is no distraction, there will be no attention, no mentation, and no mental intensity. Thus, the absence of mental intensity is the entrance into nonduality.”

8.6 The bodhisattva Subāhu declared, “‘Bodhisattva spirit’ and ‘disciple spirit’ are two. When both are seen to resemble an illusory spirit, there is no bodhisattva spirit, nor any disciple spirit. Thus, the sameness of natures of spirits is the entrance into nonduality.”

8.7 The bodhisattva Animiṣa declared, “‘Grasping’ and ‘nongrasping’ are two. What is not grasped is not perceived, and what is not perceived is neither presumed nor repudiated.[178] Thus, the inaction and non-involvement of all things is the entrance into nonduality.”

8.8 The bodhisattva Sunetra declared, "'Uniqueness' and 'characterlessness' are two. Not to presume or construct something is neither to establish its uniqueness nor to establish its characterlessness. To penetrate the equality of these two is to enter nonduality."[179]

8.9 The bodhisattva Puṣya declared, "'Good' and 'evil' are two. Seeking neither good nor evil, the understanding of the nonduality of the significant and the meaningless is the entrance into nonduality."

8.10 The bodhisattva Siṃha declared, "'Sinfulness' and 'sinlessness' are two. By means of the diamond-like wisdom that pierces to the quick, not to be bound or liberated is the entrance into nonduality."

8.11 The bodhisattva Siṃhamati declared, "To say, 'this is impure' and 'that is immaculate' makes for duality. One who, attaining equanimity, forms no conception of impurity or immaculateness, yet is not utterly without conception, has equanimity without any attainment of equanimity—he enters the absence of conceptual knots. Thus, he enters into nonduality."

8.12 The bodhisattva Sukhādhimukta declared, "To say, 'this is happiness' and 'that is misery' is dualism. One who is free of all calculations, through the extreme purity of gnosis—his mind is aloof, like empty space; and thus he enters into nonduality."[180]

8.13 The bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa declared, "To say, 'this is mundane' and 'that is transcendental' is dualism. This world has the nature of voidness, so there is neither transcendence nor involvement, neither progress nor standstill. Thus, neither to transcend nor to be involved, neither to go nor to stop— this is the entrance into nonduality."

8.14 The bodhisattva Dāntamati declared, "'Life' and 'liberation' are dualistic. Having seen the nature of life, one neither belongs to it nor is one utterly liberated from it. Such understanding is the entrance into nonduality."

8.15 The bodhisattva Pratyakṣadarśa declared, "'Destructible' and 'indestructible' are dualistic. What is destroyed is ultimately destroyed. What is ultimately destroyed does not become destroyed; hence, it is called 'indestructible.' What is indestructible is instantaneous, and what is instantaneous is indestructible. The experience of such is called 'the entrance into the principle of nonduality.'"[181]

8.16 The bodhisattva Samantagupta declared, "'Self' and 'selflessness' are dualistic. Since the existence of self cannot be perceived, what is there to be made 'selfless'? Thus, the nondual vision of their nature is the entrance into nonduality."

8.17 The bodhisattva Vidyuddeva declared, "'Knowledge' and 'ignorance' are dualistic. The natures of ignorance and knowledge are the same, for ignorance is undefined, incalculable, and beyond the sphere of thought. The realization of this is the entrance into nonduality."

8.18 The bodhisattva Priyadarśana declared, "Matter itself is void. Voidness does not result from the destruction of matter, but the nature of matter is itself voidness. Therefore, to speak of voidness on the one hand, and of matter, or of sensation, or of intellect, or of motivation, or of consciousness on the other, is entirely dualistic. Consciousness itself is voidness. Voidness does not result from the destruction of consciousness, but the nature of consciousness is itself voidness. Such understanding of the five compulsive aggregates and the knowledge of them as such by means of gnosis is the entrance into nonduality."

8.19 The bodhisattva Prabhāketu declared, "To say that the four main elements are one thing and the etheric space-element another is dualistic. The four main elements are themselves the nature of space. The past itself is also the nature of space. The future itself is also the nature of space. Likewise, the present itself is also the nature of space. The gnosis that penetrates the elements in such a way is the entrance into nonduality."[182]

8.20 The bodhisattva Sumati declared, " 'Eye' and 'form' are dualistic. To understand the eye correctly, and not to have attachment, aversion, or confusion with regard to form—that is called 'peace.' Similarly, 'ear' and 'sound,' 'nose' and 'smell,' 'tongue' and 'taste,' 'body' and 'touch,' and 'mind' and 'phenomena'—all are dualistic. But to know the mind, and to be neither attached, averse, nor confused with regard to phenomena—that is called 'peace.' To live in such peace is to enter into nonduality."

8.21 The bodhisattva Akṣayamati declared, "The dedication of generosity for the sake of attaining omniscience is dualistic. The nature of generosity is itself omniscience, and the nature of omniscience itself is total dedication. Likewise, it is dualistic to dedicate morality, tolerance, effort, meditation, and wisdom for the sake of omniscience. Omniscience is the nature of wisdom, and total dedication is the nature of omniscience. Thus, the entrance into this principle of uniqueness is the entrance into nonduality."

8.22 The bodhisattva Gambhīrabuddhi declared, "It is dualistic to say that voidness is one thing, signlessness another, and wishlessness still another. What is void has no sign. What has no sign has no wish. Where there is no wish there is no process of thought, mind, or consciousness. To see the doors of all liberations in the door of one liberation is the entrance into nonduality."

8.23 The bodhisattva Sāntendriya declared, "It is dualistic to say 'Buddha,' 'Dharma,' and 'Saṅgha.' The Dharma is itself the nature of the Buddha, the Saṅgha is itself the nature of the Dharma, and all of them are uncompounded. The uncompounded is infinite space, and the processes of all things are equivalent to infinite space. Adjustment to this is the entrance into nonduality."

8.24 The bodhisattva Apratihatacakṣu declared, "It is dualistic to refer to 'aggregates' and to the 'cessation of aggregates.' Aggregates themselves are cessation. Why? The egoistic views of aggregates, being unproduced themselves, do not exist ultimately. Hence such views do not really conceptualize 'these are aggregates' or 'these aggregates cease.' Ultimately, they have no such discrimin-

ative constructions and no such conceptualizations. Therefore, such views have themselves the nature of cessation. Nonoccurrence and nondestruction are the entrance into nonduality."

8.25 The bodhisattva Suvinīta declared, "Physical, verbal, and mental vows do not exist dualistically. Why? These things have the nature of inactivity. The nature of inactivity of the body is the same as the nature of inactivity of speech, whose nature of inactivity is the same as the nature of inactivity of the mind. It is necessary to know and to understand this fact of the ultimate inactivity of all things, for this knowledge is the entrance into nonduality."

8.26 The bodhisattva Puṇyakṣetra declared, "It is dualistic to consider actions meritorious, sinful, or unmoving. The non-undertaking of meritorious, sinful, and unmoving actions is not dualistic. The intrinsic nature of all such actions is voidness, wherein ultimately there is neither merit, nor sin, nor non-movement, nor action itself. The nonaccomplishment of such actions is the entrance into nonduality."

8.27 The bodhisattva Padmavyūha declared, "Dualism is produced from obsession with self, but true understanding of self does not result in dualism. Who thus abides in nonduality is without ideation, and that absence of ideation is the entrance into nonduality."

8.28 The bodhisattva Śrīgarbha declared, "Duality is constituted by perceptual manifestation. Nonduality is objectlessness. Therefore, nongrasping and nonrejection is the entrance into nonduality."

8.29 The bodhisattva Candrottara declared, " 'Darkness' and 'light' are dualistic, but the absence of both darkness and light is nonduality. Why? At the time of absorption in cessation, there is neither darkness nor light, and likewise with the natures of all things. The entrance into this equanimity is the entrance into nonduality."

8.30 The bodhisattva Ratnamudrāhasta declared, “It is dualistic to detest the world and to rejoice in liberation, and neither detesting the world nor rejoicing in liberation is nonduality. Why? Liberation can be found where there is bondage, but where there is ultimately no bondage where is there need for liberation? The mendicant who is neither bound nor liberated does not experience any like or any dislike and thus he enters nonduality.”

8.31 The bodhisattva Maṇikūṭarāja declared, “It is dualistic to speak of ‘good paths’ and ‘bad paths’. One who is on the path is not concerned with good or bad paths. Living in such unconcern, he entertains no concepts of ‘path’ or ‘non-path.’ Understanding the nature of concepts, his mind does not engage in duality. Such is the entrance into nonduality.”

8.32 The bodhisattva Satyananda declared, “It is dualistic to speak of ‘true’ and ‘false.’ When one sees truly, one does not ever see any truth,[183] so how could one see falsehood? Why? One does not see with the physical eye, one sees with the eye of wisdom. And with the wisdom-eye one sees only insofar as there is neither sight nor nonsight. There, where there is neither sight nor nonsight, is the entrance into nonduality.”

8.33 When the bodhisattvas had given their explanations, they all addressed the crown prince Mañjuśrī: “Mañjuśrī, what is the bodhisattva’s entrance into nonduality?”

Mañjuśrī replied, “Good sirs, you have all spoken well. Nevertheless, all your explanations are themselves dualistic. To know no one teaching, to express nothing, to say nothing, to explain nothing, to announce nothing, to indicate nothing, and to designate nothing—that is the entrance into nonduality.”

8.34 Then, the crown prince Mañjuśrī said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “We have all given our own teachings, noble sir. Now, may you elucidate the teaching of the entrance into the principle of nonduality!”

Thereupon, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti kept his silence, saying nothing at all.[184] The crown prince Mañjuśrī applauded the Licchavi Vimalakīrti: “Excellent! Excellent, noble sir! This is indeed the entrance into the nonduality of the bodhisattvas. Here there is no use for syllables, sounds, and ideas.”

8.35 When these teachings had been declared, five thousand bodhisattvas entered the door of the Dharma of nonduality and attained tolerance of the birthlessness of things.

Chapter 9 The Feast Brought by the Emanated Incarnation

9.1 Thereupon, the venerable Śāriputra thought to himself, “If these great bodhisattvas do not adjourn before noontime, when are they going to eat?”[185]

The Licchavi Vimalakīrti, aware of what the venerable Śāriputra was thinking, spoke to him: “Reverend Śāriputra, the Tathāgata has taught the eight liberations. You should concentrate on those liberations, listening to the Dharma with a mind free of preoccupations with material things. Just wait a minute, reverend Śāriputra, and you will eat such food as you have never before tasted.”

9.2 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti set himself in such a concentration and performed such a miraculous feat that those bodhisattvas and those great disciples were enabled to see the universe called Sarvagandhasugandhā, which is located in the direction of the zenith, beyond as many buddhafields as there are sands in forty-two Ganges rivers. There the tathāgata named Gandhottamakūṭa resides, lives, and is manifest. In that universe, the trees emit a fragrance that far surpasses all the fragrances, human and divine, of all the buddhafields of the ten directions. In that universe, even the names “disciple” and “solitary sage” do not exist, and the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa teaches the Dharma to a gathering of bodhisattvas only. In that universe, all the houses, the avenues, the parks, and the palaces are made of various perfumes, and the fragrance of the food eaten by those bodhisattvas pervades immeasurable universes.

9.3 At this time, the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa sat down with his bodhisattvas to take his meal, and the deities called Gandhavyūhāhāra, who were all devoted to the Mahāyāna, served and attended upon that Buddha and his bodhisattvas. Everyone in the gathering at the house of Vimalakīrti was able to see distinctly this universe wherein the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa and his bodhisattvas were taking their meal.

9.4 The Licchavi Vimalakīrti addressed the whole gathering of bodhisattvas: “Good sirs, is there any among you who would like to go to that buddhafield to bring back some food?”

But, restrained by the supernatural power of Mañjuśrī, none of them volunteered to go.

9.5 The Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the crown prince Mañjuśrī, “Mañjuśrī, are you not ashamed of such a gathering?”

Mañjuśrī replied, “Noble sir, did not the Tathāgata declare, ‘Those who are unlearned should not be despised’?”

9.6 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, without rising from his couch, magically emanated an incarnated bodhisattva, whose body was of golden color, adorned with the auspicious signs and marks, and of such an appearance that he outshone the whole assembly.

9.7 The Licchavi Vimalakīrti addressed that incarnated bodhisattva: “Noble son, go in the direction of the zenith and when you have crossed as many buddhafields as there are sands in forty-two Ganges rivers, you will reach a universe called Sarvagandhasugandhā, where you will find the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa taking his meal. Go to him and, having bowed down at his feet, make the following inquiry of him:

9.8 “ ‘The Licchavi Vimalakīrti bows down one hundred thousand times at your feet, O Lord, and asks after your health—if you have but little trouble, little discomfort, little unrest; if you are strong, well, without complaint, and living in touch with supreme happiness.’

9.9 “Having thus asked after his health, you should request of him: ‘Vimalakīrti asks the Lord to give me the remains of your meal, with which he will accomplish the buddha-work in the universe called Sahā. Thus, those living be-

ings with inferior aspirations will be inspired with lofty aspirations, and the good name of the Tathāgata will be celebrated far and wide.’ ”

At that, the incarnated bodhisattva said, “Very good!” to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and obeyed his instructions. In sight of all the bodhisattvas, he turned his face upward and was gone, and they saw him no more.[186]

9.10 When he reached the universe Sarvagandhasugandhā, he bowed down at the feet of the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa and said, “Lord, the bodhisattva Vimalakīrti, bowing down at the feet of the Lord, greets the Lord, saying: ‘Do you have little trouble, little discomfort, and little unrest? Are you strong, well, without complaint, and living in touch with the supreme happiness?’ He then requests, having bowed down one hundred thousand times at the feet of the Lord: ‘May the Lord be gracious and give to me the remains of his meal in order to accomplish the buddha-work in the universe called Sahā. Then, those living beings who aspire to inferior ways may gain the intelligence to aspire to the great Dharma of the Buddha, and the name of the Buddha will be celebrated far and wide.’ ”

9.11 At that the bodhisattvas of the buddhafield of the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa were astonished and asked the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa, “Lord, where is there such a great being as this? Where is the universe Sahā? What does he mean by ‘those who aspire to inferior ways’?”[187]

9.12 Having thus been questioned by those bodhisattvas, the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa said, “Noble sons, the universe Sahā exists beyond as many buddhafields in the direction of the nadir as there are sands in forty-two Ganges rivers. There the Tathāgata Śākyamuni teaches the Dharma to living beings who aspire to inferior ways, in that buddhafield tainted with five corruptions. There the bodhisattva Vimalakīrti, who lives in the inconceivable liberation, teaches the Dharma to the bodhisattvas. He sends this incarnated bodhisattva here in order to celebrate my name, in order to show the advantages

of this universe, and in order to increase the roots of virtue of those bodhisattvas."

9.13 The bodhisattvas exclaimed, "How great must that bodhisattva be himself if his magical incarnation is thus endowed with supernatural power, strength, and fearlessness!"

The Tathāgata said, "The greatness of that bodhisattva is such that he sends magical incarnations to all the buddhafields of the ten directions, and all these incarnations accomplish the buddha-work for all the living beings in all those buddhafields."[188]

9.14 Then, the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa poured some of his food, impregnated with all perfumes, into a fragrant vessel and gave it to the incarnated bodhisattva. And the ninety million bodhisattvas of that universe volunteered to go along with him: "Lord, we also would like to go to that universe Sahā, to see, honor, and serve the Buddha Śākyamuni and to see Vimalakīrti and those bodhisattvas."

9.15 The Tathāgata declared, "Noble sons, go ahead if you think it is the right time. But, lest those living beings become mad and intoxicated, go without your perfumes. And, lest those living beings of the Sahā world become jealous of you, change your bodies to hide your beauty. And do not conceive ideas of contempt and aversion for that universe. Why? Noble sons, a buddhafield is a field of pure space, but the lord buddhas, in order to develop living beings, do not reveal all at once the pure realm of the Buddha."

9.16 Then the incarnated bodhisattva took the food and departed with the ninety million bodhisattvas and, by the power of the Buddha and the supernatural operation of Vimalakīrti, disappeared from that universe Sarvagandhasugandhā and stood again in the house of Vimalakīrti in a fraction of a second. The Licchavi Vimalakīrti created ninety million lion-thrones exactly like those already there, and the bodhisattvas were seated.

9.17 Then, the incarnated bodhisattva gave the vessel full of food to Vimalakīrti, and the fragrance of that food permeated the entire great city of Vaiśālī and its sweet perfume spread throughout one hundred universes. Within the city of Vaiśālī, the brahmins, householders, and even the Licchavi chieftain Candracchattra, having noticed this fragrance, were amazed and filled with wonder. They were so cleansed in body and mind that they came at once to the house of Vimalakīrti, along with all eighty-four thousand of the Licchavis.

9.18 Seeing there the bodhisattvas seated on the high, wide, and beautiful lion-thrones, they were filled with admiration and great joy. They all bowed down to those great disciples and bodhisattvas and then sat down to one side. And the gods of the earth, the gods of the realm of desire, and the gods of the realm of pure matter, attracted by the perfume, also came to the house of Vimalakīrti.

9.19 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti spoke to the elder Śāriputra and the great disciples: "Reverends, eat of the food of the Tathāgata! It is ambrosia perfumed by the great compassion. But do not fix your minds in narrow-minded attitudes, lest you be unable to receive its gift."

9.20 But some of the disciples had already had the thought: "How can such a huge multitude eat such a small amount of food?"

Then the incarnated bodhisattva said to those disciples, "Do not compare, venerable ones, your own wisdom and merits with the wisdom and merits of the Tathāgata! Why? For example, the four great oceans might dry up, but this food would never be exhausted. If all living beings were to eat for an eon an amount of this food equal to Mount Sumeru in size, it still would not be depleted. Why? Issued from inexhaustible morality, concentration, and wisdom, the remains of the food of the Tathāgata contained in this vessel cannot be exhausted."

9.21 Indeed, the entire gathering was satisfied by that food, and the food was not at all depleted. Having eaten that food, there arose in the bodies of those bod-

hisattvas, disciples, Śakras, Brahmās, Lokapālas, and other living beings, a bliss just like the bliss of the bodhisattvas of the universe Sarvasukhapratimaṇḍita. And from all the pores of their skin arose a perfume like that of the trees that grow in the universe Sarvagandhasugandhā.

9.22 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti knowingly addressed those bodhisattvas who had come from the buddhafield of the Lord Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa: "Noble sirs, how does the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa teach his Dharma?"

They replied, "The Tathāgata does not teach the Dharma by means of sound and language. He disciplines the bodhisattvas only by means of perfumes. At the foot of each perfume-tree sits a bodhisattva, and the trees emit perfumes like this one. From the moment they smell that perfume, the bodhisattvas attain the concentration called 'source of all bodhisattva-virtues.' From the moment they attain that concentration, all the bodhisattvas-virtues are produced in them."

9.23 Those bodhisattvas then asked the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, "How does the Buddha Śākyamuni teach the Dharma?"

Vimalakīrti replied, "Good sirs, these living beings here are hard to discipline. Therefore, he teaches them with discourses appropriate for the disciplining of the wild and uncivilized. How does he discipline the wild and uncivilized? What discourses are appropriate? Here they are:

9.24 " 'This is hell. This is the animal world. This is the world of the lord of death. These are the adversities. These are the rebirths with crippled faculties. These are physical misdeeds, and these are the retributions for physical misdeeds. These are verbal misdeeds, and these are the retributions for verbal misdeeds. These are mental misdeeds, and these are the retributions for mental misdeeds. This is killing. This is stealing. This is sexual misconduct. This is lying. This is backbiting. This is harsh speech. This is frivolous speech. This is covetousness. This is malice. This is false view.[189] These are their retributions. This is miserliness, and this is its effect. This is immorality. This is hatred. This

is sloth. This is the fruit of sloth. This is false wisdom and this is the fruit of false wisdom. These are the transgressions of the precepts. This is the vow of personal liberation. This should be done and that should not be done. This is proper and that should be abandoned. This is an obscuration and that is without obscuration. This is sin and that rises above sin. This is the path and that is the wrong path. This is virtue and that is evil. This is blameworthy and that is blameless. This is defiled and that is immaculate. This is mundane and that is transcendental. This is compounded and that is uncompounded. This is affliction and that is purification. This is life and that is liberation.'[190]

9.25 "Thus, by means of these varied explanations of the Dharma, the Buddha trains the minds of those living beings who are just like wild horses. Just as wild horses or wild elephants will not be tamed unless the goad pierces them to the marrow, so living beings who are wild and hard to civilize are disciplined only by means of discourses about all kinds of miseries."

9.26 The bodhisattvas said, "Thus is established the greatness of the Buddha Śākyamuni! It is marvelous how, concealing his miraculous power, he civilizes the wild living beings who are poor and inferior. And the bodhisattvas who settle in a buddhafield of such intense hardships must have inconceivably great compassion!"[191]

9.27 The Licchavi Vimalakīrti declared, "So it is, good sirs! It is as you say. The great compassion of the bodhisattvas who reincarnate here is extremely firm. In a single lifetime in this universe, they accomplish much benefit for living beings. So much benefit for living beings could not be accomplished in the universe Sarvagandhasugandhā even in one hundred thousand eons. Why? Good sirs, in this Sahā universe, there are ten virtuous practices that do not exist in any other buddhafield. What are these ten? Here they are: to win the poor by generosity; to win the immoral by morality; to win the hateful by means of tolerance; to win the lazy by means of effort; to win the mentally troubled by means of concentration; to win the falsely wise by means of true wisdom; to show those

suffering from the eight adversities how to rise above them; to teach the Mahāyāna to those of narrow-minded attitudes; to win those who have not produced the roots of virtue by means of the roots of virtue; and to develop living beings without interruption through the four means of unification. Those who engage in these ten virtuous practices do not exist in any other buddhafield."

9.28 Again the bodhisattvas asked, "How many qualities must a bodhisattva have, to go safe and sound to a pure buddhafield after he transmigrates at death away from this Sahā universe?"

Vimalakīrti replied, "After he transmigrates at death away from this Sahā universe, a bodhisattva must have eight qualities to reach a pure buddhafield safe and sound. What are the eight? He must resolve to himself: 'I must benefit all living beings, without seeking even the slightest benefit for myself. I must bear all the miseries of all living beings and give all my accumulated roots of virtue to all living beings. I must have no resentment toward any living being. I must rejoice in all bodhisattvas as if they were the Teacher.[192] I must not neglect any teachings, whether or not I have heard them before. I must control my mind, without coveting the gains of others, and without taking pride in gains of my own. I must examine my own faults and not blame others for their faults. I must take pleasure in being consciously aware and must truly undertake all virtues.'

"If a bodhisattva has these eight qualities, when he transmigrates at death away from the Sahā universe, he will go safe and sound to a pure buddhafield."

9.29 When the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and the crown prince Mañjuśrī had thus taught the Dharma to the multitude gathered there, one hundred thousand living beings conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, and ten thousand bodhisattvas attained the tolerance of the birthlessness of things.

Chapter 10 Lesson of the Destructible and the Indestructible

10.1 Meanwhile, the area in which the Lord was teaching the Dharma in the garden of Āmrapālī expanded and grew larger, and the entire assembly appeared tinged with a golden hue. Thereupon, the venerable Ānanda asked the Buddha, "Lord, this expansion and enlargement of the garden of Āmrapālī and this golden hue of the assembly—what do these auspicious signs portend?"

The Buddha declared, "Ānanda, these auspicious signs portend that the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and the crown prince Mañjuśrī, attended by a great multitude, are coming into the presence of the Tathāgata."

10.2 At that moment the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the crown prince Mañjuśrī, "Mañjuśrī, let us take these many living beings into the presence of the Lord, so that they may see the Tathāgata and bow down to him!"

Mañjuśrī replied, "Noble sir, send them if you feel the time is right!"

10.3 Thereupon the Licchavi Vimalakīrti performed the miraculous feat of placing the entire assembly, replete with thrones, upon his right hand and then, having transported himself magically into the presence of the Buddha, placing it on the ground. He bowed down at the feet of the Buddha, circumambulated him to the right seven times with palms together, and withdrew to one side.

10.4 The bodhisattvas who had come from the buddhafield of the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa descended from their lion-thrones and, bowing down at the feet of the Buddha, placed their palms together in reverence and withdrew to one side. And the other bodhisattvas, great spiritual heroes, and the great disciples descended from their thrones likewise and, having bowed at the feet of the Buddha, withdrew to one side. Likewise all those Śakras, Brahmās, Lokapālas, and gods bowed at the feet of the Buddha and withdrew to one side.

10.5 Then, the Buddha, having delighted those bodhisattvas with greetings, declared, "Noble sons, be seated upon your thrones!"

Thus commanded by the Buddha, they took their thrones.

10.6 The Buddha said to Śāriputra, “Śāriputra, did you see the miraculous performances of the bodhisattvas, those best of beings?”

“I have seen them, Lord.”

10.7 “What concept did you produce toward them?”

“Lord, I produced the concept of inconceivability toward them. Their activities appeared inconceivable to me to the point that I was unable to think of them, to judge them, or even to imagine them.”

10.8 Then the venerable Ānanda asked the Buddha, “Lord, what is this perfume, the likes of which I have never smelled before?”

The Buddha answered, “Ānanda, this perfume emanates from all the pores of all these bodhisattvas.”

Śāriputra added, “Venerable Ānanda, this same perfume emanates from all our pores as well!”

10.9 *Ānanda*: Where does the perfume come from?

Śāriputra: The Licchavi Vimalakīrti obtained some food from the universe called Sarvagandhasugandhā, the buddhafield of the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa, and this perfume emanates from the bodies of all those who partook of that food.

10.10 Then the venerable Ānanda addressed the Licchavi Vimalakīrti: “How long will this perfume remain?”

Vimalakīrti: Until it is digested.

10.11 *Ānanda*: When will it be digested?

Vimalakīrti: It will be digested in forty-nine days, and its perfume will emanate for seven days more after that, but there will be no trouble of indigestion

during that time. Furthermore, reverend Ānanda, if monks who have not entered destiny for the ultimate eat this food, it will be digested when they enter that destiny. When those who have entered destiny for the ultimate eat this food, it will not be digested until their minds are totally liberated. If living beings who have not conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment eat this food, it will be digested when they conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. If those who have conceived the spirit of perfect enlightenment eat this food, it will not be digested until they have attained tolerance. And if those who have attained tolerance eat this food, it will be digested when they have become bodhisattvas one lifetime away from buddhahood. Reverend Ānanda, it is like the medicine called "delicious," which reaches the stomach but is not digested until all poisons have been eliminated—only then is it digested. Similarly, reverend Ānanda, this food is not digested until all the poisons of the passions have been eliminated—only then is it digested.

10.12 Then, the venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha, "Lord, it is wonderful that this food accomplishes the work of the Buddha!"

"So it is, Ānanda! It is as you say, Ānanda! There are buddhafields that accomplish the buddha-work by means of bodhisattvas, those that do so by means of lights, those that do so by means of the tree of enlightenment, those that do so by means of the physical beauty and the marks of the Tathāgata, those that do so by means of religious robes, those that do so by means of food, those that do so by means of water, those that do so by means of gardens, those that do so by means of palaces, those that do so by means of mansions, those that do so by means of magical incarnations, those that do so by means of empty space, and those that do so by means of lights in the sky. Why is it so, Ānanda? Because by these various means, living beings become disciplined. Similarly, Ānanda, there are buddhafields that accomplish the buddha-work by means of teaching living beings words, definitions, and analogies, such as 'dreams,' 'images,' the 'reflection of the moon in water,' 'echoes,' 'illusions,' and 'mirages'; and there are those that accomplish the buddha-work by making words understandable.

Also, Ānanda, there are utterly pure buddhafields that accomplish the buddha-work for living beings without speech, by silence, inexpressibility, and unteachability. Ānanda, among all the activities, enjoyments, and practices of the buddhas, there are none that do not accomplish the buddha-work, because all discipline living beings. Finally, Ānanda, the buddhas accomplish the buddha-work by means of the four māras and all the eighty-four thousand types of passion that afflict living beings.

10.13 "Ānanda, this is a Dharma-door called *introduction to all the buddha-qualities*. The bodhisattva who enters this Dharma-door experiences neither joy nor pride when confronted by a buddhafield adorned with the splendor of all noble qualities, and experiences neither sadness nor aversion when confronted by a buddhafield apparently without that splendor, but in all cases produces a profound reverence for all the tathāgatas. Indeed, it is wonderful how all the lord buddhas, who understand the equality of all things, manifest all sorts of buddhafields in order to develop living beings!

10.14 "Ānanda, just as the buddhafields are diverse as to their specific qualities but have no difference as to the sky that covers them, so, Ānanda, the tathāgatas are diverse as to their physical bodies but do not differ as to their unimpeded gnosis.

10.15 "Ānanda, all the buddhas are the same as to the perfection of their buddha-qualities: that is, their forms, their colors, their radiance, their bodies, their marks, their nobility, their morality, their concentration, their wisdom, their liberation, their gnosis and vision of liberation, their strengths, their fearlessnesses, their special buddha-qualities, their great love, their great compassion, their helpful intentions, their attitudes, their practices, their paths, the lengths of their lives, their teachings of the Dharma, their development and liberation of living beings, and their purification of buddhafields. Therefore, they are all called 'saṃyaksaṃbuddhas,' 'tathāgatas,' and 'buddhas.'

10.16 “Ānanda, were your life to last an entire eon, it would not be easy for you to understand thoroughly the extensive meaning and precise verbal significance of these three names. Also, Ānanda, if all the living beings of this billion-world galactic universe were like you—the foremost of the learned and the foremost of those endowed with memory and retention[193]—and were they to devote an entire eon, they would still be unable to understand completely the exact and extensive meaning of the three words ‘saṃyaksaṃbuddha,’ ‘tathāgata,’ and ‘buddha.’ Thus, Ānanda, the enlightenment of the buddhas is immeasurable, and the wisdom and the eloquence of the tathāgatas are inconceivable.”

10.17 Then, the venerable Ānanda addressed the Buddha: “Lord, from this day forth, I shall no longer declare myself to be the foremost of the learned.”

The Buddha said, “Do not be discouraged, Ānanda! Why? I pronounced you, Ānanda, the foremost of the learned, with the disciples in mind, not considering the bodhisattvas. Look, Ānanda, look at the bodhisattvas. They cannot be fathomed even by the wisest of men. Ānanda, one can fathom the depths of the ocean, but one cannot fathom the depths of the wisdom, gnosis, memory, retention, or eloquence of the bodhisattvas. Ānanda, you should remain in equanimity with regard to the deeds of the bodhisattvas. Why? Ānanda, these marvels displayed in a single morning by the Licchavi Vimalakīrti could not be performed by the disciples and solitary sages who have attained miraculous powers, were they to devote all their powers of incarnation and transformation during one hundred thousand millions of eons.”

10.18 Then, all those bodhisattvas from the buddhafield of the Tathāgata Gandhottamakūṭa joined their palms in reverence and, saluting the Tathāgata Śākyamuni, addressed him as follows: “Lord, when we first arrived in this buddhafield, we conceived a negative idea, but we now abandon this wrong idea. Why? Lord, the realms of the buddhas and their skill in liberative art are inconceivable. In order to develop living beings, they manifest such and such a field to suit the desire of such and such a living being. Lord, please give us a

teaching by which we may remember you, when we have returned to Sarvagandhasugandhā."

10.19 Thus having been requested, the Buddha declared, "Noble sons, there is a liberation of bodhisattvas called *destructible and indestructible*. You must train yourselves in this liberation. What is it? 'Destructible' refers to compounded things. 'Indestructible' refers to the uncompounded.[194] But the bodhisattva should neither destroy the compounded nor rest in the uncompounded.[195]

10.20 "Not to destroy compounded things consists in not losing the great love; not giving up the great compassion; not forgetting the omniscient mind generated by high resolve; not tiring in the positive development of living beings; not abandoning the means of unification; giving up body and life in order to uphold the holy Dharma; never being satisfied with the roots of virtue already accumulated; taking pleasure in skillful dedication; having no laziness in seeking the Dharma; being without selfish reticence in teaching the Dharma; sparing no effort in seeing and worshiping the tathāgatas; being fearless in voluntary reincarnations; being neither proud in success nor bowed in failure; not despising the unlearned, and respecting the learned as if they were the Teacher himself; making reasonable those whose passions are excessive; taking pleasure in solitude, without being attached to it; not longing for one's own happiness but longing for the happiness of others; conceiving of trance, meditation, and equanimity as if they were the Avīci hell; conceiving of the world as a garden of liberation; considering beggars to be spiritual teachers; considering the giving away of all possessions to be the means of realizing buddhahood; considering immoral beings to be saviors;[196] considering the transcendences to be parents; considering the aids to enlightenment to be servants; never ceasing accumulation of the roots of virtue; establishing the virtues of all buddhafields in one's own buddhafield; offering limitless pure sacrifices to fulfill the auspicious marks and signs; adorning body, speech, and mind by refraining from all sins; continuing in reincarnations during immeasurable eons, while purifying body, speech, and mind; avoiding discouragement, through spiritual heroism,

when learning of the immeasurable virtues of the Buddha; wielding the sharp sword of wisdom to chastise the enemy afflictions; knowing well the aggregates, the elements, and the sense-media in order to bear the burdens of all living beings; blazing with energy to conquer the host of demons; seeking knowledge in order to avoid pride; being content with little desire in order to uphold the Dharma; not mixing with worldly things in order to delight all the people; being faultless in all activities in order to conform to all people; producing the superknowledges to actually accomplish all duties of benefit to living beings; acquiring retention, memory, and knowledge in order to retain all learning; understanding the degrees of people's spiritual faculties to dispel the doubts of all living beings; displaying invincible miraculous feats to teach the Dharma; having irresistible speech by acquiring unimpeded eloquence;[197] tasting human and divine success by purifying the path of the ten virtues; establishing the path of the pure states of Brahmā by cultivating the four immeasurables; inviting the buddhas to teach the Dharma, rejoicing in them, and applauding them, thereby obtaining the melodious voice of a buddha; disciplining body, speech, and mind, thus maintaining constant spiritual progress; being without attachment to anything and thus acquiring the behavior of a buddha; gathering together the order of bodhisattvas[198] to attract beings to the Mahāyāna; and being consciously aware at all times not to neglect any good quality. Noble sons, a bodhisattva who thus applies himself to the Dharma is a bodhisattva who does not destroy the compounded realm.

10.21 "What is not resting in the uncompounded? The bodhisattva practices voidness, but he does not realize voidness. He practices signlessness but does not realize signlessness. He practices wishlessness but does not realize wishlessness. He practices non-performance but does not realize non-performance. He knows impermanence but is not complacent about his roots of virtue. He considers misery, but he reincarnates voluntarily. He knows selflessnes, but does not waste himself. He considers peacefulness but does not seek extreme peace. He cherishes solitude but does not avoid mental and physical efforts. He considers placelessness but does not abandon the place of good actions. He con-

siders occurrencelessness but undertakes to bear the burdens of all living beings. He considers immaculateness, yet he follows the process of the world. He considers motionlessness, yet he moves in order to develop all living beings. He considers selflessness, yet does not abandon the great compassion toward all living beings. He considers birthlessness, yet he does not fall into the ultimate determination of the disciples. He considers vanity, futility, insubstantiality, dependency, and placelessness, yet he establishes himself on merits that are not vain, on knowledge that is not futile, on reflections that are substantial, on the striving for the consecration of the independent gnosis, and on the buddha lineage in its definitive meaning.

"Thus, noble sons, a bodhisattva who aspires to such a Dharma neither rests in the uncompounded nor destroys the compounded.

10.22 "Furthermore, noble sons, in order to accomplish the store of merit, a bodhisattva does not rest in the uncompounded, and, in order to accomplish the store of wisdom, he does not destroy the compounded. In order to fulfill the great love, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, in order to fulfill the great compassion, he does not destroy compounded things. In order to develop living beings, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, in order to aspire to the buddha-qualities, he does not destroy compounded things. To perfect the marks of buddhahood, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, to perfect the gnosis of omniscience, he does not destroy compounded things. Out of skill in liberative art, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, through thorough analysis with his wisdom, he does not destroy compounded things. To purify the buddhafield, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, by the power of the grace of the Buddha, he does not destroy compounded things. Because he feels the needs of living beings, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, in order to show truly the meaning of the Dharma, he does not destroy compounded things. Because of his store of roots of virtue, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, because of his instinctive enthusiasm for these roots of virtue, he does not destroy compounded things. To fulfill his prayers, he does not

rest in the uncompounded, and, because he has no wishes, he does not destroy compounded things. Because his positive thought is pure, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, because his high resolve is pure, he does not destroy compounded things. In order to play with the five superknowledges, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, because of the six superknowledges of the buddha-gnosis,[199] he does not destroy compounded things. To fulfill the six transcendences, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, to fulfill the time, [200] he does not destroy compounded things. To gather the treasures of the Dharma, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, because he does not like any narrow-minded teachings, he does not destroy compounded things. Because he gathers all the medicines of the Dharma, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, to apply the medicine of the Dharma appropriately, he does not destroy compounded things. To confirm his commitments, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, to mend any failure of these commitments, he does not destroy compounded things. To concoct all the medicines of the Dharma, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, to give out the medicine of even the smallest Dharma,[201] he does not destroy compounded things. Because he knows thoroughly all the sicknesses due to passions, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, in order to cure all sicknesses of all living beings, he does not destroy compounded things.

10.23 "Thus, noble sons, the bodhisattva does not destroy compounded things and does not rest in the uncompounded, and that is the liberation of bodhisattvas called *destructible and indestructible*. Noble sirs, you should also strive in this."

10.24 Then, those bodhisattvas, having heard this teaching, were satisfied, delighted, and reverent. They were filled with rejoicing and happiness of mind. In order to worship the Buddha Śākyamuni and the bodhisattvas of the Sahā universe, as well as this teaching, they covered the whole earth of this billion-world galactic universe with fragrant powder, incense, perfumes, and flowers up to the height of the knees. Having thus regaled the whole retinue of the Tathāgata, bowed their heads at the feet of the Buddha, and circumambulated him to the

right three times, they sang a hymn of praise to him. They then disappeared from this universe and in a split second were back in the universe Sarva-gandhasugandhā.

Chapter 11 Vision of the Universe Abhirati and the Tathāgata Akṣobhya

11.1 Thereupon, the Buddha said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “Noble son, when you see the Tathāgata, how do you view him?”

Thus addressed, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the Buddha, “Lord, when I see the Tathāgata, I view him by not seeing any Tathāgata. Why? I see him as not born from the past, not passing on to the future, and not abiding in the present time. Why? He is the essence that is the reality of matter,[202] but he is not matter. He is the essence that is the reality of sensation, but he is not sensation. He is the essence that is the reality of intellect, but he is not intellect. He is the essence that is the reality of performance, yet he is not performance. He is the essence that is the reality of consciousness, yet he is not consciousness. Like the element of space, he does not abide in any of the four elements. Transcending the scope of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, he is not produced in the six sense-media. He is not involved in the three worlds, is free of the three defilements, is associated with the triple liberation, is endowed with the three knowledges, and has truly attained the unattainable.

11.2 “The Tathāgata has reached the extreme of detachment in regard to all things, yet he is not a reality-limit. He abides in ultimate reality, yet there is no relationship between it and him. He is not produced from causes, nor does he depend on conditions. He is not without any characteristic, nor has he any characteristic. He has no single nature nor any diversity of natures. He is not a conception, not a mental construction, nor is he a non-conception. He is neither the other shore, nor this shore, nor that between. He is neither here, nor there, nor anywhere else. He is neither this nor that. He cannot be discovered by consciousness, nor is he inherent in consciousness. He is neither darkness nor light. He is neither name nor sign. He is neither weak nor strong. He lives in no country or direction.[203] He is neither good nor evil. He is neither compounded

nor uncompounded. He cannot be explained as having any meaning whatsoever.

11.3 “The Tathāgata is neither generosity nor avarice, neither morality nor immorality, neither tolerance nor malice, neither effort nor sloth, neither concentration nor distraction, neither wisdom nor foolishness. He is inexpressible. He is neither truth nor falsehood; neither escape from the world nor failure to escape from the world; neither cause of involvement in the world nor not a cause of involvement in the world; he is the cessation of all theory and all practice.[204] He is neither a field of merit nor not a field of merit; he is neither worthy of offerings nor unworthy of offerings. He is not an object, and cannot be contacted. He is not a whole, nor a conglomeration. He surpasses all calculations. He is utterly unequaled, yet equal to the ultimate reality of things. He is matchless, especially in effort. He surpasses all measure. He does not go, does not stay, does not pass beyond. He is not seen, heard, distinguished, or known. He is without any complexity, having attained the equanimity of omniscient gnosis. Equal toward all things, he does not discriminate between them. He is without reproach, without excess, without corruption, without conception, and without intellectualization. He is without activity, without birth, without occurrence, without origin, without production, and without nonproduction. He is without fear and without subconsciousness;[205] he is without sorrow, without joy, and without strain. No verbal teaching can express him.

“Such is the body of the Tathāgata and thus should he be seen. Who sees thus, truly sees. Who sees otherwise, sees falsely.”

11.4 The venerable Śāriputra then asked the Buddha, “Lord, in which buddhafield did the noble Vimalakīrti die, before reincarnating in this buddhafield?”

The Buddha said, “Śāriputra, ask this good man directly where he died to reincarnate here.”

11.5 Then the venerable Śāriputra asked the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “Noble sir, where did you die to reincarnate here?”

Vimalakīrti declared, “Is there anything among the things that you see, elder, that dies or is reborn?”

11.6 *Śāriputra*: There is nothing that dies or is reborn.

Vimalakīrti: Likewise, reverend Śāriputra, as all things neither die nor are reborn, why do you ask, “Where did you die to reincarnate here?” Reverend Śāriputra, if one were to ask a man or woman created by a magician where he or she had died to reincarnate there, what do you think he or she would answer?

11.7 *Śāriputra*: Noble sir, a magical creation does not die, nor is it reborn.

Vimalakīrti: Reverend Śāriputra, did not the Tathāgata declare that all things have the nature of a magical creation?

Śāriputra: Yes, noble sir, that is indeed so.

11.8 *Vimalakīrti*: Reverend Śāriputra, since all things have the nature of a magical creation, why do you ask, “Where have you died to reincarnate here?” Reverend Śāriputra, “death” is an end of performance, and “rebirth” is the continuation of performance. But, although a bodhisattva dies, he does not put an end to the performance of the roots of virtue, and although he is reborn, he does not adhere to the continuation of sin.

11.9 Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Śāriputra, “Śāriputra, this holy person came here from the presence of the Tathāgata Akṣobhya in the universe Abhirati.”

Śāriputra: Lord, it is wonderful that this holy person, having left a buddhafield as pure as Abhirati, should enjoy a buddhafield as full of defects as this Sahā universe!

11.10 The Licchavi Vimalakīrti said, “Śāriputra, what do you think? Does the light of the sun accompany the darkness?”

Śāriputra: Certainly not, noble sir!

11.11 *Vimalakīrti*: Then the two do not go together?

Śāriputra: Noble sir, those two do not go together. As soon as the sun rises, all darkness is destroyed.

11.12 *Vimalakīrti*: Then why does the sun rise over the world?

Śāriputra: It rises to illuminate the world, and to eliminate the darkness.

Vimalakīrti: Just in the same way, reverend Śāriputra, the bodhisattva reincarnates voluntarily in the impure buddhafields in order to purify the living beings, in order to make the light of wisdom shine, and in order to clear away the darkness. Since they do not associate with the afflictions, they dispel the darkness of the afflictions of all living beings.

11.13 Thereupon, the entire multitude experienced the desire to behold the universe Abhirati, the Tathāgata Akṣobhya, his bodhisattvas, and his great disciples. The Buddha, knowing the thoughts of the entire multitude, said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “Noble son, this multitude wishes to behold the universe Abhirati and the Tathāgata Akṣobhya—show them!”

11.14 Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti thought, “Without rising from my couch, I shall pick up in my right hand the universe Abhirati and all it contains: its hundreds of thousands of bodhisattvas; its abodes of devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, and asuras, bounded by its Cakravāḍa mountains; its rivers, lakes, fountains, streams, oceans, and other bodies of water; its Mount Sumeru and other hills and mountain ranges; its moon, its sun, and its stars; its devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, and asuras themselves; its Brahmā and his retinues; its villages, cities, towns, provinces, kingdoms, men, women, and houses; its bodhisattvas; its disciples; the tree of enlightenment of the Tathāgata Akṣobhya; and the

Tathāgata Akṣobhya himself, seated in the middle of an assembly vast as an ocean, teaching the Dharma. Also the lotuses that accomplish the buddha-work among the living beings, and the three jeweled ladders that rise from its earth to its Trāyastriṃśa heaven, on which ladders the gods of that heaven descend to the world to see, honor, and serve the Tathāgata Akṣobhya and to hear the Dharma, and on which the men of the earth climb to the Trāyastriṃśa heaven to visit those gods. Like a potter with his wheel, I will reduce that universe Abhirati, with its store of innumerable virtues, from its watery base up to its Akaniṣṭha heaven, to a minute size and, carrying it gently like a garland of flowers, will bring it to this Sahā universe and will show it to the multitudes."

11.15 Then, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti entered into a concentration, and performed a miraculous feat such that he reduced the universe Abhirati to a minute size, and took it with his right hand, and brought it into this Sahā universe.

In that universe Abhirati, the disciples, bodhisattvas, and those among gods and men who possessed the superknowledge of the divine eye all cried out, "Lord, we are being carried away! Sugata, we are being carried off! Protect us, O Tathāgata!"

11.16 But, to discipline them, the Tathāgata Akṣobhya said to them, "You are being carried off by the bodhisattva Vimalakīrti. It is not my affair."

As for the other men and gods, they had no awareness at all that they were being carried anywhere.

11.17 Although the universe Abhirati had been brought into the universe Sahā, the Sahā universe was not increased or diminished; it was neither compressed nor obstructed. Nor was the universe Abhirati reduced internally, and both universes appeared to be the same as they had ever been.

11.18 Thereupon, the Buddha Śākyamuni asked all the multitudes, "Friends, behold the splendors of the universe Abhirati, the Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the array of his buddhafield, and the splendors of these disciples and bodhisattvas!"

They replied, “We see them, Lord!”

The Buddha said, “Those bodhisattvas who wish to embrace such a buddhafield should educate themselves in all the bodhisattva-practices of the Tathāgata Akṣobhya.”

11.19 While Vimalakīrti, with his miraculous power, showed them thus the universe Abhirati and the Tathāgata Akṣobhya, one hundred and forty thousand living beings among the men and gods of the Sahā universe conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, all of them formed a prayer to be reborn in the universe Abhirati, and the Buddha prophesied that in the future all would be reborn in the universe Abhirati. And the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, having thus developed all the living beings who could thereby be developed, returned the universe Abhirati exactly to its former place.

11.20 The Lord then said to the venerable Śāriputra, “Śāriputra, did you see that universe Abhirati, and the Tathāgata Akṣobhya?”

Śāriputra replied, “I saw it, Lord! May all living beings come to live in a buddhafield as splendid as that! May all living beings come to have miraculous powers just like those of the noble Licchavi Vimalakīrti!

11.21 “We have gained great benefit from having seen a holy man such as he. We have gained a great benefit from having heard such teaching of the Dharma, whether the Tathāgata himself still actually exists or whether he has already attained ultimate liberation. Hence, there is no need to mention the great benefit for those who, having heard it, believe it, rely on it, embrace it, remember it, read it, and penetrate to its depth, and, having found faith in it, teach, recite, and show it to others and apply themselves to the yoga of meditation upon its teaching.

11.22 “Those living beings who understand correctly this teaching of the Dharma will obtain the treasury of the jewels of the Dharma.

“Those who study correctly this teaching of the Dharma will become the companions of the Tathāgata. Those who honor and serve the adepts of this doctrine will be the true protectors of the Dharma. Those who write, teach, and worship this teaching of the Dharma will be visited by the Tathāgata in their homes. Those who take pleasure in this teaching of the Dharma will embrace all merits. Those who teach it to others, whether it be no more than a single stanza of four lines, or a single summary phrase from this teaching of the Dharma, will be performing the great Dharma-sacrifice. And those who devote to this teaching of the Dharma their tolerance, their zeal, their intelligence, their discernment, their vision, and their aspirations, thereby become subject to the prophesy of future Buddhahood!”

Chapter 12 Antecedents and Transmission of the Holy Dharma

12.1 Then Śakra, the king of the gods, said to the Buddha, “Lord, formerly I have heard from the Tathāgata and from Mañjuśrī, the crown prince of wisdom, many hundreds of thousands of teachings of the Dharma, but I have never before heard a teaching of the Dharma as remarkable as this instruction in the entrance into the method of inconceivable transformations.[206] Lord, those living beings who, having heard this teaching of the Dharma, accept it, remember it, read it, and understand it deeply will be, without a doubt, true vessels of the Dharma; there is no need to mention those who apply themselves to the yoga of meditation upon it. They will cut off all possibility of unhappy lives, will open their way to all fortunate lives, will always be looked after by all buddhas, will always overcome all adversaries, and will always conquer all devils. They will practice the path of the bodhisattvas, will take their places upon the seat of enlightenment, and will have truly entered the domain of the tathāgatas. Lord, the noble sons and daughters who will teach and practice this exposition of the Dharma will be honored and served by me and my followers. To the villages, towns, cities, states, kingdoms, and capitals wherein this teaching of the Dharma will be applied, taught, and demonstrated, I and my followers will come to hear the Dharma. I will inspire the unbelieving with faith, and I will guarantee my help and protection to those who believe and uphold the Dharma.”

12.2 At these words, the Buddha said to Śakra, the king of the gods, “Excellent! Excellent, king of gods! The Tathāgata rejoices in your good words. King of gods, the enlightenment of the buddhas of the past, present, and future is expressed in this discourse of Dharma. Therefore, king of gods, when noble sons and daughters accept it, repeat it, understand it deeply, write it completely, and, making it into a book, honor it, those sons and daughters thereby pay homage to the buddhas of the past, present, and future.

12.3 “Let us suppose, king of gods, that this billion-world galactic universe were as full of tathāgatas as it is covered with groves of sugarcane, with rosebushes, with bamboo thickets, with sesame gardens, and with flowers, and that a noble son or daughter were to honor them, revere them, respect and adore them, offering them all sorts of comforts and offerings for an eon or more than an eon. And let us suppose that, these tathāgatas having entered ultimate liberation, he or she honored each of them by enshrining their preserved bodies in a memorial stūpa made of precious stones, each as large as a world with four great continents, rising as high as the world of Brahmā, adorned with parasols, banners, standards, and lamps. And let us suppose finally that, having erected all these stūpas for the tathāgatas, he or she were to devote an eon or more to offering them flowers, perfumes, banners, and standards, while playing drums and music. That being done, what do you think, king of gods? Would that noble son or daughter receive much merit as a consequence of such activities?”

12.4 Śakra, the king of the gods, replied, “Many merits, Lord! Many merits, O Sugata! Were one to spend hundreds of thousands of millions of eons, it would be impossible to measure the limit of the mass of merits that that noble son or daughter would thereby gather!”

12.5 The Buddha said, “Have faith, king of gods, and understand this: whoever accepts this exposition of the Dharma called *Instruction in the Inconceivable Liberation,*[207] recites it, and understands it deeply, he or she will gather merits even greater than those who perform the above acts. Why so? Because, king of gods, the enlightenment of the buddhas arises from the Dharma, and one honors them by Dharma worship, and not by material worship. Thus it is taught, king of gods, and thus you must understand it.”

12.6 The Buddha then further said to Śakra, the king of the gods, “Once, king of gods, long ago, long before eons more numerous than the innumerable, immense, immeasurable, inconceivable, and even before then, the tathāgata called Bhaiṣajyarāja appeared in the world: an arhat, perfectly and fully en-

lightened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, a well-gone one, knower of the world, incomparable knower of men who need to be civilized, teacher of gods and men, a lord, a buddha.[208] He appeared in the eon called Vicaraṇa in the universe called Mahāvyūha.

12.7 "The length of life of this perfectly and fully enlightened Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja was twenty short eons. His retinue of disciples numbered thirty-six million billion, and his retinue of bodhisattvas numbered twelve million billion. In that same era, king of gods, there was a universal monarch called King Ratnacchattra, who reigned over the four continents and possessed seven precious jewels. He had one thousand heroic sons, powerful, strong, and able to conquer enemy armies. This King Ratnacchattra honored the Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja and his retinue with many excellent offerings during five short eons. At the end of this time, King Ratnacchattra said to his sons, 'Recognizing that during my reign I have worshiped the Tathāgata, in your turn you also should worship him.

"The thousand princes gave their consent, obeying their father the king, and all together, during another five short eons, they honored the Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja with all sorts of excellent offerings.

12.8 "Among them, there was a prince by the name of Candracchattra, who retired into solitude and thought to himself, 'Is there not another mode of worship, even better and more noble than this?'

"Then, by the supernatural power of the Buddha Bhaiṣajyarāja, the gods spoke to him from the heavens: 'Good man, the supreme worship is Dharma-worship.'

12.9 "Candracchattra asked them, 'What is this "Dharma-worship"?'

"The gods replied, 'Good man, go to the Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja, ask him about "Dharma-worship," and he will explain it to you fully.'

12.10 “Then, the prince Candracchattra went to the Lord Bhaiṣajyarāja, the arhat, the Tathāgata, the unexcelled, perfectly enlightened one, and, having approached him, bowed down at his feet, circumambulated him to the right three times, and withdrew to one side. He then asked, ‘Lord, I have heard of a “Dharma-worship,” which surpasses all other worship. What is this “Dharma-worship”?’

12.11 “The Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja said, ‘Noble son, Dharma-worship is that worship rendered to the discourses taught by the Tathāgata. These discourses are deep and profound in illumination. They do not conform to the mundane and are difficult to understand and difficult to see and difficult to realize. They are subtle, precise, and ultimately incomprehensible. As sūtras, they are collected in the canon of the bodhisattvas, stamped with the insignia of the king of incantations and teachings.[209] They reveal the irreversible wheel of Dharma, arising from the six transcendences, cleansed of any false notions. They are endowed with all the aids to enlightenment and embody the seven factors of enlightenment. They introduce living beings to the great compassion and teach them the great love. They eliminate all the convictions of the māras, and they manifest relativity.

12.12 “ ‘They contain the message of selflessness, living-beinglessness, lifelessness, personlessness, voidness, signlessness, wishlessness, nonperformance, nonproduction, and nonoccurrence.

“ ‘They make possible the attainment of the seat of enlightenment and set in motion the wheel of the Dharma. They are approved and praised by the chiefs of the gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas. They preserve unbroken the heritage of the holy Dharma, contain the treasury of the Dharma, and represent the summit of Dharma-worship. They are upheld by all holy beings and teach all the bodhisattva practices. They induce the unmistaken understanding of the Dharma in its ultimate sense. They bring emancipation through teaching the epitomes of the Dharma, and the impermanence, misery, selflessness, and peace of all things. They cause the aban-

donment of avarice, immorality, malice, laziness, forgetfulness, foolishness, and jealousy, as well as bad convictions, adherence to objects, and all opposition. They are praised by all the buddhas. They are the medicines for the tendencies of mundane life, and they authentically manifest the great happiness of liberation. To teach correctly, to uphold, to investigate, and to understand such sūtras, thus incorporating into one's own life the holy Dharma—that is "Dharma-worship."

12.13 "'Furthermore, noble son, the Dharma-worship consists of determining the Dharma according to the Dharma; applying the Dharma according to the Dharma; being in harmony with relativity; being free of extremist convictions; attaining the tolerance of ultimate birthlessness and nonoccurrence of all things; realizing selflessness and living-beinglessness; refraining from struggle about causes and conditions, without quarreling or disputing; not being possessive; being free of egoism; relying on the meaning and not on the literal expression; relying on gnosis and not on consciousness; relying on the ultimate teachings definitive in meaning and not insisting on the superficial teachings interpretable in meaning; relying on reality and not insisting on opinions derived from personal authorities;[210] realizing correctly the reality of the Buddha; realizing the ultimate absence of any fundamental consciousness; and overcoming the habit of clinging to an ultimate ground. Finally, attaining peace by stopping everything from ignorance to old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, anxiety, and trouble, and realizing that living beings know no end to their views concerning these twelve links of dependent origination—then, noble son, when you do not hold to any view at all, that is called unexcelled Dharma-worship.'[211]

12.14 "King of gods, when the prince Candracchattra had heard this definition of Dharma-worship from the Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja, he attained the conformative tolerance of ultimate birthlessness, and, taking his robes and ornaments, he offered them to the Buddha Bhaiṣajyarāja, saying, 'When the Tathāgata will be in ultimate liberation, I wish to defend his holy Dharma, to protect it, and to

worship it. May the Tathāgata grant me his supernatural blessing, that I may be able to conquer Māra and all adversaries and to incorporate in all my lives the holy Dharma of the Buddha!'

12.15 "The Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja, knowing the high resolve of Candracchattra, prophesied to him that he would be, at a later time, in the future, the protector, guardian, and defender of the city of the holy Dharma. Then, king of gods, the prince Candracchattra, out of his great faith in the Tathāgata, left the household life in order to enter the homeless life of a monk and, having done so, lived making great effort toward the attainment of virtue. Having made great effort and being well established in virtue, he soon produced the five superknowledges, understood the incantations, and obtained invincible eloquence. When the Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja attained ultimate liberation, Candracchattra, on the strength of his superknowledges and by the power of his retention, made the wheel of the Dharma turn just as the Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja had done and continued to do so for ten short eons.

12.16 "King of gods, while the monk Candracchattra was exerting himself thus to protect the holy Dharma, thousands of millions of living beings reached the stage of irreversibility on the path to unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, fourteen billion living beings were disciplined in the vehicles of the disciples and solitary sages, and innumerable living beings took rebirth in the human and heavenly realms.

12.17 "Perhaps, king of gods, you are wondering or experiencing some doubt about whether or not, at that former time, the King Ratnacchattra was not some other than the actual Tathāgata Ratnārcis. You must not imagine that, for the present Tathāgata Ratnārcis was at that time, in that epoch, the universal monarch Ratnacchattra. As for the thousand sons of the King Ratnacchattra, they are now the thousand bodhisattvas of the present blessed eon, during the course of which they are to become all of the one thousand buddhas to appear in the world. Four of them, Krakucchanda and the others, have already appeared and

the rest are still to be born. They start from Krakucchanda and end with the Tathāgata Roca, who will be the last to be born.[212]

12.18 "Perhaps, king of gods, you are asking yourself if, in that life, in that time, the Prince Candracchattra who upheld the holy Dharma of Lord Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyarāja was not someone other than myself. But you must not imagine that, for I was, in that life, in that time, the Prince Candracchattra. Thus, it is necessary to know, king of gods, that among all the worships rendered to the Tathāgata, Dharma-worship is the very best. Yes, it is good, eminent, excellent, perfect, supreme, and unexcelled. And therefore, king of gods, do not worship me with material objects but worship me with Dharma-worship! Do not honor me with material objects but honor me by honor to the Dharma!"

12.19 Then the Lord Śākyamuni said to the bodhisattva Maitreya, the great spiritual hero, "I transmit to you, Maitreya, this unexcelled, perfect enlightenment which I attained only after innumerable millions of billions of eons, in order that, at a later time, during a later life, a similar teaching of the Dharma, protected by your supernatural power, will spread in the world and will not disappear. Why? Maitreya, in the future there will be noble sons and daughters, devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, and asuras, who, having planted the roots of virtue, will conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. If they do not hear this teaching of the Dharma, they will certainly lose boundless advantages and even perish. But if they hear such a teaching, they will rejoice, will believe, and will accept it upon the crowns of their heads. Hence, in order to protect those future noble sons and daughters, you must spread a teaching such as this!

12.20 "Maitreya, there are two gestures of the bodhisattvas. What are they? The first gesture is to believe in all sorts of phrases and words, and the second gesture is to penetrate exactly the profound principle of the Dharma without being afraid. Such are the two gestures of the bodhisattvas. Maitreya, it must be known that the bodhisattvas who believe in all sorts of words and phrases, and

apply themselves accordingly, are beginners and not experienced in religious practice. But the bodhisattvas who read, hear, believe, and teach this profound teaching with its impeccable expressions reconciling dichotomies and its analyses of stages of development—these are veterans in the religious practice.

12.21 "Maitreya, there are two reasons that beginner bodhisattvas hurt themselves and do not concentrate on the profound Dharma. What are they? Hearing this profound teaching never before heard, they are terrified and doubtful, do not rejoice, and reject it, thinking, 'Whence comes this teaching never before heard?' They then behold other noble sons accepting, becoming vessels for, and teaching this profound teaching, and they do not attend upon them, do not befriend them, do not respect them, and do not honor them, and eventually they go so far as to criticize them. These are the two reasons the beginner bodhisattvas hurt themselves and do not penetrate the profound Dharma.

12.22 "There are two reasons the bodhisattvas who do aspire to the profound Dharma hurt themselves and do not attain the tolerance of the ultimate birthlessness of things. What are these two? These bodhisattvas despise and reproach the beginner bodhisattvas, who have not been practicing for a long time, and they do not initiate them or instruct them in the profound teaching. Having no great respect for this profound teaching, they are not careful about its rules. They help living beings by means of material gifts and do not help them by means of the gift of the Dharma. Such, Maitreya, are the two reasons the bodhisattvas who aspire to the profound Dharma hurt themselves and will not quickly attain the tolerance of the ultimate birthlessness of all things."

12.23 Having been thus taught, the bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Buddha, "Lord, the beautiful teachings of the Tathāgata are wonderful and truly excellent. Lord, from this time forth, I will avoid all such errors and will defend and uphold this attainment of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment by the Tathāgata during innumerable hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of eons! In the future, I will place in the hands of noble sons and noble daughters who are

worthy vessels of the holy Dharma this profound teaching. I will instill in them the power of memory with which they may, having believed in this teaching, retain it, recite it, penetrate its depths, teach it, propagate it, write it down, and proclaim it extensively to others.

12.24 "Thus I will instruct them, Lord, and thus it may be known that in that future time those who believe in this teaching and who enter deeply into it will be sustained by the supernatural blessing of the bodhisattva Maitreya."

Thereupon the Buddha gave his approval to the bodhisattva Maitreya: "Excellent! Excellent! Your word is well given! The Tathāgata rejoices and commends your good promise."

12.25 Then all the bodhisattvas said together in one voice, "Lord, we also, after the ultimate liberation of the Tathāgata, will come from our various buddhafields to spread far and wide this enlightenment of the perfect Buddha, the Tathāgata. May all noble sons and daughters believe in that!"

12.26 Then the four Mahārājas, the great kings of the quarters, said to the Buddha, "Lord, in all the towns, villages, cities, kingdoms, and palaces, wherever this formulation of the Dharma will be practiced, upheld, and correctly taught, we, the four great kings, will go there with our armies, our young warriors, and our retinues, to hear the Dharma. And we will protect the teachers of this Dharma for a radius of one league so that no one who plots injury or disruption against these teachers will have any opportunity to do them harm."

12.27 Then the Buddha said to the venerable Ānanda, "Receive then, Ānanda, this formulation of the Dharma. Remember it, and teach it widely and correctly to others!"

Ānanda replied, "I have memorized, Lord, this formulation of the Dharma. But what is the name of this formulation of the Dharma, and how should I remember it?"

12.28 The Buddha said, "Ānanda, this formulation of the Dharma is called *The Teaching of Vimalakīrti*,[213] or *The Reconciliation of Dichotomies*,[214] or also *Section of the Inconceivable Liberation*.[215] Remember it thus!"

12.29 Thus spoke the Buddha. And the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, the crown prince Mañjuśrī, the venerable Ānanda, the bodhisattvas, the great disciples, the entire multitude, and the whole universe with its gods, men, asuras, and gandharvas, rejoiced exceedingly. All heartily praised these declarations by the Lord.

12.30 *This completes the Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra "The Teaching of Vimalakīrti."*

Colophon

c.1 It has 1,800 ślokas in six fascicles, and was translated, edited, and established by Bandé Chönyi Tsultrim.

Abbreviations

Ch. Chinese

K Kumārajīva’s Ch. translation

X Xuanzang’s Ch. translation

Notes

1. Skt. *acintyavimokṣa*. See Chapter 12.

2. See Lamotte (Appendice, Note III, pp 407-413).

3. See Lamotte's discussion of this concept (Lamotte, Introduction, pp 33-37), even though he emphasizes the rhetorical meaning more than the behavioral meaning.

4. The *Guhyasamājatantra* (see Bibliography) is generally recognized as one of the earliest systematic tantric texts. It expounds a philosophically pure Middle Way nondualism, combined with an explicit teaching of the reconciliation of dichotomies (i.e., how even evil can be transmuted to enlightenment, etc.) and an elaborate meditational methodology, employing sacred formulae (*mantra*), rituals, and visualizations. The meditation of jewels, buddhas, sacred universes (*maṇḍala*), etc., as existing in full detail inside a mustard seed on the tip of the yogin's nose is a characteristic exercise in the *Guhyasamāja*, as in Chap. 3.

5. See 2.3. It is especially appropriate, in the light of the early tantric tradition, for Vimalakīrti, as a layman, to be an adept.

6. See 7.1-7.15, where Vimalakīrti states that the "wrong way" leads to buddhahood, Mañjuśrī that all passions constitute the "tathāgata-family" (itself an important tantric concept), and Mahākaśyapa that only those guilty of the five deadly sins can conceive the spirit of enlightenment. The *Guhyasamāja* (V.4) states: "Even those who have committed great sins, such as the five deadly sins, will succeed on the buddha-vehicle, there in the great ocean of the Mahāyāna" (*ānantaryaprabhṛtayaḥ mahāpāpakṛto 'pi ca | siddhyante buddhāydne 'smin mahāyānamahodadhau ||*). It then goes on to list in *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* fashion all sorts of terrible crimes of lust and hatred, ending with the phrase that such "a mentally nondualistic, intelligent person's buddhahood is attained" (*siddhyate tasya buddhatvaṃ nirvi kalpasya dhīmataḥ ||*).

7. See 7.17. In the tantric male-female symbolism of the *Guhyasamāja* and other tantras, the female consort is called the "Wisdom" (*prajña*) and the male the "Liberative Technique" (*upāya*), and the bell (*ghaṅṭa*) and diamond-scepter (vajra) also symbolize female and male, respectively.

8. See 5.17. This type of yogic power is classified as a lesser attainment (*siddhi*), the superior attainment being buddhahood, in all tantric methodologies.

9. See 6.30. The *Guhyasamāja* elaborates the symbolism of the "Five Tathāgatas," the leaders of the tathāgata-families, who are usually called Vairocana, Amitābha, Akṣobhya, Ratnasaṃbhava, and Amoghasiddhi, and thus correspond to the tathāgatas listed by the goddess too closely to be merely coincidentally related. *Tathāgataguhyaka,* further, is a subtitle of the *Guhyasamāja* itself.

10. Vimalakīrti's special relation to the Tathāgata Akṣobhya (see 11.9) is highly significant in this context, as Akṣobhya is central among the "Five Tathāgatas," occupying the heart in the esoteric methodology which locates the five in the five important spots in the human body.

11. Also transliterated Yen Fo-t'iao; his translation, like some of the other early translations, has not survived. See Lamotte p 2 *et seq*.

12. The other Tibetan translation (or translations) by unknown translators surviving only in some of the fragments found at Dunhuang; these fragments may represent two different versions. See Lamotte p 19.

13. See bibliography.

14. This list of qualities of the noble disciples (*āryāśravāka*) is absent in the Chinese of K and X. It is, however, frequently found in Mahāyāna sūtras (see Lamotte, p 98, n 2).

15. This phrase is absent in Tib. but is included in K and X.

16. The ten transcendences (*daśapāramitaḥ*), which correspond to the ten stages (*daśabhūmayaḥ*) of the bodhisattva.

17. According to the Degé and Stok Palace Kangyurs, which correspond to the Sanskrit text's *anupalambhānutpattikadharmakṣānti-samanvāgataiḥ.* The Yongle, Lithang, Peking, Narthang, Cone, and Lhasa Kangyurs all omit *dang mi skye ba'i*.

18. Tib. *mtha' dang mtha' med par lta ba'i bag chags kyi mtshams sbyor ba kun bcod pa*; Skt. *antānantadṛṣṭivāsanābhisaṃdhisamucchedaka.* "Convictions concerning finitude" refers to two sorts of extremism, absolutism and nihilism, and "convictions concerning infinitude" refers to convictions that hypostatize voidness (i.e., infinity, etc.) as a self-existent entity. Thus the bodhisattvas are said here to have realized, even on the subconscious level, both the voidness of things and the voidness of voidness.

19. The list has been revised to ensure that the names match those in the Sanskrit text, although there are a few differences in order and content. For exhaustive references concerning the presence of some of these bodhisattvas in other Mahāyāna sūtras, see Lamotte, pp 100-102, ns. 12-33. The Chinese lists in K and X vary somewhat; see Luk, pp 3-4, for K; and Lamotte, p 102, for X. For information about the more well-known bodhisattvas, see glossary.

20. Tib. *dkon mchog 'byung gnas* (lit. "Jewel-Mine"). The Chinese versions give his name as "Jewel-Ray" (*Ratnarāśi*), although the Skt. *Ratnākara* is supported by his appearance in a number of other Mahāyāna sūtras, where he is also identified as a Licchavi, a merchant's son, and a great bodhisattva of the tenth stage, as well as by the Sanskrit manuscript. For full references, see Lamotte, p 103, n 38.

21. The jewels were gold, silver, pearl, sapphire, ruby, emerald, and diamond, although various sources alter this list slightly.

22. Skt. *trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu*. The term "galaxy" was chosen to evoke the sense of inconceivable scope intended by the original Skt. term, as such cosmological terms were never aimed at material precision, but rather at triggering an imaginative vision of inconceivable cosmic immensity. I have modified the following catalogue of objects and places to conform to a more modern cosmology.

23. This list of mountains, according to Lamotte (p 104, n 41), occurs in other Mahāyāna sūtras but does not correspond to usual Buddhist cosmology, except for the fact that Sumeru, mentioned first, is in the center (of each world) and Mount Cakravāḍa, actually a mountain range, is mentioned and surrounds each world of four continents. This list is first in the order of the Tibetan.

24. Tib. *zhi gnas pha rol phyin mchog brnyes*; Skt. *śamathāpāramitāgraprāpta*. *Śamathā* can be adequately rendered "mental quiescence" when it refers in general to one of the two main types of Mahāyāna meditation; the other is "transcendental analysis" or "analytic insight" (*vipaśyana*). In this verse, however, Ratnākara refers to it in its aspect of final attainment; hence "trance" best conveys the sense of extreme one-pointed fixation of mind.

25. Tib. *skyes bu'i khyu mchog*; Skt. *puruṣarṣabha*. This common epithet of the Buddha contains the simile comparing him to the chief bull of a herd of cattle because of his power and majesty.

26. Tib. *'chi med 'gro*; Skt. *amṛtaga* (lit. "goes to deathlessness"). The buddhas' teachings lead to nirvāṇa; in nirvāṇa there is no birth, and where there is no birth there is no death.

27. The subtle difference here between Tib. and Ch. of K and X is noteworthy. Tib. causally relates "deep analysis of things" (Skt. *dharmaprabedha*) to the teaching of their ultimate meaning, which accords with the Indo-Tibetan emphasis on "transcendental analysis" (*vipaśyana*) as indispensable for realization of the ultimate nature of things. Ch. (both K and X) puts the two (analysis and the ultimate) in opposition, saying, "(You are) expert in analysis of the nature of all things, (*yet* are) unmoved with respect to the ultimate meaning, (as you have) already attained sovereignty with respect to all things."

28. The fact about Buddhist doctrine that most baffled ancient critics is that the cause and effect of karma operates without any ego principle to link the doer of an action and the experiencer of that action's karmic effects.

29. The Tibetan grammar leaves it ambiguous as to whether the absence of feeling, etc., refers to enlightenment or to the outsiders. K and X indicate the former, but we have chosen the latter to avoid characterizing supreme enlightenment as a mere "nonthought," etc., since it obviously transcends all polarities. Further, it is in keeping with the tenor of the sūtra to distinguish between enlightenment and the mere attainment of even the most advanced samādhi.

30. Tib. *lan gsum bzlas pa chos kyi 'khor lo rnam mang po*. Although neither Skt. nor Tib. mention the aspects as "twelve," Lamotte supplies this from the occurrence of the formula in other sūtras, where the three revolutions correspond respectively to the paths of insight (*darśanamārga*), meditation (*bhāvanāmārga*), and mastery (*aśaikṣamarga*), each revolution having four aspects corresponding to the Four Noble Truths. The first revolution involves recognition of each truth, the second thorough knowledge of each, and the third complete realization of each. See Lamotte, p 107, n 49; *Mahāvyutpatti*, nos. 1309-1324. However, since there is no mention of the "twelve aspects," but rather "many aspects," it is possible that what is referred to is the three doctrines of the Buddha elaborated in the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*, also known as the "Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma"; namely, the Disciple Vehicle teaching of the Four Noble Truths, the Mādhyamika teaching of Transcendent Wisdom, and the Vijñānavāda teaching of "Fine Discrimination Between Existence and Nonexistence" (see Lamotte's *Saṃdhinirmocana sūtra*, VII, no. 30, pp 85, 206).

31. After this verse, there are two verses in K and X, not in Tib. or Skt. For verses in K, see Luk, p 7, lines 3-10, and McRae, p 73, verses 9-10; for X see Lamotte, p 108. Since X tends to be more consistent with Tib., I will translate X: "The billion-world galaxy, with its realms of gods and dragons, appears in the little parasols offered to the Lord; thus we bow to his vision, knowledge, and mass of virtues. The Lord displays the worlds to us with this miracle—they all are like a play of lights, as all bear witness in astonishment. Obeisance to the Lord of ten powers, endowed with knowledge and vision."

32. Skt. *āveṇikabuddhalakṣaṇa*. This and the subsequent two verses (Chap. 3) illustrate some of the special buddha-qualities, which total eighteen (see glossary "eighteen special qualities of the Buddha" for a complete list).

33. This verse in Tib. and Skt. appears to be expanded into two verses in K and X: "The Lord speaks with but one voice, but all beings, each according to his kind, gain understanding, each thinking that the Lord speaks his own language. This is a special quality of the Buddha. The Lord speaks with but one voice, but all beings, each according to his own ability, act upon it, and each derives his appropriate benefit. This is a special quality of the Buddha." For K see Luk, p 7, and McRae, p 74. For an interesting discussion of the speech of the Buddha, see Lamotte, pp 109-110, 11. 52.

34. This and the preceding two lines ascribe to the Buddha the attainment of the three doors of liberation: voidness (*śūnyatā*), signlessness (*animittatā*), and wishlessness (*apraṇihitatā*).

35. Tib. *byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyi sangs rgyas kyi zhing yongs su dag pa*; Skt. *bodhisattvāṇam buddhakṣetrapariśuddhi*. Although the explanations given by the Buddha obviate the need for discussion of the meaning of this term, it is worthwhile to note that this concept is the logical corollary of the bodhisattva's conception of enlightenment: that it be attained for the sake of all sentient beings as well as for his own sake. Thus, the bodhisattva's quest for enlightenment does not involve merely his own development, although that is of course primary; it must also involve his cultivation of a whole "field" of living beings, those who, through karmic interconnection, have destinies intertwined with his, occupying the same worlds as he, etc. Hence, his purification of a buddhafield is a mode of expressing his ambition to cultivate a whole world or universe while he cultivates himself, so that he and his field of living beings may reach enlightenment simultaneously.

36. K and X differ here quite radically. X: "For example, sons, if one should wish to construct a palace in an unoccupied place and then adorn it, he could do so freely and without hindrance, but if he wished to build it in empty space itself, he could never succeed. In the same way, the bodhisattva, although he knows that all things are like empty space, produces pure qualities, for the development and benefit of living beings. That is the buddhafield which he embraces. To embrace a buddhafield in this way is not like building in empty space." K: "It is as if a man wished to build a building in a vacant place—he could do so without difficulty. But (if he wished to do it) in empty space, he could not succeed. Likewise, the bodhisattva, in order to cultivate all living beings, wants to embrace a buddhafield. One who thus wishes to embrace a buddhafield (does not do so) in the void." The first impulse of the translator is to resort to the Ch. versions in the interest of simplicity and ease, since the simile there is much more clearly drawn: vacant lot = living beings, empty space = any sort of materialistic notion about a buddhafield; *ergo* building on solid needs of living beings succeeds, and any other way fails. However, upon reflection, what does the Buddha wish to convey in this example? Are not living beings and their needs and purposes just as ultimately empty as "all things"? Would not the concretization of the benefit of living beings violate the definition of liberative technique integrated with wisdom given by Vimalakīrti himself (see 4.22)? Is it not more fitting to understand the Buddha here as telling us not to concretize any mundane aims, however beneficial, but that the bodhisattva's great compassion must always adhere to the wisdom that sees the ephemerality of all purposive notions, constructed or constructive? When we undertake something we know to be essentially impossible, through the sheer intensity of compassion, do we not enter the realm of inconceivability? Finally, may not the Buddha be speaking in tune with his own subsequent miraculous display, as he demonstrates the actual possibility for him, no less than for space-age technology, of building a pure buddhafield in the empty space of ultimate voidness?

37. X changes the order of these four to conception, positive thought, virtuous application, and high resolve. Either order is quite acceptable, since the four work together throughout the bodhisattva's career.

38. This phrase is taken from K (it is absent in Tib., Skt. and X) because it rounds out the list of ten virtues, being the counterpart of the sin known as "frivolous speech." "Free of divisive intrigues and adroit in reconciling factions" basically describes one virtue, the opposite of "backbiting" (see glossary "ten sins" and "ten virtues").

39. This step of "development…" is included in the progression by both K and X, and, since it makes more explicit the transition from liberative technique to the buddhafield itself, we have included it (although it is absent in Tib. and Skt.).

40. Śāriputra was one of the foremost disciples of the Buddha, especially renowned in Disciple Vehicle texts for his wisdom; he was called "foremost of the wise" (*prajñāvatām agrya*). In this sūtra, as well as in other Mahāyāna sūtras, he becomes the "fall guy" par excellence, as he is often inclined to express the Disciple Vehicle point of view, which is then roundly rejected by the Buddha, by Vimalakīrti, or by one of the bodhisattvas. In fairness to him, it is often noted that the petty thoughts that arise in his mind, for which he is severely criticized, are caused to arise there by the magical influence of the Buddha or of Vimalakīrti, so that a thought that may be entertained by numerous members of the assembly may be brought into the open and rejected. He serves therefore as an archetype of the disciple personality and need not be condemned as exceptionally obtuse personally.

41. See glossary "conception of the spirit of enlightenment."

42. Thus, his conduct and knowledge conformed to the six transcendences.

43. Tib. *'jig rten dang 'jig rten las 'das pa'i gsang sngags dang bstan bcos*; Skt. *laukikalokottaramantra-śāstra*. This is a possible reference to tantric practices, but it is missing in both K and X, who mention only "mundane practices."

44. Vimalakīrti is here shown as the embodiment of the practice of "reconciliation of dichotomies."

45. This sentence is absent in K and X.

46. Both K and X have, instead of this phrase, "because he taught them loyalty and filial devotion."

47. Tib. *mi rtag par* is missing, but supplied by Lamotte (p 130) from the Dunhuang fragments, and also from K and X; it is supported, too, by the Sanskrit manuscript (*aiśvaryānityatvasaṃdarśanāyau*).

48. These similes are famous in the Disciple Vehicle as well as Mahāyāna. The fact of their presence in Disciple Vehicle teachings was used by Prāsangika philosophers such as Buddhapālita and Candrakīrti, to prove that insubstantiality or selflessness of phenomena (*dharmanairātmyā*) was taught in the Disciple Vehicle. For further references, see Lamotte, p 132, n 23.

49. According to Lamotte, the four hundred and four diseases are classified with one hundred and one arising from each of four primary elements. But according to the "eight branches" (*aṣṭāṇga*) of Indian and Tibetan medicine, they arise from the three humors, *vāta*, *pitta*, and *kapha* (vital airs, bile, and phlegm, Tib. *rlung mkhris bad kan gsum*), when their balance becomes disturbed: i.e., one hundred and one from airs, one hundred and one from bile, one hundred and one from phlegm, and one hundred and one from unhealthy combinations of all three.

50. Comparison of these three fundamental classifications of the psychophysical elements of a person to murderers, snakes, and an empty town is traditional. See n.102, and Lamotte, p 136, n 28.

51. Tib. has simply "born from merit and charity." The translation here follows K. The store of merit culminates in the saṃbhogakāya, body of beatitude, and the store of wisdom culminates in the dharmakāya, ultimate body.

52. Skt. *śīla, samādhi, prajñā, vimukti,* and *vimuktijñānadarśana* are the five Dharma-aggregates, or pure aggregates, or members of the Dharma-body of the Buddha (see Lamotte, p 139, n 30).

53. These are the two main types of Mahāyāna meditation. The former corresponds to the fifth transcendence and includes all practices that cultivate one-pointedness of mind; the latter corresponds to the sixth transcendence, especially the analytic penetration to the realization of personal selflessness (*pudgalanairātmya*) and phenomenal selflessness (*dharmanairātmya*), or voidness. The latter is not so well known as the former, which is commonly considered to be the main type of meditation: nondiscursive, one-pointed, etc. Nevertheless, it is said frequently in both sūtras and commentaries that without integrated practice of both, the higher stages of enlightenment will not be attained. For more details, see glossary (under "mental quiescence" and "transcendental analysis").

54. Degé has *dben pa*, isolation, but most of the other Kangyurs (including the Stok Palace) have *bden pa*, truth, and this is confirmed by the Sanskrit, *satya*.

55. Skt. *utsāhate*. This has been translated most frequently in its meaning of "fitness, capacity," as each of the monks and bodhisattvas asked by the Buddha to visit Vimalakīrti replies with the same phrase: "I am not fit…" or "I am not able…" However, from the Tibetan use of the word *spro ba*, which means to be enthusiastic, inspired, gladdened, I chose to interpret this in its meaning of enthusiasm, which in the negative gives "I am not enthusiastic…" or "I am reluctant…." That is, none of those asked by the Buddha are actually pretending to be unable to visit Vimalakīrti; they only plead their unwillingness, timidity, etc., in order to be excused by the Buddha from carrying out his command.

56. Vimalakīrti confounds Śāriputra by demanding of him the ability to reconcile dichotomies in actual practice, i.e., by rejecting Śāriputra's Disciple Vehicle position and expecting him to follow the way of the bodhisattva. Śāriputra reacts in the same way as the other monks and bodhisattvas in this chapter: he is overwhelmed and speechless, yet intuitively recognizes the rightness of Vimalakīrti's statements. He can neither accept them and put them into practice nor reject them outright (see Lamotte, p 142, n 3).

57. Maudgalyāyana was known as the "foremost of those endowed with miraculous powers" (*ṛddhimatāṃ agrya*) and was paired with Śāriputra as one of the two leading disciples of the Buddha. Vimalakīrti chastises him basically for failing to use his "wisdom eye," his superknowledge of what is in others' minds (*paracittajñāna*), to determine that his listeners were willing and able to learn and understand the Mahāyāna teaching of the profound nature of reality, and for teaching them instead the Disciple Vehicle teaching, with its one-sided emphasis on world-rejection, etc.

58. Tib. *rlabs thams cad dang bral ba*; Skt. *sarvormivigata*, lit. "free of all waves" (of thought).

59. Skt. *dharmadhātu*. This is not the *dharmadhātu* (phenomenal element) included among the eighteen elements (see glossary). It is one of the five synonyms of voidness included in Maitreya's Madhyānta-vibhāga, I, 15—*tathatā bhūtakoṭiśca 'nimittaṃ paramārthatā | dharmadhātuśca paryāyāḥ śūnyatāyāḥ samāsataḥ ||*—where it is analyzed in a rather unusual way as "the element of Dharma, from which

arise the noble qualities of the arhats….” However, Tib. *dbyings* definitely indicates interpretation of *dhātu* as space, realm, etc., rather than element; so, with the proviso that it is a synonym of voidness, it is here translated “ultimate realm” (i.e., no relative realm at all). See glossary, “ultimate realm.”

60. This passage follows X quite closely, but K is somewhat different in details (see Luk, pp 21-22, or McRae, p 86).

61. This refers to those teachings (of *śūnyatā*, etc.) the Buddha reserves for disciples of greatest ability, definitive teachings (*nītārthavacana*) as opposed to teaching meant to develop disciples (to the point when they can understand the definitive teachings), which are known as interpretable teachings (*neyārthavacana*). See glossary, “definitive meaning.”

62. Mahākāśyapa was known as “the foremost among the upholders of the ascetic practices” (*dhūtaguṇa-vādinām agraḥ*) and was the Buddha’s successor as leader of the saṅgha after the parinirvāṇa. Here he is engaged in one of the twelve ascetic practices (see glossary), that of living on food begged as alms (*paiṇḍapātika*). Thus, in the very execution of his specialty he is scolded by Vimalakīrti, who points out to him that such practices are intrinsically worthless and are useful only if combined with the true equanimity reached through the wisdom that realizes voidness.

63. Kāśyapa is favoring the poor here by depriving the rich of the chance to give food to him and thus benefit themselves.

64. Skt. *yo ’svabhāvo ’parabhāvaś ca tad anujjvalitam | yad anujjvalitaṃ tan na śāmyati*. His seemingly irrelevant statement, which occurs again in Vimalakīrti’s speech to Kātyāyana (3.25), is, in fact, highly relevant to the main Disciple Vehicle concern: the burning of the misery of the world, in which, they believe, man’s condition is like that of one whose head is ablaze. Hence their major preoccupation is to extinguish that fire, just as a burning man will seek water with a frantic intensity to save himself. Thus Vimalakīrti is telling Mahākāśyapa and Kātyāyana that since they do not have intrinsic existence as self, or imparted existence as other in relationship to anything else, they do not really exist and, therefore, they cannot burn with the misery of the world and there is nothing to extinguish in liberation (*nirvāṇa* literally meaning “extinguishment”).

65. Among Subhūti’s other strong points, he was known as the “foremost among those worthy of offerings,” (*dakṣiṇeyānāṃ agraḥ*, see Lamotte, p 154, n 27). Thus Vimalakīrti challenges him precisely about his worthiness, defining it by testing Subhūti’s equanimity in the face of all the most unworthy things he can think of and causing Subhūti to feel frightened and confused by his own adherence to dualities such as good and evil.

66. By “fruition,” Vimalakīrti means any of the culminating stages of realization attained by those who practice the teachings, such as the Four Noble Truths, the twofold selflessness, etc.

67. Tib.: *chos thams cad dang yang ldan la chos thams cad kyi ’du shes dang yang bral*. The Skt. of the Potala MS reads *na sarvadharmasamanvāgataś ca sarvadharmasamadhigataś ca*, but to accord with the Tib., which seems clearer and was presumably translated from a different MS, this would have to be emended to read *sarvadharmasamanvāgataś ca na sarvadharmasaṃjñāvigataś ca*.

68. Tib. *nyon mongs pa med pa* (lit. “absence of passions,” or afflictions). However, the Skt. here is *araṇa*, and K and X use “nondisputation,” which is actually equivalent to dispassion, since the “struggle,” or “disputation,” referred to is internal, the turbulence of inner struggle of one prey to passions. This is

perhaps more appropriate here, since Subhūti was renowned for his attainment of this state (see Lamotte, p 154, n 27; *araṇavihārīnām agro*, etc.)

69. K and X: “if those who make offerings to you do not find in you a field of merit.”

70. According to the Mahāyāna understanding of the miraculous nature of the three bodies of the Buddha, especially the “incarnation-body” (*nirmāṇakāya*), Vimalakīrti himself is an extremely likely candidate to be one of its operatives. Thus, one steeped in the Mahāyāna faith would see him here as being subtly playful with Subhūti.

71. Tib. *yi ge de dag thams cad ni yi ge med pa ste/ rnam par grol ba ni ma gtogs so/ chos thams cad ni rnam par grol ba’i mtshan nyid do*. K and X differ slightly, but essentially have the same meaning: “Language does not have an independent nature. When it is no more, there is liberation.” In other words, no independent nature = ultimately nonexistent; it is no more = when the ultimate is realized; then liberation = when even words are realized to be liberation, there is no more duality, and there is realization. Ch. stresses the experiential moment of pure gnosis of voidness. Tib. expresses this gnosis along with its nondual, postattainment wisdom (*pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*). It is Vimalakīrti’s last word on nonduality to instruct Subhūti.

72. Pūrṇa, “son of Maitrāyaṇī,” was known as “the foremost of expounders of the Dharma” (*dharma-kathikānām agraḥ*; see Lamotte, p 160, n 42). According to the Pāli sources (as cited by Lamotte), this very incident, or one similar to it, resulted in five hundred young monks’ attainment of the state of arhat. In any case, it can be assumed that Pūrṇa was often entrusted with the instruction of young monks, and it was just such an occasion on which Vimalakīrti apprehended him. His reproaches are along the same line as those given to Maudgalyāyana, only more explicit, i.e., that the great disciples should not teach the Dharma because they cannot recognize the affinity for the Mahāyāna in their pupils.

73. This means they attained the eighth bodhisattva stage, called “The Immovable,” where the bodhisattva becomes irreversible (*avaivartika*) and previous to which he is liable to regression, even to forgetting the spirit of enlightenment already conceived in former lifetimes, as in the case of these monks.

74. Kātyāyana was renowned as the founder of the Abhidharma tradition of analysis of the meaning of the Buddha’s discourses. He was pronounced by the Buddha, according to the Pāli sources, to be the “foremost expounder of the detailed meaning of the concise declarations (of the Buddha)” (*aggo saṅkhittena bhāsitassa vitthārena attham vibhajantānam*). True to form, Vimalakīrti finds him when he is engaged in the execution of his special expertise (see Lamotte, p 162, n 49 and glossary).

75. These four are called the “four insignia of the Dharma” or “four epitomes” (see glossary).

76. K and X insert: “That all things do not exist ultimately is the meaning of voidness.”

77. See n.64.

78. Aniruddha was said to be “foremost among possessors of the divine eye” (*agro divyacakṣukānām*; see Lamotte, p 167, n 56, and glossary).

79. This dilemma was more embarrassing to Aniruddha than confounding, since logically he could have answered that of course his divine eye was compounded, just like that of outsider adepts. Vimalakīrti

touched his pride in this critique; hence the dilemma he poses here bears only superficial resemblance to the Mādhyamika dialectic.

80. Upāli was especially well known as expert in Vinaya, the code of monastic discipline, and was its chief compiler after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa (*vināyadharāṇām agraḥ*).

81. Tib. *the tsom sol te bdag cag gnyis ltung ba las phyung shig* (lit. "remove our doubts and take us both out from the infraction"). The "absolution" consists in the senior monk's listening to their confession and encouraging their resolution not to repeat the infraction. Thus he grants no dispensations in regard to the retributive effects and only gives them the opportunity to come to a new understanding and decision in their own minds. This is traditional in Buddhist discipline.

82. Skt. *vināyadhara*. As usual, Vimalakīrti makes his point on the disciple's home ground: Upāli was known as *vināyadharāṇāṃ agraḥ*, "foremost upholder of the discipline," as the two monks mention in the next paragraph.

83. Rāhula was the actual son of the Buddha and was admired in the saṅgha as a renunciant and devotee because he forsook the throne to join the saṅgha under his father. The Pāli sources show him dubbed "foremost among those eager for training" (Skt. *śikṣākāmānam agro*; see Lamotte, p 177, n 70).

84. Tib. *thog ma'i dang tha' ma'i mthar lta ba dang bral ba'o*. K and X have instead: "Renunciation is beyond this, that, and in between, being above the sixty-two false views." The Skt. does not appear to include this sentence.

85. Some verses of Tsong Khapa summarize the Mahāyāna "mind of renunciation" very aptly: "Reverse the interest in this life by thinking over again and again that leisure and opportunity (to practice the Dharma) are hard to find and that there is no (fixed) duration of life. Reverse interest in the life hereafter by constantly meditating upon the inexorability of karma and the sufferings of the world. Through such concentration, when there is not the slightest ambition, even for a split second, for even the greatest successes in the world, the mind of renunciation has arisen." See G. Wangyal, *Door of Liberation* (New York, Girodias, 1973), Chap. V.

86. Even after his explanation, the young men still confuse renunciation, a mental concentration, with the mundane act of entering the monkhood. So Vimalakīrti has to remind them that the conception of the spirit of enlightenment is the true renunciation, not just a mere change of clothes and habits.

87. Tib. and Skt. have thirty-two hundred, but K and X have thirty-two, which seems more reasonable.

88. Ānanda was renowned for many things: learning, mindfulness, steadfastness, etc., and was the second leader of the saṅgha , after Mahākāśyapa. Vimalakīrti finds fault with him when he is being "foremost of attendants" (*aggo upaṭṭhākānām*), caring for the Buddha's apparent needs as he did faithfully for twenty-five years.

89. See Lamotte, p 183, n 77, for learned references to this incident in other sources, notably *Vatsasūtra*.

90. Tib. *gzhan mu stegs can spyod pa pa dang kun tu rgyu dang gcer bu pa dang tsho ba pa dag*; Skt. *anyatīrthika caraka parivrajaka nigranthājīvāḥ*. I have simply rendered this "outsider sectarians" so as not to burden the reader with irrelevant names, as this expression is a cliché for all the outsider groups occurring in other Mahāyāna sūtras (see Lamotte, p 186, n 81).

91. Voices from sky-gods are common in Mahāyāna sūtras.

92. See Lamotte, p 186, n 82, for another version of this episode translated by Kumārajīva in *Prajñā-pāramitopadeśa*.

93. K and X start a new chapter at this point, while Tib. and Skt. include the disciples' and bodhisattvas' responses to the Buddha's request in a single chapter.

94. The characterization of Maitreya in Mahāyāna sūtras is that of having a certain naiveté. Mañjusrī often chides him, and Vimalakīrti does not let him rest on his laurels.

95. K and X give a different reading: "How then, Maitreya, did you receive the prophecy of your attainment of buddhahood after only one more birth? Did you receive it as the reality of birth or as the reality of death? In the former case, this reality is uncreated, and in the latter case, it does not die." As always, Ch. is less abstract than Tib., but both agree on the general tenor of Vimalakīrti's refutation of Maitreya's acceptance of the prophecy as being valid on the ultimate level of reality (*paramārtha-satyatā*). On the question of the validity of prophecies on the superficial and ultimate levels, see Lamotte, p 189, n 89.

96. The thrust of Vimalakīrti's instruction here is that "being enlightened" and "being unenlightened" are valid designations only on the superficial, designative, relative level of truth. "Discriminative construction" is that mental process that seeks to "absolutize" a relative thing, taking "ignorance" and "enlightenment" as ultimately real things. Thus in all the subsequent negational descriptions of enlightenment, the phrase "on the ultimate level" may be understood to avert a nihilistic interpretation. See Introduction, i.1 ff.

97. Tib. *rnam par rig pa med pa*; Skt. *avijñapti* (lit. "without means of cognition"). Again, it may be stressed that all these statements imply the qualification "ultimately" (*paramārthena*).

98. K and X: "It is the seat of interdependent origination, because it is like infinite space." Ch. thus takes *pratītyasamutpāda* (see glossary "dependent origination" and "relativity") as equivalent to *śūnyatā*, which is correct as regards its ultimate nature. Vimalakīrti refers to the "cessation-order" of the twelve links of origination: that is, stopping ignorance stops synthetic activity; stopping synthetic activity stops consciousness; stopping consciousness stops name-and-form; stopping name-and-form stops the six sense-media; stopping the sense-media stops contact; stopping contact stops sensation; stopping sensation stops craving; stopping craving stops grasping; stopping grasping stops existence; stopping existence stops birth; and stopping birth stops old age and death. This is the sequence of realization of the twelvefold chain during the attainment of enlightenment on the seat of enlightenment.

99. Tib. *dam pa'i chos yongs su 'dzin pa*; Skt. *saddharmasaṃgraha*. Here taken as "incorporation" in the sense of the bodhisattva's incorporation of the holy Dharma in all phases of his daily life.

100. Tib. *sha kya'i sras*; Skt. *Śākyaputrīya*. This implies that Jagatindhara, although a layman, has religious vows of celibacy in the bodhisattva order of Śākyamuni.

101. Here Vimalakīrti is shown as an emanation of the Buddha, who encountered these same goddesses as temptresses during his night under the bodhi tree, where he subdued them. Here, Vimalakīrti not only subdues them but goes a step further and causes them to conceive the spirit of enlightenment.

102. See n.50. The aggregates murder the spirit of enlightenment when falsely considered as "I" and "mine" through egoistic views. The elements, when egoistically misapprehended as constituting an experiencing subject, its objects, and its perceptions, poison the health of liberation. And the sense-media are like an empty town, as there is no person living within them.

103. It is commonly observed by the Buddha and all the great Buddhist philosophers, such as Nāgārjuna, that many feel frightened when taught the profound teaching of voidness because of misapprehensions about that most healing of concepts.

104. Tib. *drin gzo ba*, or *byas pa gzo ba*; Skt. *kṛtajñaḥ*. This is one of the important themes of the meditation of the spirit of enlightenment, of love and compassion. The kind deeds of the Tathāgata consist in his appearance in the world in order to save living beings, as a kind mother will even sacrifice her life for her beloved child. This kindness is repaid by generating the same compassion for all other living beings and conceiving the spirit of enlightenment.

105. Sudatta (*legs par byin*) is more commonly called Anāthapiṇḍada (*mgon med zas sbyin*); he was a great philanthropist of Śrāvastī, known as "the foremost of donors" (Pāli *aggo dāyakānaṃ*). For numerous references see Lamotte, p 211, n 135.

106. Skt. *mahāyajña*. The great sacrifice was an ancient Indian custom which, in Vedic times, was the central ritual of the Brahmanic religion. It usually consisted of sacrifices to the gods of various material things. By the Buddha's time, it was not uncommon for such an occasion to become rather a formalized period of donation to priests, ascetics, and beggars. However, the Buddha commonly declared that sacrifice and the giving of material things was infinitely less meritorious than sacrifice of egoism and the giving of the Dharma. This is the tenor of Vimalakīrti's critique.

107. Last phrase incorporated from K and X.

108. Last phrase incorporated from K and X.

109. This accords with the "Joy Immeasurable, which realizes the ultimate liberation of all beings from the beginningless," the standard description of the third of the "four immeasurables." See glossary.

110. X follows Tib., but K has "of realizing firmness of body, life, and wealth, consummated in the three indestructibles." The three indestructibles are infinite body, endless life, and boundless wealth (see Luk, p 46, n 3), but this concept is apparently not found in Skt. or in Tib. Nevertheless, Tib. has the same meaning because the "body, health, and wealth" here referred to are not mundane in nature, but refer to the true body, etc., of the Buddha. See 2.10.

111. In a later work, this would be taken as an obvious reference to tantric yoga, but here, this yoga might also be interpreted as a reference to the highest yoga of the bodhisattva, the yoga of the inconceivable liberation. See Chapter 5.

112. Sudatta here misses the point, apparently, and, instead of awakening to the transvaluation of the notion of sacrifice, he again resorts to a material sacrifice. Thus, Vimalakīrti has to go beyond his previous statements and stage the following miracle to make his point.

113. This extremely terse and subtle dialogue must be translated with the greatest grammatical precision to avoid confusion in meaning. It is all too tempting to translate the instrumental case (Ch. *yii*, Tib. *kyis*) as genitive, rendering the phrase "empty by means of emptiness" (*stong pa nyid kyis stong pa*) as "empty of emptiness," which then can be identified as the well-known voidness of voidness (*śūnyatā-śūnyatā*). Vimalakīrti says here only that the buddhafields are empty because that is their ultimate nature, not that they are equivalent to the emptiness of emptiness.

114. Mañjuśrī implies that Vimalakīrti is negating the validity of the superficial reality (*saṃvṛtisatya*), since, granted that the ultimate nature is emptiness, does that mean that any particular superficial thing, such as a buddhafield, is empty, even as a relative thing?

115. Vimalakīrti ignores the implication and repeats his statement of the ultimate reality of all things, mentioning specifically mental constructions (*parikalpa*) in place of buddhafields.

116. Then Mañjuśrī challenges Vimalakīrti's use of the ultimate nature of emptiness, probing to see if Vimalakīrti might be hypostatizing emptiness as something, which could be constructed mentally or conceptualized.

117. Vimalakīrti rejects that possibility, finally introducing the concept of "emptiness of emptiness," i.e., that emptiness is itself but a conceptual construction and, as such, is itself empty of substantial, ultimate reality.

118. K: "Sickness is neither of the element earth, nor separate from it; and the same pertains to the other elements. Sicknesses of living beings arise from the four primary elements, and I am sick because of their sicknesses."

119. Tib.: *nyes bar spyod pa thams cad bstan pa ste/ 'pho bas ni ma yin no*. K and X: "...But not to consider that they have entered into the past." Tib. *'pho ba* can mean either "transmigration at death," or "transference," such as the transference of sin to another, who absolves the sinner with his blessing. This is not practiced in Buddhism, as no absolution is effective: karmic effects cannot be avoided in any case, and the important thing is to cultivate the states of mind that refrain from wrongdoing.

120. The two thought processes here outlined follow the pattern of the meditation of the two selflessnesses, personal and phenomenal or of things (*pudgalanairātmya* and *dharmanairātmya*). In short Vimalakīrti is equating sickness with the bodhisattva's very existence in the world, and the cure he prescribes is the cure for all misery in the world.

121. The concluding phrase on the voidness of voidness is not in Skt. or Tib. but is incorporated from K. Note the central Mādhyamika thesis that all things exist conventionally as "mere designations" (*prajñaptimātra*).

122. This phrase is not in Skt. or Tib. but is incorporated from K and X. Other slight differences between Ch. and Tib. in these passages do not alter the essential meaning.

123. In perceiving objects, we unconsciously assent to their apparent, self-sufficient, ultimate existence and thereby are confirmed in our innate phenomenal egoism. The only antidote for this deepest root of saṃsāric life is the subtle awareness of voidness.

124. Skt. *anupalambha*. About this important method, Bhāvaviveka has this to say (*Tarkajvāla*, IV.23): "In order to abandon adherence to materialism, one should condition oneself to the cultivation of nonperception. So doing, even a single instant of the undistorted, spontaneous realization of the reality of all things will eliminate the stream of passions with their instinctual drives, these instincts being the cohesive force in objective appearance. Thus, when no objects are perceived, there is no occasion for the arising of instinct. This is the method of the Mahāyāna."

125. This analogy explaining the word "bodhisattva" is strong evidence for the fact that "sattva" here has its meaning of "hero" or "warrior," rather than merely its meaning of "living being." This puts the Tib. *byang chub sems dpa'*, "enlightenment-mind-hero," in a favorable light.

126. Skt. **anunayadṛṣṭikarunā* (lit. “compassion of emotional conviction”). The available Skt. reads *anuśaṃsādṛṣṭi*, but the Tibetan was clearly translated from another MS that must have read *anunaya-dṛṣṭikaruṇā*. This is false compassion, according to Candrakīrti, as it is not integrated with the wisdom of impermanence, hence not effective in actually alleviating the sufferings of living beings. Candrakīrti (*Madhyamakāvatāra*, I) enumerates three levels of true great compassion, compassion that sees beings, that sees things, and non-objectifying, respectively, combined with the wisdoms of impermanence, of personal selflessness, and of phenomenal selflessness. See glossary “great compassion.”

127. “Reincarnation” is here used in the sense of “voluntary rebirth” to distinguish the coming into the world of a bodhisattva as opposed to the birth of a normal being.

128. The integration of wisdom and liberative art (*prajñopāyādvaya*) is the fundamental formulation of the Mahāyāna path. It is the main dichotomy reconciliation the bodhisattva must incorporate in his practice. It is carried over into the symbolism of the tantra, where wisdom = bell = female and technique = vajra = male. Thus this integration finds its most exalted symbol in the tantric representation of the Buddha as male and female in union.

129. K and X have one more domain here, “wherein practice is neither pure nor impure.”

130. K has “transcendent knowledge”; but that would not be paradoxical, in keeping with the general pattern of this description, whereas “transcendence” conveys the idea of the bodhisattva accomplishing the transcendences for other living beings as well as for himself.

131. The “knowledge of exhaustion of defilements” is one of the five or six (see glossary “superknowledges”); hence the paradox.

132. K supplies the location here.

133. K has “The domain of the holy eightfold path, where one delights in the unlimited path of the Buddha…” The preceding statements concerning the four foci of mindulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of magical powers, the five spiritual faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the eightfold noble path (from K) are the practices known as the “thirty-seven aids to enlightenment.”

134. A critique of those who interpret the four noble truths dualistically.

135. That is, production of nirvāṇa and destruction of defilements.

136. This concludes Vimalakīrti’s definition of the “religion” of Buddhism in its true sense. Any personal interest (i.e., selfish interest) in anything, even “Dharma,” “nirvāṇa,” etc., is nonetheless a selfish interest, and the Dharma obtains only in the absence of selfish interest.

137. That is, through his miraculous power of teleportation.

138. This enthronement of the audience for a religious discourse is most remarkable in the light of Buddhist tradition, where there is an explicit interdiction against teaching the Dharma to anyone who is seated even a few inches higher than the teacher. It is another instance of a tantric tinge, as the initiate is symbolically enthroned by the preceptor to receive the consecrations.

139. The “inconceivable liberation” is said later (5.19) to be only a fragment of an inconceivably great teaching. As Lamotte points out (p 250, n 11), this probably refers to the teaching of the *Avataṃsaka*,

which is also known as *Acintyavimokṣasūtra*. This highlights the uniqueness of Vimalakīrti, who encompasses quintessentially the major doctrines of both *Prajñāpāramitā* and *Avataṃsaka*, the former emphasizing wisdom and the latter, liberative art.

140. These deities abide, respectively, on the four sides of Sumeru and on the summit.

141. A reminder that all these miraculous feats are only for the purpose of disciplining living beings. Similarly, only those hearers who are imaginatively sensitive to the extraordinary warp of dimensional distortion set up by Vimalakīrti will understand the inconceivable weave of his instruction in the inconceivable liberation.

142. K is more brief here, giving essentially the second of the three sentences in this paragraph. He is as explicit as Tib.

143. There is little doubt that this refers to the same teaching given in the *Avataṃsaka*. It is, however, highly questionable whether it mentions any particular text, as Tib. *bstan pa* (Skt. *nirdeśa*) is "teaching" rather than a "text," as in *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (teaching of Vimalakīrti).

144. Kāśyapa brings up an interesting point: from the Mahāyāna viewpoint the arhats of the Individual Vehicle are less fortunate than even the beginner bodhisattvas because, having eliminated their personal suffering, they cannot easily empathize with other living beings and hence find it hard to be inspired with great compassion. This makes their progress from arhat to full buddhahood much slower than that of the bodhisattva. This loss of opportunity occasions the "cry of regret."

145. Although Vimalakīrti might seem to be relentless in thus demolishing Mahākāśyapa's notion of evil (his rigid dualism that holds Māra as the opposite of liberation and virtue), just as the great disciple was filled with despair at his own sense of inadequacy before the teaching of inconceivability, Vimalakīrti actually is encouraging him. Things, even māras, are not what they seem, and if Māra can be a bodhisattva, then possibly a great disciple might attain to the Mahāyāna more easily than his habitual notions might allow him to think.

146. This is the definition of the highest type of compassion: "non-objectifying great compassion" (*anupalambhamahākaruṇā*). Thus such compassion is pure sensitivity, with no cognitive grasp on any person or thing as the identifiable object of its powerful feeling (see glossary, "great compassion").

147. Mañjuśrī voices the pressing question about the great love and compassion of the bodhisattva: seeing living beings as nonexistent, how can he feel love and compassion for them? As Vimalakīrti indicates, the bodhisattva's love is not merely commiseration but a spontaneous overflow of his great joy and relief in realizing the radiant nature of reality. Although he grasps no living being, he, being empty of himself, is utterly sensitive to the oppressive gravity of the "living being" feeling of others, and his love is an outpouring of his awareness of their true nature.

148. The folk etymology of *arhat* is *arīnāṃ hantṛ*—"killer of enemies" (passions and ignorance).

149. K: "…because it is causeless."

150. K and X: "…because it is always opportune."

151. K and X: "It is the rendering of blessings without expectation of return."

152. That is, the protection of the Buddha is found, not in mere dependence on him, but in self-reliant cultivation of one's own positive mind.

153. This famous dialogue is quoted in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, pp 80, 81. Śāntideva introduces the quote by the following remark: "If the superficial reality is baseless, how can it be either valid or invalid? (Its validity is comparable to) the illusion of a man (which can arise) even without a post being there (to be misperceived). And furthermore, where is the advocate of voidness who admits the ultimate existence of a post that would serve as basis of the false perception of a man? Thus, all things are rootless, their root not being established in reality."

154. Monks are not allowed to wear garlands or perfumes, etc.

155. Since the bodhisattvas have purged their subconsciousnesses of the instinctual roots of emotional habit-patterns, they do not fear the surface manifestations of passions inevitable in worldly life because these cannot affect them deeply.

156. K: "Liberation is neither within nor without, nor in between."

157. Here Śāriputra's silence fails where Vimalakīrti's famous silence on the subject of nonduality succeeds (see n.184). Thus silence *per se* is not necessarily reflective of highest wisdom.

158. The Individual Vehicle followers, from the bodhisattva point of view.

159. For numerous references concerning the Mahāyāna doctrine of the "unique vehicle" (*ekayāna*), most explicitly stated in the *Lotus Sūtra*, see Lamotte, p 275, n 32.

160. According to Lamotte (p 278, n 34), this refers to four famous treasures, each guarded by a great nāga-king; by Piṅgala at Kaliṅga, Pāṇḍuka at Mithila, Elapātra at Gandhāra, and Śankho at Kāśi (Benares).

161. Skt. has *siṃhanādanādī*; Tib. has *seng ge bsgrags pa*, which would suggest "Siṃhakīrti."

162. Lamotte (p 220, n 3; p 280, n 36) follows K and his commentators in identifying this "Dhar*ma-door" with the sūtra called The Secrets of the Realized Ones* (*Tathāgātācintyaguhyanirdeśa*, Toh 47). However, it does not seem quite certain that so many tathāgatas would be required to expound the same text. Rather, it seems that this assembly of tathāgatas refers to the formation of a cosmic *maṇḍala*, such as is formed in the first chapter of *Guhyasamājatantra*, and the "secrets of the tathāgatas" would then be the general name for any sort of tantric teaching. This would bear out the description of Vimalakīrti as understanding "the mundane and transcendental sciences and esoteric practices" (p 21) and (by Mañjuśrī) as penetrating "all the esoteric mysteries of the bodhisattvas and the buddhas" (p 42). This evidence can have been overlooked by scholars of great erudition only because of their firm conviction that tantrism did not exist in India at the time of Vimalakīrti, or even of that sūtra. Scholars native to the Buddhist tradition would disagree.

163. Śāriputra evidences his belief that enlightenment can be obtained only by men, and that women must first reincarnate in male form to reach the highest goal. Thus he cannot understand why the goddess would not use her power to become a man.

164. This whole incident is quite similar to an exchange that takes place between Śāriputra and the daughter of Sāgara, the nāga-king, in the *Lotus Sūtra* (pp 250-254). For an interesting discussion of the prejudice against females in Buddhism in general and of the Mādhyamika negation of this prejudice as executed, for example, by the goddess, see Lamotte, p 280, n 37.

165. That is, the miraculous Mahāyāna.

166. That is, the jewel of the spirit of enlightenment.

167. This translation follows K and X, as Tib., "He follows the ways of the elements and the sense-media, yet…" is obscure.

168. The disciples are bereft of the emotional patterns related to inspiration, aspiration, etc., which are necessary to form an intense high resolve to attain anything. The bodhisattva does not catch up with them in wisdom until he reaches the eighth stage (*acalā*), the "immovable"; hence he retains the emotional structure necessary for cultivation of great compassion until that high stage.

169. See notes n.7 and n.128.

170. K: "With the undefiled qualities as trees."

171. Tib. and Skt. have only "Covered with pure lotuses." K gives "seven purities": purity of (1) body and voice, or morality, (2) mind, (3) self-control, or vision, (4) resolution of doubts, (5) discernment of paths, (6) knowledge and insight into bondage, and (7) nirvāṇa. See Lamotte, p 294, n 26.

172. Following K and X.

173. Following K and X.

174. K and X: "Although he knows that the buddhafields are void like living beings, he practices purification of buddhafields to teach and civilize those living beings."

175. The three periods of time mentioned in this and the two preceding stanzas are part of the Buddhist scheme of the evolution and devolution of the world. A great eon (*mahākalpa*) contains four eons (*kalpa*). Each of the four eons contains twenty intermediate eons (*antarakalpa*). Our world lasts for twenty of these intermediate eons. At the end of each intermediate eon, except for the first and the twentieth, three periods of time occur during which various disasters befall the human beings of that period. The first, the time of swords, lasts seven days, and men go crazy and murder each other. The second, the time of sickness, lasts seven months and seven days, and human beings are stricken with plagues. The third lasts seven years, seven months, and seven days; there is drought and extreme misery of starvation. (See *Abhidharmakośa* III, p 207; Lamotte, p 296, n 37.)

176. Skt. *agnimadhye yathā padmaṃ abhūtaṃ taṃ vinirdiśet | evaṃ kāmāṃś ca dhyānaṃ ca abhūtaṃ te vidarśayī* (from *Śikṣāsamuccaya*); *agnimadhye yathā padmam adbhutaṃ pi vidarśayet | evaṃ kāmāṃś ca dhyānaṃ ca adbhutaṃ te vidarśayi* (from Potala MS). The Ch. variant here (McRae, 2004: "For a lotus flower to be born in the midst of fire / Can certainly be called rare! / To practice dhyāna within the desires—/ This is just as rare") is unsupported by the Skt.

177. "Nonduality" (*advayatva*) = "Middle Path" (*madhyamapratipat*) = freedom from extremes of being and nothingness (*antadvayavivarjita*). For numerous references, see Lamotte, pp 301-302, n 1.

178. Skt. *yan nopādadāti tan nopalabhate, tatrohāpohaṃ na karoti*. These two correspond to "realism" and "nihilism," respectively, in the system of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, the basis of Āryāsaṅga's elaboration of the "mind-only" philosophy. In terms of the "three-nature" (*trilakṣana*) theory, realism involves confusion of the conceptually constructed with the relative, and nihilism involves repudiation of all three natures through repudiation of the relative along with the conceptually constructed.

179. Small differences in K and X do not affect the meaning. “Uniqueness” corresponds to realism, the idea that each thing has its special character as a fixed essence. “Characterlessness” corresponds to nihilism.

180. K and X differ: “ ‘Creation’ (Skt. *saṃskṛta*; Ch. 有為) and ‘noncreation’ (Skt. *asaṃskṛta*; Ch. 無為) are dualistic…,” etc. (The rest is parallel.) Actually, what is *saṃskṛta* is miserable, and what is *asaṃskṛta* is nirvāṇa, i.e., happiness. Thus this difference is not significant.

181. X: “ ‘Destructible’ and ‘indestructible’ are dualistic. Knowing there to be nothing destroyed or undestroyed, the bodhisattva calls ‘destructible’ what is utterly destroyed. Utterly destroyed, it is not to be destroyed. The destruction is instantaneous, yet there is no production or destruction in an instant, so it is actually indestructible. There being no ‘destruction’ in reality, there is no ‘indestructibility.’ To realize their voidness by nature is the entrance….” K is more brief, but essentially in agreement. It should be remembered here that “destructible” = the relative, and “indestructible” = the absolute. Thus, Pratyakṣadarśa is affirming that the superficial *is* the ultimate, etc. See 10.20-10.23.

182. K: “The four elements and the void are twain. But the nature of the four elements is the nature of the void. The past and the future are void, thus the present is also void. To know the nature of the elements in this way is to enter….”

183. One of the synonyms of voidness is “truthlessness,” (Tib. *bden par med pa*), truth being a relative validity and the ultimate being beyond truth and falsehood. Last two sentences follow X.

184. This is the most famous moment of the sūtra: Vimalakīrti’s moment of sīlence on the subject of nonduality, i.e., the ultimate. It is noteworthy, however, that Vimalakīrti does talk a great deal about the ultimate on many other occasions; his silence here is given its special impact by the series of profound statements preceding it, which culminate in the statement of Mañjuśrī to the effect that silence is itself the best explanation of nonduality. Hence all silence is not to be exaggeratedly taken as the profoundest teaching, but only such a silence in the special context of profound thought on the ultimate. For example, the silences of the disciples in Chap. 3, as they became speechless when confronted by the eloquent criticism of Vimalakīrti, are not taken to be profound; nor is the silence of Śāriputra when questioned by the goddess in Chap. 8 accepted as anything extraordinary. Candrakīrti, in his *Prasannapadā* (p 57, I.7-8), has this to say in regard to the question as to whether the enlightened ones employ logical arguments or not: “Who can say if the noble ones (employ logical arguments) or not? The ultimate is inherent (even) in the ‘keeping silent of the noble ones.’ What then would cause us to imagine whether they employ logical arguments or do not employ logical arguments?” It is important to note that equating the ultimate with the “keeping silent of the noble ones” in no way precludes the ultimacy of their speech. As the Goddess says to Śāriputra (6.20): “…do not point to liberation by abandoning speech! Why? The holy liberation is the equality of all things!” Thus, to imitate the sūtra’s pattern of expression: “Silence” and “speech” are dualistic. Just as speech is ultimately meaningless, so silence exists only in contrast with speech. Penetration into the equality of silence and speech is the entrance. (see Lamotte, pp 317-318, n 43).

185. Those of the bodhisattvas who are monks, or who maintain ascetic practices, are allowed to eat only before noon; otherwise they must wait until dawn of the next day.

186. According to K and X, he was seen rising in the air; but Tib. has it that his speed was invisibly swift.

187. As there is no Disciple Vehicle, much less ordinary individuals, in that exalted universe (see 9.2), they do not even know what might be meant by “aspire to inferior ways.”

188. Thus Vimalakīrti is praised as having the full mastery of the operations of the *nirmāṇakāya* (incarnation-body of the Buddha), i.e., as indistinguishable from the buddhas.

189. See glossary, “ten sins.”

190. Vimalakīrti epitomizes for the guest-bodhisattvas the teachings of the First Wheel of Dharma, that of the four noble truths, the basis of the Disciple Vehicle practice, and the Abhidharma philosophy.

191. This paragraph is modified in style with the help of X.

192. Skt. *Śāstṛ*, i.e., Buddha.

193. Ānanda, as well as being “foremost of attendants” (see n.88), was also styled by the Buddha as the “foremost of the learned” (Skt. *bahuśrutānām agryaḥ*) and as the “foremost of those endowed with memory and retention” (Skt. *smṛtidhāraṇīprāptānām agryaḥ*). Thus he was the one who remembered the vast body of the sūtras and recited them from memory during the first collection of the Sūtra Pitaka, after the Buddha’s passing into final liberation.

194. That is, destructible (Skt. *kṣaya*) = compounded (Skt. *saṃskṛta*) = the superficial (Skt. *saṃvṛtti*) = *saṃsāra*. Indestructible (*akṣaya*) = uncompounded (Skt. *asaṁskṛta*) = the ultimate (Skt. *paramārtha*) = nirvāṇa.

195. That is, the bodhisattva does not put an end to saṃsāra for himself alone, nor does he seek ultimate repose in the Disciple Vehicle nirvāṇa. The following instruction represents the Buddha’s own summation of the bodhisattva’s reconciliation of dichotomies that Vimalakīrti has been expounding throughout the sūtra.

196. Immoral persons, along with other living beings who suffer their immoral acts, provide the bodhisattva the opportunity to expiate through suffering any traces of bad karma, as well as to practice generosity, tolerance, etc., and eventually to gather into the discipline those same immoral persons.

197. Skt. *apratihatapratibhāṇa*. This is another synonym for buddhahood because only at that stage does the turning of the Wheel of Dharma become automatic, effortless, and irresistible.

198. Skt. *bodhisattvasaṅgha*. The third Jewel, the Saṅgha, is defined in two ways: as the disciple community (*śrāvakasaṅgha*) and as the bodhisattva community (*bodhisattvasaṅgha*). Thus, from the Mahāyāna viewpoint, not only Disciple Vehicle monks but also bodhisattvas constitute the Saṅgha.

199. The sixth superknowledge (*āsravakṣayajñāna*) is attained only by arhats, of whom the Buddha is foremost.

200. That is, he does not wish his own ultimate liberation until it is time for the ultimate liberation of all living beings.

201. Tib. *chos kyi rtsi ba thams cad sgrub pa’i phyir ’dus ma byas la mi gnas so/ ’di tar chos chung ngu’i sman sbyor ba’i phyir ’dus byas zad par mi byed do*. This sentence is absent in K and X.

202. Tib. *gzugs kyi de bzhin nyid kyi rang bzhin*, Skt. *rūpatathatāsvabhāva*, i.e., voidness, as “essence which is reality” is a euphemism for “essencelessness” (*niḥsvabhāvatā*). Thus the Tathāgata is the voidness of matter, i.e., matter in the ultimate sense, not mere relative matter—and so on for the remaining four aggregates. For interesting references on the ultimate nonexistence of the Tathāgata, see Lamotte, p

355, n 1. The reference given there is worth repeating here (from *Prasannapadā*, p 435, quoting a *Vaipulyasūtra*): “Those who see me by means of form, or who follow me by means of sound—they are involved with false and ruinous views and will never see me at all. The buddhas are to be seen by means of ultimate reality, since those leaders are Dharma-bodies, and ultimate reality is impossible to know, as it is not an object of discernment.”

203. K and X: “He lives neither in any place, nor in no place.”

204. Tib. *smra ba dang spyod pa thams cad shin tu chad pa*, but Skt. has *sarvarutavyāhārasamucchinnaḥ*, “the destruction of all utterance and language.”

205. K and X have “worry.”

206. Skt. *acintyavikurvaṇanayapraveśanirdeśa*. This is a description, not a title of the sūtra, as it is not mentioned at the end of this chapter, where the Buddha gives the titles to Ānanda.

207. Skt. *Acintyavimokṣanirdeś*a

208. These names of the Buddha form part of a traditional litany consisting of eighty names. See *Mahāvyutpatti*, nos. 1-80.

209. i.e. Vajrapāṇi.

210. These are called the “four reliances” and are usually given in a different order: see glossary.

211. See n.124.

212. According to this belief, in the blessed eon of one thousand buddhas, Śākyamuni is the fourth, and Maitreya will be the fifth to incarnate in this Sahā universe.

213. Skt. *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*.

214. Skt. *Yamakapuṭavyatyastanihāra*.

215. Skt. *Acintyadharmavimokṣaparivarta*. In regard to these titles, see Introduction, i.9 and i.122

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Glossary

Abhidharma

chos mngon pa

ཆོས་མངོན་པ།

abhidharma

Conventionally, the general name for the Buddhist teachings presented in a scientific manner, as a fully elaborated transcendental psychology. As one of the branches of the Canon, it corresponds to the discipline of wisdom (the *Sūtras* corresponding to meditation, and the *Vinaya* to morality). Ultimately the Abhidharma *is* "pure wisdom, with its coordinate mental functions" (*Prajñāmalā sānucārā*), according to Vasubandhu.

Abhirati

mngon par dga' ba

མངོན་པར་དགའ་བ།

abhirati

Lit. "Intense Delight." The universe, or buddhafield of the Tathāgata Akṣobhya, lying in the east beyond innumerable galaxies, whence Vimalakīrti came to reincarnate in our Sahā universe.

Abhidharmakośa

chos mngon pa'i mdzod

ཆོས་མངོན་པའི་མཛོད།

abhidharmakośa

An important work written by Vasubandhu, probably in the fourth century, as a critical compendium of the Abhidharmic science.

absence of self

bdag med pa

བདག་མེད་པ།

anātmatā, nairātmya

This describes actual reality, as finally there is no enduring person himself or thing itself, since persons and things exist only in the relative, conventional, or superficial sense, and not in any ultimate or absolute sense. To understand Buddhist teaching correctly, we must be clear about the two senses (conventional/ultimate, or relative/absolute), since mistaking denial of ultimate self as denial of conventional self leads to nihilism, and mistaking affirmation of conventional self as affirmation of ultimate self leads to absolutism. Nihilism and absolutism effectively prevent us from realizing our enlightenment, hence are to be avoided.

absorption

snyoms par 'jug

སྙོམས་པར་འཇུག

samāpatti

"Absorption" has been translated as "meditation," "contemplation," "attainment," etc., and any of these words might serve. The problem is to establish one English word for each of the important Sanskrit words *samāpatti, dhyāna, samādhi, bhāvanā,* etc., so as to preserve a consistency with the original. Therefore, I have adopted for these terms, respectively, "absorption," "contemplation," "concentration" and "realization" or "cultivation," reserving the word "meditation" for general use with any of the terms when they are used not in a specific sense but to indicate mind-practice in general.

affliction

nyon mongs

ཉོན་མོངས།

kleśa

Desire, hatred and anger, dullness, pride, and jealousy, as well as all their derivatives, said to number 84,000. Also translated "passions."

aggregate

phung po

ཕུང་པོ།

skandha

This translation of *skandha* is fairly well established, although some prefer the monosyllabic “group.” It is important to bear in mind that the original *skandha* has the sense of “pile,” or “heap,” which has the connotation of utter lack of internal structure, of a randomly collocated pile of things; thus “group” may convey a false connotation of structure and ordered arrangement. The five “compulsive” (*upādāna*) aggregates are of great importance as a schema for introspective meditation in the Abhidharma, wherein each is defined with the greatest subtlety and precision. In fact, the five terms *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *samjñā*, *saṃskāra*, and *vijñāna* have such a particular technical sense that many translators have preferred to leave them untranslated. Nevertheless, in the sūtra context, where the five are meant rather more simply to represent the relative living being (in the realm of desire), it seems preferable to give a translation—in spite of the drawbacks of each possible term—in order to convey the same sense of a total categorization of the psychophysical complex. Thus, for *rūpa*, “matter” is preferred to “form” because it more concretely connotes the physical and gross; for *vedanā*, “sensation” is adopted, as limited to the aesthetic; for *samjñā*, “intellect” is useful in conveying the sense of verbal, conceptual intelligence. For *samskāra*, which covers a number of mental functions as well as inanimate forces, “motivation” gives a general idea. And “consciousness” is so well established for *vijñāna* (although what we normally think of as consciousness is more like *samjñā*, i.e., conceptual and notional, and *vijñāna* is rather the “pure awareness” prior to concepts) as to be left unchallenged.

aids to enlightenment

byang chub kyi phyogs kyi chos

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་ཆོས།

bodhipakṣikadharma

See “thirty-seven aids to enlightenment”

Ajita Keśakambala

mi pham sgra'i la ba can

མི་ཕམ་སྒྲའི་ལ་བ་ཅན།

ajita keśakambala

One of the six outsider teachers defeated by the Buddha at Śrāvastī.

Akaniṣṭha

'og min

འོག་མིན།

akaniṣṭha

The highest heaven of the form-world, where a buddha always receives the anointment of the ultimate wisdom, reaching there mentally from his seat of enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree.

Akṣayamati

blo gros mi zad pa

བློ་གྲོས་མི་ཟད་པ།

akṣayamati

A bodhisattva in the assembly at Vimalakīrti's house, often figuring in other Mahāyāna sūtras, especially *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra*.

Akṣobhya

mi 'khrugs pa

མི་འཁྲུགས་པ།

akṣobhya

Buddha of the universe Abhirati, presiding over the eastern direction; also prominent in tantric works as one of the five dhyāni buddhas, or tathāgatas (see Lamotte, pp. 360-362, n. 9).

Amitābha

snang ba mtha' yas

སྣང་བ་མཐའ་ཡས།

amitābha

The Buddha of boundless light; one of the five Tathāgatas in Tantrism; a visitor in Vimalakīrti's house, according to the goddess's report.

Āmrapālī

a mra srung ba

ཨ་མྲ་སྲུང་བ།

āmrapālī

A courtesan of Vaiśālī who gave her garden to the Buddha and his retinue, where they stay during the events of the sūtra.

Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

ānanda

A major śrāvaka disciple and personal attendant of the Buddha Śākyamuni during the last twenty-five years of his life. He was a cousin of the Buddha (according to the *Mahāvastu*, he was a son of Śuklodana, one of the brothers of King Śuddhodana, which means he was a brother of Devadatta; other sources say he was a son of Amṛtodana, another brother of King Śuddhodana, which means he would have been a brother of Aniruddha).
Ānanda, having always been in the Buddha's presence, is said to have memorized all the teachings he heard and is celebrated for having recited all the Buddha's teachings by memory at the first council of the Buddhist saṅgha, thus preserving the teachings after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa. The phrase "Thus did I hear at one time," found at the beginning of the sūtras, usually stands for his recitation of the teachings. He became a patriarch after the passing of Mahākāśyapa.
See also n.88 and n.193.

Anantaguṇaratnavyūha

yon tan rin chen mtha’ yas bkod pa

ཡོན་ཏན་རིན་ཆེན་མཐའ་ཡས་བཀོད་པ།

anantaguṇaratnavyūha

Lit. “infinite array of jewel-qualities.” A universe of Buddha Ratnavyūha, also mentioned in the *Lalitavistarasūtra*.

Anārambaṇadhyāyin

dmigs pa med pa’i bsam gtan

དམིགས་པ་མེད་པའི་བསམ་གཏན།

anārambaṇadhyāyin

Anikṣiptadhura

brtson pa mi ’dor ba

བརྩོན་པ་མི་འདོར་བ།

anikṣiptadhura

Aniruddha

ma ’gags pa

མ་འགགས་པ།

aniruddha

A śrāvaka disciple and cousin of the Buddha who was famed for his meditative prowess and superknowledges. See also n.78.

arhat

dgra bcom pa

དགྲ་བཅོམ་པ།

arhat

According to Buddhist tradition, one who has conquered his enemy passions (*kleśa-ari-hata*) and reached the supreme purity. The term can refer to buddhas as well as to those who have reached realization of the Disciple Vehicle.

Āryadeva

’phags pa lha

འཕགས་པ་ལྷ།

āryadeva

One of the great masters of Indian Buddhism. The main disciple of Nāgārjuna, he lived in the early a.d. centuries and wrote numerous important works of Mādhyamika philosophy.

Āryāsaṅga

thogs med, ’phags pa thogs med

ཐོགས་མེད།, འཕགས་པ་ཐོགས་མེད།

asaṅga, āryāsaṅga

This great Indian philosopher lived in the fourth century and was the founder of the Vijñānavāda, or “Consciousness-Only,” school of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Aśoka

mya ngan med pa

མྱ་ངན་མེད་པ།

aśoka

Universe whence comes the Brahmā Śikhin.

asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

Titan .

auspicious signs and marks

mtshan dang dpe byad bzang po

མཚན་དང་དཔེ་བྱད་བཟང་པོ།

lakṣaṇānuvyañjana

The thirty-two signs and the eighty marks of a superior being.

Avalokiteśvara

spyan ras gzigs kyi dbang phyug

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་ཀྱི་དབང་ཕྱུག

avalokiteśvara

A bodhisattva emblematic of the great compassion; of great importance in Tibet as special protector of the religious life of the country and in China, in female form, as Kwanyin, protectress of women, children, and animals.

Avataṃsaka

phal po che

ཕལ་པོ་ཆེ།

avataṃsaka

This vast Mahāyāna sūtra (also called the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*) deals with the miraculous side of the Mahāyāna. It is important in relation to the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa, since the latter's fifth chapter, "The Inconceivable Liberation," is a highly abbreviated version of the essential teaching of the former.

bad migrations

ngan song

ངན་སོང་།

durgati

The three bad migrations are those of (1) denizens of hells, (2) inhabitants of the "limbo" of the *pretaloka*, where one wanders as an insatiably hungry and

thirsty wretch, and (3) animals, who are trapped in the pattern of mutual devouring (Tib. *gcig la gcig za*).

basic precepts

bslab pa'i gzhi rnams

བསླབ་པའི་གཞི་རྣམས།

sikṣāpada

These basic precepts are five in number for the laity: (1) not killing, (2) not stealing, (3) chastity, (4) not lying, and (5) avoiding intoxicants. For monks, there are three or five more; avoidance of such things as perfumes, makeup, ointments, garlands, high beds, and afternoon meals.

Bhaiṣajyarāja

sman gyi rgyal po

སྨན་གྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

bhaiṣajyarāja

Lit. "King of Healers." In the story of Śākyamuni's former life in this sūtra, he is the tathāgata of the universe Mahāvyūha, during the eon called Vicaraṇa, who taught Prince Candracchattra about Dharma-worship. In later Buddhism, this buddha is believed to be the supernatural patron of healing and medicine.

Bhāvaviveka

legs ldan 'byed

ལེགས་ལྡན་འབྱེད།

bhāvaviveka

(c. a.d. 400). A major Indian philosopher, a master of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism, who founded a sub-school known as Svātantrika.

bhikṣu

dge slong

དགེ་སློང་།

bhikṣu

The term *bhikṣu,* often translated as “monk,” refers to the highest among the eight types of prātimokṣa vows that make one part of the Buddhist assembly. The Sanskrit term literally means “beggar” or “mendicant,” referring to the fact that Buddhist monks and nuns—like other ascetics of the time—subsisted on alms (*bhikṣā*) begged from the laity.
In the Tibetan tradition, which follows the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, a monk follows 253 rules as part of his moral discipline. A nun (*bhikṣuṇī*; *dge slong ma*) follows 364 rules. A novice monk (*śrāmaṇera*; *dge tshul*) or nun (*śrāmaṇerikā*; *dge tshul ma*) follows thirty-six rules of moral discipline (although in other vinaya traditions novices typically follow only ten).

billion-world galaxy

stong gsum gyi stong chen po’i ’jig rten gyi khams

སྟོང་གསུམ་གྱི་སྟོང་ཆེན་པོའི་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།

trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu

Lit. “three-thousand-great-thousand-world realm.” Each of these is composed of one thousand realms, each of which contains one thousand realms, each of which contains one thousand realms = one thousand to the third power = one billion worlds.

birthlessness

mi skye ba

མི་སྐྱེ་བ།

anutpādatva

This refers to the ultimate nature of reality, to the fact that, ultimately, nothing has ever been produced or born nor will it ever be because birth and production can occur only on the relative, or superficial, level. Hence “birthlessness” is a synonym of “voidness,” “reality,” “absolute,” “ultimate,” “infinity,” etc.

bodhisattva

byang chub sems dpa’

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ།

bodhisattva

A living being who has produced the spirit of enlightenment in himself and whose constant dedication, lifetime after lifetime, is to attain the unexcelled, perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood.

body of Dharma

chos kyi sku

ཆོས་ཀྱི་སྐུ།

dharmakāya

Also translated “ultimate body.”

Brahmā

tshangs pa

ཚངས་པ།

brahmā

Creator-lord of a universe, there being as many as there are universes, whose number is incalculable. Hence, in Buddhist belief, a title of a deity who has attained supremacy in a particular universe, rather than a personal name. For example, the Brahmā of the Aśoka universe is personally called Śikhin, to distinguish him from other Brahmās. A Brahmā resides at the summit of the realm of pure matter (*rūpadhātu*), and is thus higher in status than a Śakra.

Brahmajāla

tshangs pa’i dra ba

ཚངས་པའི་དྲ་བ།

brahmajāla

buddha

sangs rgyas

སངས་རྒྱས།

buddha

Lit. “awakened one.” Title of one who has attained the highest attainment possible for a living being. “The Buddha” often designates Śākyamuni because he is the buddha mainly in charge of the buddhafield of our Sahā universe.

Buddha Gaya

buddha gaya

Ancient name for the town in Bihar province, where the Buddha attained his highest enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree. Modern name, Bodhgaya.

buddhafield

sangs rgyas kyi zhing

སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཞིང་།

buddhakṣetra

Roughly, a synonym for “universe,” although Buddhist cosmology contains many universes of different types and dimensions. “Buddhafield” indicates, in regard to whatever type of world-sphere, that it is the field of influence of a particular Buddha. For a detailed discussion of these concepts, see Lamotte, Appendice, Note I.

Buddhapālita

sangs rgyas bskyang

སངས་རྒྱས་བསྐྱང་།

buddhapālita

(c. fourth century). A great Mādhyamika master, who was later regarded as the founder of the Prāsaṅgika sub-school.

Buddhāvataṃsaka

sangs rgyas phal po che

སངས་རྒྱས་ཕལ་པོ་ཆེ།

buddhāvataṃsaka

See Avataṃsaka.

Cakravāḍa

khor yug

འཁོར་ཡུག

cakravāḍa

A mountain in this sūtra and many others; but, in systematized Buddhist cosmology, the name of the ring of mountains that surrounds the world.

Candracchattra

zla gdugs

ཟླ་གདུགས།

candracchattra

(1) Chief of the Licchavi. (2) Son of the king Ratnacchattra, mentioned in the former-life story told by the Buddha to Śakra in Chapter 12.

Candrakīrti

zla ba grags pa

ཟླ་བ་གྲགས་པ།

candrakīrti

(c. sixth century). The most important Mādhyamika philosopher after Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, he refined the philosophical methods of the school to such a degree that later members of the tradition considered him one of the highest authorities on the subject of the profound nature of reality.

canon of the bodhisattvas

byang chub sems dpa'i sde snod

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡེ་སྣོད།

bodhisattvapiṭaka

The collection of the Vast (*vaipulya*) Sūtras of the Mahāyāna, supposed to have been collected supernaturally by a great assembly of bodhisattvas led by Maitreya, Mañjuśrī, and Vajrapāṇi. There is a Mahāyāna sūtra called Bodhisattvapiṭaka, but the word more usually refers to the whole collection (*piṭaka*) of Mahāyāna sūtras, to distinguish them from the Three Collections (*Tripiṭaka*) of the Hinayāna.

cessation

'gog pa

འགོག་པ།

nirodha

The third Noble Truth, equivalent to nirvāṇa.

Chönyi Tsültrim

chos nyid tshul khrims

ཆོས་ཉིད་ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས།

Tibetan translator of this sūtra in the ninth century, also well known for his collaboration in compiling the *Mahāvyutpatti* (Skt.-Tib. dictionary).

Ch'an

Chinese word for *dhyāna*, which was adopted as the name of the school of Mahāyāna practice founded by Bodhidharma, and later to become famous in the west as Zen.

concentration

ting nge 'dzin

ཏིང་ངེ་འཛིན།

samādhi

See "absorption."

conception of the spirit of enlightenment

byang chub kyi sems bskyed pa

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པ།

bodhicittotpāda

This can also be rendered by “initiation of…” because it means the mental event occurring when a living being, having been exposed to the teaching of the Buddha or of his magical emanations (e.g., Vimalakīrti), realizes simultaneously his own level of conditioned ignorance, i.e., that his habitual stream of consciousness is like sleep compared to that of one who has awakened from ignorance; the possibility of his own attainment of a higher state of consciousness; and the necessity of attaining it in order to liberate other living beings from their stupefaction. Having realized this possibility, he becomes inspired with the intense ambition to attain, and that is called the “conception of the spirit of enlightenment.” “Spirit” is preferred to “mind” because the mind of enlightenment should rather be the mind of the Buddha, and to “thought” because a “thought of enlightenment” can easily be produced without the initiation of any sort of new resolve or awareness. “Will” also serves very well here.

conceptualization

rnam par rtog pa

རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པ།

vikalpa

This brings up another important group of words that has never been treated systematically in translation: *vikalpa*, *parikalpa*, *samāropa*, *adhyāropa*, *kalpanā*, *samjñā*, and *prapāñca*. All of these refer to mental functions that tend to superimpose upon reality, either relative or ultimate, a conceptualized reality fabricated by the subjective mind. Some translators have tended to lump these together under the rubric “discursive thought,” which leads to the misleading notion that all thought is bad, something to be eliminated, and that sheer “thoughtlessness” is “enlightenment,” or whatever higher state is desired. According to Buddhist scholars, thought in itself is simply a function, and only thought that is attached to its own content over and above the relative object, i.e., “egoistic” thought, is bad and to be eliminated. Therefore we have chosen a set of words for the seven Skt. terms: respectively, “conceptualization,”

“imagination,” “presumption,” “exaggeration,” “construction,” “conception” or “notion,” and “fabrication.” This does not mean that these words are not somewhat interchangeable or that another English word might not be better in certain contexts; it only represents an attempt to achieve consistency with the original usages.

conscious awareness

bag yod pa

བག་ཡོད་པ།

apramāda

This denotes a type of awareness of the most seemingly insignificant aspects of practical life, an awareness derived as a consequence of the highest realization of the ultimate nature of reality. As it is stated in the *Anavataptanāgarāja-paripṛcchāsūtra* (Toh 156), 1.191: “He who realizes voidness, that person is consciously aware.” “Ultimate realization,” far from obliterating the relative world, brings it into highly specific, albeit dreamlike, focus.

consciousness

rnam shes

རྣམ་ཤེས།

vijñāna

See “aggregate.”

contemplation

bsam gtan

བསམ་གཏན།

dhyāna

See “absorption.”

cosmic wind-atmosphere

rlung gi dkyil ’khor

རླུང་གི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར།

vātamaṇḍalī

The ancient cosmology maintained that the cosmos was encircled by an atmosphere of fierce winds of impenetrable intensity (see Lamotte, p. 255, n. 15).

decisiveness

nges par sems pa

ངེས་བར་སེམས་པ།

nidhyapti

Analytic concentration that gains insight into the nature of reality, synonymous with "transcendental analysis," *vipaśyana* (q.v.).

dedication

yongs su bsngo ba

ཡོངས་སུ་བསྔོ་བ།

pariṇāmana

This refers to the bodhisattva's constant mindfulness of the fact that all his actions of whatever form contribute to his purpose of attaining enlightenment for the sake of himself and others, i.e., his conscious deferral of the merit accruing from any virtuous action as he eschews immediate reward in favor of ultimate enlightenment for himself and all living beings.

definitive meaning

nges don

ངེས་དོན།

nītārtha

This refers to those teachings of the Buddha that are in terms of ultimate reality; it is opposed to those teachings given in terms of relative reality, termed "interpretable meaning," because they require further interpretation before being relied on to indicate the ultimate. Hence definitive meaning

relates to voidness, etc., and no statement concerning the relative world, even by the Buddha, can be taken as definitive. This is especially important in the context of the Mādhyamika doctrine, hence in the context of Vimalakīrti's teachings, because he is constantly correcting the disciples and bodhisattvas who accept interpretable expressions of the Tathāgata as if they were definitive, thereby attaching themselves to them and adopting a one-sided approach.

dependent origination

rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba

རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་བར་འབྱུང་བ།

pratītyasamutpāda

See also "relativity."

destined for the ultimate

yang dag pa nyid du nges pa

ཡང་དག་པ་ཉིད་དུ་ངེས་པ།

samyaktvaniyata

This generally describes one who has reached the noble path, either in Disciple Vehicle or Mahāyāna practice (see Lamotte, p. 115, n. 65).

destiny for the ultimate

nges pa la zhugs pa

ངེས་པ་ལ་ཞུགས་པ།

niyāmāvakrānti

This is the stage attained by followers of the Hinayāna wherein they become determined for the attainment of liberation (nirvāṇa, i.e., the ultimate for them) in such a way as never to regress from their goals, and by bodhisattvas when they attain the holy path of insight.

deva

lha

ལྷ།

deva

In the most general sense the devas—the term is cognate with the English *divine*—are a class of celestial beings who frequently appear in Buddhist texts, often at the head of the assemblies of nonhuman beings who attend and celebrate the teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni and other buddhas and bodhisattvas. In Buddhist cosmology the devas occupy the highest of the five or six "destinies" (*gati*) of saṃsāra among which beings take rebirth. The devas reside in the *devalokas*, "heavens" that traditionally number between twenty-six and twenty-eight and are divided between the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), form realm (*rūpadhātu*), and formless realm (*ārūpyadhātu*). A being attains rebirth among the devas either through meritorious deeds (in the desire realm) or the attainment of subtle meditative states (in the form and formless realms). While rebirth among the devas is considered favorable, it is ultimately a transitory state from which beings will fall when the conditions that lead to rebirth there are exhausted. Thus, rebirth in the god realms is regarded as a diversion from the spiritual path.

Devarāja

lha'i rgyal po

ལྷའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

devarāja

Dharma

chos

ཆོས།

dharma

The term *dharma* conveys ten different meanings, according to Vasubandhu's *Vyākhyāyukti*. The primary meanings are as follows: the doctrine taught by the Buddha (Dharma); the ultimate reality underlying and expressed through the Buddha's teaching (Dharma); the trainings that the Buddha's teaching stipulates (dharmas); the various awakened qualities or attainments acquired

through practicing and realizing the Buddha's teaching (dharmas); qualities or aspects more generally, i.e., phenomena or phenomenal attributes (dharmas); and mental objects (dharmas).

Dharma-door

chos kyi sgo

ཆོས་ཀྱི་སྒོ།

dharmamukha

Certain teachings are called "Dharma-doors" (or "doors of the Dharma"), as they provide access to the practice of the Dharma.

Dharma-eye

chos kyi mig

ཆོས་ཀྱི་མིག

dharmacakṣu

One of the "five eyes," representing superior insights of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. The five eyes consist of five different faculties of vision: the physical eye (*māṃsacakṣu*), the divine eye (*dīvyacakṣu*), the wisdom eye (*prajñācakṣu*), the Dharma-eye (*dharmacakṣu*), and the Buddha-eye (*buddha-cakṣu*).

Dharmaketu

chos kyi tog

ཆོས་ཀྱི་ཏོག

dharmaketu

A bodhisattva.

Dharmeśvara

chos kyi dbang phyug

ཆོས་ཀྱི་དབང་ཕྱུག

dharmeśvara

divine eye

lha'i mig

ལྷའི་མིག

divyacakṣu

One of the six "superknowledges" (q.v.) as well as one of the "five eyes," this is the supernormal ability to see to an unlimited distance, observe events on other worlds, see through mountains, etc. The five eyes consist of five different faculties of vision: the physical eye (*māṃsacakṣu*), the divine eye (*dīvyacakṣu*), the wisdom eye (*prajñācakṣu*), the Dharma-eye (*dharmacakṣu*), and the Buddha-eye (*buddhacakṣu*).

Duḥprasāha

bzod dka'

བཟོད་དཀའ།

duḥprasāha

Buddha of the universe Marīci, located sixty-one universes away; mentioned also in other Mahāyāna sūtras, with the interesting coincidence that his teaching ceased at the moment Śākyamuni began teaching at Benares.

egoistic views

'jig tshogs la lta ba

འཇིག་ཚོགས་ལ་ལྟ་བ།

satkāyadṛṣṭi

This consists of twenty varieties of false notion, consisting basically of regarding the temporally impermanent and ultimately insubstantial as "I" or "mine." The five compulsive aggregates are paired with the self, giving the twenty false notions. For example, the first four false notions are that (1) matter is the self, which is like its owner (*rūpaṃ ātmā svāmivat*); (2) the self possesses matter, like its ornament (*rūpavañ ātmā alaṇkāravat*); (3) matter belongs to the self, like a slave (*ātmīyaṃ rūpaṃ bhṛtyavat*); and (4) the self dwells in matter as in a vessel (*rūpe ātmā bhajanavat*). The other four compulsive aggregates are paired with the self in the same four ways, giving

sixteen more false notions concerning sensation, intellect, motivation, and consciousness, hypostatizing an impossible relationship with a nonexistent, permanent, substantial self.

eight liberations

rnam par thar pa brgyad

རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པ་བརྒྱད།

vimokṣa

The first consists of the seeing of form by one who has form; the second consists of the seeing of external form by one with the concept of internal formlessness; the third consists of the physical realization of pleasant liberation and its successful consolidation; the fourth consists of the full entrance to the infinity of space through transcending all conceptions of matter, and the subsequent decline of conceptions of resistance and discredit of conceptions of diversity; the fifth consists of full entrance into the infinity of consciousness, having transcended the infinity of space; the sixth consists of the full entrance into the sphere of nothingness, having transcended the sphere of the infinity of consciousness; the seventh consists of the full entrance into the sphere of neither consciousness nor unconsciousness, having transcended the sphere of nothingness; the eighth consists of the perfect cessation of suffering, having transcended the sphere of neither consciousness nor unconsciousness. Thus the first three liberations form specific links to the ordinary perceptual world; the fourth to seventh are equivalent to the four absorptions; and the eighth represents the highest attainment.

eight perverse paths

log pa brgyad, log pa nyid brgyad

ལོག་པ་བརྒྱད།, ལོག་པ་ཉིད་བརྒྱད།

mithyātva

These consist of the exact opposites of the eight branches of the eightfold noble path (*aṣṭāṅgikamārga*).

eighteen special qualities of a bodhisattva

byang chub sems dpa’i chos ma ’dres pa bco brgyad

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་ཆོས་མ་འདྲེས་པ་བཅོ་བརྒྱད།

aṣṭādaśāveṇikabodhisattvadharma

These consist of the bodhisattva’s natural (uninstructed) possession of generosity, morality, tolerance, effort, meditation, and wisdom; of his uniting all beings with the four means of unification, knowing the method of dedication (of virtue to enlightenment), exemplification, through skill in liberative art, of the positive results of the Mahāyāna, as suited to the (various) modes of behavior of all living beings, his not falling from the Mahāyāna, showing the entrances of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, skill in the technique of reconciliation of dichotomies, impeccable progress in all his lives, guided by wisdom without any conditioned activities, possession of ultimate action of body, speech, and mind directed by the tenfold path of good action, nonabandonment of any of the realms of living beings, through his assumption of a body endowed with tolerance of every conceivable suffering, manifestation of that which delights all living beings, inexhaustible preservation of the mind of omniscience, as stable as the virtue-constituted tree of wish-fulfilling gems, (even) in the midst of the infantile (ordinary persons) and (narrow-minded) religious disciples, however trying they might be, and adamant irreversibility from demonstrating the quest of the Dharma of the Buddha, for the sake of the attainment of the miraculous consecration conferring the skill in liberative art that transmutes all things. (Mvy, nos. 787-804)

eighteen special qualities of the Buddha

sangs rgyas kyi chos ma ’dres pa bco brgyad

སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཆོས་མ་འདྲེས་པ་བཅོ་བརྒྱད།

aṣṭādaśāveṇikabuddhadharma

Eighteen special features of a buddha’s behavior, realization, activity, and wisdom that are not shared by other beings. They are generally listed as: (1) he never makes a mistake, (2) he is never boisterous, (3) he never forgets, (4) his concentration never falters, (5) he has no notion of distinctness, (6) his equanimity is not due to lack of consideration, (7) his motivation never falters,

(8) his endeavor never fails, (9) his mindfulness never falters, (10) he never abandons his concentration, (11) his insight (*prajñā*) never decreases, (12) his liberation never fails, (13) all his physical actions are preceded and followed by wisdom (*jñāna*), (14) all his verbal actions are preceded and followed by wisdom, (15) all his mental actions are preceded and followed by wisdom, (16) his wisdom and vision perceive the past without attachment or hindrance, (17) his wisdom and vision perceive the future without attachment or hindrance, and (18) his wisdom and vision perceive the present without attachment or hindrance.

eightfold noble path

'phags pa'i lam gyi yan lag brgyad

འཕགས་པའི་ལམ་གྱི་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད།

āryāṣṭāṅgamārga

These are right view (*samyagdṛṣṭi*), right consideration (*samyaksaṃkalpa*), right speech (*samyakvāk*), right terminal action (*samyakkarmānta*), right livelihood (*samyagajiva*), right effort (*samyagvyāyāma*), right remembrance (*samyaksmṛti*), and right concentration (*samyaksamādhi*). They are variously defined in the different Buddhist schools. These eight form a part of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (see entry).

element

khams, 'byung ba chen po

ཁམས།, འབྱུང་བ་ཆེན་པོ།

dhātu, mahābhūta

Depending on the context, may translate either: (a) Skt. *mahābhūta*, Tib. *'byung ba chen po*, the four "main" or "great" outer elements of earth, water, fire, air, and (when there is a fifth) space; or: (b) Skt. *dhātu*, Tib. *khams*, the "eighteen elements" introduce, in the context of the aggregates, elements, and sense-media, the same six pairs as the twelve sense-media, as elements of experience, adding a third member to each set: the element of consciousness (*vijñāna*), or sense. Hence the first pair gives the triad eye-element (*caksurdhātu*), form-element (*rūpadhātu*), and eye-consciousness-element, or eye-sense-element

(*caksurvijñānadhātu*)—and so on with the other five, noting the last, mind-element (*manodhātu*), phenomena-element (*dharmadhātu*), and mental-sense-element (*manovijñānadhātu*).

emanated incarnation

sprul pa

སྤྲུལ་པ།

nirmāṇa

This refers to the miraculous power of the Buddha and bodhisattvas of a certain stage to emanate apparently living beings in order to develop and teach living beings. This power reaches its culmination in the *nirmāṇakayā*, the "incarnation body," which is one of the three bodies of buddhahood and includes all physical forms of all buddhas, including Śākyamuni, whose sole function as incarnations is the development and liberation of living beings.

emptiness

stong pa nyid

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

śūnyatā

This Skt. term is usually translated by "voidness" because that English word is more rarely used in other contexts than "emptiness" and does not refer to any sort of ultimate nothingness, as a thing-in-itself, or even as the thing-in-itself to end all things-in-themselves. It is a pure negation of the ultimate existence of anything or, in Buddhist terminology, the "emptiness with respect to personal and phenomenal selves," or "with respect to identity," or "with respect to intrinsic nature," or "with respect to essential substance," or "with respect to self-existence established by intrinsic identity," or "with respect to ultimate truth-status," etc. Thus emptiness is a concept descriptive of the ultimate reality through its pure negation of whatever may be supposed to be ultimately real. It is an absence, hence not existent in itself. It is synonymous therefore with "infinity," "absolute," etc.—themselves all negative terms, i.e., formed etymologically from a positive concept by adding a negative prefix (in + finite = not finite; ab + solute = not compounded, etc.). But, since our verbally

conditioned mental functions are habituated to the connection of word and thing, we tend to hypostatize a “void,” analogous to “outer space,” a “vacuum,” etc., which we either shrink from as a nihilistic nothingness or become attached to as a liberative nothingness; this great mistake can be cured only by realizing the meaning of the “emptiness of emptiness,” which brings us to the tolerance of inconceivability.

enlightenment

byang chub

བྱང་ཆུབ།

bodhi

This word requires too much explanation for this glossary because, indeed, the whole sūtra—and the whole of Buddhist literature—is explanatory of only this. Here we simply mention the translation equivalent.

family of the Buddha

sangs rgyas kyi rigs

སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་རིགས།

buddhakula

Lit. “family” or “lineage of the Buddha.” One becomes a member on the first bodhisattva stage. In another sense, all living beings belong to this exalted family because all have the capacity to wake up to enlightenment, conceiving its spirit within themselves and thenceforward seeking its realization (see Chapter 7).

family of the tathāgatas

de bzhin gshegs pa’i rigs

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་རིགས།

tathāgatagotra

This term arises from a classification of beings into different groups (lineages) according to their destinies: disciple lineage, solitary buddha lineage, buddha lineage, etc. The Mādhyamika school, and the sūtras that are its foundation,

maintains that all living beings belong to the buddha lineage, that Disciple Vehicle nirvāṇa is not a final destiny, and that arhats must eventually enter the Mahāyāna path. Mañjuśrī carries this idea to the extreme, finding the tathāgata lineage everywhere, in all mundane things. See 7.9, and Lamotte, Appendice, Note VII.

fearlessness

mi ’jigs pa

མི་འཇིགས་པ།

vaiśāradya

The Buddha has four fearlessnesses, as do the bodhisattvas. The four fearlessnesses of the Buddha are: fearlessness regarding the realization of all things; fearlessness regarding knowledge of the exhaustion of all impurities; fearlessness of foresight through ascertainment of the persistence of obstructions; and fearlessness in the rightness of the path leading to the attainment of the supreme success. The fearlessnesses of the bodhisattva are: fearlessness in teaching the meaning he has understood from what he has learned and practiced; fearlessness resulting from the successful maintenance of purity in physical, verbal, and mental action—without relying on others’ kindness, being naturally flawless through his understanding of the absence of self; fearlessness resulting from freedom from obstruction in virtue, in teaching, and in delivering living beings, through the perfection of wisdom and liberative art and through not forgetting and constantly upholding the teachings; and fearlessness in the ambition to attain full mastery of omniscience—without any deterioration or deviation to other practices—and to accomplish all the aims of all living beings.

female attendants

slas

སྐལ།

sahacāri

Female attendants who normally assisted the wife of a wealthy householder.

five deadly sins

mtshams med lnga

མཚམས་མེད་ལྔ།

ānantarya

Lit. “sins of immediate retribution [after death].” These five, all of which cause immediate rebirth in hell, are killing one’s father, killing one’s mother, killing an arhat, breaking up the saṅgha, and causing, with evil intent, the Tathāgata to bleed.

five desire objects

’dod pa’i yon tan lnga

འདོད་པའི་ཡོན་ཏན་ལྔ།

pañcakāmaguṇaḥ

Visibles, sound, scent, taste, and tangibles.

five obscurations

sgrib pa lnga

སྒྲིབ་པ་ལྔ།

nīvaraṇa

Five impediments to meditation (*bsam gtan*, *dhyāna*): sensory desire (*’dod pa la ’dun pa*, *kāmacchanda*), ill will (*gnod sems*, *vyāpāda*), drowsiness and torpor (*rmugs pa dang gnyid*, *styānamiddha*), agitation and regret (*rgod pa dang ’gyod pa*, *auddhatyakaukṛtya*), and doubt (*the tshom*, *vicikitsā*).

five powers

stobs lnga

སྟོབས་ལྔ།

bala

These are the same as the five spiritual faculties, at a further stage of development.

five spiritual faculties

dbang po lnga

དབང་པོ་ལྔ།

indriya

These are called “faculties” (*indriya*) by analogy, as they are considered as capacities to be developed: the spiritual faculties for faith (*śraddhā*), effort (*vīrya*), mindfulness (*smṛti*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajña*). These are included in the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment.

four bases of magical power

rdzu ’phrul gyi rkang pa bzhi

རྫུ་འཕྲུལ་གྱི་རྐང་པ་བཞི།

ṛddhipāda

The first basis of magical power consists of the energy from the conscious cultivation of concentration of will (*chandasamādhiprahāṇasaṃskāra-samanvāgataḥ*). The second consists of the energy from the conscious cultivation of concentration of mind (*citta-*). The third consists of concentration of effort (*vīrya-*). The fourth consists of concentration of analysis (*mīmāṃsa-*). These four form a part of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment.

four epitomes of the Dharma

bka’ rtags kyi phyag rgya bzhi, chos kyi phyag rgya bzhi

བཀའ་རྟགས་ཀྱི་ཕྱག་རྒྱ་བཞི།, ཆོས་ཀྱི་ཕྱག་རྒྱ་བཞི།

dharmoddāna

The four are as follows: All compounded things are impermanent (*anityāḥ sarvasaṃskārāḥ*). All defiled things are suffering (*duḥkhāh sarvasāsravāḥ*). All things are without self (*anātmanāḥ sarvadharmāḥ*). Nirvāṇa is peace (*śāntaṃ nirvāṇaṃ*). Also called “the four insignia of the Dharma.”

four foci of mindfulness

dran pa nye bar gzhag pa

དྲན་པ་ཉེ་བར་གཞག་པ།

smṛtyupasṭhāna

These are the stationing, or focusing, of mindfulness on the body, sensations, the mind, and things. These four form a part of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment.

four immeasurables

tshad med bzhi

ཚད་མེད་བཞི།

catvāryapramāṇāni

Immeasurable states, otherwise known as “pure abodes” (*brahmāvihāra*). Immeasurable love arises from the wish for all living beings to have happiness and the cause of happiness. Immeasurable compassion arises from the wish for all living beings to be free from suffering and its cause. Immeasurable joy arises from the wish that living beings not be sundered from the supreme happiness of liberation. And immeasurable impartiality arises from the wish that the preceding—love, compassion, and joy—should apply equally to all living beings, without attachment to friend or hatred for enemy.

four misapprehensions

phyin ci log bzhi

ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་བཞི།

viparyāsa

These consist of mistaking what is impermanent for permanent; mistaking what is without self for self-possessing; mistaking what is impure for pure; and mistaking what is miserable for happy.

four reliances

rton pa bzhi

རྟོན་པ་བཞི།

pratiśārana

To attain higher realizations and final enlightenment, the bodhisattva should rely on the meaning (of the teaching) and not on the expression (*artha-pratisāraṇena bhavitavyaṃ na vyañjanapratisāraṇena*); on the teaching and not on the person (who teaches it) (*dharmapratisāraṇena bhavitavyaṃ na pudgala-pratisāraṇena*); on gnosis and not on normal consciousness (*jñāna-pratisāraṇena bhavitavyaṃ na vijñānapratisāraṇena*); and on discourses of definitive meaning and not on discourses of interpretable meaning (*nītārtha-sūtrapratisāraṇena bhavitavyaṃ na neyārthasūtrapratisāraṇena*) according to the order in this sūtra. The usual order, "teaching-reliance," "meaning-reliance," definitive-meaning-discourse-reliance," and "gnosis-reliance," seems to conform better to stages of practice.

four right efforts

yang dag par spong ba bzhi

ཡང་དག་པར་སྤོང་བ་བཞི།

samyakpradhāna, samyakprahāṇa

These are effort not to initiate sins not yet arisen; effort to eliminate sins already arisen; effort to initiate virtues not yet arisen; and effort to consolidate, increase, and not deteriorate virtues already arisen. For our use of "effort" (*samyakpradhāna*) instead of lit. "abandonment" (*samyakprahāna*) see Dayal, p. 102 ff. These four form a part of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment.

Gaganagañja

nam mkha'i mdzod

ནམ་མཁའི་མཛོད།

gaganagañja

Gajagandhahastin

spos kyi ba glang glang po che

སྤོས་ཀྱི་བ་གླང་གླང་པོ་ཆེ།

gajagandhahastin

Gandhahastin

spos kyi glang po che

སྤོས་ཀྱི་གླང་པོ་ཆེ།

gandhahastin

Gandhamādana

spos kyi ngad ldan

སྤོས་ཀྱི་དང་ལྡན།

gandhamādana

A mountain known for its incense trees.

gandharva

dri za

དྲི་ཟ།

gandharva

A class of generally benevolent nonhuman beings who inhabit the skies, sometimes said to inhabit fantastic cities in the clouds, and more specifically to dwell on the eastern slopes of Mount Meru, where they are ruled by the Great King Dhṛtarāṣṭra. They are most renowned as celestial musicians who serve the gods. In the Abhidharma, the term is also used to refer to the mental body assumed by sentient beings during the intermediate state between death and rebirth. Gandharvas are said to live on fragrances (*gandha*) in the desire realm, hence the Tibetan translation *dri za*, meaning “scent eater.”

Gandhavyūhāhāra

spos bkod pa’i zas

སྤོས་བཀོད་པའི་ཟས།

gandhavyūhāhāra

Deities who attend on the Buddha Sugandhakūta in the universe Sarvagandha-sugandhā.

Gandhottamakūṭa

spos mchog brtsegs pa

སྤོས་མཆོག་བརྩེགས་པ།

gandhottamakūṭa

Buddha of the universe Sarvagandhasugandhā, from whom Vimalakīrti's emanation-bodhisattva obtains the vessel of ambrosial food that magically feeds the entire assembly without diminishing in the slightest.

garuḍa

nam mkha' lding

ནམ་མཁའ་ལྡིང་།

garuḍa

In Indian mythology, the garuḍa is an eagle-like bird that is regarded as the king of all birds, normally depicted with a sharp, owl-like beak, often holding a snake, and with large and powerful wings. They are traditionally enemies of the nāgas. In the Vedas, they are said to have brought nectar from the heavens to earth. *Garuḍa* can also be used as a proper name for a king of such creatures.

gnosis

ye shes

ཡེ་ཤེས།

jñāna

This is knowledge of the nonconceptual and transcendental which is realized by those attaining higher stages.

grace

byin gyis brlabs

བྱིན་གྱིས་བརླབས།

adhiṣṭhāna

The “supernatural power” with which the buddhas sustain the bodhisattvas in their great efforts on behalf of living beings.

great compassion

snying rje chen po

སྙིང་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahākaruṇā

This refers to one of the two central qualities of buddhas or high bodhisattvas: their feeling born of the wish for all living beings to be free of suffering and to attain the supreme happiness. It is important to note that this great compassion has nothing to do with any sentimental emotion such as that stimulated by such a reflection as “Oh, the poor creatures! How they are suffering!” On the contrary, great compassion is accompanied by the clear awareness that ultimately there are no such things as living beings, suffering, etc., in reality. Thus it is a sensitivity that does not entertain any dualistic notion of subject and object; indeed, such an unlimited sensitivity might best be termed “empathy.”

great love

byams pa chen po

བྱམས་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāmaitrī

In an effort to maintain distinctions between Buddhism and Christianity, translators have used all sorts of euphemisms for this basic term. Granted, it is not the everyday “love” that means “to like”; it is still the altruistic love that is the finest inspiration of Christ’s teaching, as well as of the Mahāyāna.

great spiritual hero

sems dpa’ chen po

སེམས་དཔའ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāsattva

This translation follows the Tib. (lit. “great mind- hero”), whose translation from Skt. derives from the *lo tsā ba*’s analysis of sattva as meaning “hero,” rather than simply “being.”

high resolve

lhag pa’i bsam pa

ལྷག་པའི་བསམ་པ།

adhyāśaya

This is a stage in the conception or initiation of the spirit of enlightenment. It follows upon the positive thought, or aspiration to attain it, wherein the bodhisattva becomes filled with a lofty determination that he himself should attain enlightenment, that it is the only thing to do to solve his own problems as well as those of all living beings. This high resolve reaches its most intense purity when the bodhisattva simultaneously attains the Path of Insight and the first bodhisattva-stage, the Stage of Joy. The translation follows Lamotte’s happy coinage “*haute résolution*.”

highest deities

gzhan ’phrul dbang byed kyi lha

གཞན་འཕྲུལ་དབང་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ལྷ།

paranīrmitavaśavartin

The deities of this, the sixth level of the gods of the desire-realm, appropriate and enjoy the magical creations of others; hence their name, literally, “who assume control of the emanations of others.” Their abode contains all the wonders created elsewhere and is referred to as a standard of splendor.

Himavat

gangs ri

གངས་རི།

himavat

A mountain.

identity

rang bzhin

རང་བཞིན།

svabhāva

Svabhāva is usually rendered as “self-nature,” sometimes as “own-being,” both of which have a certain literal validity. However, neither artificial term has any evocative power for the reader who has no familiarity with the original, and a term must be found that the reader can immediately relate to his own world to fulfill the function the original word had in its world. In our world of identities (national, racial, religious, personal, sexual, etc.), “identity” is a part of our makeup; thus, when we are taught the ultimate absence of identity of all persons and things, it is easy to “identify” what is supposedly absent and hence to try to understand what that entails.

immaterial realm

gzugs med khams

གཟུགས་མེད་ཁམས།

ārūpyadhātu

The highest and subtlest of the three realms of saṃsāra in Buddhist cosmology. Here beings are no longer bound by materiality and enjoy a purely mental state of absorption. It is divided in four levels according to each of the four formless concentrations (*ārūpyāvacaradhyāna*), namely, the Sphere of Infinite Space (*ākāśānantyāyatana*), the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness (*vijñānānantyāyatana*), the Sphere of Nothingness (*akiñcanyāyatana*), and the Sphere of Neither Perception nor Non-perception (*naivasaṃjñā-nāsaṃjñāyatana*). The formless realm is located above the other two realms of saṃsāra, the form realm (*rūpadhātu*) and the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*).

incantation

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

The incantations, or spells, are mnemonic formulas, possessed by advanced bodhisattvas, that contain a quintessence of their attainments, not simply magical charms—although the latter are included. The same term in Sanskrit and Tibetan also refers to a highly developed power present in bodhisattvas that is a process of memory and recall of detailed teachings, best translated “retention” in certain contexts.

incarnation-body

sprul pa’i sku

སྤྲུལ་པའི་སྐུ།

nirmāṇakāya

See “emanated incarnation.”

incomprehensibility

mi dmigs pa

མི་དམིགས་པ།

anupalambha

This refers to the ultimate nature of things, which cannot be comprehended, grasped, etc., by the ordinary, conditioned, subjective mind. Hence it is significant that the realization of this nature is not couched in terms of understanding, or conviction, but in terms of tolerance (*kṣānti*), as the grasping mind cannot grasp its ultimate inability to grasp; it can only cultivate its tolerance of that inability.

inconceivability

bsam gyis mi khyab pa

བསམ་གྱིས་མི་ཁྱབ་པ།

acintyatā

Lit. “unthinkability,” (on the part of a mind whose thinking is conditioned and bound by conceptual terms). This is essentially synonymous with “incomprehensibility” (see entry).

inconceivable liberation

rnam par thar pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa

རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པ་བསམ་གྱིས་མི་ཁྱབ་པ།

acintyavimokṣa

Inconceivable liberation of the bodhisattvas, a name of the *Avataṃsaka*, and a subtitle of the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa.

Individual Vehicle

theg pa dman pa

ཐེག་པ་དམན་པ།

hīnayāna

See “Disciple Vehicle.”

Indra

dbang po

དབང་པོ།

indra

A major god in the Vedic pantheon, he dwindled in importance after Vedism was transformed into Hinduism in the early A.D. centuries. However, he was reinstated in Buddhist sūtras as the king of the gods and as a disciple of the Buddha and protector of the Dharma and its practicers.

Indrajāla

mig ’phrul can

མིག་འཕྲུལ་ཅན།

indrajāla

instinct

bag chags

བག་ཆགས།

vāsanā

The subconscious tendencies and predilections of the psychosomatic conglomerate. This most obvious word is seldom used in this context because of the hesitancy of scholars to employ “scientific” terminology.

intellect

’du shes

འདུ་ཤེས།

samjñā

See “aggregate.”

interpretable meaning

drang don

དྲང་དོན།

neyārtha

See “definitive meaning.”

irreversible wheel of the Dharma

phyir mi ldog pa’i chos kyi ’khor lo

ཕྱིར་མི་ལྡོག་པའི་ཆོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ།

avaivartikadharmacakra

The fact that the Dharma is not a single dogma, law, or fixed system, but instead an adaptable body of techniques available for any living being to aid in his development and liberation is emphasized by this metaphor. This wheel is said to turn by the current of energy from the needs and wishes of living beings, and its turning automatically converts negative energies (e.g., desire, hatred, and ignorance) to positive ones (e.g., detachment, love, and wisdom).

Jagatindhara

’gro ba ’dzin

འགྲོ་བ་འཛིན།

jagatindhara

A bodhisattva layman of Vaiśālī, who is saved by Vimalakīrti from being fooled by Māra posing as Indra. This bodhisattva is mentioned in Mvy, No. 728, and in the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛccha* (Toh 62, in the Ratnakūṭa; see Lamotte, p. 204, n. 120 and Vienna Buddhist Studies Translation Group, trans., *The Questions of Rāṣṭrapāla*, 1.1).

Jālinīprabha

dra ba can gyi ’od

དྲ་བ་ཅན་གྱི་འོད།

jālinīprabha

Jambudvīpa

’dzam bu gling

འཛམ་བུ་གླིང་།

jambudvīpa

The name of the southern continent in Buddhist cosmology, which can signify either the known human world, or more specifically the Indian subcontinent, literally “the *jambu* island/continent.” Jambu is the name used for a range of plum-like fruits from trees belonging to the genus *Szygium*, particularly *Szygium jambos* and *Szygium cumini*, and it has commonly been rendered “rose apple,” although “black plum” may be a less misleading term. Among various explanations given for the continent being so named, one (in the *Abhidharmakośa*) is that a jambu tree grows in its northern mountains beside Lake Anavatapta, mythically considered the source of the four great rivers of India, and that the continent is therefore named from the tree or the fruit. Jambudvīpa has the Vajrāsana at its center and is the only continent upon which buddhas attain awakening.

Kakuda Kātyāyana

kA tya’i bu nog can

ཀཱ་ཏྱ་ཡི་བུ་ནོག་ཅན།

kakuda kātyāyana

One of the six outsider teachers.

Kālaparvata

ri nag po

དེ་ནག་པོ།

kālaparvata

A mountain.

karma

las

ལས།

karman

Meaning “action” in its most basic sense, karma is an important concept in Buddhist philosophy as the cumulative force of previous physical, verbal, and mental acts, which determines present experience and will determine future existences.

Kātyāyana

ka tya’i bu, ka tya’i bu chen po

ཀ་ཏྱཻ་བུ།, ཀ་ཏྱཻ་བུ་ཆེན་པོ།

kātyāyana, mahākātyāyana

(also Mahākātyāyana). Disciple of the Buddha noted for his skill in analysis of the Buddha’s discourses and, traditionally, the founder of the Abhidharma. See also n.74.

Kauśika

kau shi ka

ཀཽ་ཤི་ཀ

kauśika

Another name for Indra. Kauśika, Śakra, and Indra all refer to the same god, centrally prominent in the Vedas, who in Buddhist cosmogony is regarded as the king of gods in the realm of desire.

kinnara

mi'am ci

མིའམ་ཅི།

kinnara

A class of nonhuman beings that resemble humans to the degree that their very name—which means "is that human?"—suggests some confusion as to their divine status. Kinnaras are mythological beings found in both Buddhist and Brahmanical literature, where they are portrayed as creatures half human, half animal. They are often depicted as highly skilled celestial musicians.

knowledge and vision of liberation

rnam par grol ba'i ye shes mthong ba

རྣམ་པར་གྲོལ་བའི་ཡེ་ཤེས་མཐོང་བ།

vimuktijñānadarśana

Krakucchanda

log par dad sel, 'khor ba 'jig

ལོག་པར་དད་སེལ།, འཁོར་བ་འཇིག

krakucchanda

The first Buddha of the "Good Eon" (*bhadrakalpa*) of one thousand buddhas, our own Śākyamuni having been the fourth, and Maitreya expected to come as the fifth. Also spelled Krakutsanda, Kukutsunda, Kukucchanda.

Kṣetralaṃkṛta

zhing snyoms brgyan

ཞིང་སྙོམས་བརྒྱན།

kṣetralaṃkṛta

Kumārajīva

kumārajīva

Translator of this sūtra into Chinese (344-409).

Lakṣaṇakūṭasamatikrānta

mtshan brtsegs yang dag ’das

མཚན་བརྩེགས་ཡང་དག་འདས།

lakṣaṇakūṭasamatikrānta

layman

dge bsnyen

དགེ་བསྙེན།

upāsaka

Householders with definite vows that set them off from the ordinary householder.

laywoman

dge bsnyen ma

དགེ་བསྙེན་མ།

upāsikā

Householders with definite vows that set them off from the ordinary householder.

liberation

mya ngan las ’das pa, rnam par grol ba, rnam par thar pa

མྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ།, རྣམ་པར་གྲོལ་བ།, རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པ།

nirvāṇa, vimokṣa, vimukti

In Sanskrit, the term *nirvāṇa* literally means “extinguishment” and the Tibetan *mya ngan las ’das pa* literally means “gone beyond sorrow.” As a general term, it refers to the cessation of all suffering, afflicted mental states (*kleśa*), and

causal processes (*karman*) that lead to rebirth and suffering in cyclic existence, as well as to the state in which all such rebirth and suffering has permanently ceased.

More specifically, three main types of nirvāṇa are identified. (1) The first type of nirvāṇa, called nirvāṇa with remainder (*sopadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*), is the state in which arhats or buddhas have attained awakening but are still dependent on the conditioned aggregates until their lifespan is exhausted. (2) At the end of life, given that there are no more causes for rebirth, these aggregates cease and no new aggregates arise. What occurs then is called nirvāṇa without remainder (*anupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*), which refers to the unconditioned element (*dhātu*) of nirvāṇa in which there is no remainder of the aggregates. (3) The Mahāyāna teachings distinguish the final nirvāṇa of buddhas from that of arhats, the nirvāṇa of arhats not being considered ultimate. The buddhas attain what is called nonabiding nirvāṇa (*apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa*), which transcends the extremes of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, i.e., existence and peace. This is the nirvāṇa that is the goal of the Mahāyāna path.

liberative art

thabs

ཐབས།

upāya

This is the expression in action of the great compassion of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas—physical, verbal, and mental. It follows that one empathetically aware of the troubles of living beings would, for his very survival, devise the most potent and efficacious techniques possible to remove those troubles, and the troubles of living beings are removed effectively only when they reach liberation. “Art” was chosen over the usual “method” and “means” because it has a stronger connotation of efficacy in our technological world; also, in Buddhism, liberative art is identified with the extreme of power, energy, and efficacy, as symbolized in the *vajra* (adamantine scepter): The importance of this term is highlighted in this sūtra by the fact that Vimalakīrti himself is introduced in the chapter entitled “Inconceivable Skill in Liberative Art”; this indicates that he, as a function of the *nirmāṇakāya* (incarnation-body), just like the Buddha himself, is the very incarnation of liberative art, and every act of

his life is therefore a technique for the development and liberation of living beings. The “liberative” part of the translation follows “*salvifique*” in Lamotte’s phrase “*moyens salvifique*.”

Licchavi

lid tsa bI

ལིད་ཙ་བི།

licchavi

Name of the tribe and republican city-state whose capital was Vaiśālī, where Vimalakīrti lived, and the main events of this sūtra take place.

life

’khor ba

འཁོར་བ།

saṃsāra

A state of involuntary existence conditioned by afflicted mental states and the imprint of past actions, characterized by suffering in a cycle of life, death, and rebirth. On its reversal, the contrasting state of nirvāṇa is attained, free from suffering and the processes of rebirth.

Lokapāla

’jig rten skyong

འཇིག་རྟེན་སྐྱོང་།

lokapāla

Lit. “World-Protectors.” They are the same as the four Mahārājas, the great kings of the quarters (*rgyal chen bzhi*), namely, Vaiśravaṇa, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Virūḍhaka, and Virūpākṣa, whose mission is to report on the activities of mankind to the gods of the Trāyastriṃśa heaven and who have pledged to protect the practitioners of the Dharma. Each universe has its own set of four.

lord

bcom ldan ’das

བཅོམ་ལྡན་འདས།

bhagavān

“Lord” is chosen to translate the title *Bhagavān* because it is the term of greatest respect current in our “sacred” language, as established for the Deity in the Elizabethan version of the Bible. Indeed, the Skt. *Bhagavān* was given as a title to the Buddha, although it also served the non-Buddhist Indians of the day and, subsequently, it served as an honorific title of their particular deities. As the Buddha is clearly described in the sūtras as the “Supreme Teacher of Gods and Men,” there seems little danger that he may be confused with any particular deity through the use of this term [as indeed in Buddhist sūtras various deities, creators, protectors, etc., are shown in their respective roles]. Thus I feel it would compromise the weight and function of the original *Bhagavān* to use any less weighty term than “Lord” for the Buddha.

Madhyamaka

dbu ma

དབུ་མ།

madhyamaka

Teaching of the Middle Way.

Mādhyamika

dbu ma pa

དབུ་མ་པ།

mādhyamika

School based on Madhyamaka, and followers of that school.

Madhyāntavibhāga

dbus mtha’ rnam ’byed

དབུས་མཐའ་རྣམ་འབྱེད།

madhyāntavibhāga

The “Analysis of the Middle and the Extremes,” it is an important work of Vijñānavāda philosophy, said to have been received as a revelation from the future Buddha Maitreya by the great scholar and saint, Āryāsaṅga, after twelve years of meditation.

Mahācakravāḍa

khor yug chen po

ཁོར་ཡུག་ཆེན་པོ།

mahācakravāḍa

A mountain, or sometimes a range of mountains.

Mahākāśyapa

’od srung chen po

འོད་སྲུང་ཆེན་པོ།

mahākāśyapa

Foremost disciple of the Buddha; he inherited the leadership of the saṅgha after the Parinirvāṇa. See also n.62.

Mahāmucilinda

ri btang zung chen po

རི་བཏང་ཟུང་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāmucilinda

A mountain.

mahāsiddha

grub thob chen po

གྲུབ་ཐོབ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāsiddha

A “Great Sorcerer,” a master of the esoteric teachings and practices of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Mahāvyūha

bkod pa chen po

བཀོད་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāvyūha

The name of one of the bodhisattvas in the assembly in Chap. 1.

Mahāvyūha

cher bkod pa

ཆེར་བཀོད་པ།

mahāvyūha

The name of the universe in the distant past where the Buddha Bhaiṣajyarāja presided, and taught the prince Chandracchattra about the Dharma-worship (in the Epilogue).

Mahāyāna

theg pa chen po

ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāyāna

The “Great Vehicle” of Buddhism, called “great” because it carries all living beings to enlightenment of Buddhahood. It is distinguished from the Hinayāna, including the Śrāvākayāna (Śrāvaka Vehicle) and Pratyekabuddhayāna (Solitary Sage Vehicle), which only carries each person who rides on it to their own personal liberation.

Mahāmaudgalyāyana

maud gal gyi bu, maud gal gyi bu chen po

མོད་གལ་གྱི་བུ།, མོད་གལ་གྱི་བུ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāmaudgalyāyana, maudgalyāyana

One of the chief śrāvakas, paired with Śāriputra.

Mahāsthāmaprāpta

mthu chen thob

མཐུ་ཆེན་ཐོབ།

mahāsthāmaprāpta

mahoraga

lto ’phye chen po

ལྟོ་འབྱེ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahoraga

Literally “great serpents,” mahoragas are supernatural beings depicted as large, subterranean beings with human torsos and heads and the lower bodies of serpents. Their movements are said to cause earthquakes, and they make up a class of subterranean geomantic spirits whose movement through the seasons and months of the year is deemed significant for construction projects.

Maitreya

byams pa

བྱམས་པ།

maitreya

A bodhisattva present throughout the sūtra, prophesied as one birth away from buddhahood and designated by Śākyamuni as the next buddha in the succession of one thousand buddhas of our era. According to tradition, he resides in the Tuṣita heaven preparing for his descent to earth at the appropriate time which, according to Buddhist belief, will occur in 4456 A.D.

maṇḍala

dkyil ’khor

དཀྱིལ་འཁོར།

maṇḍala

A mystic diagram, usually consisting of a square within a circle, used to define a sacred space in the context of esoteric rituals of initiation and consecration preliminary to certain advanced meditational practices.

Maṇicūḍa

gtsug na nor bu

གཙུག་ན་ནོར་བུ།

maṇicūḍa

Maṇiratnacchattra

nor bu rin chen gdugs

ནོར་བུ་རིན་ཆེན་གདུགས།

maṇiratnacchattra

Mañjuśrī

'jam dpal, 'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa

འཇམ་དཔལ།, འཇམ་དཔལ་གཞོན་ནུར་གྱུར་པ།

mañjuśrī, mañjuśrīkumārabhūta

The eternally youthful crown prince (*kumārabhūta*), so called because of his special identification with the *Prajñāpāramitā*, or Transcendence of Wisdom. He is the only member of the Buddha's retinue who volunteers to visit Vimalakīrti, and he serves as Vimalakīrti's principal interlocutor throughout the sūtra. Traditionally regarded as the wisest of bodhisattvas, in Tibetan tradition he is known as *rgyal ba'i yab gcig*, the "sole father of buddhas," as he inspires them in their realization of the profound. He is represented as bearing the sword of wisdom in his right hand and a volume of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* in his left. He is always youthful in appearance, like a boy of sixteen.

Māra

bdud

བདུད།

māra

The devil, or evil one, who leads the forces of the gods of the desire-world in seeking to tempt and seduce the Buddha and his disciples. But according to Vimalakīrti he is actually a bodhisattva who dwells in the inconceivable

liberation and displays evil activities in order to strengthen and consolidate the high resolve of all bodhisattvas.

Mārajit

bdud las rgyal

བདུད་ལས་རྒྱལ།

mārajit

Mārapramardin

bdud ’joms

བདུད་འཇོམས།

mārapramardin

Marīci

smig rgyu

སྨིག་རྒྱུ།

marīci

Universe of the Buddha Duṣprasāhā.

Māskārin Gośāliputra

kun tu rgyu gnag lhas kyi bu

ཀུན་ཏུ་རྒྱུ་གནག་ལྷས་ཀྱི་བུ།

māskārin gośāliputra

One of the six outsider teachers.

materialism

ril por ’dzin pa

རིལ་པོར་འཛིན་པ།

piṇḍagrāha

The sense, which ordinarily binds us, of the “objective” solidity and physical reality of things.

materiality

’jig tshogs

འཇིག་ཚོགས།

satkāya

Object of egoistic or materialist interest (*satkāyadṛṣṭi*). See “egoistic views.”

matter

gzugs

གཟུགས།

rūpa

See “aggregate.”

means of unification

bsdu ba’i dngos po

བསྡུ་བའི་དངོས་པོ།

saṃgrahavastu

Four ways in which a bodhisattva forms a group of people united by the common aim of practicing the Dharma: giving (*dāna*); pleasant speech (*priyavaditā*); accomplishment of the aims (of others) by teaching Dharma (*arthacaryā*); and consistency of behavior with the teaching (*samānārthatā*).

mental construction

kun tu rtog pa

ཀུན་ཏུ་རྟོག་པ།

kalpanā, vikalpa

See “conceptualization.”

mental quiescence

zhi gnas

ཞི་གནས།

śamatha

“Mental quiescence” is a general term for all types of mind-practice, meditation, contemplation, concentration, etc., that cultivate one-pointedness of mind and lead to a state of peacefulness and freedom from concern with any sort of object. It is paired with “transcendental analysis” or “insight,” which combines the analytic faculty with this one-pointedness to reach high realizations such as the absence of self (see “transcendental analysis”). “Mental quiescence” and “transcendental analysis” were coined by E. Obermiller in his invaluable study “Prajṅa Pāramitā Doctrine, as Exposed in the Abhisamayālaṃkāra of Maitreya” (Acta Orientalia, Vol. XI [Heidelberg, 1932], pp. 1-134).

Merudhvaja

lhun po’i rgyal mtshan

ལྷུན་པོའི་རྒྱལ་མཚན།

merudhvaja

Buddhafield beyond buddhafields as numerous as the sands of thirty-six Ganges rivers, administered by the Buddha Merupradīparāja, whence Vimalakīrti obtains the lion-thrones on which he seats his visitors.

Merupradīparāja

lhun po’i sgron ma’i rgyal po

ལྷུན་པོའི་སྒྲོན་མའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

merupradīparāja

Buddha of the universe Merudhvaja.

morality

tshul khrims

ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས།

śīla

Morally virtuous or disciplined conduct and the abandonment of morally undisciplined conduct of body, speech, and mind. In a general sense, moral discipline is the cause for rebirth in higher, more favorable states, but it is also foundational to Buddhist practice as one of the three trainings (*triśikṣā*) and one of the six perfections of a bodhisattva. Often rendered as “ethics,” “discipline,” and “morality.”

motivation

’du byed

འདུ་བྱེད།

saṃskāra

See “aggregate.”

Mucilinda

ri btang bzung

རི་བཏང་བཟུང་།

mucilinda

A mountain.

nāga

klu

ཀླུ།

nāga

One of the lords of the ocean, appearing as a great, many headed, sea dragon.

nāgārjuna

klu sgrub

ཀླུ་སྒྲུབ།

nāgārjuna

Saint, scholar, and mystic of Buddhist India from about four hundred years after the Buddha; discoverer of the Mahāyāna sūtras and author of the fundamental Madhyamaka treatise.

Nārāyaṇa

sred med kyi bu

སྲེད་མེད་ཀྱི་བུ།

nārāyaṇa

In Indian lore, incarnation of Viṣṇu, whose strength was legendary (see *Abhi dharmakośa* VII, pp. 72-74).

narrow-minded attitude

nyi tshe ba'i spyod pa

ཉི་ཚེ་བའི་སྤྱོད་པ།

pradeśakārin

This term refers to the restricted, biased, narrow-minded attitudes and practices of the Disciple Vehicle, which itself is called Skt. *prādeśikāyāna* ("limited, or narrow-minded, vehicle") (Mvy, 1254). It is narrow-minded because it posits the reality of the elements of existence as apparently perceived and because it aspires only to personal liberation, not to the exaltation of buddhahood.

narrow-minded teachings

nyi tshe ba'i chos

ཉི་ཚེ་བའི་ཆོས།

pradeśikadharma

I.e. the teachings of the Disciple Vehicle (*śrāvakayāna*). See "narrow-minded attitudes."

nine causes of irritation

kun nas mnar gsems kyi dngos po dgu

ཀུན་ནས་མནར་གསེམས་ཀྱི་དངོས་པོ་དག།

āghātavastu

These consist of various mental distractions caused by the nine considerations “He has caused, causes, will cause wrong to me. He has caused, causes, will cause wrong to one dear to me. He has served, serves, will serve my enemies.”

Nirgrantha Jñātiputra

gcer bu gnyen gyi bu

གཅེར་བུ་གཉེན་གྱི་བུ།

nirgrantha jñātiputra

One of the six outsider teachers.

Nityaprahasitapramuditendriya

rtag tu dga’ dgod dbang po

རྟག་ཏུ་དགའ་དགོད་དབང་པོ།

nityaprahasitapramuditendriya

Nityotkaṇṭhita

rtag tu gdung

རྟག་ཏུ་གདུང་།

nityotkaṇṭhita

Nityotkṣiptahasta

rtag tu lag brkyang

རྟག་ཏུ་ལག་བརྐྱང་།

nityotkṣiptahasta

Nityotpalakṛtahasta

rtag tu lag bteg

རྟག་ཏུ་ལག་བཏེག

nityotpalakṛtahasta

noble

’phags pa

འཕགས་པ།

ārya

—

noble disciple

’phags pa nyan thos

འཕགས་པ་ཉན་ཐོས།

āryaśrāvāka

A practitioner of the Disciple Vehicle teaching who has reached at least the initial stages of realization.

nonduality

gnyis su med pa

གཉིས་སུ་མེད་པ།

advayatvā

This is synonymous with reality, voidness, etc. But it must be remembered that nonduality does not necessarily mean unity, that unity is only one of the pair unity-duality; hence nonduality implies nonunity as well. This point is obscured by designating this nondual philosophy as “monism,” as too many modern scholars have done.

object-perception

lhag par dmigs pa

ལྷག་པར་དམིགས་པ།

adhyālambana

omniscience

thams cad mkhyen pa

ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ།

sarvajñatā

This refers to the gnosis of the Buddha, with which there is nothing he does not know. However, not to confuse "omniscience" with the theistic conception of an omniscient god, the "everything" here is specifically everything about the source of the predicament of worldly life and the way of transcendence of that world through liberation. Since "everything" is only an abstract term without any particular referent, once we are clear about the implications of infinity, it does not refer to any sort of ultimate totality, since a totality can only be relative, i.e., a totality within a particular frame of reference. Thus, as Dharmakīrti has remarked, "it is not a question of the Buddha's knowing the number of fish in the ocean," i.e., since there are infinity of fish in infinity of oceans in infinity of worlds and universes. The Buddha's omniscience, rather, knows how to develop and liberate any fish in any ocean, as well as all other living beings.

outsider

mu stegs pa

མུ་སྟེགས་པ།

tīrthika

Those of other religious or philosophical orders, contemporary with the early Buddhist order, including Jains, Jaṭilas, Ājīvikas, and Cārvākas. Tīrthika ("forder") literally translates as "one belonging to or associated with (possessive suffix *–ika*) stairs for landing or for descent into a river," or "a bathing place," or "a place of pilgrimage on the banks of sacred streams" (Monier-Williams). The term may have originally referred to temple priests at river crossings or fords where travelers propitiated a deity before crossing. The Sanskrit term seems to have undergone metonymic transfer in referring to those able to ford the turbulent river of saṃsāra (as in the Jain tīrthaṅkaras, "ford makers"), and it came to be used in Buddhist sources to refer to teachers of rival religious traditions. The Sanskrit term is closely rendered by the Tibetan *mu stegs pa*: "those on the steps (*stegs pa*) at the edge (*mu*)."

Padmaśrīgarbha

pad mo'i dpal gyi snying po

བད་མོའི་དཔལ་གྱི་སྙིང་པོ།

padmaśrīgarbha

Padmavyūha

pad mo bkod pa

བད་མོ་བཀོད་བ།

padmavyūha

Pāli

The canonical language of Ceylonese Buddhists, believed to be very similar to the colloquial language spoken by Śākyamuni Buddha.

parinirvāṇa

yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa

ཡོངས་སུ་མྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་བ།

parinirvāṇa

A more emphatic term for *nirvāṇa*, when it is used in reference to the apparent passing away of a physical body of a buddha.

positive thought

bsam pa

བསམ་བ།

āśaya

In general, a joyous attitude to help living beings and accomplish virtue. This is also the first stirring in the bodhisattva's mind of the inspiration to attain enlightenment (see "high resolve"). See Lamotte, Appendice, Note II.

power of life

srog gi dbang po

སྲོག་གི་དབང་པོ།

jīvitendriya

One of the nonmental motivations, defined as the force of life-duration, being a concept of the Abhidharma. See T. Stcherbatski, *Central Conception of Buddhism* (London, 1923), p. 105.

Prabhāketu

'od kyi tog

འོད་ཀྱི་ཏོག

prabhāketu

Prabhāvyūha

'od bkod pa

འོད་བཀོད་པ།

prabhāvyūha

A bodhisattva present in the opening assembly, who later tells the story of his encounter with Vimalakīrti, who discourses to him about the seat of enlightenment.

Prabhūtaratna

rin chen mang

རིན་ཆེན་མང་།

prabhūtaratna

One of the buddhas who assembled at Vimalakīrti's house to teach esoteric practices, according to the goddess (Chap. 7).

Prajñākūta

shes rab brtsegs

ཤེས་རབ་བརྩེགས།

prajñākūta

Prajñāpāramitā

shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa

ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ།

prajñāpāramitā

Transcendental wisdom, being the profound nondual understanding of the ultimate reality, or voidness, or relativity, of all things; personified as a goddess, she is worshiped as the “Mother of all Buddhas” (*Sarvajinamātā*).

Prajñāpāramitāsūtra

shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i mdo

ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པའི་མདོ།

prajñāpāramitāsūtra

The sūtra in which the transcendental wisdom is taught. There are nineteen versions of different lengths, ranging from the *Heart Sūtra* of a few pages to the *Hundred-Thousand*. A great deal of information about these sūtras can be found in the works of Dr. Edward Conze.

Prajñāpāramitopadeśa

prajñāpāramitopadeśa

A commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, composed by Kumārajīva from oral traditions derived from Nāgārjuna, and partially translated from Chinese into French by Dr. Etienne Lamotte, as *Traité de la Grande Vertu de la Sagesse*, Louvain, 1944-1949 (Bibliotheque du Museon, 18).

Prāmodyarāja

mchog tu dga’ ba’i rgyal po

མཆོག་ཏུ་དགའ་བའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

prāmodyarāja

Praṇidhiprayātaprāpta

smon lam la zhugs pas phyin pa

སྨོན་ལམ་ལ་ཞུགས་བས་ཐོབ་པ།

praṇidhiprayātaprāpta

Prāsaṅgika

thal ’gyur ba

ཐལ་འགྱུར་བ།

prāsaṅgika

The sub-school of the Mādhyamika philosophical school founded by Buddha-Pālita and further developed by Candrakīrti.

Prasannapadā

tshig gsal

ཚིག་གསལ།

prasannapadā

Candrakīrti’s major commentary on Nāgārjuna’s *Fundamental Stanzas on Wisdom*.

Pratibhānakūṭa

spobs pa brtsegs pa

སྤོབས་པ་བརྩེགས་པ།

pratibhānakūṭa

Pratisaṃvitpraṇādaprāpta

so so yang dag par rig pa rab tu bsgrub pa thob

སོ་སོ་ཡང་དག་པར་རིག་པ་རབ་ཏུ་བསྒྲུབ་པ་ཐོབ།

pratisaṃvitpraṇādaprāpta

pratyekabuddha

rang sangs rgyas

རང་སངས་རྒྱས།

pratyekabuddha

Literally, “buddha for oneself” or “solitary realizer.” Someone who, in his or her last life, attains awakening entirely through their own contemplation, without relying on a teacher. Unlike the awakening of a fully realized buddha (*samyaksambuddha*), the accomplishment of a pratyekabuddha is not regarded as final or ultimate. They attain realization of the nature of dependent origination, the selflessness of the person, and a partial realization of the selflessness of phenomena, by observing the suchness of all that arises through interdependence. This is the result of progress in previous lives but, unlike a buddha, they do not have the necessary merit, compassion or motivation to teach others. They are named as “rhinoceros-like” (*khaḍgaviṣāṇakalpa*) for their preference for staying in solitude or as “congregators” (*vargacārin*) when their preference is to stay among peers.

Priyadarśana

mthong dga’

མཐོང་དགའ།

priyadarśana

Purāṇa Kāśyapa

’od srung rdzogs byed

འོད་སྲུང་རྫོགས་བྱེད།

purāṇa kāśyapa

One of the six outsider teachers.

Pūrṇa

gang po

གང་པོ།

pūrṇa

Śrāvaka disciple of the Buddha noted for his ability as a preacher of the Hinayāna teaching, especially skillful in the conversion and training of young monks; also known as Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra. See also n.72.

Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra

byams ma'i bu gang po

བྱམས་མའི་བུ་གང་པོ།

pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra

See Pūrṇa.

Rāhula

sgra gcan 'dzin

སྒྲ་གཅན་འཛིན།

rāhula

Śākyamuni Buddha's own son, who became a distinguished disciple. See also n.83.

Ratnacandra

dkon mchog zla ba

དཀོན་མཆོག་ཟླ་བ།

ratnacandra

One of the buddhas who assembled at Vimalakīrti's house to teach the *Tathāgataguhyaka*, according to the goddess.

Ratnacchattra

rin chen gdugs

རིན་ཆེན་གདུགས།

ratnacchattra

Wheel-turning king said by the Buddha to be a former incarnation of the Buddha Ratnārcis.

Ratnajaha

rin chen gtong

རིན་ཆེན་གཏོང་།

ratnajaha

Ratnākara

dkon mchog ’byung gnas

དཀོན་མཆོག་འབྱུང་གནས།

ratnākara

Wealthy young Licchavi noble who leads the delegation that brings the precious parasols to the Buddha.

Ratnakūṭa

rin po che brtsegs pa

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་བརྩེགས་པ།

ratnakūṭa

Ratnananda

rin chen dga’ ba

རིན་ཆེན་དགའ་བ།

ratnananda

Ratnapāṇi

lag na rin po che

ལག་ན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

ratnapāṇi

Ratnaparvata

rin po che’i ri

རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་རི།

ratnaparvata

A mountain.

Ratnārcis

dkon mchog ’od ’phro

དཀོན་མཆོག་འོད་འཕྲོ།

ratnārcis

One of the buddhas who appear in the house of Vimalakīrti on esoteric occasions. According to the Prajñāpāramitā, he is the Buddha of the universe Upaśānta, in the western direction (see Lamotte, p. 384, n. 27).

Ratnaśrī

dkon mchog dpal

དཀོན་མཆོག་དཔལ།

ratnaśrī

One of the buddhas who appear in the house of Vimalakīrti on esoteric occasions; the Sanskrit name, but with a different rendering in Tibetan, also refers to a bodhisattva.

Ratnaśrī

rin chen dpal

རིན་ཆེན་དཔལ།

ratnaśrī

A bodhisattva; the Sanskrit name, but with a different rendering in Tibetan, also refers to a tathāgata.

Ratnavīra

rin chen dpa’

རིན་ཆེན་དཔའ།

ratnavīra

Ratnavyūha

dkon mchog dkod pa, rin chen bkod pa, rin po che bkod pa

དཀོན་མཆོག་དཀོད་པ།, རིན་ཆེན་བཀོད་པ།, རིན་པོ་ཆེ་བཀོད་པ།

ratnavyūha

Lit. “Jewel-Array.” Name of one of the bodhisattvas in the original assembly (rendered in Tibetan as *rin chen bkod pa*); also the name (with several renderings in Tibetan) of a buddha who presides in the universe called Ananta guṇaratnavyūha, yet who comes to Vimalakīrti’s house at the latter’s supplication, to participate in the esoteric teachings. He can be identified with the Tathāgata Ratnasaṃbhava, one of the five major buddhas of the *Guhya-samājatantra*.

Ratnayaṣṭin

rin chen gdan dkar can

རིན་ཆེན་གདན་དཀར་ཅན།

ratnayaṣṭin

Ratnamudrāhasta

lag na phyag rgya rin po che

ལག་ན་ཕྱག་རྒྱ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

ratnamudrāhasta

Ratnolkādhārin

rin chen sgron ma ’dzin

རིན་ཆེན་སྒྲོན་མ་འཛིན།

ratnolkādhārin

reality-limit

yang dag pa’i mtha’

ཡང་དག་པའི་མཐའ།

bhūtakoṭi

A synonym of the ultimate reality. In the Mahāyāna sūtras, it has a somewhat negative flavor, connoting the Hinayāna concept of a static nirvāṇa. Sthiramati glosses the term as follows: “ ‘Reality’ means undistorted truth. ‘Limit’ means the extreme beyond which there is nothing to be known by anyone” (*bhūtaṃ satyam aviparītamityarthaḥ / koṭiḥ paryanto yataḥ pareṇa-anyajjñeyaṃ nāsti…/*).

realm of desire

’dod khams

འདོད་ཁམས།

kāmadhātu

In Buddhist cosmology, this is our own realm, the lowest and most coarse of the three realms of saṃsāra. It is called this because beings here are characterized by their strong longing for and attachment to the pleasures of the senses. The desire realm includes hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, asuras, and the lowest six heavens of the gods—from the Heaven of the Four Great Kings (*cāturmahārājika*) up to the Heaven of Making Use of Others’ Emanations (*paranirmitavaśavartin*). Located above the desire realm is the form realm (*rūpadhātu*) and the formless realm (*ārūpyadhātu*).

realm of pure matter

gzugs khams

གཟུགས་ཁམས།

rūpadhātu

One of the three realms of saṃsāra in Buddhist cosmology, it is characterized by subtle materiality. Here beings, though subtly embodied, are not driven primarily by the urge for sense gratification. It consists of seventeen heavens structured according to the four concentrations of the form realm (*rūpāvacaradhyāna*), the highest five of which are collectively called “pure abodes” (*śuddhāvāsa*). The form realm is located above the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*) and below the formless realm (*ārūpyadhātu*).

reconciliation of dichotomies

snrel zhi ba, snrel zhi'i rgyud

སྙེལ་ཞི་བ།, སྙེལ་ཞིའི་རྒྱུད།

yamakavyatyastāhāra

The twelfth of the eighteen special qualities of a bodhisattva.

Roca

snang mdzad

སྣང་མཛད།

roca

Mentioned by the Buddha as the last of the thousand buddhas of this eon.

sacrifice

mchod sbyin

མཆོད་སྦྱིན།

yajña

Sahā

mi mjed

མི་མཇེད།

sahā

The name for our world system, the universe of a thousand million worlds, or trichiliocosm, in which the four-continent world is located. Each trichiliocosm is ruled by a god Brahmā; thus, in this context, he bears the title of Sahāṃpati, Lord of Sahā. The world system of Sahā, or Sahālokadhātu, is also described as the buddhafield of the Buddha Śākyamuni where he teaches the Dharma to beings.

The name Sahā possibly derives from the Sanskrit √*sah*, "to bear, endure, or withstand." It is often interpreted as alluding to the inhabitants of this world being able to endure the suffering they encounter. The Tibetan translation, *mi mjed*, follows along the same lines. It literally means "not painful," in the sense that beings here are able to bear the suffering they experience.

Śailaśikharasaṃghaṭṭanarāja

ri'i rtse mo kun tu 'joms pa'i rgyal po

རིའི་རྩེ་མོ་ཀུན་ཏུ་འཇོམས་པའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

śailaśikharasaṃghaṭṭanarāja

Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

śakra

In Buddhist texts, usual name for Indra, king of gods of the desire-realm (*kāmadhātu*) of a particular universe; hence a Śakra is lower in status than a Brahmā, who resides at the summit of the realm of pure matter (*rūpadhātu*). As in the case of Brahmā, a title, or status, rather than a personal name; each universe has its Śakra.

Śākya

shAkya

ཤཱཀྱ།

śākya

Name of the tribe dwelling in Northern India in which Gautama, or Śākyamuni, Buddha was born as prince Siddhārtha.

Śākyamuni

shAkya thub pa

ཤཱཀྱ་ཐུབ་པ།

śākyamuni

The "Sage of the Śākyas," name of the Buddha of our era, who lived c. 563-483 B.C.

Samadarśin

mnyam par lta ba

སཾམ་བང་ལྡུ་བ།

samadarśin

Samādhivikurvaṇarāja

ting nge ’dzin rnam par sprul pa’i rgyal po

ཏིང་ངེ་འཛིན་རྣམ་པར་སྤྲུལ་པའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

samādhivikurvaṇarāja

Samaviṣamadarśin

mnyam mi mnyam lta ba

སཾམ་མི་སཾམ་ལྟ་བ།

samaviṣamadarśin

Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra

mdo sde dgongs ’grel

མདོ་སྡེ་དགོངས་འགྲེལ།

saṃdhinirmocanasūtra

The “Sūtra of the Revelation of the Inner Intention,” it was the most important Mahāyāna sūtra for Āryāsaṅga and the Vijñānavāda school.

Saṃjāyin Vairāṭīputra

smra ’dod kyi bu mo’i bu yang dag rgyal ba can

སྨྲ་འདོད་ཀྱི་བུ་མོའི་བུ་ཡང་དག་རྒྱལ་བ་ཅན།

saṃjāyin vairāṭīputra

One of the six outsider teachers.

Saṃtuṣita

yongs su dga’ ldan

ཡོངས་སུ་དགའ་ལྡན།

saṃtuṣita

King of the gods of the Tuṣita heaven.

saṃyaksaṃbuddha

yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas

ཡང་དག་པར་རྫོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས།

saṃyaksaṃbuddha

Lit. "perfectly accomplished Buddha." Name of the Buddha.

Saṅgha

dge 'dun

དགེ་འདུན།

saṅgha

The third of the Three Jewels (Triratna) of Buddhism, the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Community. Sometimes narrowly defined as the community of mendicants, it can be understood as including lay practitioners.

Śāntideva

zhi ba lha

ཞི་བ་ལྷ།

śāntideva

(Eighth century). A great master of the Mādhyamika, famous for his remarkable work, "Introduction to the Practice of Enlightenment" (*Bodhi-caryāvatāra*).

Śāriputra

shA ri'i bu

ཤཱ་རིའི་བུ།

śāriputra

One of the major śrāvaka disciples, paired with Maudgalyāyana, and noted for having been praised by the Buddha as foremost of the wise; hence, the most frequent target for Vimalakīrti's attacks on the śrāvakas and on the Hinayāna in general.
(See also n.40)

Sarvārthasiddha

don thams cad grub pa

དོན་ཐམས་ཅད་སྒྲུབ་པ།

sarvārthasiddha

One of the buddhas who appear in Vimalakīrti's house to teach the *Tathāgata-guhyaka*, according to the goddess.

Sarvagandhasugandhā

spos thams cad kyi dri mchog

སྤོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་དྲི་མཆོག

sarvagandhasugandhā

Universe of the Buddha Gandhottamakūṭa; a universe wherein the Dharma is taught through the medium of scent. According to Lamotte, p. 319, n. 2, this universe is mentioned in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, the *Laṇkāvatāra*, and the *Prasannapadā*. However, In the Prasannapadā, this universe is said to be ruled by Samantabhadra, not Gandhottamakūṭa (see Lamotte, p. 320, n. 3).

Sarvarūpasaṃdarśana

gzugs thams cad ston pa

གཟུགས་ཐམས་ཅད་སྟོན་པ།

sarvarūpasaṃdarśana

This bodhisattva asks Vimalakīrti the whereabouts of his family, etc., thus prompting the latter's extraordinary verses on the family and accoutrements of all bodhisattvas (Chap. 8).

Sarvasukhapratimaṇḍita

bde ba thams cad kyis rab tu brgyan pa

བདེ་བ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱིས་རབ་ཏུ་བརྒྱན་པ།

sarvasukhapratimaṇḍita

A universe, or buddhafield, where the bodhisattvas live in a constant state of bliss. The Skt. of the Potala MS has Sarvasukhapratimaṇḍita, that of the excerpt cited in the Śikṣāsamuccaya has Sarvasukhamaṇḍitā.

Satatodyukta

rtag tu ’bad

རྟག་ཏུ་འབད།

satatodyukta

seat of enlightenment

byang chub kyi snying po

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སྙིང་པོ།

bodhimaṇḍa

Haribhadra defines it as “a place used as a seat, where the maṇḍa, here ‘essence,’ of enlightenment is present.” See Lamotte, p. 198, n. 105. The main “seat of enlightenment” is the spot under the bo tree at Buddha Gaya, where the Buddha sat and attained unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. It is not to be confused with *bodhimaṇḍala*, “circle of enlightenment.”

self

bdag

བདག

ātma

It is crucial to understand what is meant by “self,” before one is able to realize the all-important “absence of self.” Before we can discover an absence, we have to know what we are looking for. In Mahāyāna, there is a self of persons and a self of things, both presumed habitually by living beings and hence informative of their perceptions. Were these “selves” to exist as they appear

because of our presumption, they should exist as substantial, self-subsistent entities within things, or as the intrinsic realities of things, or as the intrinsic identities of things, all permanent, unrelated and unrelative, etc. The nondiscovery of such “selves” within changing, relative, interdependent persons and things is the realization of ultimate reality, or absence of self.

selfish reticence

slob dpon dpe mkhyud

སློབ་དཔོན་དཔེ་མཁྱུད།

ācāryamuṣṭi

Lit. “The tight fist of the [bad] teacher.”

sensation

tshor ba

ཚོར་བ།

vedanā

see “aggregates”

sense-media

skye mched

སྐྱེ་མཆེད།

āyatana

The twelve sense-media are eye-medium (*cakṣurāyatana*), form-medium (*rūpa-*), ear-medium (*śrotra-*), sound-medium (*śabda-*), nose-medium (*ghrāna-*), scent-medium (*gandha-*), tongue-medium (*jihvā-*), taste-medium (*rasa-*), body-medium (*kāya-*), texture-medium (*spraṣṭavya*), mental-medium (*mana-*), and phenomena-medium (*dharmāyatana*). In some passages they are enumerated as six, the object-faculty pair being taken as one, and it is this set of six that is the fifth member of the twelve links of dependent origination. The word āyatana is usually translated as “base,” but the Skt., Tib., and Ch. all indicate “something through which the senses function” rather than a basis from which they function; hence “medium” is suggested.

seven abodes of consciousness

rnam par shes pa la gnas pa bdun

རྣམ་པར་ཤེས་པ་ལ་གནས་པ་བདུན།

vijñānasthiti

This refers to the seven categories of living beings, as enumerated in the *Abhi dharmakośa,* III, v. 5-6a. The seven abodes of consciousness consist of beings who differ physically and intellectually; beings who differ physically but are similar intellectually; beings similar physically but who differ intellectually; beings similar physically and intellectually; and three types of immaterial beings (*nānātvakāyasaṃjñāś ca nānākāyaikasaṃjñinaḥ / viparyayāc caikakāya saṃjñāś cārūpiṇas trayaḥ // vijñānasthitayaḥ sapta…*). According to Vasubandhu the first category consists of men, the six types of gods of the desire-realm, and the gods of the first realm of contemplation (*brahmavihāra*) except those fallen from higher realms (*prathamābhinivṛta*); the second category consists of those fallen (*prathamābhiniṛvṛta*) gods who have different bodies but whose intellects are single-mindedly aware of the idea of being created by Brahmā; the third category consists of the gods of the second realm of contemplation—the *abhāsvara* (clear-light) gods, the *parīṭṭābha* (radiant) gods, and the *apramāṇābha* (immeasurably luminous) gods—who have similar luminous bodies but differ in their thoughts, which are bent on the experiences of pleasure and numbness; the fourth category consists of the *śubhakṛtsna* (pure-wholeness) gods, whose intellects are united in concentration on bliss; the fifth category consists of the immaterial beings who reside in the realm of infinite space; the sixth category consists of the immaterial beings who reside in the realm of infinite consciousness; and the seventh category consists of the immaterial beings who reside in the realm of nothingness. (See also Mvy, Nos. 2289-2295.)

seven factors of enlightenment

byang chub kyi yan lag bdun

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག་བདུན།

saṃbodhyaṅga

These are the factors of remembrance (*smṛti*), discrimination between teachings (*dharmapravicaya*), effort (*vīrya*), joy (*prīti*), ecstasy (*praśrabdhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*). These seven form a part of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment.

signlessness

mtshan ma med pa

མཚན་མ་མེད་པ།

animittatā

In ultimate reality, there is no sign, as a sign signals or signifies something to someone and hence is inextricably involved with the relative world. We are so conditioned by signs that they seem to speak to us as if they had a voice of their own. The letter "A" seems to pronounce itself to us as we see it, and the stop-sign fairly shouts at us. However, the configuration of two slanted lines with a crossbar has in itself nothing whatsoever to do with the phenomenon made with the mouth and throat in the open position, when expulsion of breath makes the vocal cords resonate "ah." By extending such analysis to all signs, we may get an inkling of what is meant by "signlessness," which is essentially equivalent to voidness, and to "wishlessness" (see entry). Voidness, signlessness, and wishlessness form the "Three Doors of Liberation."

Śikhin

ral pa can

རལ་པ་ཅན།

śikhin

The Brahmā of the universe Aśoka, who is personally called Śikhin to distinguish him from Brahmās of other universes (see Brahmā). The second of the "seven buddhas of the past" is also called Śikhin but his name is rendered in Tibetan as *gtsug gtor can*.

Śikṣāsamuccaya

bslab pa kun las btus pa

བསླབ་པ་ཀུན་ལས་བཏུས་པ།

śikṣāsamuccaya

The “Compendium of Precepts,” in which Śāntideva collects pertinent quotes from the Mahāyāna sūtras and presents them according to a pattern suited for systematic practice. The quotations he included from the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa were the only extant remnants of the original Sanskrit of the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa until the discovery of a Sanskrit text in the Potala Palace in 2002.

Siṃhaghoṣa

seng ge’i sgra

སེང་གེའི་སྒྲ།

siṃhaghoṣa

One of the buddhas who teach the *Tathāgataguhyaka* on certain occasions in Vimalakīrti’s house.

Siṃhanādanādī

seng ge bsgrags pa

སེང་གེ་བསྒྲགས་པ།

siṃhanādanādī

One of the buddhas who teach the *Tathāgataguhyaka* on certain occasions in Vimalakīrti’s house.

Siṃhaghoṣābhigarjitaśvara

seng ge nga ro mngon par bsgrags pa’i dbyangs

སེང་གེ་ང་རོ་མངོན་པར་བསྒྲགས་པའི་དབྱངས།

siṃhaghoṣābhigarjitaśvara

six outsider masters

ston pa drug

ཤྚ་ཏ་སྟཱ་རཱ།

ṣāṭ śāstāraḥ

These six teachers of nihilism, sophism, determinism, asceticism, etc. sought to rival the Buddha in his day: Purāna Kāśyapa, who negated the effects of action, good or evil; Māskārin Gośāliputra, who taught a theory of randomness, negating causality; Saṃjāyin Vairaṭiputra, who was agnostic in refusing to maintain any opinion about anything; Kakuda Kātyāyana, who taught a materialism in which there was no such thing as killer or killed, but only transformations of elements; Ajita Keśakambala, who taught a more extreme nihilism regarding everything except the four main elements; and Nirgrantha Jñātiputra, otherwise known as Mahāvīra, the founder of Jainism, who taught the doctrine of indeterminism (*syādvāda*), considering all things in terms of "maybe." They were allowed to proclaim their doctrines unchallenged until a famous assembly at Śrāvastī, where the Buddha eclipsed them with a display of miracles and teachings.

six remembrances

rjes su dran pa drug

རྗེས་སུ་དན་པ་དྲུག

anusmṛti

These are six things to keep in mind: the Buddha, the Dharma, the Saṅgha, morality (*śīla*), generosity (*tyāga*), and deities (*devatā*).

sixty-two convictions

lta bar gyur pa drug cu rtsa gnyis

ལྟ་བར་གྱུར་པ་དྲུག་ཅུ་རྩ་གཉིས།

dṛṣṭigata

These are enumerated in the *Brahmājālasūtra* and in the *Dighanikāya* and consist of all views other than the "right view" of the absence of self. All sixty-two fall into either one of the two categories known as the "two extremisms:" "eternalism" (*śāśvatavāda*) and "nihilism" (*ucchedavāda*).

spirit of enlightenment

byang chub kyi sems

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས།

bodhicitta

“Spirit” is preferred to “mind” because the mind of enlightenment should rather be the mind of the Buddha, and to “thought” because a “thought of enlightenment” can easily be produced without the initiation of any sort of new resolve or awareness. “Will” also serves very well here.

spiritual benefactor

dge ba’i bshes gnyen

དགེ་བའི་བཤེས་གཉེན།

kalyāṇamitra

A Mahāyāna teacher is termed “friend,” or “benefactor,” which indicates that a bodhisattva-career depends on one’s own effort and that all a teacher can do is inspire, exemplify, and point the way.

śrāvaka

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

The Sanskrit term *śrāvaka*, and the Tibetan *nyan thos*, both derived from the verb “to hear,” are usually defined as “those who *hear* the teaching from the Buddha and *make it heard* to others.” Primarily this refers to those disciples of the Buddha who aspire to attain the state of an arhat seeking their own liberation and nirvāṇa. They are the practitioners of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma on the four noble truths, who realize the suffering inherent in saṃsāra and focus on understanding that there is no independent self. By conquering afflicted mental states (*kleśa*), they liberate themselves, attaining first the stage of stream enterers at the path of seeing, followed by the stage of once-returners who will be reborn only one more time, and then the stage of non-returners who will no longer be reborn into the desire realm. The

final goal is to become an arhat. These four stages are also known as the “four results of spiritual practice.”

Śrāvakayāna

nyan thos kyi theg pa

ཉན་ཐོས་ཀྱི་ཐེག་པ།

śrāvakayāna

The vehicle comprising the teaching of the śrāvakas.

Śrāvastī

mnyan yod

མཉན་ཡོད།

śrāvastī

Capital city of the kingdom of Kosala, ruled by one of the Buddha’s royal patrons, king Prasenajit, where the Buddha often dwelt in the Jetavana grove, site of many Mahāyāna sūtras.

Sthiramati

blo gros brtan pa

བློ་གྲོས་བརྟན་པ།

sthiramati

(c. fourth century). One of the important masters of the Vijñānavāda school, he wrote important commentaries on the works of Vasubandhu and Āryāsaṅga.

stores of merit and wisdom

bsod nams dang ye shes kyi tshogs

བསོད་ནམས་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཚོགས།

puṇyajñānasaṃbhāra

The two great stores to be accumulated by bodhisattvas: the store of merit, arising from their practice of the first three transcendences, and the store of wisdom, arising from their practice of the last two transcendences. All deeds of

bodhisattvas contribute to their accumulation of these two stores, which ultimately culminate in the two bodies of the Buddha, the body of form and the ultimate body.

subconscious instinct

bag la nyal ba

བག་ལ་ཉལ་བ།

anuśaya

This is equivalent to *vāsanā*, “instinctual predilection,” and refers in Buddhist psychology to the subconscious habit patterns that underlie emotional responses such as desire and hatred.

subconsciousness

kun gzhi

ཀུན་གཞི།

ālaya

Identifiable with *ālayavijñāna*. However, as reference to the elaborate Vijñānavādin psychology of the “store-consciousness” is out of place in this sūtra, it is here simply translated “subconsciousness.”

Śubhavyūha

dge ba bkod pa

དགེ་བ་བཀོད་པ།

śubhavyūha

A supreme god, or Brahmā, of another universe, who visits our universe to converse with Aniruddha about the divine eye, and is taught instead by Vimalakīrti in Chap. 3.

Subhūti

rab ’byor

རབ་འབྱོར།

subhūti

Disciple noted for his profound concentration on voidness; as interlocutor of the Buddha, a major figure in the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*. See also n.65.

Sudatta

legs par byin

ལེགས་བར་སྦྱིན།

sudatta

Sudatta was a great lay patron of the Buddha and philanthropist of Śrāvastī, and is more commonly called Anāthapiṇḍada (*mgon med zas sbyin*); he known as “the foremost of donors” (Pāli; *aggo dāyakānaṃ*).

sugata

bde bar gshegs pa

བདེ་བར་གཤེགས་པ།

sugata

One of the standard epithets of the Buddha Śākyamuni and other buddhas. According to Buddhaghoṣa, the term means that the way the Buddha went (Skt. *gata*) is good (Skt. *su*), and where he went (*gata*) is good (*su*).

Sujāta

mdzes par skyes

མཛེས་བར་སྐྱེས།

sujāta

Sumati

rab kyi blo sgros

རབ་ཀྱི་བློ་སྦྱོས།

sumati

Sumeru

ri'i rgyal po ri rab

རིའི་རྒྱལ་པོ་རི་རབ།

sumeru

According to ancient Buddhist cosmology, this is the great mountain forming the axis of the universe. At its summit is Sudarśana, home of Śakra and his thirty-two gods, and on its flanks live the asuras. The mount has four sides facing the cardinal directions, each of which is made of a different precious stone. Surrounding it are several mountain ranges and the great ocean where the four principal island continents lie: in the south, Jambudvīpa (our world); in the west, Godānīya; in the north, Uttarakuru; and in the east, Pūrvavideha. Above it are the abodes of the desire realm gods. It is variously referred to as Meru, Mount Meru, Sumeru, and Mount Sumeru.

superknowledges

mngon par shes pa

མངོན་པར་ཤེས་པ།

abhijñā

Special powers of which five, acquired through the meditative contemplations (*dhyāna*), are considered mundane (*laukika*) and can be attained to some extent by outsider yogis as well as Buddhist arhats and bodhisattvas; and a sixth—being acquired through a bodhisattva's realization, or by buddhas alone according to some accounts—is supramundane (*lokottara*). The first five are: divine eye or vision (*divyacakṣu*), divine hearing (*divyaśrotra*), knowledge of others' minds (*paracittajñāna*), knowledge of former (and future) lives (*pūrva-[para]nivāsānusmṛtijñāna*), and knowledge of magical operations (*ṛddhividhi-jñāna*). The sixth, supramundane one is knowledge of the exhaustion of defilements (*āsravakṣayajñāna*).

sūtra

mdo

མདོ།

sūtra

In general Indian usage, the word for a highly condensed arrangement of verses that lends itself to memorization, serving as a basic text for a particular school of thought. In Buddhism, a scripture, in as much as it records either the direct speech of the Buddha, or the speech of someone manifestly inspired by him.

Suvarnacūḍa

gtsug na gser

གཙུག་ན་གསེར།

suvarnacūḍa

tantra

rgyud

རྒྱུད།

tantra

Meaning “method” in general, in Buddhism it refers to an important body of literature dealing with a great variety of techniques of advanced meditations, incorporating rituals, incantations, and visualisations, that are stamped as esoteric until a practitioner has already attained a certain stage of ethical and philosophical development.

Tarkajvāla

rtog ge ’bar ba

རྟོག་གེ་འབར་བ།

tarkajvāla

The “Blaze of Reason,” an important treatise of Bhāvaviveka’s, in which he critically discusses all the major philosophical views of his day.

tathāgata

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

Lit. “Thus-gone” or “Thus-come,” (one who proceeds always in consciousness of the ultimate reality, or thatness of all things). A name of the Buddha.

ten powers

stobs bcu

སྟོབས་བཅུ།

daśabala

There are two different sets of ten powers, those of the Buddha and those of bodhisattvas. Those of the Buddha consist of power from knowing right from wrong (*sthānāsthānajñānabala*); power from knowing the consequences of actions (*karmavipākajñāna-*); power from knowing the various inclinations (of living beings) (*nānādhimuktijñāna-*); power from knowing the various types (of living beings) (*nānādhātujñāna-*); power from knowing the degree of the capacities (of living beings) (*indriyavarāvarajñāna-*); power from knowing the path that leads everywhere (*sarvatragāmīmpratipatjñāna-*); power from knowing the obscuration, affliction, and purification of all contemplations, meditations, liberations, concentrations, and absorptions (*sarvadhyāna-vimokṣasamādhisamāpattisaṃkleśavyavadānavyutthānajñāna-*); power from knowing his own former lives (*pūrvanivāsānusmṛtijñāna-*); power from knowing deaths and future lives (*cyutyutpattijñāna-*); and power from knowing the exhaustion of defilements (*āsravakṣayajñāna-*). The latter set consists of the bodhisattva’s power of positive thought (*āśayabala*); power of high resolve (*adhyāśaya-*); power of application (*prayoga-*); power of wisdom (*prajña-*); power of prayer (*praṇidhāna-*); power of vehicle (*yāna-*); power of activities (*caryā-*); power of emanations (*vikurvaṇa-*); power of enlightenment (*bodhi-*); and power of turning the wheel of the Dharma (*dharmacakrapravartaṇa-*).

ten sins

mi dge ba bcu

མི་དགེ་བ་བཅུ།

daśākuśala

These are the opposite of the ten virtues, and consist of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, harsh speech, backbiting, frivolous speech, covetousness, malice, and false views.

ten virtues

dge ba bcu

དགེ་བ་བཅུ།

kuśala

These are the opposite of the ten sins, i.e., refraining from engaging in activities related to the ten sins and doing the opposite. There are three physical virtues: saving lives, giving, and sexual propriety. There are four verbal virtues: truthfulness, reconciling discussions, gentle speech, and religious speech. There are three mental virtues: loving attitude, generous attitude, and right views. The whole doctrine is collectively called the “tenfold path of good action” (*daśakuśalakarmapatha*).

thirty-seven aids to enlightenment

byang chub kyi phyogs sum cu rtsa bdun gyi chos

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་ཕྱོགས་སུམ་ཅུ་རྩ་བདུན་གྱི་ཆོས།

bodhipakṣikadharma

These consist of the four foci of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of magical powers, the five spiritual faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the eightfold noble path.

three realms

khams gsum

ཁམས་གསུམ།

traidhātuka

The three worlds or realms of which all universes are composed: of desire (*kāmadhātu*), of pure matter (*rūpadhātu*), and the immaterial realm (*ārūpyadhātu*).

tolerance of the birthlessness of things

mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa

མི་སྐྱེ་བའི་ཆོས་ལ་བཟོད་པ།

anutpattikadharmakṣānti

Here we are concerned with the "intuitive tolerance of the birthlessness (or incomprehensibility) of all things" (*anutpattikadharmakṣānti* or *anupalabdhi-dharmakṣānti*). To translate *kṣānti* as "knowledge" or "conviction" defeats entirely the Skt. usage and its intended sense: In the face of birthlessness or incomprehensibility (i.e., the ultimate reality), ordinary knowledge and especially convictions are utterly lost; this is because the mind loses objectifiability of anything and has nothing to grasp, and its process of coming to terms may be described only as a conscious cancellation through absolute negations of any false sense of certainty about anything. Through this tolerance, the mind reaches a stage where it can bear its lack of bearings, as it were, can endure this kind of extreme openness, this lack of any conviction, etc. There are three degrees of this tolerance—verbal (*ghoṣānugā*), conforming (*anulomikī*), and complete. See Introduction, i.9, and Lamotte, *Appendice*, Note III.

transcendental analysis

lhag mthong

ལྷག་མཐོང་།

vipaśyana

This is paired with "mental quiescence" (see entry). In general "meditation" is too often understood as only the types of practices categorized as "quietistic"—which eschew objects, learning, analysis, discrimination, etc., and lead only to the attainment of temporary peace and one-pointedness. However, in order to reach any high realization, such as the absence of a personal self, the absence of a self in phenomena, or voidness, "transcendental analysis," with its analytical penetration to the nature of ultimate reality, is indispensable. The analysis is called "transcendental" because it does not accept anything it sees as it appears. Instead, through analytic examination, it penetrates to its deeper reality, going ever deeper in infinite penetration until tolerance is reached. All

apparently self-sufficient objects are seen through and their truth-status is rejected—first conceptually and finally perceptually, at buddhahood. Thus "meditation," to be efficacious, must include both mental quiescence (*śamatha*), and transcendental analysis (*vipaśyana*) in integrated combination.

transcendental practice

ye shes sgrub pa

ཡེ་ཤེས་སྒྲུབ་པ།

jñānapratipatti

Transcendental practice, as opposed to practice at an earlier stage.

Trāyastriṃśa

sum cu rtsa gsum pa

སུམ་ཅུ་རྩ་གསུམ་པ།

trāyastriṃśa

The Heaven of the "Thirty-Three," second level of the desire-realm, located on top of Mount Sumeru in the Buddhist cosmology.

Tsong Khapa

tsong kha pa

ཙོང་ཁ་པ།

(1357-1419). One of the greatest of all Tibetan Lamas, his saintliness was evidenced in his altruistic deeds that caused a renaissance in Tibet, his enlightenment in the extraordinary subtlety and profundity of his thought, and his scholarship in the breadth and clarity of his voluminous writings.

Tuṣita

dga' ldan

དགའ་ལྡན།

tuṣita

A heaven, the fourth level of the heavens of the realm of desire, and the last stopping place of a buddha before his descent and reincarnation on earth; at present the abode of the future Buddha Maitreya.

twelve ascetic practices

sbyangs pa'i yon tan bcu gnyis

སྦྱངས་པའི་ཡོན་ཏན་བཅུ་གཉིས།

dvādaśadhūtaguṇāḥ

These consist of (1) wearing rags (*pāṃśukūlika*, *phyag dar khrod pa*), (2) (in the form of only) three religious robes (*traicīvarika*, *chos gos gsum*), (3) (coarse in texture as) garments of felt (*nāma[n]tika*, *'phyings pa pa*), (4) eating by alms (*paiṇḍapātika*, *bsod snyoms pa*), (5) having a single mat to sit on (*aikāsanika*, *stan gcig pa*), (6) not eating after noon (*khalu paścād bhaktika*, *zas phyis mi len pa*), (7) living alone in the forest (*āraṇyaka*, *dgon pa pa*), (8) living at the base of a tree (*vṛkṣamūlika*, *shing drungs pa*), (9) living in the open (not under a roof) (*ābhyavakāśika*, *bla gab med pa*), (10) frequenting burning grounds (Indian equivalent of cemeteries) (*śmāśānika*, *dur khrod pa*), (11) sleeping sitting up (in meditative posture) (*naiṣadika*, *cog bu pa*), and (12) accepting whatever seating position is offered (*yāthāsaṃstarika*, *gzhi ji bzhin pa*). *Mahāvyutpatti*, 1127-39.

ultimate

don dam pa

དོན་དམ་པ།

paramārtha

"Ultimate" is preferable to the usual "absolute" because it carries fewer connotations than "absolute"—which, however, when understood logically, is also correct. It is contrasted with "superficial" (*vyavahāra*) or "relative" (*samvṛtti*) to give the two types, or "levels.," of truth. It is synonymous with ultimate reality, the uncompounded, voidness, reality, limit of reality, absolute, nirvāṇa, ultimate liberation, infinity, permanence, eternity, independence, etc. It also has the soteriological sense of "sacred" as opposed to "profane" as is conveyed by its literal rendering "supreme" (*parama*) "object" (*artha*).

ultimate realm

chos kyi dbyings

ཆོས་ཀྱི་དབྱིངས།

dharmadhātu

This compound is actually metaphorical in sense, with (at least) two interpretations possible because of ambiguities in the word *dhātu*. *Dhātu* as in the expression *kāmadhātu* (desire-realm), may mean "realm"; or it may mean "element," as in the eighteen elements (see entry), where it is explained as analogous to a mineral such as copper. Thus the realm of the Dharma is the dharmakāyā, the pure source and sphere of the Dharma. And the element of the Dharma is like a mine from which the verbal Dharma, the buddha-qualities, and the wisdoms of the arhats and bodhisattvas are culled. This is metaphorical, as Vimalakīrti would remind us, because the Dharma, the ultimate, is *ultimately* not a particular place; it is immanent in all places, being the actuality and ultimate condition of all things and being relatively no one thing except, like voidness, the supremely beneficent of concepts.

unmoving

mi g.yo ba

མི་གཡོ་བ།

āniñjya

Referring to actions, this term signifies the actions of beings in the subtle god-realms of form and formlessness that can only lead to rebirth in the same realm in the next life.

Upāli

nye bar 'khor

ཉེ་བར་འཁོར།

upāli

Disciple; originally the barber of the Śākya princes, ordained together with them, and noted as an expert on the Vinaya.
(See also n.80).

Vaiśālī

yangs pa can

ཡངས་པ་ཅན།

vaiśālī

Great city during the Buddha's time, capital of the Licchavi republic; at present the town of Basarh, Muzaffarpur district, in Tirhut, Bihar province of India. (See Lamotte, pp. 80-83; p. 97, n. 1.).

Vajrapāṇi

phyag na rdo rje

ཕྱག་ན་རྡོ་རྗེ།

vajrapāṇi

An important bodhisattva, "Wielder of the Thunderbolt," whose compassion is to manifest in a terrific form to protect the practicers of the Dharma from harmful influences.

Vasubandhu

dbyig gnyen

དབྱིག་གཉེན།

vasubandhu

(Fourth century). The younger brother of Āryāsaṅga, he was one of the greatest scholars in Buddhist history, author of the *Abhidharmakośa*, the most definitive work on the Abhidharma, and later of numerous important works on the Vijñānavāda philosophy.

Veda

rig byed

རིག་བྱེད།

veda

Name of the ancient sacred Scriptures of Brahmanism, most famous of which is the *Ṛg Veda*.

Vicaraṇa

rnam par sbyong ba

རྣམ་པར་སྦྱོང་བ།

vicaraṇa

The name of the long-past eon during which the Buddha Bhaiṣajyarāja presided in the buddhafield Mahāvyūha.

Vidyuddeva

glog gi lha

གློག་གི་ལྷ།

vidyuddeva

view

lta ba

ལྟ་བ།

dṛṣṭi

This means a mental conviction or opinion that conditions the mind and determines how it sees reality.

Vijñānavāda

rnam par shes pa smra ba

རྣམ་པར་ཤེས་པ་སྨྲ་བ།

vijñānavāda

The school of “Consciousness-Only” founded by Maitreya and Āryāsaṅga, which shares with the Mādhyamika most of the philosophical techniques of the Mahāyāna, while differing on the interpretation of the profound meaning of voidness, or the ultimate reality.

Vikurvaṇarāja

rnam par ’phrul pa’i rgyal po

རྣམ་པར་འཕྲུལ་པའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

vikurvaṇarāja

Vimalakīrti

dri ma med grags pa

དྲི་མ་མེད་གྲགས་པ།

Vimalakīrti

The wealthy Licchavi layman, from the city of Vaiśālī, ranked as one of the great bodhisattvas. The main protagonist of this sūtra.

Vinaya

’dul ba

འདུལ་བ།

vinaya

One of the three Piṭakas, or “Baskets,” of the Buddhist canon; the one dealing specifically with the code of the monastic disipline.

voidness of voidness

stong pa nyid kyi stong pa nyid

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

śūnyatāśūnyatā

The voidness of voidness, an important concept that indicates the ultimate conceptuality of all terms, even those for the ultimate, to avoid the major error of absolutising the ultimate.

win

sdud pa

སྡུད་པ།

samgraha

Lit. “collect,” i.e., gather together into the Mahāyāna.

wisdom

shes rab

ཤེས་རབ།

prajñā

wishlessness

smon pa med pa

སྨོན་པ་མེད་པ།

apraṇihitatā

Third of the Three Doors of Liberation (see glossary). Objectively, it is equivalent to voidness; subjectively, it is the outcome of the holy gnosis of voidness as the realization of the ultimate lack of anything to wish for, whether voidness itself, or even Buddhahood. See “emptiness.”

Xuanzang

Seventh century Chinese scholar. One of the greatest translators in world history, he traveled to India, where he lived for many years, studying Sanskrit and all the sciences of the day. On his return to China he translated many volumes of important philosophical and religious works. He translated this sūtra in 650.

yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

A class of nonhuman beings who inhabit forests, mountainous areas, and other natural spaces, or serve as guardians of villages and towns, and may be propitiated for health, wealth, protection, and other boons, or controlled

through magic. According to tradition, their homeland is in the north, where they live under the rule of the Great King Vaiśravaṇa.
Several members of this class have been deified as gods of wealth (these include the just-mentioned Vaiśravaṇa) or as bodhisattva generals of yakṣa armies, and have entered the Buddhist pantheon in a variety of forms, including, in tantric Buddhism, those of wrathful deities.