



*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*

THE TEACHING  
*of* VIMALAKĪRTI

Translated from the Sanskrit by  
**Luis Gómez & Paul Harrison**  
with the Mangalam Translation Group

*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*  
The Teaching of Vimalakīrti

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The Teaching of Vimalakīrti

An English Translation of the Sanskrit Text  
Found in the Potala Palace, Lhasa

by

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Dedicated to the memory of

Luis Gómez

Michael Hahn

Carmen Dragonetti

Fernando Tola

and all those other

companions in what is good

*(kalyāṇamitrāṇi)*

who have lighted our way

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## Introduction to the Translation

**T**he *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (The Teaching of Vimalakīrti) is one of the most celebrated literary creations of the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, but until recently we were unable to see it in its full glory, reliant as we were on the Chinese and Tibetan translations, and on translations in various languages of those older versions. The Sanskrit text was lost, and, despite the talent and ingenuity of a long line of translators, our view of Vimalakīrti was like that of a face through a pane of frosted glass. This all changed, suddenly and unexpectedly, with the discovery in 1999 of a complete Sanskrit manuscript of the sūtra in the Potala Palace, Lhasa, which allowed us at last to see Vimalakīrti's features with crystal clarity.

The translation you are about to read is one attempt to convey the resulting vision. It has had a long and difficult gestation—so long that we sometimes despaired it would ever come to term—in part due to the unusual manner of its conception, and the fact that it had many parents. It began life in a translation workshop held at the Mangalam Research Center for Buddhist Languages in Berkeley, California, in July 2010. This was a three-week event, which, with the generous support of the Mangalam Center and its director Jack Petranker, brought together a team of professors and a group of fourteen graduate students (including one postdoctoral fellow) to work together on translating parts of the Sanskrit text of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (hereafter V<sub>k</sub>N) published on the basis of the Potala manuscript. The faculty team consisted of Luis Gómez, Michael Hahn, Carmen Dragonetti, Fernando Tóla, myself (Paul Harrison), and Alexander von Rospatt, who returned from a stint in Nepal to join us for the last week. It was a mixed group in terms of country of origin—Germany, Argentina, Peru, New Zealand, and the United States (Puerto Rico)—but united by a deep interest



in the Buddhist tradition and in the work of translation. With a similar variety of national backgrounds (United States, Canada, Poland, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan), the students were with two exceptions studying at North American universities. Before the workshop got under way they were divided into three groups with roughly comparable skill sets. These groups stayed together for the whole three weeks, and met every morning to work on the same passage from the text. Faculty rotated among the groups, singly or in pairs, working with a different group every day. In the afternoons, all participants gathered for a plenary session, in which the three translations produced during the morning were set side by side and assessed critically in order to hammer out a version which met with the approval of everybody, a kind of consensus version. Needless to say, progress was not rapid: at the end of the three weeks we had finished only Chapter 11 and some of the verses of Chapter 1. Nevertheless, there was a palpable sense of achievement: we had all learned a lot about the art of translation and about the *VkN*, and we had had an enjoyable time doing so.

As the workshop came to an end we decided to capitalize on the momentum we had generated and keep going, with a view to translating the entire text. Accordingly, the various chapters of the *VkN* were allocated to different workshop participants, at least to those of us who were in a position to carry on.<sup>1</sup> The initial distribution was as follows:

Chapter 1: Luis Gómez

Chapter 2: Paul Harrison

Chapters 3 and 4: Justin Fifield, Nancy Lin,  
Sungha Yun (Student Group 1)

Chapters 5 and 6: David Mellins, Shiyong Pang,  
Chiaki Ozawa (Student Group 2)

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1. Five of the graduate students—Lauren Bausch, Rafal Felbur, Malcolm Keating, Ralph Moon and Julie Regan—withdrew due to other commitments, as did faculty member Alexander von Rospatt. We thank them here for their contributions during the workshop.

Chapter 7: Michael Hahn

Chapter 8: Carmen Dragonetti & Fernando Tola

Chapters 9 and 10: Shi Huifeng, Bryan Levman,  
Tyson Yost (Student Group 3)

Chapter 11: Already completed; first revision to  
be undertaken by Luis Gómez

Chapter 12: Paul Harrison

A deadline of October 15, 2010 was set for the delivery of all the draft translations, it having been decided at the end of the workshop that Luis Gómez and I would have the job of taking those drafts and editing them to produce a stylistically unified rendition. In due course all the workshop participants submitted their work, except for Michael Hahn, who was unable to send us anything, due to his other commitments; in the end Luis and I took care of Chapter 7 as well.

In late 2010, then, we began the work of editing, and soon found that it was not the straightforward process we had envisaged, nor did it go as quickly as we had hoped. Given the variety of approaches and styles that had emerged during the workshop, this ought not to have surprised us. Nevertheless, we were unprepared for what followed, which was not a simple editing job at all, but a complete reworking of the various draft chapters we started with, even the ones we had produced individually ourselves. Despite the high quality of the drafts, little escaped the need for re-evaluation. Often we had the impression that not a single word was left unchanged by the process.

That process soon settled into a recognizable pattern. Every week Luis and I would devote approximately three hours to the VKN, meeting online. During that time we would work our way through the text, discussing the problems of interpretation it was presenting and trying to work out the solutions to them so as to arrive at the optimal wording. Progress was extremely slow; often we crept forward at the rate of one section a day, but sometimes we could not

even manage this much, and only got through one or two sentences. Furthermore, other commitments kept intruding, forcing us to skip weeks here and there, and sometimes even longer periods. Months passed, years passed, and still we continued our slow advance.<sup>2</sup>

The work was difficult, but it was not drudgery, far from it, and the way it went was also something of a surprise. We could not have predicted that this style of working, each of us ensconced in our own studies—Luis in Mexico City, me in Menlo Park—and conversing at a distance would work so well, but it turned out to be wonderfully effective. On rare occasions we got together in person, only to find that being in the same room was more hindrance than help. It not only deprived us both of the convenience of having our own libraries ready at hand, but also worked against the mysterious dynamics of collaboration at a distance of which we were becoming aware, which were amplified by the personal chemistry involved in this particular collaboration.

To say that group work is no novelty in this field is an understatement—Buddhists have been translating in this way for nearly two thousand years. Many of our graduate classes in effect continue this tradition, and are exercises in group translation, with everyone pooling their knowledge in a joint attempt to understand and interpret the text. However, in this situation we found that not only were two heads better than one, they were also better than three, or four, or five. Perhaps that had a lot to do with the particular character of the two heads involved. We brought very different skills, tastes and training to the work, as well as a different take on English. Luis, as an American from Puerto Rico, naturally had a keener ear for American English, but also a sense of style informed by a deep knowledge of Spanish language and literature. As a New Zealander I inclined strongly to a more British variety of English, moreover one heavily conditioned by my early reading in my grandmother's house,

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2. This long process was punctuated only by a smaller workshop which Luis and I held at Stanford in June 2013, under the auspices of the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford, which was attended by Jonathan Silk, Jan Nattier and David Fiordalis, among others. The focus of this workshop was Chapter 7, and we had the opportunity to compare David Fiordalis's translation of this chapter with our own, for which we thank him.

where the only books at my disposal during the long rainy holidays in Wellington were the complete sets she possessed of the works of Agatha Christie and Charles Dickens. These early influences on my prose style—especially the Dickens—led me occasionally to propose translations which Luis would reject as too archaic, or excessively formal, or just too British, just as I found his sometimes too American. Yet the constant back-and-forth between us related to much more than the choice of wording, as we repeatedly challenged each other's ideas, interpretations, and understandings until at last we arrived at a resolution. The process was adversarial, but I should also add that it was intensely enjoyable, enlivened as it was by exchanges about the meaning of life and discussions of politics, by jokes and laughter. Indeed, we grew so used to the back-and-forth of these long conversational working sessions that often each of us would anticipate what the other was going to say. That is true of any close couple, but we found that something else also happened, which was more mysterious, and not at all expected. We put this down to the special dynamic that emerges when only two people are working together, with a very intense level of engagement; it's not something I myself have noticed with larger groups of three or more, although it is theoretically possible. It does, however, require a high degree of patience and trust. I took to calling it the "no place to hide" syndrome, and it worked like this. Often we would come to a problem, which neither of us would have any idea how to solve. We would spend hours agonizing over it, each of us proposing solutions and having them rejected by the other, until we arrived at a total impasse. The silence would lengthen, in Menlo Park and Mexico City, and we would let it do so, while knowing that one of us had to break it in the end. And this eventually happened, at the magical point where desperation becomes the mother of invention: somehow the solution would materialize in the space between us, a solution neither of us could have arrived at on our own, and often taking an entirely unanticipated form. Such is the alchemy of scholarly collaboration.<sup>3</sup>

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3. My colleague Jan Nattier has drawn it to my attention that these dynamics are nicely illuminated in Joshua Wolf Shenk's *Powers of Two: How Relationships Drive Creativity* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014).

Given this particular style of working and the many problems the Sanskrit text presents, it is no surprise that progress was so slow. The glacial pace was frequently brought to a complete stop by the intrusions of our other professional and personal commitments, but these halts were only temporary, and we would soon resume the work again, plodding forward like the proverbial tortoise (a translation like this is no job for hares). And yet we eventually found ourselves making our way through the text, and the work remained productive and deeply satisfying—indeed, I looked forward to the sessions with Luis as the high point of my working week. Nevertheless, the passage of time took its toll, first with the death of our respected colleague Michael Hahn on July 12, 2014, then with the passing of our dear friend Fernando Tola on July 18, 2017, at the ripe old age of 102. By that point Luis was gravely ill himself, but despite the discomfort and the pain he still made time to work on the *VkN*, even as the gaps between our sessions grew worryingly long. His dedication to this translation and to scholarship was amazing. We continued to joke—often about Vimalakīrti himself, whom we would refer to in our emails as “the patient” or “the sick man”—and we went on discussing politics, even as those politics took an increasingly darker turn. But more disheartening than the developments in Washington was the face of my friend on my computer screen. Luis grew steadily older, thinner, and greyer as the end approached, but remained full of fighting spirit and good humor. I have it recorded that our last session was on August 8, 2017, only a matter of weeks before he passed away, on September 3. We had reached a point more than halfway through the last chapter, in §12.17, and the last words we worked on together were these, which in retrospect seem perfectly fitting:

There are two seals, Maitreya, which stamp bodhisattvas as bodhisattvas. What are the two? The stamp of serene faith in unusual and beautiful language, and the stamp of fearlessness with regard to the guiding principles of the profound dharmas and of understanding and accepting them as they really are. These, Maitreya,

are the two seals which stamp bodhisattvas  
as bodhisattvas.

So we had nearly reached the end of our long, hard climb up the mountain, and it has fallen to me to make the last push to the summit and complete the job. This has involved not simply finishing §§12.17–12.23, but going back through the whole text to resolve the various more troublesome issues which Luis and I had set aside for further discussion. When I did this I was surprised to find how many problems we had left unsolved, in the hope that we would come back to them later. I have done my best to resolve them on my own, according to my own lights, but always in the hope that Luis would have approved of the result. Indeed he may have passed on, but I could still hear his voice in my head, and more than once that voice restrained me from making arbitrary changes to sections which together we had thought settled.<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

As observed above, this is by no means the first time the *VkN* has been translated: like many other Mahāyāna sūtras, this work has had a long and interesting history of being rendered in different tongues, beginning, very likely, with the lengthy and gradual process of transposition from the Middle Indo-Aryan dialect or Prakrit—quite possibly Gāndhārī—in which we assume it was first composed, into the more regular form of Sanskrit with some Prakritic features which we nowadays call Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. Then, and most important for the historical study of the text, we have the Chinese translations made at various points in that linguistic evolution. These occasionally provide us with evidence of such changes, as well as freezing in time discrete stages in the historical development of the

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4. At this point I would also like to record my thanks to my colleagues Jens-Uwe Hartmann, Jan Nattier, and David Fiordalis for kindly reading the translation as it neared its final form and offering me many helpful suggestions for improvement. In addition, I happily acknowledge the great debt of gratitude I owe to Jack Petranker for his constant encouragement of the project over many years and to Hugh Joswick, Managing Editor of Mangalam Press, for the superb care and attention to detail with which he helped prepare the work for publication.

text, its expansion and contraction, and its branching into different recensions. Like nearly all Mahāyāna sūtras, the V<sub>k</sub>N was never a fixed and unitary quantity, even in its Indic form (or forms), and the Chinese translations are our best evidence of its protean nature, showing us that even to talk about “the V<sub>k</sub>N” is to take liberties. Be that as it may, the three surviving Chinese translations—there may have been others which are now lost—are as follows:

1. T 474: *Weimojie jing* 維摩詰經, attributed to Zhi Qian 支謙, in the period 222–229 (= ZQ).
2. T 475: *Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經, by Kumārajīva, 406 (= Kj).
3. T 476: *Shuo wugoucheng jing* 說無垢稱經, by Xuanzang 玄奘, 650 (= Xz).<sup>5</sup>

The second of these, the rendition by Kumārajīva, became the most popular version in China, and was, not surprisingly, the basis for the English translations of the text by Charles Luk (1972), Burton Watson (1997), and John McRae (2004). As far as we know, nobody has tried their hand at putting Zhi Qian’s or Xuanzang’s renditions into a Western language, at least in their entirety: Étienne Lamotte’s 1962 work includes a sizable number of passages from Xuanzang translated into French alongside the main text, which is from the Tibetan.

As anybody who works with Chinese translations of Buddhist texts will know, the names attached to these three versions are convenient shorthand: “translated by Kumārajīva,” for example, really means “from the studio of Kumārajīva,” which is to say that his many assistants, some of them eminent scholars in their own right, must have played a significant part in the final product. Furthermore, it is clear that successive translations of a text were regularly made with a close eye on previous versions, incorporating their wording to a lesser or greater degree, something that inevitably detracts

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5. For full details, including other attributions of allegedly lost translations, see Lamotte 1962: 2–14.

from the value of the later translations as independent witnesses to the Indic exemplars on which they are supposedly based.<sup>6</sup> We must add to that the cloud of uncertainty that hangs over the Zhi Qian translation, which according to Michael Radich contains much vocabulary that is not typical of Zhi Qian but points instead towards Dharmarakṣa. In other words we may have in T 474 a patchy revision of an older translation, made towards the end of the 3rd century. The attribution to Zhi Qian cannot be taken at face value.

To the string of Chinese translations we can add others into various Central Asian languages such as Khotanese and Sogdian, and then later, and most important for modern scholarship, the Tibetan version, the *'Phags pa dri ma med par grags pas bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*. This was produced by Dharmatāśīla during the spectacular burst of translation work in Tibet around the beginning of the 9th century, as recorded in the surviving catalogues from that period, the *lHan kar ma* and *'Phang thang ma*, and preserved in the massive canonical collections of the bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur. This is the basis for the pioneering French translation by Étienne Lamotte (1962), the Japanese translation by Nagao Gadjin (1973), and the English translation by Robert Thurman (1976).<sup>7</sup> Among all these Lamotte's groundbreaking translation into French was the most influential contribution to the Western understanding of the VkN, with a definitive effect on all subsequent renditions of the text. Not only does it bring in the evidence of the Chinese versions alongside the Tibetan, but it also adds extensive notes which even today retain their usefulness in matters of interpretation. An English version was published by Sara Boin (a.k.a. Sara Boin-Webb) in 1976. For the convenience of readers unable to consult Lamotte in the original French, whenever we cite his work we also provide references to the Boin translation.<sup>8</sup>

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6. See Harrison 2008 for a detailed study of this phenomenon, in part with reference to the VkN itself.

7. A lightly edited version of Thurman 1976 was published on the website of the 84,000 Project in 2017, and continues to undergo minor revisions.

8. One of the ways in which Lamotte's work has been influential is that his division of the text into numbered sections has been followed by many subsequent



Those familiar with Buddhist literature will know that the situation we have just sketched is completely normal. In fact we could call it the default position: no surviving Sanskrit text, but at least one Tibetan translation and multiple Chinese translations (and if there's a translation by Kumārajīva, that's the one which gets put into English, again and again, even if translating the Tibetan might produce better results). This means that up until recently we tended to look at the V<sub>kN</sub> very much through a Chinese lens, and to a lesser extent through a Tibetan one.

This situation changed, however, with the totally unexpected discovery of a palm-leaf manuscript in July 1999 in the Potala Palace in Lhasa by members of a Japanese team from Taishō University. This stunning find contained two complete texts hitherto thought lost, the *Sarvabuddhaviṣayāvatārajñānālokālaṃkāra* (often referred to simply as the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra*) and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, copied by the same scribe approximately one month apart, at some point during the 11–13th centuries.<sup>9</sup> After lengthy negotiations, Taishō University secured permission to publish a facsimile edition of this manuscript, the appearance of which in 2003 caused a sensation in the world of Buddhist studies.<sup>10</sup>

The publication of the photographs of the palm-leaf folios was rapidly followed by two publications, in 2004 and 2006:

- (1) *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa and Jñānālokālaṃkāra:  
Transliterated Sanskrit Text Collated with*

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scholars. We too mark these section divisions (giving them in the margins), and use them for reference purposes, even though our own paragraphing of the text may ignore them (in such cases a superscript § marks the break).

9. This is the cautious conclusion of the Taishō University Study Group. The two colophons give the date as the twelfth year in the reign of King Gopāla, but since there were three Pāla kings of this name and scholars disagree over their regnal dates, uncertainty is inevitable. Gopāla I is too early to be likely (second half of the 8th century). If the king in question was Gopāla III—possibly the front runner, unless we believe with some that he ruled only four years—then the date would be 1140 (according to Bagchi) or 1155 (after Huntington). Cf. TSG<sup>Intro</sup>, 18–19, 75.

10. “*Yuimagyō*” “*Chikōmyōshōgongyō*” *bonbun shahon eiinban* (Tokyo: Taishō daigaku sōgo bukkyō kenkyūjo, 2003).

*Tibetan and Chinese Translations* (Tokyo: Taisho University Press, 2004).

This publication consisted of three volumes:

- (a) Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, ed., *Introduction to Vimalakīrtinirdeśa and Jñānālokālaṃkāra*. We shall refer to this as TSG(=Taishō Study Group)<sup>Intro</sup>.
  - (b) Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, ed., *Jñānālokālaṃkāra: Transliterated Sanskrit Text Collated with Tibetan and Chinese Translations*.
  - (c) Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, ed., *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa: Transliterated Sanskrit Text Collated with Tibetan and Chinese Translations*. We shall refer to this as TSG<sup>Text</sup>.
- (2) Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, ed., *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa: A Sanskrit Edition Based upon the Manuscript Newly Found at the Potala Palace* (Tokyo: Taisho University Press, 2006). We shall refer to this as TSG<sup>Ed</sup>.

The 2004 publication was a faithful diplomatic transliteration of the manuscript plus a synoptic presentation of the text's Tibetan and Chinese translations, while the 2006 publication was an edition of the Sanskrit, which attempted to regularize the spelling, correct obvious errors, repunctuate the text, improve the layout and tidy things up in various ways. The transliteration (i.e., TSG<sup>Text</sup>) has proved to be fairly accurate, with only the occasional misreading. In general terms it is highly reliable. The edition of 2006 (TSG<sup>Ed</sup>), however, is somewhat less satisfactory, but it is, by its authors' own admission, a preliminary attempt at editing a single witness (*codex unicus*). Such an undertaking is always fraught with difficulty, and the result in this case is a text liable to elicit ongoing critique and correction as the Vñ continues to be studied, while providing the very foundation for that study. It has been the basis for our translation, and we are

greatly indebted to the Taishō University Study Group for doing this crucial work. Wherever we consider their emendations sound, we accept them without comment; where we disagree, we propose our own emendations, which then form the basis of our translation. Our comments on the Sanskrit text appear in the endnotes, but Appendix A also contains a list of our emendations keyed to the page and line numbers of TSG<sup>Ed</sup>. We have generally tried to keep endnotes to a minimum, and to use them to discuss problem passages, possible alternative interpretations, and places where the Tibetan and/or Chinese translations differ appreciably from the Sanskrit text. We also note citations from the VkN in Indian commentaries, which were until recently the only evidence we had of what the text looked like in Sanskrit. Such citations remain important witnesses to the historical development of the sūtra, like the Chinese and Tibetan versions, and occasionally they influence our translation.

The Taishō University Study Group's publications put the study of the VkN on an entirely new footing, and it was not long before translations of the new Sanskrit text appeared in Chinese (Huang Baosheng, 2011) and Japanese (Takahashi Hisao and Nishino Midori, 2011; Ueki Masatoshi, 2011).<sup>11</sup> As for translations into European languages, there are only two yet, as far as we are aware. In 2013 the late Thomas Cleary published an English translation in a Kindle edition with a very brief introduction and no annotation, while in 2018 an annotated Spanish translation by Carmen Dragonetti and Fernando Tola appeared in print: *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa: La Enseñanza de Vimalakīrti* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Instituto de Estudios Buddhistas [FIEB]), not long before Dr Dragonetti herself passed away. There is also one German version in progress, by Jens-Uwe Hartmann, who has kindly shared his work with us. As far as we know, no other English version has yet been published apart from Cleary's, although we understand several are in progress.<sup>12</sup>

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11. One should also note the very useful papers by Iwamatsu on the verses of the text, especially Iwamatsu 2007c and 2008. Takahashi Hisao has gone on to publish a series of volumes entitled *Yuimagyō nōto* (Notes on the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*), (Takahashi, 2017–2019).

12. Cleary's version is supposedly "translated from the original Sanskrit," but the relationship with the Sanskrit text appears to be rather loose. A good example

In working on our translation, we have only occasionally looked at those by Huang, Takahashi & Nishino, and Ueki, preferring for the most part to go our own way. We have, however, made extensive use of the work of Iwamatsu on the verses of Chapters 1 and 7, and, while not following all of his suggested readings, gratefully acknowledge our debt to him here.

\* \* \* \* \*

Access to a Sanskrit text of the V&N is of course a game-changer in many ways, not least because it enables a much more nuanced interpretation of the work, which we could hitherto see only through the distorting medium of the Chinese and Tibetan translations. Although they do not lose their value, and are indeed often indispensable for understanding the Sanskrit properly, seeing how it has developed over time, and correcting its occasional errors, the Sanskrit text allows us for the first time to appreciate the artistry of its composer, especially in his use of elaborate word play and other effects like simile and metaphor, which can sometimes survive translation intact, and alliteration and assonance, which are unlikely to. These effects are especially apparent in the verses, but are often found in the prose as well. Two passages will suffice to illustrate this feature of the work.

The first is §6.8, where the text plays on various derivatives of the verb *kṛp* *kalpate*, meaning “to fashion,” “to form,” “to

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is the list of bodhisattva names in Chapter 8. There are thirty-two of these, if we exclude Vimalakīrti at the end. In reconstructing these from the Tibetan, Lamotte got twenty-two of them right, with ten misses. Thurman 1976 accepted Lamotte’s reconstructions in their entirety, but the online 84,000 version of his translation corrects them in the light of the Sanskrit (except that Pratyakṣadarśa should be Pratyakṣadarśin and Satyananda should be Satyanandin). Cleary’s list, however, while dispensing with diacritical marks, occasionally follows the Sanskrit text in preference to Lamotte, but sometimes keeps Lamotte’s invalid reconstructions (thus his Bhadrāyoti, Tisya, Pratyakṣadarsana, Gambhiramati, and Satyarata survive) or even replaces them with entirely new—but equally invalid—reconstructions (and so Vinayamati, Agramati, Apratihateksana, and Ratnakuta Raja make their appearance for the first time). This is not an encouraging sign of fidelity to the Sanskrit.

consider,” “to construct conceptually,” “to be fit for,” etc. (these are highlighted in bold here):

*atha sā devatāyusmantam śāriputram evam āha: kiṃ  
bhadantaśāriputra, etāni puṣpāṇy utsrjasi |*

*āha: **akalpikāni** devate etāni puṣpāṇi | tasmād aham  
etāni puṣpāṇy apanayāmi |*

*devatāha: mā bhadantaśāriputra evaṃ vocaḥ | tat  
kasmād dhetoḥ | etāni hi puṣpāṇi **kalpikāni** | kiṃ  
kāraṇam | tathā hy etāni puṣpāṇi na **kalpayanti**  
na **vikalpayanti** | sthaviraḥ punaḥ śāriputraḥ  
**kalpayati vikalpayati** ca | ye bhadantaśāriputra  
svākhyāte dharmavinaye pravrajyām **kalpayanti**  
**vikalpayanti** ca, te '**kalpikāḥ** | sthavirus tu  
**kalpayati vikalpayati** ca | ye punar na **kalpayanti**  
na **vikalpayanti**, te **kalpikāḥ** | paśya bhadanta-  
śāriputra eṣāṃ mahāsatvānām kāye puṣpāṇi  
na śliṣyanti | yathāpi nāma sarva**kalpavikalpa-**  
**prahīnatvāt***

This short passage has sixteen occurrences of words derived from the verbal root *kṛp*, playing on several of its meanings in a way which an English translation can only imperfectly convey (in our case using “in bad form” for *akalpika*, which in another context might be better rendered as “unsuitable” or “improper,” as in §§3.62–63):

Then the goddess said to the Venerable Śāriputra,  
“Reverend Śāriputra, why are you trying to get rid of  
these flowers?”

“Goddess, these flowers are in bad form.<sup>13</sup> That is  
why I am trying to remove them.”

The goddess said, “Do not say this, Reverend  
Śāriputra. Why? These flowers are in good form.

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13. That is, unfitting, unsuitable, contrary to the rules of the Vinaya, which prohibit bodily adornment on the part of members of the Saṅgha.

What is the reason? It is because these flowers do not form ideas, nor do they form conceptions. The elder Śāriputra, on the other hand, forms ideas and conceptions. Those, Reverend Śāriputra, who form ideas and conceptions about a renunciant life in the Dharma and Discipline which have been well taught are guilty of bad form, and still the elder forms ideas and conceptions. Those, on the other hand, who neither form ideas nor form conceptions are doing what is in good form. Look, Reverend Śāriputra—the flowers are not sticking to the bodies of these mahā-sattvas. This is because they have completely got rid of ideas and conceptions.”

While our translation tries to give some idea of the word-play by using the word “form” repeatedly, it fails to convey the author’s clever switching of positive and negative that gives the passage its bite, i.e. that to form is to have no form and vice versa.

A second example, even more challenging, comes in §7.1, with derivatives of the verbal root *gam*, *gacchati*, “to go,” “to understand,” etc.:

*atha khalu mañjuśrīḥ kumārabhūto vimalakīrtiṃ  
licchaviṃ evam āha: kathaṃ kulaputra bodhisatvo  
gatimḡgato bhavati buddhadharmeṣu |*

*āha: yadā mañjuśrīḥ bodhisatvo 'gatigamanam  
gacchati, tadā bodhisatvo gatimḡgato bhavati  
buddhadharmeṣu |*

*āha: katamac ca bodhisatvasyāgatigamanam |*

*āha: yadā pañcānantaryagatiṃ ca gacchati, na  
ca vyāpādavahiṃsāpraduṣṭo bhavati | nirayagatiṃ  
ca gacchati, sarvarajaḥkleśavigataś ca bhavati |  
tiryagyonigatiṃ ca gacchati, vigatatamo'ndhakāraś  
ca bhavati . . . sarvalokagatiṃ ca gacchati, sarva-  
gatinivṛttaś ca bhavati | nirvāṇagatiṃ ca gacchati,  
saṃsāraprabandham ca na jahāti | evaṃ mañjuśrīḥ*

*bodhisatvo 'gatigamanam gacchati, gatiṃgataś ca  
bhavati sarvabuddhadharmeṣu |*

Once again, this is a level of word-play which no English translation can adequately convey, no matter how hard one tries:

Then Prince Mañjuśrī said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti,  
“Good sir, how does the bodhisattva take the path  
that ends in mastering the qualities of a buddha?”

“Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva takes the path that ends  
in mastering the qualities of a buddha when he takes  
the wrong path.”

“But what does it mean to say that the bodhisattva  
takes the wrong path?”

“He takes the path of the five sins entailing imme-  
diate retribution, and yet he is not corrupted by  
malice and cruelty. He takes the path of rebirth in the  
hells, and yet he is free of all stain and defilement.  
He takes the path of rebirth as an animal, and yet  
he is free of the darkness of ignorance. . . . He takes  
everybody's path, and yet he has turned away from  
all paths. He takes the path of final release, and yet  
he does not interrupt the flow of the cycle of rebirth.  
This is the way, Mañjuśrī, in which the bodhisattva  
takes the wrong path, and yet takes the path that  
ends in mastering the qualities of a buddha.”

Naturally these literary effects fare just as badly in the Chinese and Tibetan versions as they do in the English. All translations involve gain and loss, and one such loss here is the distinctive word play of the author.<sup>14</sup> We assume, by the way, that the V<sub>k</sub>N was the work

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14. We cannot claim to have recognized all the author's punning or word-play (Sanskrit *śleṣa*), but wherever we have good reason to believe the text is playing on several meanings of the same word, we use curly brackets {braces} to provide a second translation giving an idea of the *double-entendre*.

of one person, although it is difficult to determine whether more than one hand was involved in its creation. When compared with the general run of Mahāyāna sūtras, however, the VκN does appear to have a greater degree of unity, and bespeak a single intelligence, but it is difficult to be sure about this without much more rigorous stylistic analysis. For the time being single authorship is simply a working hypothesis.

In any case, having the Sanskrit gives us the opportunity not only to admire this hypothetical author, but also to approach the work of translation with fresh eyes, and move beyond previous interpretations, which, whether based on the Chinese or the Tibetan, have tended to owe a great deal to the work of Étienne Lamotte, whether this is acknowledged or not. Lamotte was to be sure a good guide, but he was not infallible, as we can see when we look at his attempts to reconstruct the Sanskrit equivalents of the text he was working with, which turn out to have been a somewhat haphazard affair.<sup>15</sup> In this light it is hardly surprising that previous attempts to reconstruct the entire Sanskrit text on the basis of the Tibetan translation now stand revealed as having given a very imperfect match. This must be a salutary caution against any attempt to do this with any other text, without at least acknowledging the inevitable unreliability of the results. For all that, Lamotte's translation remains an indispensable resource for the study of the VκN, with a wealth of learned annotation on the text which sixty years later has not found its match.

A single example illustrating the need to rethink our reading of the text in a more critical fashion comes from Chapter 12, §12.5:

*yaś ca punar devendra kulaputro vā kuladuhitā  
vemaṃ trisāhasramahāsāhasraṃ lokadhātuṃ tathā-  
gatapūrṇaṃ tadyathāpi nāmekṣuvanaṃ vā naḍa-*

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15. As an example of this, when one looks at Chapter 8, just focusing on the lexical items, one finds that Lamotte scores 123 hits to 14 partial hits and 59 complete misses, yielding an average of about one miss to every two hits. And this is just working on an "atomic" level, i.e. with individual words. When one starts putting those words together, predicting the order in which they appear is fraught with even more uncertainty.



*vanam vā veṇuvanam vā tilavanam vaivam śāli-  
vanam vā pratipūrṇam kalpaṃ vā kalpāvaśeṣam  
vā satkuryād gurukuryān mānayet pūjayet tāṃs  
tathāgatān sarvapūjābhiḥ sarvasukhopadhānaiḥ*

Lamotte (1962: 372), translating this passage from the Tibetan, proposed:

Supposons, ô Devendra, que ce trichiliomégachilio-  
cosme soit rempli par des Tathāgatas aussi  
nombreux que des bois de cannes à sucre, de roseaux,  
de bambous, de moutardiers ou d'acacias qui le  
recouvrent, et qu'un fils ou une fille de famille, durant  
un kalpa ou plus d'un kalpa, les honore, les vénère,  
les respecte et les adore, en leur offrant toutes sortes  
d'offrandes et des bons équipements.

And this Boin (1976: 254) turned into English as follows:

Let us suppose, O Devendra, that this trichilio-  
megachiliocosm were filled with Tathāgatas as  
numerous as the woods of sugar-cane, reeds,  
bamboos, mustard bushes or acacias which cover it,  
and that a son or daughter of good family, for a kalpa  
or more than a kalpa, honours them, reveres them,  
respects them and pays homage to them, by offering  
them all kinds of offerings and fine embellishments.

Also translating from the Tibetan, Thurman (1976: 96–97) offered:

Let us suppose, prince of gods, that this billion-  
world-galactic universe were as full of Tathagatas  
as it is covered with groves of sugarcane, with rose-  
bushes, with bamboo thickets, with herbs, 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 aeon or more than an aeon.

Setting aside the anomalous presence of rosebushes,<sup>16</sup> we can see that Thurman's overall interpretation of the passage is indebted to Lamotte's particular handling of the Tibetan syntax (as it is covered = qui le recouvrent). In opting for herbs and flowers at the end of the list, rather than Lamotte's mustard bushes and acacias, he veers right off target, but Lamotte had already failed to hit the bullseye. The intended meaning is not that the universe is to be imagined as full of Buddhas as it is covered with these plants, since this world at least is manifestly not covered with these plants. The point of the simile lies in what is common to all the plants in the list, something which would have been obvious to people living in an agrarian society: simply put, they all have a very dense growth pattern—they grow in tight clumps. The simile is about crowding, about the absence of spaces between things, not numbers. Hence our translation:

Furthermore, Lord of the Gods, suppose this cosmos of a billion worlds was full of realized ones packed as densely as a stand of sugar-cane or a thicket of reeds or a grove of bamboos or a patch of sesame plants or a field of rice plants,<sup>17</sup> and a lady or a gentleman were to honor, venerate, revere and worship all those realized ones for an eon or more than an eon with every offering and every item they might need for their pleasure and comfort. . . .

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16. Evidently French *roseau* turned out to be a false friend, since it does not mean rose but reed. The rosebushes continue to bloom in the lightly edited version of Thurman 1976 published more recently on the 84,000 Project website, although the herbs have become sesame gardens and Śakra is now king of gods. Otherwise the translation is unchanged.

17. Tib. has *seng ldeng*, which usually renders *khadira*, the Acacia Catechu, hence Lamotte's "[les bois] d'acacias," but the Sanskrit text has *śālivanaṃ*. *Śāli* is rice, *śālī* (also called *kr̥ṣṇajīra*[ka]) is *Nigella indica* (or *Nigella sativa*), variously referred to as kalonji, black caraway, black cumin, etc. Since neither Acacia Catechu or *Nigella indica/sativa* have a particularly dense growing pattern, while rice does, we opt for the latter here. All Chinese versions also include rice in their lists of five plants. Thurman's "flowers" for *seng ldeng* is presumably free association on the basis of Lamotte's rendition.

Surprisingly, the same indebtedness to Lamotte can be seen in the English versions of Kumārajīva's Chinese translation:

Śakra, if the great chiliocosm were full of countless Tathāgatas as many as the sugar canes, bamboos, reeds, rice grains and hemp seeds in its fields; and if a virtuous man or woman who has passed either a whole aeon or a decreasing kalpa to revere, honour, praise, serve and make offerings to these Buddhas . . . Charles Luk (1972: 129)

Heavenly lord, suppose this thousand-millionfold world were as full of Thus Come Ones as it is of sugarcane, bamboo, reeds, rice and hemp plants, or forest trees. If there were good men or good women who for the space of a kalpa, or less than a kalpa, were to revere and honor, praise and make offerings to them and provide for their well-being . . . Burton Watson (1996: 137)

Heavenly emperor, even if the entire trimega-chiliocosm were filled with Tathāgatas as numerous as the sugar cane, bamboo, reeds, rice, hemp, and forests, and if a good man or woman were to revere, honor, praise, make offerings, and provide all their needs for a *kalpa* or even less than a *kalpa* . . . John McRae (2004: 192)

We see here not only that in this case these three very accomplished scholars all missed the mark—or rather hit it around the same place that Lamotte had—despite the fact that Kumārajīva's rendition of this passage can in fact be read in a way more consistent with our interpretation, but also that, without a Sanskrit text to prompt the rethinking of problems, the lineage of English translators shows the same tendency to repeat the readings of their predecessors that the Chinese one does.<sup>18</sup>

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18. Not surprisingly, translators of the Sanskrit text have come closer to handling this simile properly. Cleary (2013), for example, has: "Suppose this whole world,

All this is not to deny the usefulness of previous versions, especially those of our Chinese and Tibetan forerunners. Indeed, we need all the help we can get, faced as we are with a text which delivers a sophisticated religious and philosophical message in densely packed and yet witty language full of complicated word-play and paradox. We therefore sympathize with the disciples and bodhisattvas who put Vimalakīrti in the “too hard” basket. He is one tough customer, and translating him is no less daunting than visiting him to inquire after his health. And just as he always has the last word, our translation will certainly not be all there is to say.

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Before concluding this introduction, a synopsis of the text may be useful to orient the reader to the flow of the action and the sequence of topics addressed. The V<sub>k</sub>N is a work of 14 chapters in the Chinese versions, and 12 in the Sanskrit and Tibetan. Since all three Chinese translations, including the earliest, are divided into 14 chapters,<sup>19</sup> the 12-chapter arrangement is possibly a later modification, arrived at by combining chapters 3 and 4 and chapters 13 and 14. Our synopsis of the text, however, follows the Sanskrit chapter divisions, as does our translation. Like many Mahāyāna sūtras, the V<sub>k</sub>N proceeds as a series of conversations, some of them with a fairly rapid give-and-take, in a sort of repartee, others involving long speeches made by this or that character, more akin to sermons, that are typically more didactic.

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Lord of Gods, were completely filled with Realized Ones, like fields of sugarcane, thickets of reeds, groves of bamboo, stands of sesame, or groves of acacia, and a family son or family daughter were to honor and show respect and reverence for all those Buddhas filling the world, with offerings of all comforts for an eon or more...” Huang (2011: 348) has something similar (with the correct rice instead of acacia in last place), as do Takahashi & Nishino (2011: 214), but only Ueki (2011: 569) makes explicit the force of the comparison. As he points out in a lengthy footnote (585–587n40), the same simile is found in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*.

19. In the Zhi Qian translation, the break between chapters 5 and 6 falls slightly later than in the other two versions. Apart from this, the chapter divisions are in agreement.

The sūtra begins in Chapter 1 with the Buddha Śākyamuni in the company of a vast congregation of followers at the Grove of Āmrāpālī, outside the Indian city of Vaiśālī. Leaving the city, the Licchavi prince and bodhisattva Ratnākara comes out with five hundred companions to visit the Buddha, presenting him on their arrival with their jewelled parasols. By the power of his magic, the Buddha turns all these parasols into one gigantic parasol arching over and reflecting in itself the entire universe. This miracle prompts Ratnākara to offer a set of fifteen verses of praise, the first of only two verse sequences in the text. Having done so, he requests the Buddha to deliver a teaching on how bodhisattvas purify their buddha-domains, a teaching which prompts the great disciple Śāriputra to reflect on why this world, the buddha-domain of Śākyamuni, seems far from pure—a recurrent theme in the text. From his vantage point as a high deity, the Brahmā Jaṭin hastens to confirm the Buddha's response that all such impurity is in the eye of the beholder, and a miraculous transformation of the world effected by Śākyamuni reinforces the lesson, engendering various spiritual accomplishments on the part of the audience.

In Chapter 2 we move back into Vaiśālī to be introduced to the householder Vimalakīrti, who, like Ratnākara, is a member of that city's ruling Licchavi clan. Although a layman, Vimalakīrti is an advanced bodhisattva distinguished by his mastery of stratagem (*upāyakaūśalya*), enabling him to be all things to all people. As a ruse to bring others to the Dharma, he pretends to be ill, drawing thousands of well-wishers into the city to whom he offers a teaching on the body, contrasting the frailness and perishability of the ordinary human frame with the superior body of a Buddha. In response to this, those who hear him aspire to the perfect awakening which will endow them with such a body.

Chapter 3 returns us to the Grove of Āmrāpālī, where Śākyamuni reads the mind of Vimalakīrti from afar, and resolves to send a member of his own entourage to inquire after the layman's health. One by one, however, his disciples decline the mission, each of them recalling an episode in which they were doing or saying something only to have Vimalakīrti turn up and lay bare their inadequacy, taking them to task in such a way as to leave them without inspiration

(*niṣpratibhāna*), at a loss for words. The sequence starts with the Buddha's two leading disciples, Śāriputra and Mahāmaudgalyāyana, after whom come Mahākāśyapa, Subhūti, Pūrṇa, Kātyāyana, Aniruddha, Upāli, Rāhula, and Ānanda. In all, five hundred disciples of the entire eight thousand in attendance refuse to run the risk of an encounter with Vimalakīrti, but the details are given only for the ten just named. Now the Buddha turns to the bodhisattvas (this is where Chapter 4 starts in the Chinese versions), beginning with Maitreya. His response is no different. Next to be asked are the Licchavi Prince Prabhāvyūha, the bodhisattva Jagatindhara, and the guildmaster's son Sudatta, this handful of people—four in all—being presumably a small sampling of the responses of all the bodhisattvas in attendance, no more willing than the great śrāvakas, the spiritually advanced disciples, to brave the journey into Vaiśālī to call on Vimalakīrti. Although the outcome of each request is more or less identical, the episodes recalled and the teachings received from Vimalakīrti on those occasions are markedly different in each case, with many interesting topics addressed, including the nature of awakening, the seat of awakening (*bodhimāṇḍa*), the sacrifice of the Dharma (*dharmayajña*), and the highest form of pleasure. In this way the chapter allows the author (or authors) of the text to advance the narrative in a most ingenious way, conveying a mounting sense of the formidable wisdom of Vimalakīrti while putting in his mouth a series of fourteen mini-sermons on a range of topics.

Finally, in Chapter 4, Śākyamuni turns to the great bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, who accepts the charge and enters Vaiśālī to call on Vimalakīrti, followed by a great many disciples, bodhisattvas, and divinities eager to hear their exchange. Knowing that this huge crowd is heading his way, Vimalakīrti uses his magic to make his house completely empty, all members of his household spirited away, right down to the gatekeeper, and not a stick of furniture anywhere to be seen, apart from the bed on which he himself lies. This is the starting-point for a discussion with Mañjuśrī on the theme of emptiness, before the great layman moves on to talk at length about illness, about bondage and liberation, and about the field of action of the bodhisattva. This is no longer an exchange: Vimalakīrti has the floor entirely, and Mañjuśrī is just listening to the

extended exposition he gives, which concludes with eight thousand of the deities in Mañjuśrī's train conceiving the aspiration to the full awakening of a buddha.

Chapter 5 begins with Śāriputra wondering to himself where all the advanced disciples and bodhisattvas who have turned up at Vimalakīrti's are going to sit, given that the house is devoid of furniture. Reading his thoughts, Vimalakīrti asks him whether he has come wanting the Dharma, or wanting a seat, launching into a discourse on what exactly it means to want the Dharma. Yet he does not let Śāriputra's concern about seating arrangements go unassuaged, using his magical powers to bring 3,200,000 gigantic lion thrones from the distant world of Merudhvajā, the domain of the Buddha Merupradīparāja. Miraculously they all fit into his house, and Mañjuśrī and the bodhisattvas, expanding their bodies to the appropriate height, take their seat on them, as do Śāriputra and the advanced disciples, once told how to do so by their host. Vimalakīrti then explains to Śāriputra the state of inconceivable freedom which enables bodhisattvas to perform such miracles of expansion and compression as well as sundry other marvels that bend the laws of nature to their will. Hearing of the power of this state, the Elder Mahākāśyapa laments the inability of the advanced disciples and solitary buddhas to attain it, springing as it does from the aspiration to full awakening, which is forever closed off to them by virtue of their lesser attainments. 32,000 deities then conceive this aspiration. The chapter ends with Vimalakīrti underlining the power of bodhisattvas established in the state of inconceivable freedom as a result of their knowledge of stratagem.

The next chapter begins with an interesting statement by Vimalakīrti, in response to a question from Mañjuśrī, on how bodhisattvas should regard all other beings, giving a long list of impossible things to which they should be compared, e.g., bodhisattvas should see other beings as like the tracks of birds in the sky, the son of a barren woman, fire burning without fuel, etc. This leads to a discussion between the two on how bodhisattvas can have love (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and so forth for those other beings, given that they, and indeed all things, lack a real foundation. Delighted by this exchange, a goddess living in the

house showers divine flowers down on the assembled company. The flowers do not stick to the bodhisattvas, falling to the ground, but they remain stuck to the bodies of the advanced disciples, who find themselves unable to remove them, even though the Vinaya prohibits any kind of bodily ornamentation for members of the Saṅgha. The predicament of the advanced disciples is the occasion for an exchange between their leading representative, Śāriputra, and the goddess, culminating in the famous gender-switch episode, in which she uses her magic to change places with the venerable monk. Each person assumes the form of the other. In this way the goddess, as an advanced bodhisattva, dramatizes the unreality and ephemeral nature of conventional distinctions, of male and female, awakened and unawakened.

As if such distinctions do matter after all, Chapter 7 opens with Mañjuśrī asking how the bodhisattva takes the path that ends in mastering the qualities of a buddha. Vimalakīrti's answer, however, takes us back into the realm of apparent contradiction and paradox, compounded by word-play; it is a prime example of the particular Mahāyāna way of speaking which is one of the hallmarks of this work.<sup>20</sup> When he asks Mañjuśrī in return about the lineage of the realized ones (*tathāgatānāṃ gotram*), the great bodhisattva's reply shows that he understands entirely how to play this game. At that point one of the other bodhisattvas in the assembly, named Sarvarūpasamdarśana ("Display of all forms"), asks Vimalakīrti where all the members of his household are; the name is a nice touch, since all their forms are very much hidden from view. The layman responds with a set of forty-two verses—the second and last such sequence in the work, and arguably the more artfully contrived—detailing the members of a bodhisattva's household, their mansions, vehicles, clothes and so on, and all the forms bodhisattvas take to liberate living beings. In effect, Vimalakīrti reveals his household metaphorically while keeping the actual one hidden.

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20. In fact, this way of speaking is so emblematic of the Vñ that it is referenced in one of the sūtra's alternative titles: the Production of Matching Pairs of Contradictory Statements (*Yamakapuṭavyatyastanirhāra*). See Chapter 12, note 296 for an extended discussion.



Chapter 8 brings a change of pace, with a lengthy series of short reflections on how bodhisattvas gain access to the truth of non-duality, each one delivered by a separate bodhisattva, who gives a particular example of duality or dualistic thinking, and points the way (or the gateway) to its resolution—or better, elimination.<sup>21</sup> Thirty-two bodhisattvas voice their inspiration in this regard, ending with Mañjuśrī, who then invites Vimalakīrti to say what he thinks the gateway to the truth of non-duality is. The response is the famous silence of Vimalakīrti, which prompts the acceptance of the fact that things do not arise in five thousand bodhisattvas who are in the audience.

After these two rather conceptual chapters, we turn once more to movement and dramatic action. Śāriputra, who worried at the beginning of Chapter 5 where everyone was going to sit, sets things in motion in Chapter 9 by wondering when people are going to eat (the implication is that the time is getting dangerously close to midday, past which monks may not eat). Reading his mind yet again, Vimalakīrti shows the assembled company the distant world of Sarvagandhasugandha (“Perfumed by all fragrances”), where the Buddha Gandhottamakūṭa is at that very moment sitting down to the main meal of the day with his entourage, an exquisitely fragrant meal consumed by similarly fragrant bodhisattvas. The layman then conjures up a phantom bodhisattva whom he dispatches to Sarvagandhasugandha to pay his respects to Gandhottamakūṭa and bring back some leftovers for the company in Vimalakīrti’s house, in the Sahā world. Successful in his mission, the phantom returns with a bowl of the fragrant food, accompanied by ninety thousand bodhisattvas who are eager to see what the Sahā world is like, but are warned by their buddha to suppress the fragrance and hide the true beauty of their bodies to spare the inhabitants of Sahā the intoxication and feelings of inferiority they would inevitably provoke. As it is, the smell of the food alone is strong enough to draw many thousands more into Vimalakīrti’s house, not only the

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21. Such *seriatim* statements, delivered by a rapid succession of speakers, are a set piece in many Mahāyāna sūtras. Sometimes the names of the speakers are keyed to the contents of the utterances.

inhabitants of Vaiśālī, but also the gods from multiple levels of the cosmos. Miraculously, the assembled throng is able to be fed from the single bowl, without the food running out; bliss fills their bodies, and the wonderful fragrance of the meal exudes from every pore. After everyone has eaten, Vimalakīrti asks the bodhisattvas from Sarvagandhasugandha how the Buddha Gandhottamakūṭa teaches the Dharma—simply put, he does it with fragrances rather than words—and they ask him how Śākyamuni does it. The answer is much longer and more interesting, allowing a return to the theme of the apparent inferiority of this world, which to the bodhisattvas of Sarvagandhasugandha appears to be a truly miserable and benighted place. Consequently the teaching that suits its unruly inhabitants is as sharp and unpleasant as the goad with which a recalcitrant elephant might be poked by its driver, while the heroism of its resident buddha and of its bodhisattvas is all the more remarkable for being exercised in such an environment. The chapter ends with thousands of beings achieving high states of attainment.

In Chapter 10 we move back to the Grove of Āmrāpālī, where Śākyamuni and the rest of his entourage have remained. Suddenly the grove is enlarged, and those in it glow the color of gold, a portent of the imminent arrival of the crowd in Vaiśālī, led by Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī—or rather, brought, since Vimalakīrti carries the entire company in his right hand, lion thrones and all, using his prodigious powers. Ānanda is struck by the fragrance they bring with them, and is told it will last as long as the food remains undigested, which happens at different points for people at different stages of their spiritual path. Ānanda exclaims that the food is in effect performing the work of a buddha, and Śākyamuni, teaching for the first time since Chapter 1, observes that the work of a buddha is performed in different ways in different buddha-domains, the manifest variety of which should not obscure the uniform magnificence of all buddhas or give rise to dualistic conceptions of superiority and inferiority. Before returning home, the bodhisattvas of Sarvagandhasugandha promise never again to think of the Sahā world as inferior, and ask Śākyamuni for a teaching to remember him by. The response is a lengthy exposition of the state of liberation called “Ending and Not Ending,” which is to say, the bodhisattva’s skilful manipulation of

the tension between the conditioned (ending or perishable) and the unconditioned (not ending or imperishable). Delighted by this discourse, the visiting bodhisattvas depart for their own world, vanishing in the blink of an eye.

The conversation that begins Chapter 11 is, for the first time in the sūtra, between Vimalakīrti and Śākyamuni, who asks him how he sees the Realized One (tantamount to his asking “How do you see me?”). The answer is that he sees him by not seeing, since the Buddha is beyond any type of conventional description. Śāriputra then wants to know where Vimalakīrti was before taking rebirth in the Sahā world, and, after a certain amount of back-and-forth between those two, the Buddha provides the answer: Vimalakīrti came from Abhirati. The assembly is filled with an intense longing to see Abhirati, and Vimalakīrti obliges them by using his powers to place the entire realm of Abhirati in his right hand and bring it into this world, a feat which causes fourteen billion of the beings here to aspire to perfect awakening and rebirth in Abhirati, which the layman then returns to its proper place. The chapter concludes with praise of “this formulation of the Dharma” (*dharmaparyāya*), i.e., the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* itself, and of the benefits that will accrue to those who hear it, accept it, learn it, recite it, and so on.

This theme continues to be pursued in Chapter 12, in which Śakra, Lord of the Gods, promises his protection to all devotees of the sūtra. Śākyamuni commends him for this, describing the vast amounts of merit to be earned by performing activities directed towards the text, driving home the point with an account of one of his own past lives as the Prince Somacchatra, in which he learned that the offering of the Dharma (*dharmapūjā*) is the best of all offerings. The Buddha then formally entrusts his awakening—and the discourses like this one which embody it—to the bodhisattva Maitreya, who undertakes to preserve this awakening and such discourses in the future. The bodhisattvas in attendance and the Four Great Kings also promise to play their part. Ānanda is instructed to learn the teaching and pass it on to others, and is given the three titles by which it can be known, before the text concludes with the usual rejoicing of the assembled company and of the whole world besides.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the hope that this synopsis will be a sufficiently useful guide to the sūtra, we refrain from any further discussion of its content, of its doctrinal and philosophical significance, or of its impact on the visual, literary, and religious culture of those Asian countries in which Mahāyāna Buddhism was held in high esteem. Much has been written about the V<sub>k</sub>N, both about the sūtra itself and about its reception history; Felbur 2015 provides an excellent survey, while an extensive review of the considerable secondary literature to date can be found in Cheng and Tse 2014. From this point on we will leave it to Vimalakīrti to speak for himself, agreeing with him that it is sometimes appropriate to remain silent. Ultimately we shall have no choice about that, as the cycle of rebirth pursues its course, but Vimalakīrti will no doubt go on teaching, and people will go on finding meaning in his words.

Paul Harrison  
September 2021

## Abbreviations

- BIISD Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953.
- BIISG Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953.
- Chin. Chinese / Chinese translation(s).
- Kj Chinese translation by Kumārajīva, *Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經, T 475.
- P'TSD Pali Text Society Dictionary: T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, eds., *Pali-English Dictionary*. London: Pali Text Society, 1921–1925.
- Sikṣ *Śikṣāsamuccaya* of Śāntideva; see Bendall 1897–1902.
- Skt. Sanskrit.
- SuS *Sūtrasamuccaya* attributed to Nāgārjuna; see Pāsādika 1989.
- T Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaikyoku, eds., *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai, 1924–1934.
- Tib. Tibetan / Tibetan translation.
- TSG<sup>Ed</sup> Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, ed., *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa: A Sanskrit Edition Based upon the Manuscript Newly Found at the Potala Palace*. Tokyo: Taisho University Press, 2006.

- TSG<sup>Intro</sup> Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, ed., *Introduction to Vimalakīrtinirdeśa and Jñānālokāṃkāra*. Tokyo: Taisho University Press, 2004.
- TSG<sup>Text</sup> Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, ed., *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa: Transliterated Sanskrit Text Collated with Tibetan and Chinese Translations*. Tokyo: Taisho University Press, 2004.
- Xz Chinese translation by Xuanzang, *Shuo wugoucheng jing* 說無垢稱經, T 476.
- ZQ Chinese translation attributed to Zhi Qian, *Weimojie jing* 維摩詰經, T 474.

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1. The "official" English title in the journal's index ("On the 2nd Verse of the 7th Chapter of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*") is in error.

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# TRANSLATION

# Chapter 1

## In the Beginning:

### The Purification of Buddha-domains

I bow to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

1.1 **T**his is what I heard at one time when the Exalted One<sup>1</sup>  
was staying in Vaiśālī, in the Grove of Āmrapālī. He was  
attended by a large assembly of monks, eight thousand of  
1.2 them.<sup>2</sup> They were all truly worthy ones;<sup>2</sup> they had eliminated  
the corrupting influences; they were free of the defilements,  
possessed of self-mastery; their minds were well and truly  
liberated; their insight was well and truly liberated; they were  
like thoroughbred horses; they were like great elephants. They  
had done what they had to do; they had done what they needed  
to do; they had laid down their load; they had reached the goal  
they had set for themselves; they had destroyed the bonds  
that had tied them to rebirth. Their minds were well and truly  
liberated through perfect understanding, they had attained  
the supreme perfection of mastery of all their thoughts.

1.3 Also in attendance were thirty-two thousand bodhi-  
sattvas, well known to all by virtue of their fame.<sup>3</sup> They were all  
adept in the practice of the greatest of supernormal faculties.<sup>4</sup>  
They had been empowered by the Buddha's empowerment.  
They were guardians of the city of the True Dharma. They were  
in full possession of the True Dharma. They roared with the  
Great Lion's roar, their voices resounding in all ten directions.  
Even without being asked they were companions in what is  
good to all living beings. They made sure the lineage of the  
Three Treasures continued unbroken. They had defeated  
their adversaries, Māra in all his forms;<sup>5</sup> they had never been

defeated by the proponents of other doctrines. They were fully in possession of memory, of concentration and of mental retentiveness and the formulae which support it (*dhāraṇī*).<sup>6</sup> They were beyond being beset by any of the hindrances; they were firmly established in the liberation that comes from being free of the impediments. Their inspired eloquence could flow without interruption. They had become adept in the practice of generosity, self-control, restraint, self-discipline, moral conduct, patient acceptance, heroic effort, meditation, insight, and stratagem.<sup>7</sup>

They commanded the state of acceptance of the fact that things cannot be grasped and do not arise. They turned the wheel of Dharma, unstoppable in its progress. They bore the mark of the seal that bears no mark. They were skilled in knowing the faculties of all living beings. Into each and every assembly they strode undaunted, full of self-assurance. They were fully equipped with a great provision of merit and wisdom. Adorned as their bodies were with the distinctive features and the secondary marks of greatness, they were supremely beautiful, with no need for ornamentation. Their fame and renown towered over the summit of Mount Meru itself.

They had obtained a serene faith in the Buddha's Dharma which was unbreakable because their ambition was as adamant as the thunderbolt (*vajra*). They poured down the rain of ambrosia that scatters the jewels of the Dharma all about.<sup>8</sup> Their pure voices spoke in tones which resonated with the cries of all living beings. With an understanding of the profound Dharma and of causality they had completely cut off any lingering traces of a view of things as coming to an end or not coming to an end.<sup>9</sup> They roared with the fearlessness of lions.<sup>10</sup> They had gone beyond being comparable or incomparable. They were great leaders of caravans laden with insight, the treasure of the Dharma.<sup>11</sup>

They were experts in all the teachings, which are straightforward but subtle, moderate but hard to contemplate and difficult to understand. They were at home in the knowledge which penetrates the motivation and mentality

of living beings in all their comings and goings.<sup>12</sup> They had received the consecration of the wisdom of the Buddha, which is like no other. They had formed the ambition to attain the ten powers, the modes of self-assurance, and the unique attributes of a buddha.

They had cleared away the obstacles of all the lower realms, the unfortunate states of rebirth, and the states of ruin, but they deliberately manifested rebirth in the realms of rebirth. They were grand and regal physicians, knowing the procedures for instructing all living beings, active in administering the medicine of the Dharma as appropriate. Endowed with a store of infinite qualities, they were adorned with the full panoply of personal qualities found in endless buddha-domains. Their power of hearing and vision never failed; no step they took was in vain.<sup>13</sup> They had such an overabundance of virtues that one would never come to the end of extolling them even in countless hundreds of thousands of millions and trillions of eons.

- 1.4 At the head of these thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas were the bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas<sup>14</sup> named Samadarśin, Samaviṣamadarśin, Samādhivikurvaṇarāja, Dharmeśvara, Dharmaketu, Prabhāketu, Prabhāvyyūha, Mahāvyyūha, Ratnakūṭa, Pratibhānakūṭa, Ratnamudrāhastā, Nityotkṣiptahastā, Nityotpalakṛtahastā, Nityotkaṇṭhita, Nityaprahasitapramuditendriya, Prāmodyarāja, Devarāja, Praṇidhiprayātaprāpta, Pratiśamvitpraṇādaprāpta, Gagana-gaṃja, Ratnolkādhārin, Ratnavīra, Ratnaśrī, Ratnanandin, Indrajālin, Jālinīprabha, Anārambaṇadhyāyin, Prajñākūṭa, Ratnajāha, Mārapramardin, Vidyuddeva, Vikurvaṇarāja, Lakṣaṇakūṭa, Lakṣaṇakūṭasamatikrānta, Siṃhaghoṣābhigarjitasvara, Śailaśikharasaṃghaṭṭanarāja, Gandhahastin, Gajagandhahastin, Satatodyukta, Anikṣiptadhura, Sumati, Sujāta, Padmaśrīgarbha, Padmavyūha, Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Brahmajālin, Ratnayaṣṭi, Mārajita, Kṣetrālaṃkṛta, Maṇiratnacchatra, Suvarṇacūḍa, Maṇicūḍa, Maitreya, and the Bodhisattva and Mahāsattva Prince Mañjuśrī.

- 1.5 Also in attendance were ten thousand Brahmā deities, led by the Brahmā Jaṭin, who had come from the world-system Aśoka with its four great continents<sup>15</sup> in order to see the Exalted One, to honor him, to serve him, and to hear the Dharma. They too were gathered together in that same assembly. And twelve thousand Śakras, arriving from their respective four-continent worlds, were gathered together in that same assembly. In the same way, others who were renowned as great lords among those who are renowned as great lords—the Śakras, the Brahmās, the Divine Guardians of the World, gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas—were also gathered together in that same assembly and were seated there. Similarly, the four assemblies—monks, nuns, men and women lay followers—had arrived.
- 1.6 On that occasion the Exalted One taught the Dharma, surrounded by, and at the head of, an assembly numbering countless hundreds of thousands. Like Sumeru, King of Mountains, rising above the ocean, he outshone the whole assembly with his light, his luster and his luminosity, while seated on a lion throne made of rubies.
- 1.7 At that time the Bodhisattva Ratnākara, a prince of the Licchavi clan, with five hundred other Licchavi princes, set out from the great city of Vaiśālī, bearing parasols made of the seven precious substances, and proceeded to the Grove of Āmrāpālī, where the Exalted One was staying. Having proceeded there, they showed<sup>16</sup> their respect to the Exalted One by prostrating themselves at his feet and walking around him seven times, keeping him to their right. Then they covered the Exalted One with all the parasols they were carrying. Having done so, they stood to one side.
- 1.8 As soon as they let go of the jeweled parasols,<sup>17</sup> then and there the Buddha's majestic power turned them into one huge jeweled parasol,<sup>18</sup> a huge jeweled parasol which appeared to shade this entire cosmos of a billion worlds, in such a way that one could see the full expanse of the cosmos of a billion worlds in that huge jeweled parasol.<sup>19</sup> One could also see in that one huge jeweled parasol all the Sumerus, those most

kingly of all great mountains, to be found in this cosmos of a billion worlds, all the Himālayas, the Mucilindas, the Great Mucilindas, the Gandhamādanās, and the Jewel Mountains, as well as all the Outer Ring Mountains and Great Outer Ring Mountains. One could also see in that huge jeweled parasol all the great oceans, the lakes and ponds, and the rivers, brooks, and streams which flow in this cosmos of a billion worlds. One could also see in that one huge jeweled parasol all the celestial chariots of the suns and the moons, the shapes of the stars, the abodes of the gods, the abodes of the nāgas, the abodes of the yakṣas, the abodes of the gandharvas, of the asuras, the garuḍas, the kinnaras and of the mahoragas, and the abodes of the four Great Kings, and the market towns, the cities, the villages, the kingdoms and royal capitals in this cosmos of a billion worlds. And emanating from that one huge jeweled parasol could be heard whatever teaching of the Dharma was being uttered by the exalted buddhas in all ten directions of the cosmos.

1.9 Then, seeing a great marvel like this produced by the Exalted One, the whole assembly were amazed. Delighted, excited, enraptured, overjoyed, filled with bliss and happiness, they remained there, bowing<sup>20</sup> before the Realized One<sup>21</sup> and gazing at him wide-eyed.

1.10 Then the Licchavi prince Ratnākara, seeing a great marvel like this produced by the Exalted One, arranged his cloak over one shoulder,<sup>22</sup> knelt down on his right knee, and bowing towards the Exalted One with his palms placed together in salutation, he praised the Exalted One in verse, saying:

“I pay homage to you, Ascetic,<sup>23</sup> who leads us on  
the path to peace,  
with your large eyes bright and pure, like the fine  
petals of a lotus,  
pure in motivation, having attained the pinnacle of  
the perfection of peace,  
with such a store of virtuous deeds that the extent  
of your good qualities is beyond measure.<sup>24</sup> [1]

Behold the miraculous power of the Guide, a  
 bull among men:  
 the sublime radiance of this Sublime One's  
 domain stands revealed  
 and the lofty teaching of the supreme Dharma,  
 that leads to deathlessness,  
 is heard in its entirety in this world, from the vault  
 of heaven. [2]

Through Dharma you have won this noble  
 kingdom of Dharma;  
 and you are giving away the treasure of Dharma to  
 the world, having conquered your foes.  
 I bow my head before the Lord of Dharma, the  
 King of Dharma,  
 who is skilled in dividing up the Dharma {in  
 analyzing the dharmas} and showing where  
 its supreme wealth lies {and revealing the  
 ultimate truth}.<sup>25</sup> [3]

Nothing exists at all—these words you have  
 said<sup>26</sup>—and yet nothing is nonexistent;  
 all these things have arisen depending on a cause,  
 and in them there is no self, nor one who does the  
 deed or experiences the result,<sup>27</sup>  
 yet no action whatsoever, good or bad, is  
 ever lost. [4]

Lord of Sages, you have defeated Māra and his  
 forces, to be sure,  
 and attained the noble highest awakening, which  
 is auspicious, deathless, and calm,  
 in which nothing is sensed,<sup>28</sup> and which is beyond  
 the range of thought or mind,  
 and whose depths all the hosts of teachers of false  
 paths to salvation cannot fathom.<sup>29</sup> [5]

And you have turned the wheel which  
 turns three times,  
 but takes many different forms, brings stillness  
 and is inherently pure.  
 In the sight of gods and human beings, King of the  
 Marvelous Dharma,  
 at that time<sup>30</sup> you manifested the Three  
 Treasures. [6]

Those whom you have led on the correct path with  
 this jewel that is the Dharma,  
 no longer have conceptual constructions, and they  
 are always calm.<sup>31</sup>  
 I bow my head before the immeasurable  
 ocean of virtues,  
 the Supreme Physician, who puts an end to death,  
 birth, and old age. [7]

Like Mount Meru, you remain unmoved even when  
 accorded honors.  
 With the highest love in equal measure for the  
 virtuous and the wicked,  
 with a mind that is like the open luminous sky, you  
 remain even-minded.  
 Who indeed would not worship such a treasure  
 among living beings? [8]

The multitude gathered here, Great Sage,  
 looks up to you, their hearts made serene by  
 their trust in you,  
 and each one sees the Victorious One right there  
 in front of them;  
 this is a quality unique to a buddha that the  
 Victorious One possesses. [9]

Exalted One, you have spoken but a single word,<sup>32</sup>  
 yet the assembly hears many diverse languages  
 and voices,



and each person intuitively a meaning appropriate  
to their needs;  
this is a quality unique to a buddha that the  
Victorious One possesses. [10]

With the single word that you have spoken  
you leave some with an impression, others you  
affect deeply;<sup>33</sup>  
you, Guide, allay the doubts of those who doubt:  
this is a quality unique to a buddha that the  
Victorious One possesses. [11]

I salute you, who advance with the true valor of  
the ten powers.<sup>34</sup>  
I salute you, who have attained the self-assurance<sup>35</sup>  
that lacks all fear.  
I salute you, who have reached a state of certainty  
about the uniqueness of your qualities,  
you who lead the whole world forward.<sup>36</sup> [12]

I salute you, who have cut through the bonds  
that kept you tied.  
I salute you, who have crossed over and  
reached dry land.  
I salute you, who also bring people in distress  
across.  
I salute you, who do not come to rest in any state  
into which beings go in the cycle of rebirth, [13]

who, in total devotion to living beings,<sup>37</sup> have gone  
into those states {understand them completely},  
with a mind which remains free in each and  
every state.  
Like an aquatic flower unstained by the water  
from which it grows,  
Lotuslike Sage, emptiness is your abode and  
practice; [14]

you have dissolved in every way all signs;  
 you have no wish for anything at all.<sup>38</sup>  
 I salute the inconceivable Buddha with his great  
 majestic power,<sup>39</sup>  
 who is like space and has no resting place.” [15]

111 And then, after praising the Exalted One with these stanzas, the Licchavi prince Ratnākara said to the Exalted One, “These five hundred Licchavi princes, Exalted One, have all set out on the path to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed, and they all are asking about the purification of buddha-domains: ‘What is it for bodhisattvas to purify buddha-domains?’ Well then, Exalted One, may the Realized One explain to these bodhisattvas the purification of buddha-domains.”

When this was said, the Exalted One congratulated the Licchavi prince Ratnākara: “Bravo, prince, bravo! It is a good thing indeed, prince, that you are asking the Realized One about the purification of buddha-domains. Listen, then, prince, and pay careful and close attention. I will explain to you how bodhisattvas purify their buddha-domains.”

“Excellent, Exalted One!” replied the Licchavi prince Ratnākara and the five hundred Licchavi princes to the Exalted One.

112 The Exalted One said to them: § “Good sir,<sup>40</sup> the buddha-domain of a bodhisattva is the domain of other living beings.<sup>41</sup> Why is that? A bodhisattva takes possession of a buddha-domain to the extent that he takes care of other living beings. He takes possession of a buddha-domain to the degree that there is training for other living beings. He takes possession of a buddha-domain to the degree that by arriving at that buddha-domain other living beings arrive at the knowledge of buddhas. He takes possession of a buddha-domain to the degree that by arriving at that buddha-domain living beings take on faculties similar to those of the Noble Ones. Why is that? Because, good sir, the buddha-domain of any bodhisattva arises from and for the benefit of living beings.

“Just as, Ratnākara, one might want to build empty space

into something and try to build it accordingly, but empty space could never be built, nor even embellished; in exactly the same way, Ratnākara, once one knows that all things are like empty space, a bodhisattva might want to build a buddha-domain in order to bring living beings to maturity and try to build it accordingly, but a buddha-domain, as empty space, could never be built, nor even embellished.<sup>42</sup>

- 1.13 “Moreover, Ratnākara, for a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of motivation; once he attains awakening, living beings free of all guile and deception are reborn in his buddha-domain. For a bodhisattva, good sir, the domain of a buddha is the domain of ambition; once he attains awakening, living beings who have gathered a full complement of merit are reborn in his buddha-domain. For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of applying oneself to practice; once he attains awakening, living beings who have acquired all virtuous qualities are reborn in his buddha-domain. For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of the grand conception of the aspiration to awakening; once he attains awakening, living beings who have set out on the Great Way (*mahāyāna*) are reborn in that buddha-domain of his.

“For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of generosity; once he attains awakening, living beings who give everything away are reborn in that buddha-domain of his. For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of moral conduct; once he attains awakening, living beings who keep to the ten paths of meritorious conduct while fulfilling their full intent are reborn in that buddha-domain of his. For a bodhisattva, good sir, the domain of a buddha is the domain of patient acceptance; once he attains awakening, living beings who are adorned with the thirty-two distinctive features and who have mastered to perfection patience, self-control and serenity are reborn in his buddha-domain. For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of heroic effort; once he attains awakening, living beings who engage with heroic effort in the quest for all virtues are reborn in his buddha-domain.

For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of meditation; once he attains awakening, living beings who are able to concentrate with mindfulness and full awareness are reborn in his buddha-domain. For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of insight; once he attains awakening, living beings who are assured of attaining the state of perfection are reborn in his buddha-domain.

“For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of the four boundless states; once he attains awakening, living beings who remain in the states of love, compassion, empathetic joy and serene equanimity are reborn in his buddha-domain. For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of the four means of drawing others to oneself; once he attains awakening, living beings who are drawn in towards total liberation are reborn in his buddha-domain. For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of mastery of stratagem; once he attains awakening, living beings who are skilled in discerning the right stratagem in all situations are reborn in his buddha-domain. For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the domain of the thirty-seven factors that contribute to awakening; once he attains awakening, living beings who have practical knowledge of engagement in right mindfulness, of right effort, of the bases for mental power, of the spiritual faculties and powers, of the constitutive elements of awakening, and of the path are reborn in his buddha-domain.

“For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the aspiration to dedicate merit; once he attains awakening, a buddha-domain adorned with all good qualities will appear. For a bodhisattva, good sir, the domain of a buddha is the teaching that eliminates the eight unfavorable circumstances in which one can be reborn; once he attains awakening, he will have a buddha-domain where all the lower states of rebirth have been eradicated, and where there will be none of the eight unfavorable circumstances.<sup>43</sup> For a bodhisattva the domain of a buddha is the state in which one practices the precepts oneself without taking others to task for their transgressions;

once he attains awakening, even the word ‘transgression’ will not exist in his buddha-domain.

“For a bodhisattva, good sir, the domain of a buddha is purity in the ten paths of meritorious conduct; once he attains awakening, living beings who are reborn in his buddha-domain are those who do not die before their time, have great wealth to enjoy, lead a celibate life, are adorned with speech conforming to truth, whose words are sweet, who live in community without discord, are adept at bringing harmony where there is discord, are free of envy, whose minds are free of hostility, and who hold correct views.<sup>44</sup>

- 1.14 “For it is like this, good sir: [as is a bodhisattva’s aspiration to awakening, so are his motivations; as are his motivations, so are his efforts; as are his efforts, so are his ambitions<sup>45</sup>]; as are his ambitions, so are his acts of deep reflection (*nidhyapti*); as are his acts of deep reflection, so are his applications in practice; as are his applications in practice, so are his dedications of merit; as are his dedications of merit, so are his stratagems; as are his stratagems, so are the ways in which he purifies his domain; as is his purification of his domain, so is his purification of other living beings; as is his purification of other living beings, so is his purification of knowledge; as is his purification of knowledge, so is his purification of teaching;<sup>46</sup> as is his purification of teaching, so is his purification of the application in practice of knowledge; as is his purification of the application in practice of knowledge, so is his purification of his own mind {and his own aspiration}.<sup>47</sup>

“Therefore, my good sir, the bodhisattva who wishes to purify his buddha-domain should make an effort to purify his own mind. Why is this so? As is the purification of a bodhisattva’s mind, so is the purification of his buddha-domain.”

- 1.15 Thereupon, as a result of the majestic power of the Buddha, this thought occurred to the Venerable Śāriputra: “If it is true that the bodhisattva’s purification of his buddha-domain is commensurate with the purification of his mind, is that not saying that this buddha-domain appears as impure as it does because the Exalted One Śākyamuni’s mind was not

purified when he pursued his bodhisattva practice?"

Then the Exalted One, knowing in his mind what the Venerable Śāriputra was thinking in his, said this to the Venerable Śāriputra: "What do you think, Śāriputra? You surely wouldn't say that it is because the sun and the moon are impure that a person who is born blind cannot see them."

"Indeed not, Exalted One, this is the fault of the person who is born blind, not that of the sun and the moon."

"In the same way, Śāriputra, if<sup>48</sup> certain living beings cannot see the panoply of good qualities adorning the buddha-domain of the Realized One, it is the fault of the ignorance of the living beings, and not the fault of the Realized One. For the Realized One's buddha-domain is indeed pure, Śāriputra, but you don't see it."

116 Then the Brahmā Jaṭin said this to the Elder Śāriputra: "Do not say, reverend Śāriputra, that this Realized One's buddha-domain is impure, because, reverend Śāriputra, the Exalted One's buddha-domain is indeed pure. Śāriputra, we can see that the buddha-domain<sup>49</sup> belonging to the Exalted One Śākyamuni has panoplies of splendid qualities which are just like the splendors of the mansions of the Vaśavartin gods."<sup>50</sup>

Then, the Elder Śāriputra said this to the Brahmā Jaṭin: "But, Brahmā, we see that this wide earth has its high places and low places, and is full of thorns, precipices, mountain peaks, chasms, and cesspools."

The Brahmā Jaṭin replied, "It must be, reverend Śāriputra, that you see the buddha-domain as being like this because your mind has high places and low places, and its motivation to attain the knowledge of a buddha is impure. On the other hand, reverend Śāriputra, those bodhisattvas who are even-minded towards all living beings and have a pure motivation to attain the wisdom of a buddha see this buddha-domain as pure."

117 Then the Exalted One nudged this cosmos of a billion worlds with his big toe. Then and there, this cosmos of a billion worlds was transformed into one stacked with many hundreds of thousands of precious substances and studded with many hundreds of thousands of jewels, so that it looked

just like the world Anantaḡaṇaratnavyūha of the Realized One Ratnavyūha.<sup>51</sup> The entire assembly were astonished to see themselves sitting right there on jewel-lotuses.

- 1.18 Then, the Exalted One addressed the Venerable Śāriputra: “Can you see, Śāriputra, the splendid qualities of this buddha-domain?”

“I see them, Exalted One. Splendors that I had never before seen or heard of now appear to my eyes.”

“My buddha-domain, Śāriputra, is always like this, but it is in order to mature inferior living beings that the Realized One makes it appear marred by so many defects. Just as the gods, even when they eat from one and the same bowl, find in it a share of the nectar which is the food of the gods according to the amount of merit each one has accumulated,<sup>52</sup> so too, Śāriputra, living beings reborn in a single buddha-domain see the splendid qualities of the buddha-domain of any buddha according to the purity of their minds.”

- 1.19 As the splendid array of qualities which adorn this buddha-domain was being revealed, eighty-four thousand living beings conceived the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed, and all five hundred Licchavi princes who had come with the Licchavi prince Ratnākara also reached the state of acceptance which brings one into natural accord with the Dharma.

- 1.20 Then, however, the Exalted One withdrew his magical power, and at once that buddha-domain returned to its normal state. At that point, thirty-two thousand living beings, divine and human, who traveled on the vehicle of the advanced disciples,<sup>53</sup> realized, “Alas, all these conditions are ephemeral!” and their Dharma eye became purified, spotless and immaculate with regard to all things, while the minds of eight thousand monks became free of the corrupting influences, without further clinging. Realizing that it is a mark of all things that they are brought into existence by a process of fabrication, eighty-four thousand living beings who were committed to the noble Dharma of the buddhas also conceived the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed.<sup>54</sup>

## Chapter 2

### Inconceivable Mastery of Stratagem

Now at that time there lived in the great city of Vaiśālī a member of the Licchavi clan, Vimalakīrti by name. As one who had rendered dutiful service to former victorious ones he had put down the roots of merit by waiting on many buddhas. He had attained the states of acceptance, had achieved inspired eloquence, had made child's play of the great supernormal faculties, was in full possession of mental retentiveness and the formulae which support it, had mastered the modes of self-assurance, and had defeated his adversaries, Māra in all his forms. He was immersed in the guiding principles of the profound Dharma, was adept in the perfection of insight, was a consummate master of stratagem, was gifted with inspired eloquence,<sup>55</sup> was adept at understanding the motivations and behavior of living beings, was adept at knowing the caliber of their faculties, and taught the Dharma according to their capacities. He was resolutely committed to this Great Way and strenuously active in it. His deeds were always well considered, he carried himself with the comportment of a buddha, and displayed an intelligence as vast as the ocean. Praised, lauded and extolled by all buddhas, venerated by all the Śakras, Brahmās and Divine Guardians of the World, he lived in the great city of Vaiśālī employing his mastery of stratagem to bring living beings to spiritual maturity.

He possessed inexhaustible wealth so as to draw to himself living beings who were destitute and had nobody to take care of them. His morals were pure so as to draw to himself living beings who were immoral. He was patient and self-controlled so as to draw to himself living beings who were wicked, vicious,



malicious, and ill-tempered. He blazed with heroic effort so as to draw to himself living beings who were indolent. He lived in a constant state of meditation, mindfulness, and deep concentration so as to draw to himself living beings whose minds were scattered. He was a person of unfailing insight so as to draw to himself living beings whose insight was deficient.

- 2.3 He wore the white clothes of a layman, yet he carried himself like the consummate ascetic. He lived the life of the householder, yet remained unaffected by any of this world's three realms, the realm of desire, the realm of pure bodily form, and the incorporeal realm. He gave the appearance of having wives, children and other womenfolk, yet he remained celibate at all times. He was surrounded by his entourage, yet remained in solitude at all times. He appeared decked out in jewelry, yet was cloaked at all times in the distinctive features of greatness.<sup>56</sup> He appeared to subsist on food and drink, yet at all times his nourishment came from meditative concentration. He showed up in all the gaming houses, where he brought to spiritual maturity living beings addicted to the pleasures of gambling, yet he remained constantly vigilant. He sought out all teachers of false doctrines, yet his devotion to the Buddha was unswerving. He knew all worldly and transcendental bodies of learning and the methods to apply them,<sup>57</sup> yet was constantly pleased by the pleasure which comes from taking pleasure in the Dharma. He appeared to be a member of every social group, yet everywhere was accorded the highest honor.

- 2.4 He was a speaker of the Dharma, yet was good company for the elderly, middle-aged and young alike, so as to adapt himself to the way of the world. He was assiduous in all his business dealings, yet had no desire for profit or property. He appeared at all crossroads in order to be a guide to all living beings. He immersed himself in state affairs in order to protect living beings. He appeared wherever people listened to or discussed Dharma to discourage them from the Lesser Way and make them take the Great Way. He went into all the schools in order to bring children to spiritual maturity. He entered all the brothels in order to demonstrate the evils of sexual desire.

He entered all inns and taverns in order to promote mindfulness and full awareness.

He enjoyed recognition as the best guildmaster among guildmasters, so that he was able to proclaim the best dharma.<sup>58</sup> He enjoyed recognition as a householder among householders, so that he was able to bring an end to all holding and having. He enjoyed recognition as a warrior among warriors, so that he was able to give greater force to their patient acceptance and gentleness. He enjoyed recognition as a brahman priest among brahman priests, so that he was able to destroy pride, presumption, and pomposity. He enjoyed recognition as a minister of state among ministers of state, so that he was able to impel others to justice in all affairs of the realm. Among princes he held a place of honor as a prince, in order to turn them away from desire for royal wealth and power. He enjoyed recognition as a chamberlain in the women's quarters, so that he was able to bring women and girls to spiritual maturity.

He imitated the ways of common people so that they could achieve excellence in ordinary merit. He enjoyed recognition as a Śakra among the Śakras, so that he was able to reveal the evanescence of their mighty power. He enjoyed recognition as a Brahmā among the Brahmās, so that he was able to display superior knowledge.<sup>59</sup> He enjoyed recognition as a Divine Guardian of the World among the Divine Guardians of the World, so that he was able to protect all living beings. This, then, is how the Licchavi Vimalakīrti lived in the great city of Vaiśālī, endowed as he was with his immense knowledge and mastery of stratagem.<sup>60</sup>

Calling upon his mastery of stratagem he gave the appearance of being ill, and on account of his illness, kings and their prime ministers, advisors, princes and counselors, priests and householders, guildmasters and people from the towns and countryside, and many thousands of people in addition to these, made their way into the great city of Vaiśālī to inquire after his health.<sup>§</sup> To all those who came to him the Licchavi Vimalakīrti taught the Dharma, and this body composed of the four elements was what he took as his subject.<sup>61</sup> "See, friends, how

evanescent this body is. See, friends, how unstable, unreliable, feeble, insubstantial, infirm, fleeting, painful, ailing, subject to change, and disease-ridden this body is. A wise person should not rely on it.

2.9 “Friends, this body is like a clump of froth, offering no resistance to the touch. This body is like a bubble, lasting only a short time. This body is like a mirage, arising from thirst and affliction. This body is like the stem of a banana plant, because it lacks a solid core. Alas, this body is a mere contraption, bones held together by ligaments.<sup>62</sup> This body is like a magical illusion, arising from misperceptions. This body is like a dream, appearing other than what it is. This body is like a reflection, insofar as it appears as a reflection of one’s previous actions. This body is like an echo, since it depends on particular conditions. This body is like a rain cloud, taking the shape of a passing flurry of thoughts. This body is like a flash of lightning, vanishing in a moment, without lasting. This body is not its own master, being the product of multiple conditions.<sup>63</sup>

2.10 “Like earth, this body has no agency. Like water, this body has no self. Like fire, this body has no soul. Like air, this body has no person in it. Like space, this body has no essence.<sup>64</sup>

2.11 “This body is unreal, a perch for the elements, the prime realities.<sup>65</sup> This body is empty, devoid of self and what belongs to self. This body is inanimate, like a blade of grass, a piece of wood, a plastered wall, a clod of earth, a reflection. This body is itself incapable of motion, moving as if attached to a wind machine.<sup>66</sup> This body is worthless, being a pile of filth and foulness. This body is a waste of time, its nature is to be rubbed down {rubbed out} and massaged {wiped away} only to disintegrate and crumble into dust. This body is threatened by the 404 maladies. This body is like an old well, overwhelmed forever by decay. Indeed, this body is always at its limit, its end being death.<sup>67</sup> This body, insofar as it is subsumed under the aggregates, the elements, and the spheres of the senses, resembles a band of assassins, a group of poisonous snakes, and an empty village.<sup>68</sup> For such a body as this you should feel

disgust and aversion, but for the body of a realized one you should feel an eager longing.

212 "This is because the body of a realized one, friends, is the body of dharmas.<sup>69</sup> [The body of a realized one is born from merit and born from knowledge.]<sup>70</sup> It is born from generosity,<sup>71</sup> born from moral conduct, born from meditative concentration, born from insight, born from liberation, born from the knowledge and vision of liberation. It is born from love, compassion, empathetic joy and serene equanimity. It is born from generosity, restraint and self-discipline.<sup>72</sup> It is born from patient acceptance and gentleness. It is born from the root of merit that is unwavering heroic effort. It is born from the meditative states, the states of liberation, the deep meditative concentrations, and the states of absorption. It is born from learning, insight, and stratagem. It is born from the thirty-seven factors that contribute to awakening. It is born from calming and discernment. It is born from the ten powers, born from the four modes of self-assurance, born from the eighteen unique attributes of a buddha. It is born from all the perfections. It is born from the supernormal faculties and modes of knowledge.<sup>73</sup> It is born from the elimination of all bad qualities. It is born from the assumption of all good qualities. It is born from the verities, born from truth. It is born from vigilance. The body of a realized one, friends, is born from meritorious actions beyond measure. That is what you should feel an eager longing for. You should also conceive the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed, so as to eliminate all the afflictions and illnesses of all living beings."

213 In this manner the Licchavi Vimalakīrti taught the Dharma to those who had gathered together there to inquire after his health, teaching in such a way that many hundreds of thousands of living beings conceived the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed.

## Chapter 3

### Dispatching the Advanced Disciples and Bodhisattvas Becomes an Issue<sup>74</sup>

11 **T**hen the Licchavi Vimalakīrti thought, “Here I am sick, ailing, and laid up in bed, but the Realized, Truly Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One is not thinking of me. He is not showing compassion by sending somebody to inquire after my health.”

12 However, the Exalted One had thought about the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, and so the Exalted One addressed himself to the Venerable Śāriputra: “Śāriputra, go and ask after the health of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti.”

When this was said, the Venerable Śāriputra replied to the Exalted One, “Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and ask after the Licchavi Vimalakīrti’s health. Why? Because, Exalted One, I remember one occasion when I had secluded myself for meditation at the foot of some tree or other, and the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came up to that tree and said to me: § ‘Reverend Śāriputra, you should not seclude yourself for meditation in the way you have secluded yourself. Rather, you should seclude yourself for meditation so that your body and mind do not appear in this world, in any of its three realms. You should seclude yourself for meditation so that without emerging from the state of cessation you can be seen performing every possible activity. You should seclude yourself for meditation so that without casting off the characteristic marks of attainment, you can be seen with the characteristic marks of an ordinary person. You should seclude yourself for meditation so that without your mind being set on anything internal, it does

not range about externally. You should seclude yourself for meditation so that without swerving from all viewpoints, you are seen in terms of the thirty-seven factors that contribute to awakening. You should seclude yourself for meditation so that without casting off the defilements that belong to the realm of the cycle of rebirth, you attain final release. Reverend Śāriputra, when people seclude themselves for meditation in such a way, the Exalted One approves of their secluding themselves for meditation.'

3.4 "As for me, Exalted One, when I heard these words, I could only remain silent. I was unable to say anything in reply. That is why I couldn't possibly go and ask after that gentleman's health."

3.5 Thereupon the Exalted One addressed himself to the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana: "Maudgalyāyana, go and ask after the health of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti."

3.6 Maudgalyāyana in his turn replied, "Exalted One, I couldn't possibly go and ask after that good man's health. Why? Because, Exalted One, I remember one occasion when I was teaching the Dharma to householders on some street or other in the great city of Vaiśālī, at that time the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came up and said this to me: <sup>§</sup> 'Reverend Maudgalyāyana, you should not teach the Dharma to householders who wear white the way you are teaching it. Rather, Reverend Maudgalyāyana, you should teach the Dharma exactly as it is. For in the Dharma, Reverend Maudgalyāyana, there is no living being, it is devoid of the dust of living beings. There is no self, it is devoid of the dust of passion. There is no soul, it is devoid of birth and death. There is no person, before and after are severed from each other. It is at peace, it has the characteristic mark of being set at peace. It is passionless, in it there is no object to go after. It is wordless, in it all speech is cut off. It cannot be spoken of, being completely beyond the ebb and flow of thought. It is all-pervasive, it is like space. It has no color, no distinctive attribute, no form, it does not manifest in any way. In it there is no "mine," it is devoid of any idea of possession. It cannot be made known, it is beyond thought, mind, and sensory consciousness. There

is nothing you can compare it with because there is nothing you can contrast it with. It has no distinctive cause and no condition can be imputed to it. It leads to the attainment of the totality of things, it is that in which all things are concentrated. It conforms to the way things are by not conforming. It stands firm at the highest level of reality, because it is utterly unwavering. It is unwavering, because the six sense objects are not its support. It does not come or go anywhere, because it never stops. It is emptiness concentrated, it is signlessness fully displayed, it is wishlessness manifest. It is devoid of affirmation and negation. In it nothing is added and nothing is taken away. There is no arising or dissolution. It dwells nowhere, it is completely beyond the reach of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. It neither rises nor falls. It abides immovable, devoid of any action or motion.

17       “‘For this kind of Dharma, Reverend Mahāmaudgalyāyana, what kind of teaching could there be? “Teaching the Dharma,” Reverend Mahāmaudgalyāyana, is another way of saying “false imputation.” Anybody hearing it, hears it only because of false imputation as well. In the absence of any false imputation, Reverend Maudgalyāyana, there can be no teaching, or hearing, or awareness. It is as if one magically created person taught the Dharma to other magically created people.

18       “‘This is the mindset, then, with which you should teach the Dharma. You should also be one who is good at discerning the capacities of other living beings, who possesses the clear vision of insight, whose great compassion is there for all to see, who extols the Great Way, who is grateful to the Buddha, whose motivation is pure, and who knows the proper way to interpret the Dharma. And you should be one who teaches the Dharma in such a way that the lineage of the Three Jewels remains unbroken.’

19       “‘He taught the Dharma, Exalted One, in such a way that eight hundred householders from that assembly of householders conceived the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed. But I could think of nothing

to say. This is why I couldn't possibly go and ask after that good man's health."

- 3.10 The Exalted One then addressed the Venerable Mahākāśyapa: "Mahākāśyapa, go and ask after the health of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti."

- 3.11 Mahākāśyapa in his turn replied, "Exalted One, I couldn't possibly go and ask after that good man's health. Why? Exalted One, I remember doing an alms round in a poor neighborhood when the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came up to me and said: <sup>§</sup> "The compassion and love of the Reverend Mahākāśyapa are partial, in that you avoid wealthy families and approach poor families. Rather, Reverend Mahākāśyapa, you should be grounded in the sameness of all things; you should look for alms by caring at all times for all living beings; you should look for food without taking food; you should do the alms round to help others get rid of their grasping for objects;<sup>75</sup> you should enter a village empowered by the thought that the village is empty; you should enter a town for the sake of leading men and women to spiritual maturity; and you should approach families as a member of the family of the Buddha.<sup>76</sup>

- 3.12 "You should accept alms without accepting; see shapes just the same as someone blind from birth; hear sounds as if they were echoes; smell scents as if they were mere air; taste flavors without registering them; touch tangible things with your awareness remaining untouched;<sup>77</sup> you should be aware of all objects of thought with the awareness of an illusory man,<sup>78</sup> something which having essence neither in its own right nor in relation to others, is not ablaze,<sup>79</sup> and, not being ablaze, cannot be extinguished.

- 3.13 "If the Elder Mahākāśyapa were to pass right through the eight wrong practices<sup>80</sup> and enter into the eight states of liberation; if he were to attain the state where everything is equally right through the state where everything is equally wrong;<sup>81</sup> if, with a single portion of alms-food, he were to feed all living beings, and after feeding all buddhas and all noble persons, he were to eat it himself; if he were to eat in such a way that he neither possessed the defilements nor was free of



them, were to eat in such a way that he was neither in a state of concentration nor out of it, were to eat in such a way that he remained neither in the cycle of rebirth nor in final release; and if whoever gave alms to the Reverend One were to reap neither a poor result from it nor a great one, were neither to lose anything nor gain anything special, and were to attain the way of a buddha, not the way of an advanced disciple, then in this way the Elder Mahākāśyapa would not be consuming the alms of the kingdom in vain.<sup>82</sup>

114 “As for me, Exalted One, I was so amazed on hearing this teaching of the Dharma that I had to bow down before all bodhisattvas. If even one who is a householder can possess this sort of inspired eloquence, who would not conceive the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed? From then on I have never promoted anything but the Great Way to anyone, not the vehicle of the advanced disciples or the vehicle of the solitary buddhas. This is why I couldn’t possibly go and ask after that gentleman’s health.”

115 The Exalted One then addressed himself to the Venerable Subhūti: “Subhūti, go and ask after the health of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti.”

Subhūti in his turn replied, “Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and ask after that good man’s health. Why? Exalted One, I remember one occasion when, making my alms-round in the great city of Vaiśālī, I entered the home of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti to get alms. He took my bowl, filled it with choice  
116 food, and said to me: <sup>§</sup> ‘Reverend Subhūti, only if you have reached the state where all things are the same because all food is the same,<sup>83</sup> and you have reached the state where all the qualities of a buddha are the same because all things are the same, should you accept this alms-food.

“Reverend Subhūti, if you have not eliminated greed, hatred, and delusion, and yet do not keep company with them; if you can be as follows—if without disturbing your sense of yourself as a real person, you follow the path that leads in only one direction; if you have not destroyed ignorance and the thirst for existence, and have not<sup>84</sup> caused knowledge and

- liberation to arise; if you are liberated in a state of concentration<sup>85</sup> achieved through your ability to see everything, even the sins entailing immediate retribution, as the same, and yet you are neither liberated nor bound; if you have not seen the Four Truths of the Noble Ones, and yet you are not one who has not yet seen the Truths; if you have not obtained the fruit, and yet you do not attain what ordinary people attain; if you are neither a noble one, nor one who is not; if you are not endowed with all qualities, and yet you have acquired
- 3.17 all qualities;<sup>86</sup> § if you have not seen the Teacher, heard the Dharma, or waited upon the Saṅgha, and the six teachers—namely Pūraṇa Kāśyapa, Maskarin Gośālīputra, Sañjaya Vairāṣṭrikaputra, Kakuda Kātyāyana, Ajita Keśakambala, and Nirgrantha Jñātiputra—are your teachers, Reverend One, and you, Noble Subhūti, have left the household life under them,
- 3.18 and follow these six teachers wherever they go; § if you have got to the bottom of all false viewpoints,<sup>87</sup> and yet you have not come to the end of them nor anywhere in between; if you have ended up in the eight unfavorable circumstances in which one can be reborn, and do not encounter any favorable circumstances;<sup>88</sup> if, indifferent to defilement, you have not achieved purification;<sup>89</sup> if your peace, Your Reverence, is also the peace of all living beings;<sup>90</sup> if you do not sanctify any offering made to you, and you, Your Reverence, bring ruin upon those who give you alms-food; if you make common cause with Māra in all his forms; if all the defilements are your companions; if the essence of the defilements, Your Reverence, is your essence too; if you have murderous thoughts towards all living beings; if you slander all buddhas; if you scorn the teachings of all the buddhas; if you do not take refuge in the Saṅgha; and if you never achieve final release—if you can be like this, then accept this alms-food.’
- 3.19 “Exalted One, after hearing this teaching of the Dharma, everything went dark for me as I thought to myself: ‘What am I to say to him, what am I to do? So let me leave the bowl and get out of this house.’ The Licchavī Vimalakīrti said to me, ‘Reverend Subhūti, do not be frightened by words, accept the

bowl. What do you think, Reverend Subhūti: if such things were said to a magical creation of the Realized One, would it be frightened?’

“I replied, ‘Certainly not, good sir.’

“He said to me: ‘Reverend Subhūti, as everything has the nature of a magically created illusion, you shouldn’t be afraid of anything. Why is that? Because all these words have such a nature. This being the case, wise people neither cling to words, nor are they afraid of them. Why is that? All words are beyond words, which is to say they are unfit to be uttered and perishable,<sup>91</sup> except for “liberation” and “all things have the mark of liberation.”’

1.20 “As this teaching was being given, for two hundred gods the Dharma eye became clear, spotless and immaculate with regard to all things; and five hundred gods arrived at the state of acceptance which brings one into natural accord with the Dharma. I could think of nothing to say, and I was no longer able to come up with a response. This is why I couldn’t possibly go and ask after that good man’s health.”

1.21 The Exalted One then addressed himself to the Venerable Pūrṇa, son of Maitrāyaṇī, “Pūrṇa, go and ask after the health of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti.”

Pūrṇa in his turn replied, “Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and ask after that good man’s health. Why? Exalted One, I remember one occasion when I was teaching the Dharma to junior monks in some spot in the forest,<sup>92</sup> when the Licchavi 1.22 Vimalakīrti came up and said to me, § ‘Reverend Pūrṇa, you should teach the Dharma after entering a state of absorption and taking a careful look at the minds of these monks. Don’t dole out slop into such grand and precious vessels! You should first know what motivations these monks have. Don’t equate precious beryl with glass beads. Reverend Pūrṇa, don’t unreflectingly ascribe limited abilities to living beings. Do not injure the uninjured.<sup>93</sup> Don’t put those who wish to enter the great path on the path of the buffoon.<sup>94</sup> Don’t pour the vast ocean into the puddle that forms in a cow’s hoofprint. Don’t try to counter the radiance of the sun with fireflies. Don’t urge

the howl of a jackal on those whose goal is the roar of a lion. For it is the case, Reverend Pūrṇa, that all of these monks have set out on the Great Way but have forgotten their aspiration to awakening.<sup>95</sup> Don't hold out to them the prospect of the way of the advanced disciples, because the way of the advanced disciples is dangerous. Advanced disciples appear to me like those blind from birth when it comes to knowing the different capacities of living beings.'

- 3.23 "At that point the Licchavi Vimalakīrti entered a deep state of concentration of such a kind that those monks remembered many and various previous lives in which they had acquired the roots of merit for perfect awakening by attending upon five hundred buddhas, and there, right in front of them, was their aspiration to perfect awakening. After prostrating themselves at the feet of that good man, they sat down right there, with palms placed together in a gesture of reverence. Then he taught them the Dharma in such a way that they became unstoppable in their progress towards that perfect awakening
- 3.24 which cannot be surpassed.<sup>96</sup> § This is why, Exalted One, I couldn't possibly go and ask after that good man's health."

- 3.25 The Exalted One then addressed himself to the Venerable Kātyāyana, "Kātyāyana, go and ask after the health of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti."

- Kātyāyana in his turn replied, "Exalted One, I couldn't possibly go and ask after that good man's health. Why? Exalted One, I remember that the Exalted One had given an instruction in condensed form to the monks and I was teaching them the Dharma in order to explain the words of his discourse, that is to say, the meaning of 'transitory,' the meaning of 'suffering,' the meaning of 'not self,' and the meaning of 'being at peace,' when
- 3.26 the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came up and said to me,<sup>97</sup> § 'Reverend Kātyāyana, do not teach that the nature of all things is a process that has anything to do with arising and dissolution. Reverend Mahākātyāyana, that which has absolutely not been born, nor will be born, has not arisen, has not ceased, and will not cease—this is what "transitory" means.<sup>98</sup> Having the sense "the non-arising and the non-cessation of the five

aggregates which follows from their emptiness”—this is what “suffering” means.<sup>99</sup> The non-duality of self and not-self—this is what “not self” means. That which has neither an essence in its own right nor in relation to others, that is not ablaze, and, not being ablaze, cannot be extinguished; and that absolute state of extinction is what “at peace” means.’<sup>§</sup> As this teaching was being delivered, the minds of those monks were freed of the corrupting influences, without further clinging. This is why, Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and ask after this good man’s health.”

The Exalted One then addressed himself to the Venerable Aniruddha, “Aniruddha, go and ask after the health of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti.”

Aniruddha in his turn replied, “Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and ask after that good man’s health. Why? <sup>§</sup> I remember, Exalted One, how I once was walking on some meditation walkway or other when a Brahmā deity named Śubhavyūha, along with ten thousand Brahmās, lit up the place as he approached me. He saluted me by prostrating himself at my feet, stood to one side, and said to me: ‘How much can the Venerable Aniruddha see with his divine eye?’

“‘Friend,’ said I to him, ‘I can see this cosmos of a billion worlds<sup>100</sup> which is the buddha-domain of the Exalted One Śākyamuni as easily as I could see a myrobalan fruit in the palm of my hand.’

“As this conversation was taking place, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti approached that spot. When he got there, he saluted me by prostrating himself at my feet and said, ‘Reverend Aniruddha, is the divine eye characterized by effort or by effortlessness? If it is characterized by effort, it is the same as any of the five supernormal faculties of those who follow other paths. If it is characterized by effortlessness, effortlessness is unconditioned, and one cannot see anything with it. How then can the Elder see?’ There was I, unable to say anything. <sup>§</sup> That Brahmā deity, however, amazed at hearing this teaching from that good man, bowed down before him and asked, ‘Who in the world have the divine eye?’

“‘In this world,’ he said, ‘the exalted buddhas have the divine eye, they who do not abandon their state of deep concentration, who see all buddha-domains and who are not ruled by duality.’

3.32 “Then, upon hearing the teaching, that Brahmā deity with his retinue ten thousand strong conceived as his ambition the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed. He paid his respects to me and politely took his leave from that good man, and disappeared then and there. And I could think of nothing to say. This is why I couldn’t possibly go and ask after that good man’s health.”

3.33 The Exalted One then addressed himself to the Venerable Upāli, “Upāli, go and ask after the health of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti.”

Upāli also said: “Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and ask after that good man’s health. Why? I remember, Exalted One, how one time a certain pair of monks who had committed an offense, since they were too ashamed to face the Exalted One, did not approach the Exalted One. The two came to me, and when they arrived they said: ‘Reverend Upāli, we have committed an offense and, being too ashamed, we cannot bear to approach the Exalted One. In order to bear it,<sup>101</sup> Venerable Upāli, help us dispel our remorse and rise above the offense.’

3.34 “There I was, Exalted One, instructing those two monks with a talk relating to the Dharma when the Licchavi Vimalakīrti turned up in that place and said to me: ‘Reverend Upāli, don’t make it harder for these monks; help them get rid of their offense, and don’t make them more confused. After all, Reverend Upāli, an offense is not located inside oneself, nor does it come from the outside, nor is it to be found somewhere between the two.<sup>102</sup> Why is this so? Because, as the Exalted One has declared, “Living beings become defiled when their minds are defiled; they become purified when their minds are purified,”<sup>103</sup> and the mind, Reverend Upāli, is not located inside oneself, nor is it outside, nor is it to be found somewhere between the two. As it is for the mind, so is it for the offense. As it is for the offense, so it is for all things. They never deviate

from being just as they are. Reverend Upāli, is the natural state of mind by virtue of which your mind was liberated —is that natural state of mind ever defiled?’

“‘Indeed not!’

3.35 “‘That is the natural state, Reverend Upāli, of the minds of all living beings. <sup>§</sup> Defilement, Reverend Upāli, is volition, and the natural state of mind is free from volition and discrimination. Defilement is misperception, and the natural state of mind is free from misperception. Defilement is false imputation of a self, and the natural state of mind is the absence of self. All things, Reverend Upāli, are destroyed as soon as they arise and they do not last; they are like conjurer’s illusions, like clouds and flashes of lightning. All things are unreliable, they do not last even a moment. All things are like a dream or mirage, they are false appearances. All things are like the moon we see in the water or the reflection we see in a mirror, they arise only because the mind imagines them in this way. Those, however, who know this are called preservers of the rule of training. Those who are trained in this way are well trained.’

3.36 “Then those two monks said: ‘It is this layman who possesses insight and is a keeper of the rules of training,<sup>104</sup> rather than the Reverend Upāli, whom the Exalted One declared to be the foremost among keepers of the rules of training.’

“I said this to them: ‘You monks should not have the idea that he is a householder. Why is that?<sup>105</sup> With the exception of the Exalted One there is no bodhisattva or advanced disciple who could interrupt his inspired eloquence, such is the brilliance of his insight.’

3.37 “At that those two monks, their remorse removed, there and then conceived as their ambition the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed, and having saluted that good man they said, ‘May all living beings become possessed of this kind of inspired eloquence!’ This is why I couldn’t possibly go and ask after that good man’s health.”

3.38 Thereupon the Exalted One addressed himself to the Venerable Rāhula: “Rāhula, go and ask after the health of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti.”<sup>106</sup>

Rāhula in his turn replied, “Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and inquire after the health of that good man. Why? I remember one occasion, Exalted One, when a great many Licchavi princes came up to me and said, ‘You, Rāhula, are the son of the Exalted One, and have renounced the sovereignty of a universal emperor and left home to pursue the religious path. What, then, are the virtues and advantages of leaving home to pursue the religious path?’ As I was duly explaining to them the virtues and advantages of leaving home to pursue the religious path, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti came up to me, and  
 3.39 after paying his respects, he said to me, <sup>§</sup> ‘Reverend Rāhula, one should not explain the virtues and advantages of leaving home to pursue the religious path in the way that you are explaining them. Why? Because the religious path has no virtues and no advantages. Wherever, Reverend Rāhula, there is conditioned activity<sup>107</sup> there are virtues and advantages; but the religious path is unconditioned, and being unconditioned it has neither virtues nor advantages.

“‘The religious path, Reverend Rāhula, has no particular shape, it lacks any form;<sup>108</sup> it is the path to final release;<sup>109</sup> it is extolled by the wise; it is embraced by the noble ones; it is the conquest of all the Māras; it delivers one from the five states of rebirth; it purifies the five forms of eyesight; it is the acquisition of the five powers; it is the stabilizing of the five faculties; it is doing no harm to others; it is not contaminated by any evil qualities; it crushes the followers of other religious paths; it transcends all definition; it is a causeway over the swamp;<sup>110</sup> it lacks any thoughts of what is one’s own or of taking things as one’s own; it is non-possessiveness; it is non-grasping; it is without confusion; it is confusion eliminated; it tames one’s own mind;<sup>111</sup> it takes care of the minds of others; it is conducive to tranquility; it is irreproachable in every way. This is what one calls leaving home to pursue the religious path. Those who have left home to pursue the religious path in this way have  
 3.40 well and truly left home. <sup>§</sup> You should leave home, princes, to pursue the religious path according to that Teaching and Rule that have been proclaimed in the right way, for the appearance



of a buddha is a rare thing, birth in favorable circumstances is a rare thing, and being born human is a rare thing!

"Those princes replied, 'We have heard, householder, that the Realized One does not let anyone leave home to pursue the religious path without the consent of their mother and father'.

"He said to them, 'You princes should conceive the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed, and put it into practice. That alone will be your leaving home, and  
3.41 full ordination as well.' § At that point the thirty-two Licchavi princes conceived the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed. This is why, Exalted One, I couldn't possibly go and inquire after the health of that good man."

3.42 Thereupon the Exalted One addressed himself to the Reverend Ānanda, "Ānanda, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and inquire after his health."

Ānanda replied, "Exalted One, I couldn't possibly go and inquire after the health of that good man. Why is that? I remember, Exalted One, on one occasion the Exalted One suffered some slight physical distress which had to be treated with milk. I was standing with my bowl near a certain wealthy brahmin's home, when the Licchavi Vimalakīrti turned up in  
3.43 that place. After paying his respects to me, he said, § 'Reverend Ānanda, why are you standing bowl in hand here at the door of a house so early in the morning?'

"I said to him, 'Householder, the Exalted One is suffering some slight physical distress which needs to be treated with milk, and that's what I am looking for.'

"And he said to me: 'Stop, Reverend Ānanda, don't say such things! For the body of the Realized One, Reverend Ānanda, is as adamant as the thunderbolt, it is free of any lingering traces of the bad, and endowed with every quality that is good.<sup>112</sup> So how could it have any illness, how  
3.44 could affliction befall it? § Keep quiet, Reverend Ānanda, and be on your way! Do not slander the Exalted One! Don't say such things to anyone again, and do not let it be heard by the mighty deities and the bodhisattvas who have gathered here from other buddha-domains. Reverend Ānanda, if

- a universal emperor endowed with lesser roots of merit does not suffer illness, how could the Exalted One, who is endowed with limitless virtue, possibly suffer illness?<sup>113</sup> It is impossible. Go, Reverend Ānanda, be on your way! Do not embarrass me! Don't let the wandering ascetics who follow other paths, the Jains and the Ājīvikas, hear about this, lest they think, "Just what sort of person is this teacher of theirs who can't even save himself when he is sick. How then could other living beings who are sick be saved?" Therefore, Reverend Ānanda, be on your way, quickly and discretely, lest anyone hear! § What is more, Reverend Ānanda, the realized ones have the Dharma as their body, they don't have bodies of flesh. The realized ones have bodies that transcend the world, they have gone completely beyond all worldly things. The body of a realized one suffers no distress, he is free of all corrupting influences. The body of a realized one is unconditioned, it is beyond all reckoning.<sup>114</sup> It is improper and unseemly for Your Reverence to maintain that such a body as this suffers illness.'<sup>115</sup>
- 3.45 "I felt greatly embarrassed, Exalted One, because I thought that I must have misheard or misunderstood the Exalted One. Then I heard a voice from the sky saying: 'Ānanda, it is just as the householder points out. However, the Exalted One has appeared at a time of fivefold degeneration, and therefore he has to train living beings by engaging in behavior which is pointless, unworthy, and needy. So take the milk and go,
- 3.47 Ānanda, and don't be embarrassed!' § This is the way, Exalted One, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti teaches using questions and answers. That is why, Exalted One, I couldn't possibly go and inquire after that gentleman's health."
- 3.48 In the same way those five hundred advanced disciples informed the Exalted One that they couldn't possibly go, and also informed the Exalted One of all the dialogues and conversations they had had with the Licchavi Vimalakīrti.<sup>116</sup>
- 3.49 Thereupon the Exalted One addressed himself to the bodhisattva Maitreya, "Maitreya, go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and inquire after his health."

- Maitreya in his turn replied, “Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and inquire after the health of this good man. Why is that? I remember, Exalted One, on one occasion I was having a conversation about the Dharma with the deity Saṃtuṣita together with the host of Tuṣita deities on the subject of the stage at which bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas become unstoppable in their progress, when the Licchavi Vimalakīrti
- 3.50 turned up in that place. He said to me, <sup>5</sup> “The Exalted One has predicted that you, Maitreya, are one birth away from that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed. In that case, which birth was your prediction about, Maitreya? Was it about a past one, or a future one, or was it about a present one? If the birth was past, it is gone. And if the birth is future, it is yet to come. And if the birth is present it has no duration; as the Exalted One has said, “For you too, monk,<sup>117</sup> are born, age, die, pass away and are reborn from moment to moment.”<sup>118</sup> On the basis of there being no birth one attains confirmation of having reached the goal, and yet in the absence of birth there can be no prediction, nor in the absence of birth can there be any attainment of full awakening.
- 3.51 “How then was a prediction made about you, Maitreya? Was it by the coming into existence of the way things are, or was it by the ceasing to be of the way things are? But the way things are does not come into existence, and it does not cease to be, nor will it cease to be. The way all living beings are, and the way all things are, that too is the way that you, Maitreya, are. If this is the way in which you have been predicted, then the same prediction applies to all living beings as well. Why is that? Because the way things are cannot be separated into two or more. That means that when Maitreya awakens fully to awakening, all living beings will also awaken fully to exactly the same awakening at that same time. Why? Because awakening is after all the full understanding of all living beings. And when Maitreya passes into final release, at that time all living beings will also pass into final release. Why is that? Because the realized ones do not pass into final release as long as all living beings have not passed into final release. They see those

living beings as finally released, as having the same nature as final release. Therefore, Maitreya, don't mislead or deceive these deities. <sup>§</sup> Nobody sets out toward awakening or turns back from it. What is more, Maitreya, you must have these deities rid themselves of any view that they have which makes a conceptual construct out of awakening.<sup>119</sup>

"For, Maitreya, one does not awaken fully to awakening through the body nor through the mind. Awakening is the putting to rest of all signs. Awakening is the absence of false imputation with regard to all objects. Awakening is the non-occurrence of all directed mental activity. Awakening is the cutting off of all viewpoints. Awakening is the abandonment of all conceptual construction. Awakening is being free from all perturbation, fantasy, and agitation of the mind.<sup>120</sup> Awakening is the absence of standstill in all vows.<sup>121</sup> Awakening is the engagement in non-attachment, being free from all grasping. Awakening stands in a place, and that place is the totality of all things. Awakening is in accord with the way things are.<sup>122</sup> Awakening stands firm at the highest level of reality. Awakening is non-dual, being devoid of mental objects. Awakening is everywhere the same, in the way that space is the same. Awakening is unconditioned, free from arising and destruction, duration and change.<sup>123</sup> Awakening is thorough knowledge of the thoughts, deeds, and motivations of all living beings. Awakening has no door where the senses are concerned. Awakening is unadulterated, totally free from the defilements which are rooted in the lingering traces of past actions. Awakening is found nowhere and in no particular location, being beyond presence and absence.<sup>124</sup> Awakening is located in the way things are, because it is not to be seen anywhere. Awakening is merely a word, and this name doesn't do anything. Awakening is selfless,<sup>125</sup> free from any striving to acquire things or reject them. Awakening is not turbid, being pure by nature. Awakening is radiant, being pure in essence. Awakening is free from grasping, lacking any object to hold on to. Awakening knows no difference, because it is the understanding of the sameness of all things. Awakening is

incomparable, being beyond any comparison one could make. Awakening is subtle, being difficult to comprehend. Awakening is all-pervasive, being of the same essence as space. One cannot awaken fully to it through body, speech, or mind.<sup>126</sup>

3.53 “Exalted One, as this explanation was being delivered, two hundred deities from that assembly attained acceptance of the fact that things do not arise. But I could think of nothing to say. That is why, Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and inquire after that good man’s health.”

3.54 Then the Exalted One addressed the Licchavi Prince Prabhāvyūha, “Good man, you go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and inquire after his health.”

Prabhāvyūha in his turn replied, “Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and ask after that good man’s health. Why is that? I remember, Exalted One, on one occasion I was leaving the great city of Vaiśālī, and the Licchavi Vimalakīrti was coming in. I paid my respects to him and said, ‘Where are you coming from, householder?’

“He said to me, ‘I am coming from the seat of awakening.’

“I replied, ‘What does this expression “seat of awakening” refer to?’

3.55 “He said to me, <sup>§</sup> “The seat of awakening, good sir, is the seat<sup>127</sup> of motivation, because it is entirely genuine. It is the seat of effort, because it carries its undertakings to completion. It is the seat of ambition, because it attains distinction. It is the seat of the aspiration to awakening, because it is not lost or forgotten. <sup>§</sup> It is the seat of generosity, because it expects no reward. It is the seat of moral conduct, because it fulfills its vows. It is the seat of patient acceptance, because its mind harbors no hostility towards any living being. It is the seat of heroic effort, because it is unstoppable in its progress. It is the seat of meditation, because its mind is workable. It is the seat of insight, because it perceives directly. <sup>§</sup> It is the seat of love, because its mind is the same towards all living beings. It is the seat of compassion, because it can endure distress. It is the seat of empathetic joy, because it is pleased by the pleasure which comes with taking pleasure

- 3.58 In the Dharma. It is the seat of serene equanimity, because it abandons like and dislike. § It is the seat of the supernormal faculties, because it has the six supernormal faculties. It is the seat of liberation, because it has no conceptual constructions. It is the seat of stratagem, because it brings living beings to spiritual maturity. It is the seat of the means of drawing others to oneself, because it embraces all living beings. It is the seat of learning, because realization in practice is its main point. It is the seat of deep reflection, because it investigates everything from the bottom up. It is the seat of the factors that contribute to awakening, because it abandons both the conditioned and the unconditioned.<sup>128</sup> It is the seat of truth, because it does not break faith with the whole world. It is the seat of dependent origination, because it eliminates the corrupting influence of ignorance and so on, until we come to: the corrupting influence of old age and death.<sup>129</sup> It is the seat of relief from all
- 3.59 defilement, because it awakens fully to things as they are. § It is the seat of all living beings, because living beings have no essence. It is the seat of all things, because it awakens fully to emptiness. It is the seat of the defeat of Māra in all his forms, because it never wavers. It is the seat of this world with its three realms, because it has nowhere else to go. It is the seat of the heroic courage with which one roars the lion's roar, because it is fearless and intrepid. It is the seat of all the qualities of a buddha, the powers, the modes of self-assurance and the unique attributes, through being in all respects blameless. It is the seat of the knowledge which comes from the threefold knowledge, through not having even a remnant of the defilements. It is the seat of the comprehension of all things without exception in a single moment of thought, through the attainment of the knowledge of an omniscient one.
- 3.60 "For so it is, good sir, that however many bodhisattvas there are, whenever they lift up their feet and put them down again to take a step<sup>130</sup> connected with the perfections, connected with bringing sentient beings to spiritual maturity, connected with embracing the True Dharma, and connected with the roots of merit, they are all of them proceeding from

the seat of awakening, they are proceeding from the teachings and the qualities of a buddha, and yet they are standing firm in the teachings and the qualities of a buddha.<sup>131</sup>

3.61 “Exalted One, as this explanation was being delivered, five hundred gods and humans conceived the aspiration to awakening. But I could think of nothing to say. That is why, Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and inquire after that good man’s health.”

3.62 Thereupon the Exalted One addressed the Bodhisattva Jagatindhara, “Jagatindhara, you go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and inquire after his health.”

Jagatindhara in his turn replied, “Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and inquire after the health of that good man. Why is that? I remember, Exalted One, on one occasion I was staying in my own dwelling,<sup>132</sup> when Māra the Evil One approached me in the guise of Śakra, with an entourage of twelve thousand celestial nymphs and heralded by music and singing. He greeted me by prostrating himself at my feet, and then stood respectfully to one side in my presence, together with his entourage. I know who this is, I thought, ‘This is Śakra, Lord of the Gods.’ So I said to him, ‘Welcome, Kauśika! You should remain vigilant in the midst of all the pleasures of the senses, you should be constantly reflecting on their impermanence and getting what is really valuable from your body, your life and your possessions.’

“He said to me, ‘Good sir, please accept these twelve thousand celestial nymphs from me, let them be your servants.’

“I said to him, ‘Kauśika, you should not offer<sup>133</sup> anything improper to ascetics who are sons of the Śākyan, for these women are indeed unsuitable for us.’

3.63 “This is the way the conversation had gone, when the Licchavi Vimalakīrti turned up. ‘Good sir,’ he said to me, ‘Don’t think that this is Śakra. This is Māra the Evil One, who has come here with the intention of doing you harm. This is not Śakra.’

“The Licchavi Vimalakīrti then said to Māra the Evil One: “Evil One, give those divine maidens to me. They are suitable for me, not for ascetics who are sons of the Śākyan.”

"Then Māra the Evil One, in fear, terror, and trepidation, tried to disappear, thinking, 'Let me not be humiliated by the Licchavi Vimalakīrti!' But even after deploying all his magical power he could not disappear. Then he heard a voice from the sky: 'Evil One, give those celestial nymphs to this good man, and then you will be able to go home.' Then Māra, in fear and terror, reluctantly gave those celestial nymphs to him.

3.64 "After accepting them, Vimalakīrti said to those celestial nymphs, 'Now that you have all been given to me by Māra the Evil One, you should conceive the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed.' Having given them a talk suitable for them and liable to make them ripe for awakening, he caused them to conceive the aspiration to awakening.

"He said to them, 'Now that you have conceived an aspiration to awakening, you should now be taking pleasure in that pleasure that comes from taking pleasure in the Dharma, not taking pleasure in the pleasures of the senses.'

"They replied, 'And what then is that pleasure that comes from taking pleasure in the Dharma?'

"He said: 'It is the pleasure of absolute trust in the Buddha; the pleasure of willingly hearing the Dharma; the pleasure of serving the Saṅgha; the pleasure of respecting and serving one's teachers; the pleasure of escaping this world with its three realms; the pleasure of not relying on the objects of the senses; the pleasure of constantly reflecting on the aggregates as murderers and as transient; the pleasure of considering the elements as venomous snakes; the pleasure of discerning the spheres of the senses as an empty village; the pleasure of guarding the aspiration to awakening; the pleasure of having the benefit of living beings as one's objective; the pleasure of sharing everything with others in one's giving; the pleasure of being scrupulous in one's moral conduct; the pleasure of being composed and self-restrained in one's exercise of patient acceptance; the pleasure of acquiring merit in one's exercise of heroic effort; the pleasure of working on one's self in the stages of meditation; the pleasure in the clarity that comes from the absence of the defilements in one's exercise



of insight; the pleasure in the expansiveness of awakening; the pleasure of defeating Māra; the pleasure of annihilating the defilements; the pleasure of purifying a buddha-domain; the pleasure of gathering together all the roots of merit in order to perfect the distinctive features and secondary marks of greatness; the pleasure of being fearless when hearing the profound Dharma; the pleasure of intensive cultivation of the three doors to liberation; the pleasure of making final release one's objective; the pleasure of adorning the seat of awakening, but not the pleasure of attainment when the time is not right; the pleasure of keeping company with kindred spirits; the pleasure of not feeling hatred for or aversion to those who are not kindred spirits; the pleasure of keeping company with companions in what is good; the pleasure of avoiding companions in what is bad; the pleasure of joy and delight in the Dharma; the pleasure of drawing others to oneself in the use of stratagems; the pleasure of carefully cultivating the thirty-seven factors that contribute to awakening. It is in this way, then, that a bodhisattva takes pleasure in that pleasure that comes from taking pleasure in the Dharma.'

3.65 "Then Māra the Evil One said to those celestial nymphs, 'Come along! Let's go home now.'

"And they said, 'You just gave us to this householder. Now we have to take pleasure in that pleasure which comes from taking pleasure in the Dharma, not take pleasure in the pleasures of the senses.'

"Then Māra the Evil One said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, 'Give up these celestial nymphs, householder! Bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas give away everything they have.'

"Vimalakīrti said, 'They are free to go. On your way, Evil One! May the legitimate aspirations of all living beings be fulfilled!'

"Then, bowing to Vimalakīrti, those celestial nymphs said, 'Householder, how are we to live in Māra's palace?'

3.66 "He replied, 'There is a particular teaching, ladies, called the Lamp with the Inexhaustible Flame, which you should practice there. What is it then? Ladies, just as the flame of a single oil-lamp can be used to light a hundred thousand lamps

and yet the flame of that lamp is not diminished, in exactly the same way, ladies, a single bodhisattva can establish many hundreds of thousands of living beings in awakening and yet he is no less mindful of his aspiration, nor is it diminished; rather, it grows. Thus, the bodhisattva grows in all the good qualities as he illuminates and demonstrates them for others. This is the particular teaching called the Lamp with the Inexhaustible Flame. When you are living in Māra's palace, you should illuminate the aspiration to awakening for countless divinities and celestial nymphs. In this way you will show your gratitude to the Realized One, and give life to all living beings.'

3.67 "Then those celestial nymphs paid their respects to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti by prostrating themselves at his feet, and left with Māra. Such were the superior miracles, Exalted One, of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, which I did not understand.<sup>134</sup> That is why, Exalted One, I couldn't possibly go and inquire after that good man's health."

3.68 Thereupon the Exalted One addressed the guildmaster's son Sudatta: "Good sir, you go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and inquire after his health."

Sudatta also said, "Exalted One, I couldn't possibly go and inquire after that good man's health. Why is that? I remember, Exalted One, when I was performing a great sacrifice in my father's house. I was giving to all the poor and unfortunate, to all ascetics and brahmins, the paupers, the beggars, and the mendicants. I had been performing that great sacrifice for seven days, when, on the seventh day, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti entered the sacrificial pavilion and said to me, 'Guildmaster's son, the sacrifice should not be performed in the way you are performing it. The sacrifice of Dharma is what you should perform. What is the point of your sacrificing food and other material things?'

"I replied, 'How, then, is the sacrifice of Dharma to be performed?'

3.69 "He said to me, § "The sacrifice of Dharma is the sacrifice by means of which one brings all living beings to maturity simultaneously, without first or last. And what is that, then? It is the

- great love which is realized by the forms awakening takes;<sup>135</sup> the great compassion which is realized by embracing the True Dharma; the great empathetic joy which is realized by focusing on the joy of all living beings; and the great equanimity which
- 3.70 is realized by embracing wisdom. § It is the perfection of generosity which is realized by calm and self-restraint; the perfection of moral conduct which is realized by bringing to maturity living beings whose conduct is immoral; the perfection of patient acceptance which is realized by the truth of the absence of self; the perfection of heroic effort which is realized by the constitutive elements of awakening;<sup>136</sup> the perfection of meditation which is realized by the solitude of the body and of the mind; and the perfection of insight which is realized by
- 3.71 the knowledge of an omniscient one. § It is the cultivation of emptiness which is realized by bringing all living beings to maturity; the cultivation of signlessness which is realized by working on the conditioned; and the cultivation of wishlessness which is realized by taking rebirth purposefully.
- 3.72 “It is the bold display of one’s powers which is realized by embracing the True Dharma. It is the vital force which is realized by the exercise of the four means of drawing others to oneself. It is the humility which is realized by being a slave and a disciple to all sentient beings. It is the acquisition of body, life and possessions which is realized by extracting the value from that which has no value. It is the mindfulness which is realized by the practice of the six recollections. It is the ambition which is realized by the forms of behavior which endear people to each other.<sup>137</sup> It is the purification of livelihood which is realized by perfect practice. It is the service one renders to the noble ones which is realized by cultivating the serene faith and joy with which one honors them. It is the deep mental absorption which is realized by the absence of hostility toward those who are not noble ones. It is the resolve which is realized by renunciation. It is the adeptness at learning the Dharma which is realized by putting it into practice. It is the life in the forest which is realized by going right to the heart of the teaching of freedom from conflict.<sup>138</sup> It is the seclusion which is realized

by the full attainment of the knowledge of a buddha. It is the stage of the adept practitioner which is realized by the practice of freeing all living beings from their defilements. § It is the bringing of living beings to maturity which is realized by having the requisite store of the distinctive features and secondary marks of greatness. It is the requisite store of merit which is realized by the adornment of a buddha-domain. It is the requisite store of knowledge which is realized by instructing living beings in the Dharma in accordance with their motivations. It is the requisite store of insight which is realized by knowledge whose sole guiding principle is the absence of any striving to acquire or reject anything at all. It is the requisite store of all the roots of merit which is realized by the abandonment of all defilements, all impediments, and all bad qualities. § It is the attainment of all the factors that contribute to awakening which is realized by the perfect understanding of the knowledge of the omniscient ones and by all their good qualities. This, good sir, is the sacrifice of Dharma, established in which bodhisattvas become performers of the proper sacrifice and worthy recipients of offerings from the whole world, including all its gods.<sup>139</sup>

“It was in this way, Exalted One, that, while the householder was instructing them, two hundred brahmins from the assembly of brahmins there conceived the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed. § I, however, filled with awe and faith, bowed down at the feet of that good man, and taking a pearl necklace worth hundreds of thousands from around my neck, I presented it to him. He did not take the pearl necklace. I said to him, ‘Take this and bestow it upon him in whom you have serene confidence.’ Taking that necklace, he divided it in two. One portion he gave to the poorest man in the city,<sup>140</sup> the one in that sacrificial hall who was despised by everybody. The other portion he gave to the Realized One Duṣprasaha, with the result that the entire assembly saw the world of Marīci, the Realized One Duṣprasaha, and the pearl necklace appearing above Duṣprasaha’s head in the form of a beautiful, multicolored peaked pavilion made of strings of

pearls, symmetrical and well proportioned with a pillar at each of its four corners.

3.76 “After displaying this miracle he said to me, ‘The sacrifice of Dharma is fulfilled when a generous donor makes a gift in a spirit of great compassion and with no expectation of reward, in the recognition that the poorest man in the city is just as worthy of gifts as the Realized One and that there is no  
3.77 difference between them.’<sup>§</sup> Then the poorest man in the city, after seeing that miracle and hearing this teaching of Dharma, conceived the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed. That is why, Exalted One, I couldn’t possibly go and inquire after that good man’s health.”

3.78 And so it was that all those bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas gave their own accounts of their exchanges and interactions with that good man, and were unwilling to go.

## Chapter 4

### A Sick Man is Consoled

4.1 **A**t that point the Exalted One addressed himself to Prince Mañjuśrī: “Mañjuśrī, you go to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and inquire after his health.”

Mañjuśrī replied, “Exalted One, this Licchavi Vimalakīrti is admittedly a difficult man to approach. He has attained inspired eloquence with regard to the profound teachings. He is adept at expressing himself with both paradoxical and perfectly straightforward statements.<sup>141</sup> His inspired eloquence never stops. Among all living beings his intelligence is unmatched. He is perfectly adept in the deeds of all bodhisattvas. He has fully penetrated the secrets of all bodhisattvas and all buddhas. He is expert at storming all the strongholds of Māra. The great supernatural faculties are child’s play for him. He has attained supreme mastery over the sphere of the totality of things which is non-dual and undivided. He teaches that things come in a splendid array of endless forms, even though the totality of things is a splendid array of one. He has the skill and knowledge to bring out in all living beings the full panoply of their abilities. He is a consummate master of stratagem. He can resolve any question that comes his way. He cannot be won over by someone who is ill-equipped. Nevertheless I will go, empowered to do so by the Buddha, and I will hold forth there to the best of my own power and ability.”

4.2 Then the thought occurred to the bodhisattvas, to the advanced disciples, to the Śākras, Brahmās, and Divine Guardians of the World, and to the divinities in that assembly: “Without doubt there is going to be a great proclamation and discussion of the Dharma<sup>142</sup> when Prince Mañjuśrī and that

good man talk to each other.” At that, eight thousand bodhisattvas, five hundred advanced disciples, and a great many Śakras, Brahmās, and Divine Guardians of the World along with a great many hundreds of thousands of divinities followed after Mañjuśrī so they could hear the Dharma. And thus Prince Mañjuśrī entered the great city of Vaiśālī with an entourage of those bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas, those advanced disciples, those Śakras, Brahmās, and Divine Guardians of the World, and those divinities.

4.3 Then the thought occurred to Vimalakīrti: “Here comes Prince Mañjuśrī with a huge entourage. What if I were to turn this house into an empty one?” And he did turn it into an empty house, so that even the gatekeeper was gone. In it there were no beds or chairs or seats to be seen, with the sole exception of the bed on which the sick man himself lay.

4.4 So Mañjuśrī together with his entourage arrived at Vimalakīrti’s house, and arriving there, he went inside. He saw that the house was empty, so that even the gatekeeper was gone. He saw neither beds nor chairs in it, with the sole exception of the bed on which Vimalakīrti lay. Then Vimalakīrti the Licchavi saw Prince Mañjuśrī and seeing him said:

“Mañjuśrī, you are both welcome and unwelcome, because the Mañjuśrī I am seeing has not come, he has not been seen or heard of before.”

Mañjuśrī replied: “That is correct, householder. As you say, once somebody has come he cannot come again, once he has gone he cannot go again. Why is that? One does not see the coming of one who has already come, nor the going of one who has already gone, and he who has been seen is not to be seen again.<sup>143</sup> § In any case, good man, is your condition tolerable?<sup>144</sup> Will you be able to get through it? Are your humors disturbed by an excess of wind? Is your illness abating rather than getting worse? The Exalted One wants to know if you are not in too much pain, not in too much distress, not too ill, if you are in good form, fit, strong and happy, if you have no complaints and are getting along comfortably.<sup>145</sup>

4.6 “Where did this illness come from, householder? How long

ago have you had it? When will it pass?"

Vimalakīrti said, "Mañjuśrī, I have had this illness for as long as there have been ignorance and the thirst for existence, and my illness will cease when all living beings become free of illness. Why is that? Because, Mañjuśrī, living beings are the reason why a bodhisattva stays in the cycle of rebirth, and the cycle of rebirth is what illness is contingent upon. The bodhisattva will get well when all living beings become free of illness.

4.7 "For example, Mañjuśrī, if the only son of a guildmaster were to become ill, his parents would become ill too, and they would continue to suffer until that only son of theirs got well. In the same way, Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva loves all living beings as if they were his only son. He becomes ill because of the illness of living beings, and gets well when all living beings get well. So when you ask, Mañjuśrī, where this illness came from, the illness of bodhisattvas comes from great compassion."

4.8 Mañjuśrī said, "Your house is empty, householder, and you don't have a single servant."

"Even all buddha-domains, Mañjuśrī, are empty."

"Empty of what?"

"Empty of emptiness."

"What is the emptiness of emptiness?"

"The emptiness of emptiness is beyond conceptual construction."<sup>146</sup>

"Can emptiness then be conceptually constructed?"

"Even that by which one conceptually constructs it is empty, and emptiness cannot construct itself."

"Householder, where is one to find emptiness?"

"Mañjuśrī, emptiness is to be found in the sixty-two false views."

"And where then are the sixty-two false views to be found?"

"They are to be found in the full liberation of a realized one."

"And where then is the full liberation of a realized one to be found?"

"It is to be found in what all living beings think and do. Moreover, Mañjuśrī, when you say, 'what of your servants?' all Māras and all rival teachers are my servants. Why is that?



Because the Māras sing the praises of the cycle of rebirth, and the cycle of rebirth is the servant of the bodhisattva. Rival teachers sing the praises of false views, but bodhisattvas are not shaken by any false views. Therefore all Māras and all rival teachers are my servants.

- 4.9 Mañjuśrī said, "What kind of illness do you appear to have, householder?"

"One that does not appear at all, being invisible."

"Does this illness affect the body or does it affect the mind?"<sup>147</sup>

"It does not affect the body, because the body is isolated and pure. It does not affect the mind, because the mind has the nature of a magical illusion."

"There are these four elements, householder. What are the four? They are the element of earth, the element of water, the element of fire, and the element of air. Which element is the problem in this case?"

- 4.10 "Mañjuśrī, it is the illness that afflicts all sentient beings that afflicts me, whichever element is implicated in it."<sup>148</sup> § Furthermore, Mañjuśrī, how should one bodhisattva comfort another bodhisattva when he is ill?"

Mañjuśrī replied, "With the body's impermanence, and not with aversion and indifference; with the body's painfulness, and not with the bliss of final release; with the body's lack of a self and with bringing other beings to maturity; with the body's being at peace, not with absolute peace; with the confession of all misdeeds, and not with the passage to the next life; with the use of one's own sickness to have compassion on other living beings who are ill; with the recollection of one's sufferings since the very beginning of time; with the recollection of what one has done for the sake of others; with keeping one's roots of merit clearly in mind; with primordial purity; with the absence of despair; and with the words, 'It is by striving continuously that you will become the king of physicians and a healer of all diseases!' This is the way one bodhisattva should comfort another bodhisattva when he is ill."

4.11 Mañjuśrī asked: “How, good sir, should a bodhisattva who is ill train his mind to think?”

Vimalakīrti replied, “As for that, Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva who is ill should train his mind to reflect in the following manner: This illness has arisen due to the effect of past deeds resulting from misperceiving things that are not true, it has arisen due to the defilements resulting from imagining things that are not real. From the point of view of ultimate truth, moreover, one cannot apprehend any real thing here which has this illness. Why? This body consists of the four elements, and these elements have no master, nor any one that sets them in motion, because this body lacks a self. This so-called ‘illness’ cannot be apprehended from the point of view of ultimate truth, except as a result of obsession with the self. Let us remain then unobsessed with the self and fully cognizant of the roots of illness. Having thus dispensed with the idea of a self, we should entertain the idea of dharmas. This body is a collection of dharmas. It’s only dharmas arising when they arise, only dharmas ceasing when they cease. But those dharmas are not aware of each other nor do they know one another. As they arise they do not think, ‘We are arising,’ as they cease they do not think, ‘We are ceasing.’

4.12 “He should conceive an aspiration to comprehend the idea of dharmas as follows:<sup>149</sup> Even this idea of dharmas is a misperception as well, and misperception is a serious illness. I ought to be free of illness and I must make an effort to eliminate illness. What then is the elimination of illness? It is the elimination of me and mine. And what is that elimination of me and mine. It is the cessation of duality. What then is the cessation of duality? It is non-involvement with oneself and with what is external to one’s self.<sup>150</sup> What then is non-involvement with oneself and with what is external to one’s self? It is being unmoved and undisturbed because of sameness.<sup>151</sup> And what is sameness? It is the sameness of final release together with the sameness of the self. Why? Both of these are empty, the self and final release. What are they empty of? They are empty as verbal designations. Both of

them are not ultimately real, the self and final release. Seeing things as the same, he should not take illness as one thing and emptiness as another. Illness is itself emptiness.

- 4.13 “He should also know that this painful feeling<sup>152</sup> is not experienced, and yet he should not realize the cessation of painful feeling as long as the qualities of a buddha have not been perfected.<sup>153</sup> He should not let go of both types of feelings, and yet he should not fail to conceive great compassion for living beings reborn in the unfortunate states of rebirth, thinking: ‘We should act in such a way as to remove the illness of living beings by reflecting upon it from the bottom up in the following way: <sup>§</sup> We are not offering them any thing nor are we removing it, but rather, we will teach them the Dharma so that they comprehend the underlying cause from which illness arises. What then is the underlying cause? The underlying cause is grasping. As long as one goes on engaging in the grasping which is the underlying cause, the underlying cause of illness persists. And what is it that one grasps? One grasps the world with its three realms. What profound knowledge comes from grasping it? It is that the object of grasping is beyond apprehension. For one does not grasp that which cannot be apprehended. And what is it that one cannot apprehend? One cannot apprehend the two views, namely, the false view of self and the false view of other. This is what is called being beyond apprehension.’

“This then, Mañjuśrī, is the way in which a bodhisattva who is ill should turn his mind to deep reflection, in order to eliminate old age, disease, death, and rebirth. And if, Mañjuśrī, the awakening of bodhisattvas were not like this, then surely their efforts would be pointless. Just as heroes are called heroes because they strike down their enemies, so too bodhisattvas are called bodhisattvas because they bring an end to the ills of old age, disease, and death.

- 4.15 “The bodhisattva who is ill should carefully consider things as follows: ‘Just as my illness is unreal and nonexistent, so too is the illness of all living beings unreal and nonexistent.’ When he considers things in this way, the great compassion for living

beings that he has is not the kind that lapses into any view as to its advantages; on the contrary, the great compassion for living beings that he has is devoted to the abandonment of adventitious defilements. Why is this? Because with the great compassion that lapses into any view as to its advantages, the bodhisattva succumbs to fatigue in his rebirths. However, with the great compassion that escapes being overwhelmed by any view as to its advantages, the bodhisattva does not succumb to fatigue in his rebirths. This one is reborn, but he is not reborn overwhelmed by any view that might overwhelm him. The one who is reborn with a mind not overwhelmed is reborn already liberated, he takes birth already liberated. And being reborn and taking birth already liberated, he is able and has what it takes to teach the Dharma in order to untie the bonds of sentient beings who are in bondage. As the Exalted One said: 'As long as one remains bound oneself, it is impossible that one could liberate someone else from bondage. However, it is possible that one who is himself liberated could liberate someone else from bondage.'<sup>154</sup> Therefore a bodhisattva should be one who is liberated, not one who is bound.

4.16 "What then is bondage? What is liberation? For a bodhisattva bondage is the assumption of the states of existence as his own which results from the lack of stratagem, while liberation is the passage through the states of existence which results from stratagem. For a bodhisattva bondage is the enjoyment of meditation and higher states of concentration which results from the lack of stratagem, while liberation is the enjoyment of meditation and higher states of concentration which is accompanied by stratagem. Insight that is not supported by stratagem is bondage; insight that is supported by stratagem is liberation. Stratagem that is not supported by insight is bondage; stratagem that is supported by insight is liberation.

4.17 "What then is the bondage that is insight unsupported by stratagem? It is reflecting deeply on emptiness, signlessness and wishlessness, and not reflecting deeply on the distinctive features and secondary marks of greatness, the adornment of the buddha-domain, and bringing living beings to maturity.

This is the bondage that is insight unsupported by stratagem. What then is the liberation that is insight supported by stratagem? It is having a mind that reflects deeply on the distinctive features and secondary marks of greatness, the adornment of the buddha-domain, and bringing living beings to maturity, as well as engaging in the intensive cultivation of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness. This is the liberation that is insight supported by stratagem. What then is the bondage that is stratagem unsupported by insight? It is the endeavor to cultivate all the roots of merit on the part of someone who is entrenched in attraction and aversion due to all the habitual tendencies surging up from mistaken views and defilements, as well as the failure to dedicate them to awakening. This is the bondage that is stratagem unsupported by insight. What then is the liberation that is stratagem supported by insight? It is the endeavor to cultivate all the roots of merit on the part of someone who has eliminated attraction and aversion due to all the habitual tendencies surging up from mistaken views and defilements, with that endeavor dedicated to awakening, yet with no excessive clinging to it. This is the liberation that is stratagem supported by insight.<sup>155</sup>

- 4.18 “In that regard, Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva who is ill should reflect deeply on these things in such a way that insight for him is whatever observation he has of the transitoriness, painfulness, emptiness and absence of self of body, of mind, and of illness, while stratagem for him is whenever he is not fatigued by the illness he carries around in his body and does not terminate the cycle of rebirth, devoted as he is to working for the benefit of living beings. Furthermore, insight for him is whenever he contemplates the succession, one after the other, of body, illness, and mind as something which does not entail that one is older or newer than the others.<sup>156</sup> Stratagem for him, on the other hand, is whenever he does not bring about the cessation which is the absolute putting to rest of body, illness, and mind.<sup>157</sup> § This is the way then, Mañjuśrī, that a bodhisattva who is ill should train his mind to reflect deeply, but he should not remain in either reflection or the absence of
- 4.19

reflection. Why? Because if one were to remain in the absence of reflection, it would be the practice of fools, but if one were to remain in reflection, it would be the practice of the advanced disciples. Therefore a bodhisattva remains neither in reflection nor in the absence of reflection.<sup>158</sup> Not remaining in either is the bodhisattva's field of action.

4.20 "When it is neither the field of action of ordinary people nor that of the noble ones, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of the cycle of rebirth and yet not that of the defilements, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of reflecting upon final release and yet not that of absolute final release, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of the manifestation of the four Māras along with that of being beyond the range of Māra in all his forms, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of the quest for omniscient knowledge and yet not that of the premature attainment of knowledge,<sup>159</sup> that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of knowing the Four Truths and yet not that of seeing through the truths prematurely,<sup>160</sup> that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of deep introspection and that of deliberately accepting existence and rebirth, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of contemplating birthlessness and yet not that of attaining confirmation of liberation, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of dependent origination and that of being free from all views, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of associating with all living beings and yet not that of defilements and habitual tendencies, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of solitary introspection and yet not that of simple reliance on the cessation of mental and bodily functions, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of this world with its three realms and yet not that in which the totality of all things is divisible, that is the bodhisattva's field of action.

“When it is the field of action of emptiness and that of striving for virtuous qualities of all kinds, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of signlessness {motivelessness}<sup>161</sup> and that of deliberating upon the specific object of liberating other living beings, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of wishlessness and that of deliberate appearance in the realms of existence, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of effortlessness and yet that of the incessant effort to produce all the roots of merit, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of the six perfections and that of being thoroughly familiar with the ways that all sentient beings think and act, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of the six recollections, and yet not that of the elimination of all the corrupting influences, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of relying on the True Dharma and not that of cleaving to the wrong path, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action.

“When it is the field of action of the six supernormal faculties and yet not that of the elimination of the corrupting influences, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of the four boundless states and yet not that of undergoing rebirth in the heavens of the Brahmā deities, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of the meditations, the concentrations and the absorptions and yet not that of taking rebirth as a result of the concentrations and the absorptions, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of the applications of mindfulness<sup>162</sup> and yet not that of excessive preoccupation with body, feeling, states of mind and objects of thought, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of the right efforts and yet not that of perceiving good and bad as two different things, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of working magic and that of effortless mastery of magic, that is the bodhisattva’s field of action. When it is the field of action of the five spiritual

faculties and that of knowing the relative quality of the faculties of all living beings, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of relying on the five powers and that of manifesting the ten powers of a realized one, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of perfecting the seven constitutive elements of awakening and that of being conversant with the analytical knowledge of a buddha,<sup>163</sup> that is the bodhisattva's field of action.

"When it is the field of action of standing firm on the path and that of not cleaving to any wrong path, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of striving to equip oneself fully with calm and introspection and yet not that of falling into extreme quietude, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of considering all things as characterized by non-production and yet that of perfecting a buddha's physical body adorned with the distinctive features and secondary marks of greatness, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of displaying the behavior of advanced disciples and solitary buddhas and that of not relinquishing the qualities of a buddha, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of understanding all things as having the nature of absolute purity and that of displaying the behavior of all other living beings in such a way as to conform with their predilections, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of considering that all buddha-domains are, like space, in essence absolutely devoid of evolving or devolving and yet that of showing themselves arraying buddha-domains with splendid qualities, so as to endow them with manifold and multiple splendors, that is the bodhisattva's field of action. When it is the field of action of showing themselves setting the wheel of Dharma in motion and reaching the great moment of final release and yet that of not abandoning the course of conduct of a bodhisattva, that is the bodhisattva's field of action."<sup>164</sup>

As this exposition was being given, eight thousand of the deities who had come with Prince Mañjuśrī conceived



the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed.

## Chapter 5

# The State of Inconceivable Freedom is Revealed

5.1 **T**he Venerable Śāriputra then thought to himself, “Where are these bodhisattvas going to sit, and these great advanced disciples? There are no seats in this house.” At which point the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, knowing what was going on in the Venerable Śāriputra’s mind, said to the Venerable Śāriputra, “Has the Reverend Śāriputra come wanting the Dharma, or wanting a seat.”

“We have come wanting the Dharma, not wanting a seat.”

5.2 Vimalakīrti said, “Precisely, Reverend Śāriputra—someone who wants the Dharma does not even care about his own body, so how then could he want a seat? Reverend Śāriputra, someone who wants the Dharma does not want form, feeling, conception, conditioning or consciousness, nor does he want the aggregates, the elements, or the spheres of the senses. Someone who wants the Dharma does not want the realm of desire, the realm of pure bodily form, or the incorporeal realm, nor does he want any attachment to the Buddha or any attachment to the Dharma and to the Saṅgha. § Moreover, Reverend Śāriputra, someone who wants the Dharma does not want to fully understand suffering, does not want to eliminate what gives rise to it, does not want to realize its cessation, and does not want to cultivate the path. Why is this so? It is because the Dharma is beyond ideation and is beyond words, in which case anybody who entertains the idea ‘I will understand suffering fully, I will eliminate what gives rise to it, I will realize its cessation, and I will cultivate the path!’ is not someone who wants

the Dharma, he is someone who wants to entertain ideas. Reverend Śāriputra, it is because the Dharma is completely at peace, in which case those who occupy themselves with arising and passing away are not those who want the Dharma, who want solitude and discernment, but are those who want arising and passing away. It is because the Dharma is pure and free of any stain of passion, in which case those who are passionate about any dharma whatsoever, even about final release, are not those who want the Dharma, they are those who want the stain of passion. It is because the Dharma is not within the range of the senses, including thought. Those who think of it in terms of the objects of the senses are not those who want the Dharma, they are those who want the objects of the senses. The Dharma is beyond acceptance or rejection. Those who receive or forsake the Dharma are not those who want the Dharma, they are those who want to take up or let go.

- 5.4        “The Dharma does not have anything on which it rests. Those who take pleasure in having something to rest on are not those who want the Dharma, they are those who want something to rest on. The Dharma has no distinguishing marks. Those whose consciousness focuses on distinguishing marks are not those who want the Dharma, they are those who want distinguishing marks. The Dharma is not something one can settle down with. Those who settle down with the Dharma are not those who want the Dharma, they are those who want to settle down. The Dharma is not something which is seen, heard, thought or cognized. Those who occupy themselves with things which are seen, heard, thought and cognized are not those who want the Dharma, they are those who want things which are seen, heard, thought and cognized. § Reverend Śāriputra, the Dharma is unconditioned, devoid of anything conditioned. Those whose field of action is the conditioned are not those who want the Dharma, they are those who want to hold on to conditioned things. Therefore, Reverend Śāriputra, in this case, if you wish to be someone who wants the Dharma, you should be someone who does not want any things (dharma) at all.”<sup>165</sup>

While this exposition of the Dharma was being delivered, five hundred deities had their Dharma-eye purified with regard to all things.

- 5.6 Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti addressed himself to Prince Mañjuśrī, “Mañjuśrī, you travel to countless hundreds of thousands of buddha-domains in all ten directions. In which buddha-domain, then, have you seen the best lion thrones of all, with every possible good quality?”

At this, Prince Mañjuśrī replied to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “There is, good sir, a world called Merudhvajā in the direction of the east, lying beyond buddha-domains as numerous as the grains of sand in thirty-six Ganges Rivers. In that place there lives, dwells and resides a realized, truly worthy and perfectly awakened one by the name of Merupradīparāja. That realized one has a body which is 8,400,000 leagues tall; that exalted one has a lion throne which is 6,800,000 leagues high. The bodhisattvas there also have bodies which are 4,200,000<sup>166</sup> leagues tall; those bodhisattvas have lion thrones which are 3,400,000 leagues high. The lion thrones in the world-system Merudhvajā, the buddha-domain of the Exalted One, the Realized One Merupradīparāja, are the best of all, with every possible good quality.”

- 5.7 Then, at that moment, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti put his mind into such a state of concentration and deployed his magical powers in such a way that 3,200,000 lion thrones were sent from the world-system of Merudhvajā by the Exalted One, the Realized One Merupradīparāja—lion thrones much taller, wider, and more beautiful than any the bodhisattvas, the advanced disciples, Śakra, Brahmā, the Divine Guardians of the World, and the deities had ever seen before.<sup>167</sup> Traveling through the sky above, they settled in the house of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, and the house appeared to expand to the point where it could accommodate those 3,200,000 beautiful thrones without their being squeezed together or spilling out over the great city of Vaiśālī, over Jambūdvīpa, over all the four continents. Afterwards these all looked exactly as they had before.

- 5.8 The Licchavi Vimalakīrti then said to Prince Mañjuśrī, “Take a seat, Mañjuśrī, on a lion throne, you and these bodhisattvas too. Transform your bodies magically so that they are the right size for these lion thrones.” At that the bodhisattvas who had attained the six supernormal faculties transformed their bodies magically to a height of 4,200,000 leagues and took their seats on those lion thrones, but the bodhisattvas who were beginners could not sit on the lion thrones.

Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti addressed himself to the Venerable Śāriputra, “Reverend Śāriputra, please take your seat on a lion throne.”

“Good man, I am not able to take a seat: these lion thrones are too high and elevated.”<sup>168</sup>

“In that case, Reverend Śāriputra, you should bow to the Exalted One, the Realized One Merupradīparāja, and then you will be able to take a seat.” The great advanced disciples then bowed to the Exalted One, the Realized One Merupradīparāja, and after that took their seats on the lion thrones.

- 5.9 The Venerable Śāriputra then said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “It is a wonder, good sir, that so many thousands of these lion thrones—so high, so elevated, so beautiful—can fit into a house as small as this, without spilling out over the great city of Vaiśālī, without spilling out over Jambūdvīpa, over its villages, towns, cities, countries, kingdoms, and royal capitals, over all the four continents, without spilling out over the realms of the gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras and mahoragas, and yet afterwards things look just as they did before.”

- 5.10 Vimalakīrti said, “For realized ones and bodhisattvas, Reverend Śāriputra, there is a state of freedom which goes by the name ‘inconceivable.’ A bodhisattva securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom could insert Sumeru, the king of mountains—as high, as elevated, as lofty and as wide as it is—into a mustard seed, without making the mustard seed bigger or Sumeru smaller, and he could manifest this feat without the deities of the realm of the Four Great Kings or those of Trayastriṃśa wondering where they have been

put, even though other beings whom the extraordinary feat is intended to train would know and see that Sumeru, the king of mountains, has entered a mustard seed. This, Reverend Śāriputra, is what happens when one enters the domain of the bodhisattvas' state of inconceivable freedom.

5.11       “Moreover, Reverend Śāriputra, a bodhisattva securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom could pour all the water of the four great oceans into a single pore of his skin without any harm coming to the fish, tortoises, porpoises, frogs or other aquatic animals and without the nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas and asuras wondering where they have been put. One would still know that this is happening, but no living being would suffer injury or harm

5.12       “He could also pick up this cosmos of a billion worlds with his right hand as if it were a potter's wheel, and send it spinning beyond worlds as numerous as the grains of sand in the River Ganges, and yet beings would not know where they had been taken or where they had come from. What is more, he could retrieve it and put it back where it belonged without their being aware that they had gone anywhere or come back, but one would still see that this is happening.

5.13       “Moreover, Reverend Śāriputra, there are living beings who need a limitless amount of time in the cycle of rebirth to be trained, as well as beings who need only a limited amount of time in the cycle of rebirth to be trained. In this regard a bodhisattva securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom could make a week seem like the passage of an eon for the purpose of training living beings who need a limitless amount of time in the cycle of rebirth to be trained, and he could make an eon seem like the passage of a week for the purpose of training living beings who need only a limited amount of time in the cycle of rebirth to be trained. Then living beings who need a limitless amount of time in the cycle of rebirth to be trained would perceive the passage of a week as the passage of an eon, while living beings who need only a limited amount of time in the cycle of rebirth to be trained would perceive the passage of an eon as the passage of a week.

- 5.14 “Likewise, the bodhisattva securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom could display within a single buddha-domain the manifold splendors of all buddha-domains. Alternatively, placing all beings in the palm of his right hand, he could travel with the magical ability of the speed of thought and show them through all buddha-domains, without moving from the one buddha-domain. He could display in a single pore of his skin all the acts of offering made to the exalted buddhas in all the ten directions. He could display in a single pore of his skin all the suns, moons and stars in the ten directions. He could suck into his mouth all the great whirlwinds blowing beneath the worlds in all the ten directions, and yet his body would remain unchanged, and the grass and the trees in that buddha-domain would remain standing.
- 5.15 “He could also put into his mouth the whole flaming mass formed when the cataclysmic blaze at the end of the kalpa incinerates the buddha-domains of the ten directions, and that blaze would still go on doing its work. He could also pick up a buddha-domain from the nether regions, down past buddha-domains as numerous as the millions of grains of sand in the River Ganges, and place it in the upper regions, beyond buddha-domains as numerous as the millions of grains of sand in the River Ganges, as easily as a strong man might pick up a
- 5.16 jujube leaf with the point of a needle. <sup>§</sup> Similarly a bodhisattva securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom could magically transform all beings so that they assume the
- 5.17 forms of universal emperors and the like. <sup>§</sup> For all living beings in the ten directions, be they inferior, average or superior, he could magically transform the voices with which they speak and the utterances they make, no matter how many there are, into the voices and utterances of all the buddhas, calling forth from the sounds of those voices and utterances the sounds of the words ‘transitory,’ ‘painful,’ ‘empty,’ and ‘devoid of self,’ and then calling forth from those voices and utterances all the expositions of various kinds by which the exalted buddhas teach the Dharma in the ten directions.

5.18 “This, Reverend Śāriputra, is just a cursory description of the range of activities which bodhisattvas securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom can undertake. However, Reverend Śāriputra, it would take me an eon or more than an eon—or even longer than that—to describe the full<sup>169</sup> range of activities which bodhisattvas securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom can undertake.”

5.19 Now, when he heard about the bodhisattvas’ state of inconceivable freedom, the Elder Mahākāśyapa was amazed, and he said to the Elder Śāriputra, “Venerable Śāriputra, just as someone might want to show visible forms of all kinds to a person blind from birth, but that person blind from birth would not be able to see even one of them, even when they are right in front of him, in the same way, Venerable Śāriputra, when this state of inconceivable freedom is explained, all the advanced disciples and solitary buddhas, like people blind from birth, have no eyes to see and cannot even perceive the one thing that is the cause of the inconceivable. Indeed, what wise person, on hearing about the state of inconceivable freedom, would not conceive the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed? Given that our faculties are totally ruined, like seeds burnt to cinders, and we are unfit vessels for this Great Way, what then are we going to do? When they hear this exposition of the Dharma, the advanced disciples and solitary buddhas are likely to announce it to the world-system of a thousand million worlds with their wailing, while all the bodhisattvas, rejoicing when they hear about the state of inconceivable freedom, will surely accept it, placing it respectfully on their heads,<sup>170</sup> and feel a powerful sense of confidence in it. What can Māra in any of his forms do to someone who has such confidence in the state of inconceivable freedom?”

When the Elder Mahākāśyapa made this declaration, 32,000 deities conceived the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed.

5.20 Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the Elder Mahākāśyapa, “Reverend Mahākāśyapa, however many Māras



there may be, doing what Māras do, in the innumerable world-systems in the ten directions, in most cases they are bodhisattvas securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom, using their mastery of stratagem to do what Māras do in order to bring living beings to maturity.<sup>171</sup> Reverend Mahākāśyapa, however many supplicants<sup>172</sup> there are, in innumerable worlds throughout the ten directions, making requests of bodhisattvas, harrassing them with requests for hands and feet, for ears and noses, for blood and sinews, for bones and marrow, for eyes, for heads, for arms and legs and fingers and toes, for kingdoms, realms and countries, for wives, sons and daughters, for male and female slaves, for horses, elephants, chariots and conveyances, for anything in the way of jewels or precious substances, like gold, gems, pearls, beryls, conch shells, crystals, and corals, for food, drink and tasty things, or for clothing,<sup>173</sup> in most cases these supplicants are bodhisattvas securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom, using their mastery of stratagem to demonstrate how strong one's ambition can be. Why is that? Reverend Mahākāśyapa, bodhisattvas can make such a demonstration because their austerity is formidable. After all, an ordinary person is incapable of harrassing a bodhisattva, unless afforded the occasion or the opportunity to do so.<sup>174</sup> Reverend Mahākāśyapa, just as a firefly is unable to outshine the light of the sun, so too, Reverend Mahākāśyapa, an ordinary person is unable to approach a bodhisattva or make requests of him, unless afforded the opportunity by him to do so. Reverend Mahākāśyapa, just as a donkey is incapable of fighting an elephant, so too, Reverend Mahākāśyapa, someone who is not a bodhisattva is incapable of harrassing a bodhisattva. Only a bodhisattva is capable of harrassing a bodhisattva.

"This, Reverend Mahākāśyapa, is how bodhisattvas securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom deploy the power that comes from their knowledge of stratagem."

## Chapter 6

### The Goddess

6.1 **P**rince Mañjuśrī then said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “Good man, how should a bodhisattva regard all beings?”

“A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as a wise man would look upon the moon reflected in the water. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as someone would look upon their face in a mirror. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the water in a mirage. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as a magician would look upon a man magically created by a magician. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the sound of an echoing voice. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to clouds towering in the sky. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to a clump of foam just as it takes shape. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the appearance and disappearance of bubbles of water. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the core of a banana tree. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the track of lightning through the sky. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to a fifth element. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to a seventh sense. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the appearance of bodily form in the incorporeal realms. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the sprouting of shoots from burnt seeds. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as

comparable to a garment made of frog's hair. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to a dead man's enjoyment of sex play. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to a stream-winner's false view of the existence of a real person. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to a once-returner's third rebirth. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to a non-returner's conception in a womb. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the desire, hatred, and delusion in a truly worthy one. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to thoughts of meanness, wickedness, malice, and cruelty in a bodhisattva who has attained the states of acceptance. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the lingering traces of the defilements in a realized one. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the ability to see shapes of a person blind from birth. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to breathing on the part of someone totally absorbed in the state in which all functions have ceased. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the tracks a bird leaves in the sky. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the erection of a eunuch. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the son of a barren woman. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to defilements arising in a phantom created by a realized one.<sup>175</sup> A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to continuing to see a dream after one has awakened from it. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to defilements in someone who does not engage in conceptual constructions. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to a fire burning without any fuel. A bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, should look upon all beings as comparable to the rebirth of someone who has won final release. For this, Mañjuśrī, is how a bodhisattva should look upon all beings."

6.2 “Good sir, if a bodhisattva should look upon all beings in this way, how then can he have great love for all living beings?”

“Whenever, Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva looks upon them with the thought: ‘It is up to me to teach the Dharma in such a way that these beings comprehend the Dharma,’ then he feels the love which is true and protective of others because it has no object, the love which lays everything to rest because it causes nothing to arise, the love which is free from pain because it is free from affliction, the love which is the way it should be because it is the same in the three times, the love which knows no opposition because it is not obsessed with anything, the love which is free of all duality because what pertains to self and what is outside it are fused together, the love which is unshakable because it is absolutely stable, the love which is rock-solid because its resolve is unbreakable, being as adamant as the thunderbolt, the love which is pure because its very nature is pure, the love which is the same everywhere, because it is like space, the love of a truly worthy one because it strikes enemies down, the love of a bodhisattva because it never rests from bringing living beings to maturity, the love of a realized one because it understands things as they really are, the love of a buddha, an awakened one, because it awakens beings from their sleep, the love of a truly independent one because it reaches complete awakening by itself, the love of awakening because for it the taste of everything is the same, the love which is free of false attribution because it abandons attraction and aversion, the love of great compassion because it sheds light on the Great Way, the love which is untiring because of the contemplation of emptiness and the absence of self, the love which consists in the giving of the Dharma because it does not hold it in a teacher’s closed fist, the love which consists in moral conduct because it looks after immoral beings, the love which consists in patient acceptance because it guards<sup>176</sup> self and other, the love which consists in heroic effort because it bears the burden of all beings, the love which consists in meditation because it does not savor the taste of it, the love which consists in insight because it brings attainment

at the right time, the love which consists in stratagem because it manifests itself facing in all directions, the love which does nothing for show because of the purity of its motivation, the love which is without guile because it comes from the heart, the love which is one's highest ambition because there is no evil in it, the love which is without deception because there is nothing false in it, the love which consists in happiness because it is the foundation of the happiness of a buddha. This, Mañjuśrī, is the great love of a bodhisattva."

6.3 "What then is his great compassion?"

"He gives away to all living beings the roots of merit from each and every thing he does."

"What then is his great empathetic joy?"

"When he gives anything, he is delighted and has no regrets."

"What then is his great serene equanimity?"

"Dedication to the benefit of both self and other."

6.4 "When afraid of the perils of the cycle of rebirth, what should he have recourse to?"<sup>177</sup>

"When afraid of the perils of the cycle of rebirth, Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva should have recourse to the greatness of a buddha."

"If he wishes to depend on the greatness of a buddha, on what should he depend?"

"If he wishes to depend on the greatness of a buddha, he should depend on the sameness of all living beings."

"If he wishes to depend on the sameness of all living beings, on what should he depend?"

"If he wishes to depend on the sameness of all living beings, he should depend on working for the liberation of all living beings."

6.5 "If he wishes to bring about the liberation of all living beings, what should he do?"

"If he wishes to bring about the liberation of all living beings, he should bring about liberation from the defilements."

"If he wishes to get rid of the defilements, how should he exert himself?"

"If he wishes to get rid of the defilements, he should exert himself thoroughly."

"How then does one exerting himself become someone who exerts himself thoroughly?"

"He exerts himself thoroughly when he exerts himself so as not to give rise to anything or bring anything to an end."

"What does he not give rise to? What does he not bring to an end?"

"He does not give rise to evil, he does not bring good to an end."

"And what is the root and basis of good and evil?"

"The false view of the existence of a real person is the basis."

"And what then is the basis of the false view of the existence of a real person?"

"Desire and craving are the basis of the false view of the existence of a real person."

"What is the basis of desire and craving?"

"Imagining things that are not real is the basis of desire and craving."

6.6 "What is the basis of imagining things that are not real?"

"Misrecognition is the basis of imagining things that are not real."

"What is the basis of misrecognition?"

"The absence of a foundation is the basis of misrecognition."

"What is the basis of the absence of a foundation?"

"What could be the basis, Mañjuśrī, of the absence of a foundation? So it is that all things are founded on the basis of the absence of a foundation."<sup>178</sup>

6.7 At that time the goddess who lived in that house heard this exposition of the Dharma by those bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas and was delighted, excited, and enraptured by it. Showing herself in a physical body, she showered those mahāsattvas and those great advanced disciples with celestial flowers. But as they rained down, those flowers that fell on the bodhisattvas' bodies ended up on the ground, while those

that fell on the bodies of the great advanced disciples stuck to them and did not fall to the ground. Consequently the great advanced disciples invoked their magical and marvelous powers to get rid of those flowers, but they still would not fall.

6.8 Then the goddess said to the Venerable Śāriputra, “Reverend Śāriputra, why are you trying to get rid of these flowers?”

“Goddess, these flowers are in bad form.<sup>179</sup> That is why I am trying to remove them.”

The goddess said, “Do not say this, Reverend Śāriputra. Why? These flowers are in good form. What is the reason? It is because these flowers do not form ideas, nor do they form conceptions. The elder Śāriputra, on the other hand, forms ideas and conceptions. Those, Reverend Śāriputra, who form ideas and conceptions about a renunciant life in the Dharma and Discipline which have been well taught are guilty of bad form, and still the elder forms ideas and conceptions. Those, on the other hand, who neither form ideas nor form conceptions are doing what is in good form. Look, Reverend Śāriputra—the flowers are not sticking to the bodies of these mahāsat-tvas. This is because they have completely got rid of ideas and conceptions. Just as, for example, non-humans find ways of getting at a person of a timorous nature, so too do visible form, sound, smell, taste and touch get at those who are afraid of the terrors of the cycle of rebirth. But what can visible form, sound, smell, taste and touch do to those who are free of all the terror and affliction of the cycle of rebirth? Flowers stick to the bodies of those who have not got rid of the lingering traces of karma. Consequently they do not stick to the bodies of those who have got rid of all the lingering traces of karma.”

6.9 The Venerable Śāriputra then said to the goddess, “Goddess, how long have you been in this house?”

“As long as the Elder has been in the state of noble liberation.”

“Goddess, you can’t have been in this house for very long.”

“How long then has the Elder been in the state of noble liberation?”

At that the Elder fell silent.

"Why does the Elder, first among those of great insight, fall silent at this point and fail to answer this timely question."

"Liberation is beyond speech, Goddess, so I do not know what to say."

"Every single word the Elder utters is expressive of liberation and marked by it. Why is this? Liberation, after all, is not to be apprehended as something internal, external, or somewhere between the two. So it is with words too. Therefore, Reverend Śāriputra, do not define liberation by excluding words. Why is this? Liberation is the sameness of all things."

"Surely, Goddess, liberation comes from the cessation of greed, hatred and delusion."

The goddess said, "This is the teaching of conceited people, that liberation comes from the cessation of greed, hatred and delusion. For those who are free of conceit, the nature of liberation is nothing but greed, hatred and delusion."

6.10 Then the Venerable Śāriputra said to the goddess, "Well said, Goddess, well said! What have you attained, what have you realized, to have such inspired eloquence?"

"Reverend Śāriputra, I have not attained or realized anything, and that is why I have such inspired eloquence. Those who think that they have attained or realized anything<sup>180</sup> are said to be conceited about the Dharma and Discipline which have been well taught."

6.11 "Goddess, are you a follower of the way of the advanced disciples, or a follower of the way of the solitary buddhas, or a follower of the Great Way?"

6.12 "I am a follower of the way of the advanced disciples since I teach the way of the advanced disciples; I am a follower of the way of the solitary buddhas since I understand the law of dependence; I am a follower of the Great Way since I do not abandon great compassion. <sup>§</sup> Be that as it may, Reverend Śāriputra, those who go into a forest of champaks<sup>181</sup> do not smell the scent of the flowers of castor-oil plants. Once they are in the champak forest, they only smell the scent of champaks. In just the same way, Reverend Śāriputra, the residents of this



house, redolent as it is of the qualities and virtues of buddhas, cannot smell the scent of advanced disciples and solitary buddhas. Reverend Śāriputra, all who come into this house—Śakra, Brahmā and the Divine Guardians of the World, the gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras and mahoragas—they all leave with the aspiration to awakening aroused by hearing this good man's teaching of the Dharma, redolent as it is of the qualities and virtues of buddhas. I have been a resident for twelve years, Reverend Śāriputra, and I have never heard any talk concerning advanced disciples and solitary buddhas. On the contrary, I have heard nothing but talk concerning great love and great compassion, concerning the inconceivable Dharma.

- 6.13 "Here in this house, Reverend Śāriputra, eight wonderful and marvelous things are constantly and continually to be seen. What are the eight? In this house one can't tell night from day; it is always lit up by a golden light. Here one can't make out the sun and the moon; they do not shine. This is the first wonderful and marvelous thing. Further, Reverend Śāriputra, all those who come into this house cease to be troubled by any of the defilements from the moment they step inside. This is the second wonderful and marvelous thing.<sup>182</sup> Further, Reverend Śāriputra, this house is never without Śakras, Brahmās, Divine Guardians of the World, and bodhi-sattvas gathering together from other buddha-domains. This is the third wonderful and marvelous thing. Further, Reverend Śāriputra, this house is never without the hearing of the Dharma, without talk concerning the six perfections and without talk about the teaching which is unstoppable in its progress.<sup>183</sup> This is the fourth wonderful and marvelous thing. Further, Reverend Śāriputra, in this house there is the playing of instruments and the singing of songs, the making of music, human and divine, and from the instruments flows the sound of the words of the Dharma, endlessly and at all times. This is the fifth wonderful and marvelous thing. Further, Reverend Śāriputra, there are in this house four huge and inexhaustible stores of treasure, overflowing with all types of precious

things to such a degree that all poor and wretched beings can take what they want and go on their way, without the treasure ever running out. This is the sixth wonderful and marvelous thing. Further, Reverend Śāriputra, as soon as this good man wishes it, the countless realized ones of the ten directions come to this house, with Śākyamuni, Amitābha, Akṣobhya, Ratnaśrī, Ratnārcis, Ratnacandra, Ratnavyūha, Duḥprasaha, Sarvārthasiddha, Prabhūtaratna, Siṃhanādanādin, and Siṃhaghoṣa being foremost among them.<sup>184</sup> They come, they teach the particular way of accessing the Dharma entitled 'The Secret of the Realized Ones,' and then they go on their way. This is the seventh wonderful and marvelous thing. Further, Reverend Śāriputra, in this house can be seen the entire panoply of splendours of the celestial mansions and the entire panoply of the splendid qualities of all buddha-domains. This is the eighth wonderful and marvelous thing.

"These, Reverend Śāriputra, are the eight wonderful and marvelous things which are constantly and continually to be seen in this house. Why is that?<sup>185</sup> Who, seeing the inconceivable nature of these things, would wish for advanced discipleship?"

6.14 "Goddess, why don't you stop being a woman?"

"Despite the fact that for twelve long years I have searched for femaleness, I have not found it. Reverend Śāriputra, if someone were to ask a woman conjured up<sup>186</sup> by a magician 'Why don't you stop being a woman?' what would she<sup>187</sup> say?"

"She is not truly real."

"In the very same way, Reverend Śāriputra, all things are not fully real and have the nature of magical illusions. That being so, how could you think of asking 'Why don't you stop being a woman?'"

6.15 Then the goddess worked a magical transformation such that the Elder Śāriputra assumed the appearance of the goddess, and the goddess assumed the appearance of the elder. The goddess in the shape of Śāriputra then asked Śāriputra in the shape of the goddess, "Reverend Śāriputra, why don't you stop being a woman?"

Śāriputra in the shape of the goddess replied: "I don't

know what to stop. My male form has vanished and the female form has appeared."

"If the Elder could stop being a woman, then all women could also stop being women. Just as the Elder is not a woman and appears as a woman, so too with the female appearance of all women as well: they too are not women, but appear in the shape of women. This is what the Exalted One meant when he said 'Among all the things that really exist there is no woman and no man.'"

The goddess then put an end to the magical transformation so that the Venerable Śāriputra reverted to his original appearance. Then the goddess said to the Venerable Śāriputra, "Reverend Śāriputra, what have you done with your female form? Where has it gone?"<sup>188</sup>

"I have not done anything with it, nor have I undone it."

"In the very same way, all things are neither done nor undone, and that according to which there is no doing or undoing is the Buddha's word."

6.16 "Once you pass away from here, goddess, where will you be reborn?"

"Wherever a man conjured up by the Realized One is reborn, that's where I will be reborn."

"A man conjured up by the Realized One neither passes away nor is he reborn."

"It is exactly the same with all things: they neither pass away nor are they reborn."

"How long then will it be, goddess, before you awaken fully to awakening?"

"When the Elder comes to have the qualities of an ordinary person, I will awaken fully to awakening."

"Goddess, it is impossible that I should come to have the qualities of an ordinary person."

"Just so, Reverend Śāriputra, it is impossible that I should awaken fully to awakening. What is the reason for that? It is because awakening lies precisely in what is impossible, is nowhere to be found. For that reason nobody could awaken fully to that which is impossible, is nowhere to be found."

The Elder said, "The Realized One, goddess, has said, 'Realized ones as numerous as the grains of sand in the River Ganges have become fully awakened, are becoming fully awakened, and will become fully awakened.'"

The goddess said, "The expression 'past, present and future buddhas,' Reverend Śāriputra, is a conventional designation resulting from verbal and computational usage. The buddhas, however, are not past, present or future, because awakening transcends the three times. Now then, has the Elder attained the state of a truly worthy one?"

"I have attained it because there is no attainment."

"In just the same way, full awakening happens because there is no full awakening."

6.17 Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the Venerable Śāriputra, "Reverend Śāriputra, this goddess has served ninety-two million buddhas; her knowledge of the supernormal faculties makes them child's play for her; her vows have raised her to a position of eminence; she has attained all the states of acceptance; and she has reached the point of being unstoppable in her progress. Because of her vows, she remains as long as she wants to bring living beings to maturity."

## Chapter 7

### The Lineage of the Realized Ones

7.1 **T**hen Prince Mañjuśrī said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “Good sir, how does the bodhisattva take the path that ends in mastering the qualities of a buddha?”

“Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva takes the path that ends in mastering the qualities of a buddha when he takes the wrong path.”<sup>189</sup>

“But what does it mean to say that the bodhisattva takes the wrong path?”

“He takes the path of the five sins entailing immediate retribution, and yet he is not corrupted by malice and cruelty. He takes the path of rebirth in the hells, and yet he is free of all stain and defilement. He takes the path of rebirth as an animal, and yet he is free of the darkness of ignorance. He takes the path of rebirth as an asura, and yet he is free of conceit, arrogance and pride. He takes the path of rebirth in the realm of Yama,<sup>190</sup> and yet he has acquired all the provisions of merit and knowledge. He takes the path of rebirth in the realm of pure bodily form and in the even higher realms where there is no movement, and yet he does not take those realms as his goal. He takes the path of passion, and yet he remains free of passion for any object of sensual enjoyment. He takes the path of hatred, and yet he is not averse to any thing whatsoever.<sup>191</sup> He takes the path of delusion, and yet his mind approaches all things with insight and deep reflection. He takes the path of stinginess, and yet he gives away everything, his property and his own person alike, with complete disregard for life and limb. He takes the path of the immoral, and yet he remains firm in his practice of all forms of moral conduct, of all the

precepts, of the stricter ascetic practices and total abstinence, seeing danger in even the slightest cause for reproach. He takes the path of malice, harshness and anger, and yet he remains in a constant state of love, his thoughts absolutely free of malice. He takes the path of indolence, and yet he is devoted to seeking all the roots of merit, exerting himself with heroic effort which is inexhaustible. He takes the path of distraction, and yet he never loses his meditative concentration, being naturally in a state of absorption. He takes the path of dull-wittedness, and yet he is proficient in all forms of learning, both worldly and transcendental, having mastered the perfection of insight. He takes the path of acting in an ostentatious and boastful manner, and yet he is adept at acting with a mastery of stratagem and is proficient in the use of language with a deeper meaning. He displays a haughty manner, and yet he is a bridge and a means of crossing over for the whole world. He takes the path of the defilements, and yet he is naturally pure and utterly unstained. He takes the path of the Māras, and yet with respect to all the qualities and teachings of a buddha he is subject to nobody else. He takes the path of the advanced disciples, and yet he is able to make other sentient beings hear truths they have not yet heard. He takes the path of solitary buddhas, and yet he masters great compassion in order to bring other sentient beings to maturity. He takes the path of the indigent, and yet his hands are full of treasure and his wealth is inexhaustible. He takes the path of the crippled and defective, and yet, being adorned with all the distinctive features of greatness, he is most handsome. He takes the path of those born in low-class families, and yet he is born into the family and lineage of the realized ones, with stocks of merit and wisdom already accumulated. He takes the path of the weak, the ugly and the deformed, and yet he has obtained the body of a Nārāyaṇa and is attractive to all sentient beings. He displays the demeanor of the old, the weak and the sick, and yet he has completely eliminated all illness and transcended the fear of death. He displays the behavior of the wealthy, and yet he constantly reflects on the notion of transitoriness and

has put a stop to all forms of acquisitiveness. The bodhisattva makes a show of watching the arrays of dancing girls in his seraglio, and yet, having crossed over to the other side of the swamp of desires, he wanders in the homeless life. He takes the path of the dull-witted, and yet he is graced with inspired eloquence that is brilliant, and is in full possession of mental retentiveness and the formulae which support it. He takes the path of the teachers of false paths to liberation, and yet he is worthy of honor as the true way to liberation. He takes everybody's path, and yet he has turned away from all paths. He takes the path of final release, and yet he does not interrupt the flow of the cycle of rebirth. This is the way, Mañjuśrī, in which the bodhisattva takes the wrong path, and yet takes the path that ends in mastering the qualities of a buddha."

7.2 Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti asked Prince Mañjuśrī, "What, Mañjuśrī, is the lineage of the realized ones?"<sup>192</sup>

"The false idea of the existence of a real person, good sir, is the lineage of the realized ones. Unawareness and the thirst for existence are their lineage, desire, hatred and delusion are their lineage, the four misperceptions are their lineage, the five hindrances are their lineage, the six spheres of the senses are their lineage, the seven planes on which consciousness can become fixed<sup>193</sup> are their lineage, the eight wrong practices are their lineage, the nine causes for resentment<sup>194</sup> are their lineage, the ten paths of demeritorious conduct are their lineage. This, good sir, is the lineage of the realized ones. In short, good sir, the sixty-two false views are the lineage of the realized ones.

7.3 "What are you implying, Mañjuśrī, when you say this?"

"Someone, good sir, who sees the unconditioned, who has already achieved confirmation of liberation, cannot conceive the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed. It is only the person who has not seen the truths<sup>195</sup> and who inhabits the conditioned, the dwelling of the defilements,<sup>196</sup> who can conceive the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed.

"One could say, good sir, that it is like blue water lilies,

pink lotuses, red water lilies, white lotuses and white water lilies, which do not grow in the desert but do grow when their seeds are scattered in silt and sludge. In the same way, good sir, the qualities of a buddha do not grow in someone whose attainment of the unconditioned<sup>197</sup> is already confirmed, they grow in those living beings who find themselves in the silt and sludge of the defilements.

“One could say that it is just like seeds, which do not grow in the sky, but grow when planted in the ground. In the same way the qualities of a buddha do not grow in someone whose attainment of the unconditioned is already confirmed. The qualities of a buddha grow in someone only after the aspiration to awakening has arisen as a result of conceiving a false view of the existence of a real person that is as large as Mount Sumeru.<sup>198</sup>

“Therefore, good sir, it is in this fashion that you should understand that what holds good for all the defilements also holds good for the lineage of the realized ones.<sup>199</sup> Just as one cannot, good sir, bring up priceless treasure without diving down into the great ocean, in the very same way, one cannot come up with the treasure that is the aspiration to omniscience without diving down into the ocean of the defilements.”

- 7.4 Then the Elder Mahākāśyapa congratulated Prince Mañjuśrī, “Bravo, Mañjuśrī, bravo! These words of yours are well said. It is true that the lineage of the realized ones is the defilements. How after all could people like us still have the ability to conceive the aspiration to awakening? A person who has committed the five sins entailing immediate retribution is able to conceive the aspiration to awakening, he is able to
- 7.5 awaken fully to the qualities of a buddha, but I am not.<sup>§</sup> Just as the objects of the five senses that motivate our desires have no value and no force for a person whose senses are impaired, in the very same way all the qualities of a buddha have no value and no force for an advanced disciple who has abandoned all the fetters, and they are no longer within his grasp. Therefore, Mañjuśrī, it is ordinary people who can appreciate what the Realized One does for them, not the advanced disciples. Why



is this so? Because ordinary people, when they hear of the virtues of a buddha, conceive the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed so as to maintain the lineage of the Three Treasures unbroken. The advanced disciples, on the other hand, even if they spend their whole lives hearing of the qualities, powers and the modes of self-assurance of a buddha, are unable to conceive the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed.”

7.6 At that time a bodhisattva called Sarvarūpasamdarśana had come to that assembly and was seated in its midst. He said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “But householder, where are your mother and father, your male and female slaves, your laborers and servants, where are your friends, kinsmen and relatives, where your retinue or your horses, elephants, chariots, footmen<sup>200</sup> and vehicles?”

When this was said, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti addressed the Bodhisattva Sarvarūpasamdarśana in verse:<sup>201</sup>

“The perfection of insight is the mother  
Of the bodhisattvas, my dear friend,  
And mastery of stratagem is the father;  
From these two are the guides born. [1]

Delight in the Dharma is their wife,  
Love and compassion their daughters,<sup>202</sup>  
Their two sons are truthfulness and justice,<sup>203</sup>  
And pondering the meaning of emptiness is  
their home.<sup>204</sup> [2]

Likewise all the defilements are their students  
Obedient to their every wish,  
While the constitutive elements of  
awakening are their friends  
With whom they awaken to supreme  
awakening. [3]

And their constant companions  
At all times are the six perfections,

The inhabitants of their harem the  
 means of drawing others to oneself.  
 Their music the communal chanting of the  
 teachings.<sup>205</sup> [4]

Mental retentiveness and the formulae  
 which support it are their garden,  
 Decked with<sup>206</sup> the blossoms of the  
 constitutive elements of awakening,  
 Its fruits liberation and knowledge,<sup>207</sup>  
 Its trees the great forest of the Dharma.<sup>208</sup> [5]

Its pools are the states of liberation,  
 Brimming with the waters of concentration  
 Their surface covered with the lotuses of  
 the forms of purity.<sup>209</sup>  
 In them the immaculate ones bathe. [6]

Pulled by the supernormal faculties  
 Is their great vehicle, which  
 cannot be surpassed,<sup>210</sup>  
 Its driver is the aspiration to awakening,  
 The road it takes is the auspicious eightfold  
 path of the noble ones. [7]

The distinctive features of greatness  
 are their jewelry,  
 Along with its eighty secondary marks.  
 They are clothed in a sense of  
 shame and modesty,  
 Pure and virtuous in their ambitions.<sup>211</sup> [8]

The True Dharma is their wealth,  
 Teaching the Dharma is their investment,  
 Huge profits come when it is put into practice  
 And when it is dedicated to awakening. [9]

The four states of dhyāna meditation  
 are their bed,  
 And pure livelihood is their bedding;  
 What wakes them is insight  
 Which is always concentrated upon what  
 they've learned. [10]

The nectar of immortality is their food,  
 The elixir of liberation their drink;<sup>212</sup>  
 The purity of their motivation is their bath,  
 Their moral conduct the fragrant oils and pastes  
 they apply. [11]

Because they strike down their enemies,  
 the defilements,  
 They are heroes indeed, invincible;  
 Rallying to the banner at the seat of  
 awakening,<sup>213</sup>  
 They triumph over Māra in his four forms. [12]

Deliberately they display rebirth<sup>214</sup>  
 But are unborn and do not come to be;  
 They appear in all domains,  
 Rising like the shining sun. [13]

Worshiping millions of buddhas,  
 Making every offering to those guides,  
 They still never become dependent  
 Either on themselves or on any buddha.<sup>215</sup> [14]

They purify the buddha-domains  
 In accordance with the way living  
 beings function  
 But attaining the domain which is space,  
 They do not recognize any living  
 being as such. [15]

The bodhisattvas, fearless and confident,  
 Can display in a single instant  
 All the shapes that living beings take,  
 The sounds they make and the voices they  
 speak with. [16]

They understand what Māras do  
 And yet play along with them:  
 With consummate mastery of stratagem  
 They display every activity. [17]

They grow old, become sick,  
 And make it look as though they die,  
 At home as they are with the art of illusion,<sup>216</sup>  
 For the purpose of bringing living beings  
 to maturity. [18]

They show the conflagration at the  
 end of the eon,  
 In which this earth is incinerated;  
 They will make living beings who hold the  
 idea of permanence  
 See how impermanent things are. [19]

Invited to dinner by the thousands of millions  
 Of living beings in a kingdom,  
 They dine in the houses of all of them  
 And turn all towards awakening. [20]

Whatever spells or sciences there are,  
 Or the practical arts in their many forms,  
 Becoming experts in them all,  
 They bring happiness to all living beings. [21]

However many false religious teachers there  
 are in this world,  
 They embark on the religious life with them all,

For they want to liberate living beings  
Who adhere to all kinds of false views. [22]

They become moons or suns,  
Śakras, Brahmās or the Lords of Creation,  
They become water, fire,  
Earth and likewise the wind. [23]

In the intermediate eons<sup>217</sup> of plague  
They become the supreme medicine,  
And the living beings saved by them  
Become happy and free of sickness. [24]

In the intermediate eons of famine  
They become food and drink,  
And they teach the Dharma to all  
who draw breath,  
After relieving them of their hunger  
and thirst.<sup>218</sup> [25]

In the intermediate eons of armed strife  
They remain intent on love,  
Urging many hundreds of millions  
Of living beings to become free from  
malice. [26]

And in the midst of great battles  
Those bodhisattvas, as powerful as they are,  
Refuse to take sides,  
Preferring peace and concord. [27]

Even to the hells, inconceivable in number,  
That are found in the buddha-domains  
They go of their own free will  
To promote the welfare of living beings. [28]

Manifesting all the ways  
In which animals might behave,

They teach the Dharma everywhere;  
That is why they are called the guides. [29]

They display the enjoyment of the pleasures  
of the senses,  
They display the deep meditation of  
those who meditate;  
They leave Māra in confusion,  
They do not leave any opening for him. [30]

Like a lotus blooming in the middle of a fire,  
Which one would declare to be an impossibility,  
In the same way they display the impossible:  
The pleasures of the senses with deep  
meditation.<sup>219</sup> [31]

They willingly become courtesans  
In order to seduce men,  
And once they have caught them with the  
hook of passion,  
They establish them in the knowledge  
of a buddha. [32]

They continually become village  
headmen as well,  
Caravan-leaders, court chaplains,  
Chief ministers and counselors too,  
To promote the welfare of living beings. [33]

For living beings who are poor  
They become inexhaustible stores of treasure,<sup>220</sup>  
And with the gifts they give to them,  
They lead them to conceive the aspiration to  
awakening. [34]

Among living beings puffed up with pride  
They become great dignitaries,

And lead them to seek supreme awakening  
Once all their pride has been destroyed. [35]

They always move to shield living beings  
Who are in peril and gripped by fear,  
And having given them the gift of safety  
and reassurance,  
They make them ripe for awakening. [36]

Having become sages living the celibate life  
And masters of the five supernormal faculties,  
They impel living beings toward moral conduct,  
Toward patient acceptance, gentleness, and  
self-control. [37]

Spiritual masters though they are, when they  
see in this world<sup>221</sup>  
Living beings who need to be served,  
They become their servants and slaves  
And assume the role of students. [38]

Whatever it might take to make  
Living beings love the Dharma,  
They appear to engage in all such activities,  
Well-trained as they are in high stratagem. [39]

Their training knows no limit,<sup>222</sup>  
Their range knows no limit,  
They are endowed with limitless knowledge,  
And they liberate limitless creatures. [40]

Were all the buddhas to speak  
For millions of aeons,  
Or even hundreds of millions of aeons,  
The full extent of their virtues would still be  
hard to describe. [41]

What wise person would not wish for  
supreme awakening  
After hearing about such things,  
Unless he were one of those inferior beings  
Who are bereft of insight?" [42]



## Chapter 8

# Entering into the Gateway of the Truth of Non-duality

8.1 **T**hen the Licchavi Vimalakīrti addressed himself to the bodhisattvas: “What is the gateway by which bodhisattvas arrive at the truth of non-duality? Let inspiration make you eloquent, good men!”

The bodhisattva called Dharmavikurvaṇa was one of those assembled there, and he said, “When we speak of arising and passing away, good sir, we have duality. There is no passing away at all of that which has not been born or has not arisen. Arriving at acceptance of the fact that things do not arise is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.2 The Bodhisattva Śrīgupta said, “When we speak of me and mine, we have duality. When one does not impute a self, there is no mine. Absence of imputation is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.3 The Bodhisattva Śrīkūṭa said, “When we speak of defilement and purification, we have duality. When there is full comprehension of defilement, there can be no notion of purification. The path which destroys all notions and leads to sameness is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.4 The Bodhisattva Sunakṣatra said, “When we speak of mental distraction and mental focus, we have duality. When, however, one is neither distracted nor focussed, the mind is not attending to anything. Not attending to anything is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.5 The Bodhisattva Subāhu said, “When we speak of the aspiration to awakening and the aspiration to be an advanced disciple, we have duality. Where, however, one sees aspirations

and illusions as the same, there is no aspiration to awakening nor aspiration to be an advanced disciple. The fact that all aspirations have the same character is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.6 The Bodhisattva Animiṣa said, “When we speak of grasping and non-grasping, we have duality. What one does not grasp, that one does not apprehend, nor with regard to that does one engage in any adding or taking away, any affirming or denying. Not creating anything and not losing anything is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.7 The Bodhisattva Sunetra said, “When we speak of having a particular characteristic and having no characteristic at all, we have duality. When, however, one does not distinguish any characteristics or conceptualize them, one does not conceive of something as having either a particular characteristic or no characteristic at all. Reaching an understanding of the equivalent character of having a particular characteristic and not having any characteristic at all is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.8 The Bodhisattva Puṣya said, “When we speak of good and bad, we have duality. When good and bad do not arise, there is no sign, and from absolute signlessness there is non-duality. The realization of this is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.9 The Bodhisattva Siṃha said, “When we speak of being open to reproach and being beyond reproach, we have duality. Being neither bound nor freed because one has adamant knowledge, however, is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.10 The Bodhisattva Siṃhamati said, “When we say this is subject to the corrupting influences and that is not, we have duality. Reaching the truth of sameness, however, not entertaining such concepts as ‘subject to the corrupting influences’ or ‘free of the corrupting influences,’ and yet not getting to the point where one has no concepts, not reaching the sameness which is the sameness of the absence of concepts, not being bound by concepts at all—it is this way of proceeding<sup>223</sup> which is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.11 The Bodhisattva Sukhādhimukta said, “When we say that this is happiness and this is unhappiness,<sup>224</sup> we have duality. When, however, one is beyond all happiness, when one’s mind

is like the sky, when one does not get caught on anything because one's cognition is fully purified—this is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.12 The Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa said, “When we say that this is mundane, of the world, and this is supramundane, above the world, we have duality. In the emptiness which is the world's natural state, nothing escapes upwards or comes downwards, nothing goes in or goes out. Where there is no escape upwards or coming downwards, no going in or going out, there one is at the gateway to non-duality.”

8.13 The Bodhisattva Dāntamati said, “When we speak of the cycle of rebirth and final release, we have duality. As a result of seeing the nature of the cycle of rebirth one is neither reborn nor released. It is this sort of understanding<sup>225</sup> which is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.14 The Bodhisattva Pratyakṣadarśin said, “When we speak of ending and not ending, we have duality. Ending means completely ended, but that which has completely ended cannot be made to end, and therefore it is called ‘not ending.’ That which is not ending is evanescent and momentary; what is momentary does not admit of ending.<sup>226</sup> He who proceeds in this way has entered the gateway of the teaching of non-duality.”

8.15 The Bodhisattva Samantagupta said, “When we speak of self and the absence of self, we have duality. What would one deprive of self if one does not perceive that self exists? One who sees the nature of self does not assume such a duality. This is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.16 The Bodhisattva Vidyuddeva said, “When we speak of knowledge and ignorance, we have duality. The very nature of knowledge is ignorance, and ignorance itself has no nature, it is incalculable, it is entirely beyond the reach of any calculation. The realization of that, the realization that they are not two, this is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.17 The Bodhisattva Priyadarśana said, “When we say that form is empty, we have duality. Emptiness is after all nothing other than form. Emptiness does not come from the destruction

of form. The very nature of form is emptiness. In the same way, when we say that feeling, conception, conditioning, and consciousness are empty, we have duality. Emptiness is after all nothing other than consciousness. Emptiness does not come from the destruction of consciousness. The very nature of consciousness is emptiness. Such a knowledge and understanding of the five aggregates that are the basis of clinging to existence, this is the gateway to non-duality.”<sup>227</sup>

8.18 The Bodhisattva Prabhāketu said, “When we say that the four elements are one thing and the element of space is another, we have duality. The four elements have the nature of space, have had the nature of space in the past, will have the nature of space in the future, and have the nature of space at present too. When knowledge penetrates the elements in this way, this is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.19 The Bodhisattva Sumati said, “When we have eye and form, we have duality. When, however, thoroughly knowing the eye, one feels no attraction to forms, nor repulsion from them, nor confusion about them, one is said to be at peace. When we have ear and sound, nose and smell, tongue and taste, body and the objects of touch, mind and the objects of mind, we have duality. When, however, thoroughly knowing the mind, one feels no attraction to the objects of mind, nor repulsion from them, nor confusion about them, one is said to be at peace. One who abides in this kind of peace is at the gateway to non-duality.”

8.20 The Bodhisattva Akṣayamati said, “When one dedicates one’s giving to omniscience, we have duality. Giving is the very essence of omniscience, and omniscience is the very essence of dedication. In the same way, when one dedicates one’s moral conduct, patient acceptance, heroic effort, meditation, and insight to omniscience, we have duality. Indeed, insight is the very essence of omniscience, and omniscience is the essence of dedication. An approach to these things which is guided by the principle of oneness is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.21 The Bodhisattva Gambhīrabuddhi said, “When we say that emptiness is one thing, signlessness is another, and

wishlessness is yet another, we have duality. In whatever is empty, after all, there is no sign whatsoever, in the signless there is no wish, and in the wishless there is no activity of thought or mind or mental consciousness. Where there is one door to liberation, there one should see all the doors to liberation: this is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.22 The Bodhisattva Śāntendriya said, “When we speak of the Buddha, the Dharma, the Saṅgha, we have duality. The nature of the Buddha, after all, is the Dharma,<sup>228</sup> and the Saṅgha has the Dharma as its nature. All these treasures are unconditioned, space is unconditioned, and the principle of all dharmas is similar to space. Such an understanding is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.23 The Bodhisattva Apratihatacakṣu said, “When we speak of the real person and the cessation of the real person, we have duality. The real person, after all, is the same thing as cessation. Why is that? It is like this: one does not entertain the false view that someone is a real person, the false view by means of which one could construct the concept either of the real person or of the cessation of the real person; one then has no conceptual construction, has no false discrimination, is entirely free of false discrimination, and one grasps the essence of cessation: one neither comes into existence nor ceases to exist—this is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.24 The Bodhisattva Suvinīta said, “When we speak of the training of body, speech, and mind, we have duality. Why is that? Because it is the defining characteristic of these things that they cannot be worked upon. Whatever the impossibility of working upon the body, such is also the defining characteristic of speech, which cannot be worked upon, such is also the defining characteristic of mind, which cannot be worked upon<sup>229</sup>—and it is this impossibility of working upon anything at all which one must know and understand. It is this knowing that nothing can be worked upon which is the gateway to non-duality.

8.25 The Bodhisattva Puṇyakṣetra said, “When we say that one works to create meritorious, demeritorious, and indeterminate

karmic conditions, we have duality. The fact, on the other hand, that one cannot work to create meritorious, demeritorious, and indeterminate karmic conditions is non-duality. There are no meritorious, demeritorious, and indeterminate karmic conditions in the emptiness which is the defining characteristic of meritorious, demeritorious, and indeterminate karmic conditions. Pondering this is the gateway to non-duality."

8.26 The Bodhisattva Padmavyūha said, "Duality arises with the arising of the self. One who understands the self completely does not give rise to any duality. For the one established in non-duality there is no pointing to anything else, and not pointing to anything else is the gateway to non-duality."

8.27 The Bodhisattva Śrīgarbha said, "Duality is generated by objectification. That which one does not grasp, that one does not objectify, nor does one strive to accept it or reject it. Where there is no acceptance or rejection, this is the gateway to non-duality."

8.28 The Bodhisattva Candrottara said, "When we speak of darkness and light, we have duality. When we speak of the absence of darkness and the absence of light, we have non-duality. Why is that? Because there is no darkness and no light for the one who is totally absorbed in the state in which all functions have ceased. All things have this defining characteristic too. The realization of sameness in this sense is the gateway to non-duality."

8.29 The Bodhisattva Ratnamudrāhasta said, "When we speak of the joy of final release and the joylessness of the cycle of rebirth, we have duality. When one sees neither joy in final release nor joylessness in the cycle of rebirth, we have non-duality. Why is that? Because only for one who is still bound does the possibility of liberation arise. After all, why would one who is not bound at all seek liberation? The monk who is neither bound nor liberated does not experience joy or joylessness—this is the gateway to non-duality."

8.30 The Bodhisattva Maṇikūṭarāja said, "When we speak of the right path and the wrong path, we have duality. For the one who has entered the right path, the wrong path goes nowhere.

But the one who takes his stand on going nowhere does not entertain any notions of a right path or a wrong path, for the mind of someone who comprehends thoroughly what it is to entertain notions does not enter into duality—this is for him the gateway to non-duality.”

8.31 The Bodhisattva Satyanandin said, “When we speak of truth and falsehood, we have duality. One who has seen the truth does not actually see truth, how much less falsehood? Why is that? Because he does not see with his physical eyes, he sees with the eyes of insight, and he sees insofar as he neither sees nor fails to see. Wherever there is no seeing and no failing to see,<sup>230</sup> this is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.32 In this way those bodhisattvas each presented his own exposition, after which they said<sup>231</sup> to Prince Mañjuśrī,  
“What is the gateway to non-duality for a bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī?”

Mañjuśrī said, “You have all spoken well, good men! Be that as it may, your entire exposition is duality, all of it, unless it is to expound one thing only, that all things are beyond words, beyond speech, beyond description, indefinable, ineffable and incommunicable, and that this is the gateway to non-duality.”

8.33 At that point Prince Mañjuśrī said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “We have each, good sir, presented our own exposition. Let inspiration make you eloquent too, and give us your exposition of the gateway to the truth of non-duality.”

The Licchavi Vimalakīrti remained silent.

Prince Mañjuśrī then commended the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “Bravo, good sir, bravo! For bodhisattvas this is the gateway into the truth of non-duality, in which there is no use of syllables, words, and utterances to make anything known!”

As this exposition was delivered, as a result of entering into the gateway of the truth of non-duality, five thousand bodhisattvas arrived at acceptance of the fact that things do not arise.

## Chapter 9

### A Phantom Delivers a Meal

9.1 **T**hen the Venerable Śāriputra thought to himself, “It is getting late, but these mahāsattvas are not getting up. At what point are they going to eat?” Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, knowing in his own mind what the Venerable Śāriputra was thinking in his, said to the Venerable Śāriputra, “Reverend Śāriputra, you should be satisfied with the eight states of liberation which the Realized One has taught. Don’t listen to the Dharma with a mind befouled by food and other material things. Just wait a moment, Reverend Śāriputra, and you will enjoy food such as you have never tasted before.”

9.2 There and then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti entered such a state of concentration and performed a miraculous act of such force that he showed the bodhisattvas and the great advanced disciples there the world-system called Sarvagandhasugandha located on high in the zenith, far above this buddha-domain, beyond buddha-domains as numerous as the sands of forty-two Ganges Rivers, where the realized one by the name of Gandhottamakūṭa now dwells, resides, and lives. There in that world-system, the trees emit fragrances even more exquisite than any of the human and divine fragrances that waft through all the buddha-domains in the ten directions. In that world-system there isn’t even a word for “advanced disciple” or “solitary buddha,” there being only an assembly of pure bodhisattvas, to whom the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa teaches the Dharma. In that world-system the pavilions are all made of fragrant substances, as are the walkways, gardens, and palaces. And whatever the bodhisattvas eat, the aroma of that food pervades countless world-systems.



At that moment the Exalted One, the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa was sitting down to eat together with the bodhisattvas, and in that place deities known as the Gandhavyūhāhāras, who had set out on the Great Way, were busy serving and waiting upon that exalted one and those bodhisattvas. At that point the entire assembly here could see that world-system and the exalted one and the bodhisattvas sitting down to their meal.

- 9.3 Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti addressed himself to all the bodhisattvas, “Which one of you good men is able to bring food back from this buddha-domain?” But none of them was able to do it due to the magical power of Mañjuśrī.

The Licchavi Vimalakīrti then said to Prince Mañjuśrī, “Mañjuśrī, are you not completely embarrassed by an assembly like this?”

“Good sir, did the Realized One not say that those who lack training ought not to be despised?”

- 9.4 Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, without getting up from his seat, conjured up a bodhisattva right in front of those bodhisattvas. With a body the color of gold and adorned with the distinctive features and secondary marks of greatness, the radiance of his form was such that it put the whole assembly in the shade.

Vimalakīrti then said to that phantom bodhisattva: “Go, good sir. High in the zenith, beyond buddha-domains as numerous as the sands of forty-two Ganges Rivers, there is a world-system called Sarvagandhasugandha, where a realized one by the name of Gandhottamakūṭa is presently sitting down to eat. When you get there, pay your respects to that realized one in my name by prostrating yourself at his feet, and say, ‘The Licchavi Vimalakīrti prostrates himself at the Exalted One’s feet, and he asks if you, Exalted One, are healthy and well, if you are in good physical condition, fit, strong and happy, and if you have no complaints and are getting along comfortably. He also asks, Exalted One, that you give him the remains of your meal so that he can do the work of a buddha in the world-system of Sahā and motivate its beings of inferior

inclination to aspire to loftier things, so that the name of the Realized One will be widely known.”

- 9.5 “Very well!” replied the phantom bodhisattva to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, and right in front of those bodhisattvas he appeared to be looking upwards, but the bodhisattvas did not see him as he left.<sup>232</sup>

The phantom bodhisattva reached the world-system Sarvagandhasugandha, prostrated himself at the feet of the Exalted One, the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa, and said, “Exalted One, the bodhisattva Vimalakīrti prostrates himself at your feet, and he asks if you, Exalted One, are healthy and well, if you are in good physical condition, fit, strong and happy, if you have no complaints and are getting along comfortably. And having prostrated himself at your feet, Exalted One, he also asks, Exalted One, that you give him the remains of your meal so that he can do the work of a buddha in the world-system of Sahā and motivate its beings of inferior inclination to aspire to the lofty qualities of a buddha, and so that the name of the Realized One will be widely known.”

- 9.6 Then the bodhisattvas in the buddha-domain of that Exalted One, the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa, were surprised and they said to the Exalted One, the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa, “Exalted One, where does a mahāsattva like this come from, where is that world-system Sahā, and what is this thing called inferior inclination?” Such were the questions those bodhisattvas asked that realized one.

Then that exalted one said to those bodhisattvas, “The world-system Sahā, gentlemen, lies in the nadir, far below this buddha-domain, beyond buddha-domains as numerous as the sands of forty-two Ganges Rivers. In that place the realized one called Śākyamuni teaches the Dharma to beings of inferior inclination in a buddha-domain subject to fivefold degeneration. There a bodhisattva by the name of Vimalakīrti, securely established in the state of inconceivable freedom, teaches the Dharma to bodhisattvas. He has sent this phantom bodhisattva to proclaim my name, to reveal the glory of this world-system and to develop the roots of merit of those bodhisattvas there.”

- 9.7 Then the bodhisattvas said, "How magnificent must this bodhisattva be, Exalted One, if even his phantom has such magical ability, power, and self-assurance?"

The exalted one said, "That bodhisattva is so magnificent that he conjures up phantoms and dispatches them to all the buddha-domains, and those phantoms attend to living beings by doing what buddhas do."

- 9.8 Then the Exalted One, the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa handed that bodhisattva the food redolent with every fragrance in a vessel from which all fragrances wafted.<sup>233</sup> At that point, ninety thousand bodhisattvas got ready to leave, saying, "Exalted One, we will go to the world-system of Sahā to pay our respects to the Exalted One Śākyamuni there and see this Vimalakīrti and these bodhisattvas."

The exalted one said, "Go, gentlemen, if you think now is the right time. But suppress your fragrances, gentlemen, before you enter that world-system, so that the beings there do not fall into a state of drunken intoxication, and hide your true beauty so that the beings in the Sahā world-system do not feel ashamed. But don't get the idea that that world-system is inferior, don't feel aversion to it. Why not? Because the domains of buddhas are domains of empty space, and yet in order to bring living beings to maturity, the exalted buddhas do not manifest the full extent of their dominion as awakened ones."

- 9.9 Then the phantom bodhisattva took the food and, by that buddha's power and through Vimalakīrti's magic, disappeared from the world-system of Sarvagandhasugandha with those ninety thousand bodhisattvas, reappearing instantaneously, in the merest fraction of the blink of an eye, in the house of
- 9.10 the Licchavi Vimalakīrti.<sup>8</sup> There Vimalakīrti magically created ninety thousand lion thrones which were just like the lion thrones already there, on which the bodhisattvas seated themselves. The phantom bodhisattva offered the vessel full of food to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti. The great city of Vaiśālī was in its entirety perfumed by the fragrance of that food, indeed the whole cosmos of a thousand worlds<sup>234</sup> was perfumed by its exquisite fragrance. Then, when they smelled the fragrance,

the householders and brahmins of Vaiśāli were amazed and astonished, and so too was Somacchatra, the leader of the Licchavis. Feeling a pleasure both mental and physical, together with a full eighty-four [thousand Licchavis, they entered the house of the Licchavi Vimalakīrti. When they saw the bodhisattvas in that house seated upon such tall, big and wide lion thrones, the sight filled them with joy and devotion. After they had all paid homage to the advanced disciples and the great bodhisattvas, they sat down to one side.]<sup>235</sup> Drawn by the fragrance of the same food, the deities of the earthly realm, the realm of desire, and the realm of pure bodily form also flocked to Vimalakīrti's house.

9.11 Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to the Elder Śāriputra and the great advanced disciples, "Your Reverences, enjoy this food, the ambrosia of a realized one, imbued with his great compassion, but do not keep your minds fixed on your limited path lest you are unable to sanctify the offering."<sup>236</sup>

9.12 At that the thought occurred to some of the advanced disciples, "Given that there is so little food, how is an assembly like this going to be fed?"

The phantom bodhisattva said to them, "Venerable Ones, you ought not to compare the insight and merit of the realized ones with your own insight and merit. The four great oceans may dry up, but this food would never run out. Even if all living beings ate portions the size of Mount Sumeru for a whole eon, the food would still not run out. Why? This is the leftover food from the bowl of a realized one who is born from inexhaustible morality, concentration, and insight, so it cannot be exhausted."

9.13 And thus it was that the whole assembly ate of that food to their heart's content, and still the food did not run out. Bliss filled the bodies of the bodhisattvas, of the advanced disciples, of Śakra, Brahmā, and the Divine Guardians of the World, and of all the other beings who ate that food, a bliss like the bliss of the bodhisattvas in the world-system of Sarvasukhapratimaṇḍita, and every pore of their skin exuded a fragrance just like the fragrance of the trees in the

world-system of Sarvagandhasugandha.<sup>237</sup>

- 9.14 Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, despite knowing the answer, said to the bodhisattvas who had come from the buddha-domain of the Exalted One, the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa, "Gentlemen, what is the Dharma teaching of the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa like?"

This was their reply: "That exalted one does not teach the Dharma through verbal explanation. Those bodhisattvas are guided by fragrance alone. Whatever perfume tree those bodhisattvas sit beneath, that tree exudes such a fragrance that no sooner do they smell it than they attain a state of concentration called Sarvabodhisattvaguṇākara, and no sooner do they attain that state of concentration than the qualities of bodhisattvas arise in all of them."

- 9.15 Then those bodhisattvas said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, "What about here—how does the Exalted One Śākyamuni convey the teaching of the Dharma in this world?"

"Good sirs, living beings here are uncontrollable, and to the living beings here who are uncontrollable he delivers precisely the sort of discourse that would bring the unruly and uncontrollable under control. What does it mean then to bring the unruly and uncontrollable under control, and what sort of discourse is it that would bring the unruly and uncontrollable under control? It is this: 'These are the hells. These are animals. This is the world of Yama. These are the unfavorable circumstances in which one can be reborn. This is birth with impaired faculties. This is bodily misconduct. This is the consequence of bodily misconduct. This is verbal misconduct. This is the consequence of verbal misconduct. This is mental misconduct. This is the consequence of mental misconduct. This is the taking of life. This is the taking of what is not given. This is sexual misconduct. This is lying. This is slanderous speech. This is harsh speech. This is idle babble. This is covetousness. This is malice. This is false view. This is the consequence of these.<sup>238</sup> This is stinginess. This is wickedness. This is wrath. This is sloth. This is distraction. This is defective insight. This is the fruit of defective insight. This is violation of the monastic

code and the rules of training. This is the monastic code. This is what one should do. This is what one should not do. This is attachment. This is the effort to abandon it.<sup>239</sup> This is an impediment. This is no impediment. This is transgression. This is not transgression. This is getting rid of transgression. This is the right path. This is the wrong path. This is virtuous. This is not virtuous. This is blameworthy. This is blameless. This is what it means to be affected by corrupting influences. This is what it means to be free of corrupting influences. This is of the world. This is above the world. This is conditioned. This is unconditioned. This is defilement. This is purification. This is the cycle of rebirth. This is final release.’

“In this way those beings, whose minds are like unruly horses, are brought into line by being admonished with these many teachings. Just as an unruly horse or elephant is brought under control by poking it in the most sensitive spots, so too in this world these uncontrollable and unruly beings are brought under control by admonitory talk about all these miseries.”

- 9.16 The bodhisattvas said, “This is the wonderful thing about the Exalted One Śākyamuni, that he conceals the magnificence of the awakened and uses the poor and wretched state the unruly beings are in to bring them under control. What is also inconceivable is the great compassion of the bodhisattvas who live in a buddha-domain as miserable as this.”

- Vimalakīrti replied, “Yes indeed, good men, it is just as you say. The great compassion of the bodhisattvas who are reborn here is formidable. They will do much more good for others in a single lifetime in this world-system than anything that could be done for others in a thousand eons in the world-system of
- 9.17 Sarvagandhasugandha. <sup>§</sup> Why is that? Because, good men, in this world-system of Sahā there are ten ways of accumulating virtue, not found in other buddha-domains, which they embrace. What are the ten? They are: drawing the poor to oneself through giving, drawing the immoral to oneself through moral conduct, drawing the hostile to oneself through patient acceptance, drawing the lazy to oneself through heroic effort, drawing the mentally distracted to oneself through meditation,

drawing the unwise to oneself through insight, teaching those who find themselves in the eight unfavorable circumstances in which one can be reborn how to move beyond them, teaching the Great Way to those who pursue a lesser path, drawing those who have not put down the roots of merit to oneself through one's own roots of merit, continuously bringing living beings to maturity through the four means of drawing others to oneself. These are the ten ways of accumulating virtue, not found in other buddha-domains, which they embrace.

- 9.18 The bodhisattvas said, "What things does a bodhisattva need to pass away unscathed and unimpaired from the world-system of Sahā and go to a pure buddha-domain?"

Vimalakīrti replied, "Gentlemen, a bodhisattva needs eight things to pass away unscathed and unimpaired from the world-system of Sahā and go to a pure buddha-domain. What are the eight? They are: to benefit all living beings, but not to seek any benefit from them; to endure the suffering of all living beings and to give away one's entire root of merit to all living beings;<sup>240</sup> to be free of hostility towards any living being; to love all bodhisattvas<sup>241</sup> as one would the Master; to refrain from rejecting teachings on hearing them, whether one has heard them before or not; to have the deep mental absorption which is the result of not being envious of others' gains or proud of one's own; to examine one's own failings and not to take other people to task for their transgressions; and to take it upon oneself to develop all good qualities while remaining intent on being vigilant and careful. A bodhisattva needs these eight things to pass away unscathed and unimpaired from the world-system of Sahā and go to a pure buddha-domain."

And then, in the assembly gathered there, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and Prince Mañjuśrī taught the Dharma to such effect that a full thousand living beings conceived the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed and ten thousand bodhisattvas arrived at acceptance of the fact that things do not arise.

## Chapter 10

### The Gift of the Teaching Named “Ending and Not Ending”

10.1 **A**t that time it happened that the pavilion in which the Exalted One was teaching the Dharma in the Grove of Āmrāpālī became wider and bigger, and the assembly glowed the color of gold. Then the Venerable Ānanda said to the Exalted One, “Exalted One, what does this portend, that the Grove of Āmrāpālī has become so much bigger and the whole assembly glows the color of gold?”

The Exalted One said, “Ānanda, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti and Prince Mañjuśrī will be coming into the presence of the Realized One with a great entourage.”

10.2 It was at that point that the Licchavi Vimalakīrti said to Prince Mañjuśrī, “Mañjuśrī, let us go to the Exalted One so that these mahāsattvas will be able to see the Realized One and pay their respects to him.”

“Let us go, good sir, if you think that now is the right time.”

Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti deployed his magical powers in such a way that he was able to put the entire assembly, lion thrones and all, in his right hand and go with them to where the Exalted One was. After arriving there, he set the assembly down on the ground, prostrated himself at the feet of the Exalted One, performed seven clockwise circumambulations around the Exalted One, and stood to one side.

Then the bodhisattvas, those who had come from the buddha-domain of the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa and the other ones too, descended from their lion thrones, prostrated themselves at the feet of the Exalted One, and stood to



one side. Likewise, Śakra, Brahmā, the Divine Guardians of the World and the gods prostrated themselves at the feet of the Exalted One and took up a position to one side.

Then the Exalted One, after welcoming the bodhisattvas with the usual formalities,<sup>242</sup> said, "Be seated, gentlemen, each of you on his own lion throne." And given leave to do so by the Exalted One, they all took their seats.

- 10.3 Then the Exalted One said to the Venerable Śāriputra, "Śāriputra, did you see how these superior beings, these bodhisattvas, made light work of all that magic?"

"I did, Exalted One."

The Exalted One said, "Afterwards, what did you think about it?"

"Exalted One, I thought that it was inconceivable. I see what they did as inconceivable in that I find it beyond any conception, comparison, or reckoning on my part."

- 10.4 Then the Venerable Ānanda said to the Exalted One, "I smell a fragrance I have never smelled before, Exalted One. To whom does this fragrance belong?"

"To these bodhisattvas, Ānanda, who are exuding the fragrance from every single pore of their skin."

"Venerable Ānanda," interposed Śāriputra, "even we exude this fragrance from every single pore of our skin!"

"Where did the fragrance come from?"

"The Licchavi Vimalakīrti brought food from the world-system Sarvagandhasughanda, the buddha-domain of the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa. All those who ate it exude this fragrance from their bodies."

- 10.5 Then the Venerable Ānanda said to the Bodhisattva Vimalakīrti, "How long then will this fragrance last, good sir?"

"As long as the food remains undigested."

Ānanda said, "How long then will it take for the food to be digested?"

- 10.6 "It will take seven weeks to be digested, and its potency will fill one for another week after that, without there ever being any problem with indigestion.<sup>§</sup> However, when eaten by monks, reverend Ānanda, who have not yet attained assurance

of liberation, it will be digested when they attain that assurance. When eaten by monks who have already attained assurance of liberation, it will be digested when their minds are liberated. When eaten by those who have not yet conceived the aspiration to awakening, it will be digested when they conceive the aspiration to awakening. When eaten by those who have already conceived the aspiration to awakening, it will be digested when they attain the states of acceptance. Furthermore, when eaten by those who have already attained the states of acceptance, it will be digested when they have only one more rebirth ahead of them.<sup>243</sup> § Reverend Ānanda, it is just like the medicine called 'Sweet' which, after being swallowed, is not digested as long as any poison remains anywhere in the body. Only afterwards is that medicine digested. In exactly the same way, Reverend Ānanda, this food is not digested as long as the poison of all the defilements remains active. Only afterwards is the food digested."

Then the Venerable Ānanda said to the Exalted One, "Exalted One, this food performs the work of a buddha."

10.8 "Indeed it does, Ānanda, it is just as you say. § There are buddha-domains, Ānanda, where bodhisattvas perform the work of a buddha. There are buddha-domains where the Tree of Awakening performs the work of a buddha.<sup>244</sup> There are buddha-domains where a vision of the body with the distinctive features of a realized one performs the work of a buddha, just as there are those where the sky and the heavens above perform the work of a buddha, this being the way the living beings there are educated. § In the same way there are those where a particular arrangement of words invoking the similes of a dream, a reflection, a moon in the water, an echo, an illusion, and a mirage performs the work of a buddha for living beings; there are buddha-domains where the sense conveyed by one word performs the work of a buddha; and there are buddha-domains so pure,<sup>245</sup> Ānanda, that in them the work of a buddha is performed when nothing at all is declared, uttered, stated or expressed in words.

10.10 "Ānanda, there is not a movement the exalted buddhas

make and there is not a thing they use which does not perform the work of a buddha in order to guide living beings. Even the four Māras, Ānanda, and the eighty-four hundred thousand types of defilement which afflict living beings, all of these too are used by the exalted buddhas to perform the work of a buddha.

- 10.11 "This, Ānanda, is the particular teaching called 'The Way All Buddhas Approach the Dharma.' When<sup>246</sup> a bodhisattva engages with this teaching, he does not sink into despondency or dejection when buddha-domains are not endowed<sup>247</sup> with magnificent panoplies of every good quality, nor does he get above himself<sup>248</sup> or become exultant when buddha-domains are endowed with magnificent panoplies of every good quality, but he comes to have the utmost respect for all realized ones, thinking how marvellous it is that the exalted buddhas, intent as they are on the equality of all things, manifest a variety of buddha-domains as a way to bring living beings to maturity.
- 10.12 "Ānanda, just as as there is difference in the various qualities which buddha-domains have, but there is no difference in the space one finds under the sheltering sky of any buddha-domain, in the same way, Ānanda, there is a difference in the physical bodies which realized ones have, but there is no difference in the unhindered cognition which realized ones possess.
- 10.13 "After all, Ānanda, all the buddhas are the same in their general appearance, complexion, radiance, beauty, distinctive features, and high birth; in their morality, meditative concentration, insight, liberation, and knowledge and vision of liberation; in their powers, modes of self-assurance, and qualities of a buddha; in their great love and great compassion; in their devotion to the welfare of others, deportment, behavior, and course of conduct; in their lifespan, teaching of the Dharma, bringing living beings to maturity, liberating living beings, and purifying a domain; and in perfecting all the qualities of a buddha. That is why we say 'Perfectly Awakened One,' 'Realized One,' 'Awakened One.'<sup>249</sup>

"Ānanda, it would not be easy for you to master the full range of meanings and the detailed analysis of these three

terms, even if you lived for an eon. Even if all the living beings in a cosmos of a billion worlds, Ānanda, were to become just like you, supreme among those who possess great learning and are in full possession of memory and mental retentiveness,<sup>250</sup> and even if they had an eon too, all those living beings, each one equal to an Ānanda, would still not be capable of settling and expounding the meanings of these three terms, namely 'Perfectly Awakened One,' 'Realized One,' and 'Awakened One.' This is after all, Ānanda, how boundless the awakening of the buddhas is, this is how inconceivable the insight and the inspired eloquence of the realized ones are."

10.14 Then the Venerable Ānanda said to the Exalted One, "From this day forth, Exalted One, I will no longer consider myself supreme among those who possess great learning."

The Exalted One said, "Ānanda, you should not think such a despondent thought. For what reason? When I declared you to be supreme among those who possess great learning, Ānanda, I had the advanced disciples in mind, not the bodhisattvas. Let the bodhisattvas be, Ānanda; no learned person could fathom them. One can measure the depth of all the seas, Ānanda, but one cannot measure the depth of the insight, knowledge, memory, mental retentiveness and inspired eloquence of the bodhisattvas. Ānanda, do not concern yourselves with the conduct of the bodhisattvas. For what reason? Ānanda, the splendid displays created by the Licchavi Vimalakīrti in a single morning could not be created in a hundred thousand million eons by all the advanced disciples and solitary buddhas with their magical powers, even wielding all the magic, miraculous power and marvelous ability they have."

10.15 Then the bodhisattvas who had come from the world-system of Sarvagandasugandha, the buddha-domain of the Exalted One, the Realized One Gandhottamakūṭa, bowing down with palms pressed respectfully together towards the Realized One, addressed the following words to him, "Exalted One, we are going to give up those ways of thinking that led us to the idea that this buddha-domain is inferior. For what reason? Exalted One, the scope of the awakening of the

exalted buddhas is indeed inconceivable! It is because of their mastery of stratagem and in order to bring living beings to maturity that they cause the splendors of their domains to appear exactly as they want them to. Exalted One, bestow the gift of the Dharma upon us, so that when we have gone back there to the world-system of Sarvagandhasugandha, we may remember the Exalted One!"

- 10.16 The Exalted One said, "Gentlemen, there is a state of liberation for bodhisattvas called 'Ending and Not Ending,' in which you should train. What then is it? The conditioned is what we call ending or perishable, the unconditioned is what we call not ending or imperishable. Therefore, the bodhisattva should neither bring the conditioned to an end, nor should he remain fixed in the unconditioned.
- 10.17 "What is meant here by not bringing the conditioned to an end is this: not abandoning great love; not giving up great compassion; not losing the aspiration to omniscience that one has set out with so ambitiously; not growing weary of bringing living beings to maturity; not relinquishing the means of drawing others to oneself; sacrificing one's person and one's life to embrace the True Dharma; being never satisfied with one's roots of merit; perseverance and proficiency in dedicating them to others; being unremitting in one's pursuit of the Dharma; not being close-fisted as a teacher whenever one expounds the Dharma; being eager to see realized ones face-to-face and worship them; having no fear as one undergoes rebirth intentionally; not feeling the highs and lows of success and failure; not despising those who have not been trained; loving those who have been trained just as one would the Master himself; bringing those pulled in all directions by the defilements to a properly grounded state of being; not being devoted to the joys of solitude; not being dedicated to one's own happiness; being devoted to the happiness of others; thinking of the meditations, the deep concentrations and the absorptions as the Avīci Hell; thinking of the cycle of rebirth as a pleasure garden or a palace;<sup>251</sup> thinking of suppliants as one's companions in what is good; thinking of giving

away everything one owns as the fulfilment of omniscience; thinking of those who are immoral as one's saviors; thinking of the perfections as one's mother and father; thinking of the factors that contribute to awakening as one's own retinue; never considering one's supplies of the roots of merit to be enough; endowing one's own buddha-domain with the good qualities of all buddha-domains; engaging in the free and unrestrained making of offerings, so as to acquire the full set of the distinctive features and secondary marks of greatness; adorning body, speech and mind by not committing any evil act; wandering in the cycle of rebirth for incalculable eons with heroic intent<sup>252</sup> because one's body and speech are pure and one's mind is pure; not being discouraged when hearing about the countless good qualities of the buddhas; taking up the sword of insight to defeat the enemy of the defilements; fully understanding the aggregates, elements, and spheres of the senses so as to shoulder the burdens of all living beings; burning with heroic ardor to defeat the legions of Māra; never being too proud to search for the Dharma; having few desires and being perfectly content so as to be able to accept the Dharma in the search for knowledge;<sup>253</sup> not having anything to do with all the things of this world, so as to love all the world; remaining unruffled in every aspect of one's comportment, so as to conform with the world; exercising the supernormal faculties in order to manifest every possible activity; knowing how to use one's memory and one's mental retentiveness and the formulae which support it in order to retain all that one has learned; knowing the quality of other beings' faculties, so as to be able to eliminate their doubts; having magical power which is unimpeded, in order to demonstrate the Dharma; having inspired eloquence which is unimpeded, because one has reached the point where one possesses the full power of inspiration; experiencing the good fortune of gods and humans by purifying the ten paths of meritorious conduct; establishing the path to Brahmā by developing the four boundless states;<sup>254</sup> acquiring the voice of a buddha by uttering the request to teach the Dharma, by showing appreciation for it,

and by expressing approval of it; acquiring the comportment of a buddha by reaching a special degree of self-control in body, speech and mind, and by being unattached to all things; inspiring others to set out on the Great Way by drawing them into the community of bodhisattvas;<sup>255</sup> and being vigilant by not letting any of one's good qualities perish.<sup>256</sup> It is precisely in this way, gentlemen, that a bodhisattva committed to this teaching does not bring the conditioned to an end.

- 10.18 "Now then, how does one not remain fixed in the unconditioned? It is when one engages in the intensive cultivation of emptiness, but does not fully realize emptiness; when one engages in the intensive cultivation of signlessness, but does not fully realize signlessness; when one engages in the intensive cultivation of wishlessness, but does not fully realize wishlessness; when one engages in the intensive cultivation of effortlessness, but does not fully realize effortlessness; when one considers things to be impermanent, but is never satisfied with one's roots of merit; when one considers things to be painful, but deliberately undergoes rebirth; when one considers things to be not the self, but does not abandon selfhood altogether; when one considers things to be at peace, but does not bring about the state of absolute peace; when one considers things to be isolated and separate from each other, but applies oneself to them physically and mentally; when one considers things to be devoid of any foundation, but does not give up the foundation afforded by virtuous qualities; when one considers things to be not subject to appropriation, but carries the burden appropriated by other living beings; when one considers things to be free from the corrupting influences, but actively engages in the cycle of rebirth; when one considers things to be free of activity, but is active in bringing other living beings to maturity; when one considers things to be devoid of self, but does not abandon great compassion for other living beings; when one considers things to be devoid of birth, but does not lapse into the fixed state an advanced disciple attains; when one considers things to be void, empty, hollow, lacking a master, and rootless, but is not devoid of merit, is not empty

of knowledge, is full of resolve, is consecrated with and intent on the knowledge of those who are their own masters, and is securely established in the actual lineage of the buddhas.<sup>257</sup> It is precisely in this way, gentlemen, that a bodhisattva committed to such a teaching does not remain fixed in the unconditioned and does not bring the conditioned to an end.

- 10.19 "Because one is engaged in gathering the provision of merit one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one is engaged in gathering the provision of knowledge one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because one is endowed with great love one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one is endowed with great compassion one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because one is bringing living beings to maturity one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one desires the attributes of a buddha one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because one is perfecting the distinctive features of a buddha one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and for the sake of perfecting the knowledge of the omniscient one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because one is a master of stratagem one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one observes things closely with insight one does not bring the conditioned to an end. For the sake of purifying one's buddha-domain one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one is empowered by the buddhas one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because one knows from experience what is beneficial for living beings one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one manifests the meaning of the Dharma one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because one is gathering supplies of the roots of merit one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one carries the lingering traces of those roots of merit one does not bring the conditioned to an end. For the sake of fulfilling one's vows one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one has no purpose at all one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because of the purity of one's motivation one does not remain fixed in



the unconditioned, and because of the purity of one's ambition one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because of deploying the five supernormal faculties as if they were child's play one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one has all six supernormal faculties which belong to the knowledge of a buddha one does not bring the conditioned to an end. For the sake of completing one's store of the perfections one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and for such time as it is not completed one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because one is amassing the wealth of the Dharma one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one does not just seek a limited Dharma one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because one is gathering a collection of all medicinal remedies one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one is applying those remedies as needed one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because of one's firm promise one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one fulfils one's promise one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because one is gathering the medicinal remedy of the Dharma one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one is applying that remedy, even in small doses,<sup>258</sup> one does not bring the conditioned to an end. Because one comprehends the disease of the defilements of all living beings one does not remain fixed in the unconditioned, and because one is curing all diseases one does not bring the conditioned to an end. In this way, then, gentlemen, the bodhisattva neither brings the conditioned to an end, nor does he remain fixed in the unconditioned. This is what is meant by the bodhisattvas' state of liberation called 'Ending and Not Ending,' and this, good men, is what you should apply yourselves to."

10.20 Then those bodhisattvas, delighted, excited, thrilled, overjoyed, and full of bliss and happiness after hearing this exposition, covered this entire cosmos of a billion worlds with a knee-deep layer of flowers, and of aromatic powders, perfumes, and incense of all kinds, showering them over the assembly surrounding the Exalted One as an offering to the

Exalted One, as an offering to the bodhisattvas there and to this formulation of the Dharma. After prostrating themselves at the feet of the Exalted One and circumambulating him three times, they disappeared from this buddha-domain with uplifting verses of joy on their lips, reappearing instantaneously, in the merest fraction of the blink of an eye, in the world-system Sarvagandhasugandha.

## Chapter 11

# The World-system Abhirati is Brought into Sahā, Revealing the Realized One Akṣobhya

11.1 **T**hen the Exalted One said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “When you want to see the Realized One, good sir, how do you see the Realized One?”

To these words of the Exalted One the Licchavi Vimalakīrti made the following reply: “Exalted One, when I want to see the Realized One, I see the Realized One by not seeing. I see him as one who did not come to be in the past, does not remain in the present, and does not pass on to the future. Why is this so? I see him as having the very nature of form, without form; the very nature of feeling, without feeling;<sup>259</sup> the very nature of conception, without conception; the very nature of conditioning, without conditioning; and the very nature of consciousness, without consciousness; as not encompassed by the four elements, like the element of space; as not emerging within the spheres of the six senses; as beyond what the eye can see, beyond what the ear can hear, beyond what the nose can smell, beyond what the tongue can taste, beyond what the body can feel, and beyond what the mind can think; as not enmeshed in this world with its three realms; as parting company with the three impurities, as keeping company with the three liberations; as having acquired the threefold knowledge; as having obtained the unobtainable; as having reached the highest level of non-attachment to all things; as being one for whom the highest level and limit of reality is no limit; as

not being fixed on the way things really are, yet not associated with what they are not; as neither brought about by causes, nor dependent on conditions; as neither lacking characteristics, nor possessing them; as recognized neither by a single characteristic, nor by multiple characteristics.

"He is not discerned by characteristics, neither shared characteristics nor distinctive characteristics. He is neither on this side, nor the other, nor in-between; he is neither here nor there, neither from here nor from elsewhere. He is neither discernible by ordinary understanding, nor established by sensory consciousness.<sup>260</sup> He is neither darkness nor light. He has neither name nor distinguishing mark. He is neither powerless nor powerful. He does not reside anywhere, nor is he found in a particular place. He is neither pure nor impure. He is neither conditioned nor unconditioned. He cannot be described in any sense whatsoever—not in terms of generosity or stinginess, morality or immorality, patient acceptance or malice, effort or sloth, concentration or distraction, insight or foolishness. One should neither speak about him nor avoid speaking about him—not in terms of truth nor in terms of falsehood, not in terms of emancipation nor in terms of non-emancipation. He is neither comprehensible nor incomprehensible; he has completely cut off all sound and speech; he is neither a field of merit nor not a field of merit; he is neither worthy of offerings nor incapable of sanctifying offerings. He is not to be grasped; he is not touched by contamination. He carries no emblems; he is not adorned in any particular way. Free from all reckoning, he is the same as sameness, equal to the way things are, his effort is unequalled; he has gone completely beyond all points of comparison; he has not gone anywhere, nor has he come anywhere, nor has he gone completely beyond anything. He is not seen, not heard, not understood. He is free of all entanglements. He has attained the view that everything is the same that comes with the knowledge of the omniscient, he is the same towards all living beings, he has succeeded in seeing that all things are undifferentiated. He is entirely beyond reproach; there is nothing wrong with him;

he is free of what would stain him. He is free of all concepts,<sup>261</sup> beyond conceptual construction. He is not made, not born, not produced, not become, not come into being, nor will he come to be. He is free of all fear, free of afflictions, free of sorrows, free of joys, free of surges of emotion. He cannot be spoken about using any conventional descriptions.

"This is the kind of body, Exalted One, that the Realized One has. This is precisely how it should be seen. Those who see it in this way see it in the right way. Those who see it differently see it in the wrong way."

11.2 Then the Venerable Śāriputra said to the Exalted One, "Exalted One, in which buddha-domain did the gentleman Vimalakīrti die before coming to this buddha-domain?"

The Exalted One said, "Śāriputra, you ask this good man himself, 'Where did you die before being reborn here?'"

Then the Venerable Śāriputra said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, "Good sir, where did you die before being reborn here?"

Vimalakīrti said, "Is there death or rebirth for any reality of which the Elder has achieved direct awareness?"

"There is no death or rebirth for any such reality."

"Reverend Śāriputra, if it is like this, that there are no real things that die or are reborn, how could it occur to you to ask where I died before being reborn here? Reverend Śāriputra, were you to ask a phantom man or woman created by magic, 'Where did you die before being reborn here?'—how would that magical creation reply?"

"Good sir, a magical creation does not die nor is it reborn. What could it reply?"

"Reverend Śāriputra, didn't the Realized One teach that all things have the nature of magical creations?"

"It is so, good sir."

"Reverend Śāriputra, if all things have the nature of magical creations, how could it occur to you to ask where I died before being reborn here?<sup>262</sup> Death, Reverend Śāriputra, is a word designating the cessation of cumulative karmic activity,<sup>263</sup> rebirth is the continuation of cumulative karmic

activity. As to that, bodhisattvas die and they do not stop the accumulation of the roots of merit; they are reborn, but their evil does not continue.”

- 11.3 Then the Exalted One addressed himself to the Venerable Śāriputra, “Śāriputra, this gentleman left the Realized One Akṣobhya and the world-system Abhirati to come to us.”

“How amazing, Exalted One, that this good man can come from such a pure buddha-domain and still like staying in this buddha-domain, marred by the many defects that it has!”

Vimalakīrti said, “Reverend Śāriputra, what do you think? Do the sun’s rays like mingling with darkness?”

“Certainly not, good sir. The two do not exist together. For as soon as the sun’s disk comes up, all darkness flees.”<sup>264</sup>

“And why does the sun come up in Jambūdvīpa?”

“Only in order to shed light and dispel darkness.”

“In the very same way, Śāriputra, bodhisattvas are deliberately reborn in impure buddha-domains in order to purify living beings, but they will have nothing to do with the defilements, in fact they dispel the darkness of the defilements by which all other living beings are blinded.”

- 11.4 At that, the whole assembly was filled with intense longing: “If only we could see that world-system Abhirati and the Realized One Akṣobhya, the bodhisattvas and the advanced disciples there!”

Then, knowing in his own mind what the entire assembly was thinking in theirs, the Exalted One said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti: “Good sir, show the assembly here that world-system Abhirati and the Realized One Akṣobhya. The assembly would like to see them.”

The Licchavi Vimalakīrti thought, “What if, without getting up from my seat here, I were to cut the world-system Abhirati loose from its setting—Abhirati, with its many hundreds of thousands of bodhisattvas; its resident gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, and asuras; its encircling Outer Ring mountains; with its rivers, pools, fountains, lakes, and encircling oceans; with its Mount Meru, mountain peaks and hills; with its sun, moon and stars; with the abodes of its gods, nāgas, yakṣas,

and gandharvas; with its palaces of the Brahmā gods and their retinues; with the people in their villages, towns, cities, provinces, and kingdoms; with its women's apartments; its assemblies of bodhisattvas and advanced disciples; with the Bodhi-tree of the Realized One Akṣobhya, and with the Realized One Akṣobhya himself teaching the Dharma, seated amidst an assembly as vast as the ocean; and the lotuses that carry out the Buddha's work for living beings in the ten directions; and with its three stairways<sup>265</sup> made of precious substances reaching from the continent of Jambūdvīpa to the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, which the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three use to descend to Jambūdvīpa in order to see the Realized One Akṣobhya, honor him, wait upon him, and hear the Dharma, and which human beings of Jambūdvīpa use to ascend to the heavenly palace of the Thirty-Three in order to see those gods; with countless attributes such as these—what if I were to cut the world-system Abhirati loose, taking all of it from the disk of water on which it rests all the way up to the palaces of the Akaniṣṭha Heaven, as if it were a potter's wheel, and then, taking it in my right hand like a wreath of flowers, bring it into this world-system and show it to the whole assembly here?"

11.5 There and then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti entered such a state of concentration and performed a miraculous act of such force that he cut the world-system Abhirati loose, and, taking it in his right hand, brought it into the world-system

11.6 Sahā. § At that point the accomplished disciples, bodhisattvas, gods and humans in Abhirati who had the divine eye and possessed supernormal faculties raised a loud cry, "We are being carried off,<sup>266</sup> Exalted One! We are being carried off, Sublime One! Save us, Realized One!"

In order to bring them under control, the Exalted One said to them, "I have no authority in this matter, given that the bodhisattva Vimalakīrti is doing the carrying off."

The other gods and humans there, however, did not know or see that they were being carried anywhere. After all, as the world-system Abhirati was brought into the world-system Sahā, nothing was taken away from it or added to it,

while this world was not squeezed or constricted. The world-system Abhirati did not lose anything; it looked the same as it had before.

- 11.7 Then the Exalted One Śākyamuni addressed the whole assembly, “Friends, see the world-system Abhirati and the Realized One Akṣobhya, see this domain’s panoplies of qualities, its splendid arrays of advanced disciples and bodhisattvas.”

They said, “We see them, Exalted One.”

“A bodhisattva who wants to acquire such a buddha-domain, friends, should emulate the Realized One Akṣobhya in his practice as a bodhisattva.”

At this marvelous feat of magic in which the world-system Abhirati was revealed and at the sight of the Realized One Akṣobhya, fourteen billion living beings in this world-system Sahā, both divine and human, conceived the aspiration to that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed, and they all vowed to be reborn in the world-system Abhirati. The Exalted One predicted that they would all be born in the world-system Abhirati.

And so it was that, after doing everything he needed to do to bring living beings in the world-system Sahā to maturity, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti put the world-system Abhirati right back where it belonged.

- 11.8 Then the Exalted One addressed the Venerable Śāriputra: “Did you see the world-system Abhirati and the Realized One Akṣobhya, Śāriputra?”

“I did, Exalted One. May all beings have buddha-domains with such panoplies of qualities. May all beings also have the same kind of magical powers as this gentleman, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti. In getting to see such good men, we have won a great prize. Those living beings who just hear this formulation of the Dharma, either now while the Buddha is still in the world or after he has attained final release, will also win a great prize, to say nothing of those who, when they hear it, commit themselves to it, put their trust in it, learn it, memorize it, recite it, and master it, and who, after committing themselves to it,<sup>267</sup> circulate it, elucidate it in full for others,



- 11.9 and dedicate themselves to its cultivation in practice. § Those into whose hands this formulation of the Dharma comes will obtain the treasure of the precious Dharma. Those who recite this formulation of the Dharma to themselves will have the Realized One as their companion. Those who render devotion and service to people dedicated to this formulation of the Dharma will become guardians of the Dharma. Those who, making a good written copy of this formulation of the Dharma, preserve it and honor it will have the Realized One in their own homes. Those who give thanks for this formulation of the Dharma will come to possess all possible merit. Those who do no more than take a stanza of four lines, or even just one of those lines, from this formulation of the Dharma<sup>268</sup> and teach it to other people, elaborating on it in full, will offer the great sacrifice of the Dharma. Exalted One, for those who approach this formulation of the Dharma with acceptance, appreciation, respect, esteem, regard, dedication and devotion, that will in itself constitute a prediction.”<sup>269</sup>

## Chapter 12

### Conclusion and Entrustment<sup>270</sup>

- 12.1 **T**hen Śakra, Lord of the Gods, said to the Exalted One, “Exalted One, I have heard many hundreds of thousands of formulations of the Dharma from the Realized One and from Prince Mañjuśrī, but I have never before heard a teaching which provides access to the guiding principles of the Dharma like the miraculous state of inconceivable freedom<sup>271</sup> such as
- 12.2 is expounded in this formulation of the Dharma. § There is no doubt that those living beings who learn, memorize, recite, and master this formulation of the Dharma will in this way become vessels of the Dharma, to say nothing of those who dedicate themselves to its cultivation in practice. All the lower realms will be blocked off to them and all the paths to the fortunate rebirths will be opened up for them, they will be seen by all buddhas, they will defeat all rival teachers, they will conquer Māra in all his forms, they will clear the paths to awakening, they will take their place upon the seat of awakening, and they will follow the path of a realized one to its conclusion.
- 12.3 “As for those gentlemen who memorize this formulation of the Dharma, Exalted One, I will also wait upon and serve them with my entire retinue. And in whatever villages or cities, market towns or districts, kingdoms or capitals this formulation of the Dharma is being circulated, taught, or expounded, there I will go to hear the Dharma with my retinue. In gentlemen who lack the serenity of faith I will cause the serenity of faith to arise, and to those who have the serenity of faith already, I will afford protection, shelter and defense in accordance with the Dharma.”<sup>272</sup>

12.4 When this was said, the Exalted One said to Śakra, Lord of the Gods, "Bravo, bravo, Lord of the Gods! What you have said is good, Lord of the Gods, and the Realized One rejoices in it. The awakening of the exalted buddhas of the past, present and future, Lord of the Gods, is taught in this formulation of the Dharma. In this sense, therefore, Lord of the Gods, the exalted buddhas of the past, present and future will be worshiped by any lady or gentleman<sup>273</sup> who learns this formulation of the Dharma, who even so much as copies it out in book form, recites it, copies it and masters it."<sup>274</sup>

12.5 "Furthermore, Lord of the Gods, suppose this cosmos of a billion worlds was full of realized ones packed as densely as a stand of sugar-cane or a thicket of reeds or a grove of bamboos or a patch of sesame plants or a field of rice plants, and a lady or a gentleman were to honor, venerate, revere, and worship all those realized ones for an eon or more than an eon with every offering and every item they might need for their pleasure and comfort. Suppose then, after those realized ones have attained final release, he or she were to erect a stūpa made from all manner of precious substances for the worship of the bodily remains, preserved intact and in one piece, of each and every realized one, a stūpa the size of a four-continent world-system to the height of the Brahmaloḥa heavens, adorned on high with spires, parasols, and flags. Now, if he or she were to make one such stūpa for every single realized one, and at it perform worship for an eon or more than an eon with every possible type of flower, perfume, banner and flag, and with the sound of every possible type of musical instrument, then what do you think, Lord of the Gods, would this lady or gentleman engender a great deal of merit as a result of that?"

"A great deal, Exalted One, a great deal, Sublime One—even in a hundred thousand million eons one could not find the end of that mass of merit."

12.6 The Exalted One said, "I will tell you, Lord of the Gods, I will have you know<sup>275</sup> that if a lady or a gentleman were to learn, memorize, recite and master this formulation of the Dharma 'The exposition of the inconceivable state of freedom,'

they would generate a lot more merit than that. Why is this? It is because, Lord of the Gods, the awakening of the exalted buddhas is born from the Dharma, and it is with the Dharma alone that it can be worshipped, not with material things. That this is so, Lord of the Gods, you should also know in the following way.

12.7 “Once upon a time, Lord of the Gods, in an age past, going back an incalculable eon, going back an eon which is more than incalculable, which was vast, measureless, and inconceivable, there was then, at that time, in the world-system Mahāvvyūha, during the eon Viśodhana, a Realized, Truly Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One, One Perfected in Knowledge and Conduct, a Sublime One, a Knower of the World, a Supreme Trainer of Men Amenable to Training, a Teacher of Gods and Humans, a Buddha, and an Exalted One whose name was Bhaiṣajyarāja. And it is the case, Lord of the Gods, that the Realized, Truly Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One Bhaiṣajyarāja had a lifespan of twenty intermediate eons, a Saṅgha of thirty-six million billion advanced disciples, and a Saṅgha of twelve million bodhisattvas. Lord of the Gods, there was also then, at that time, a king called Ratnacchatra, a universal emperor, possessor of the seven treasures and master of the whole world with its four continents, and he had a total of a thousand sons, who were heroic, handsome and vanquishers of enemy armies.

12.8 “At that time, furthermore, King Ratnacchatra spent five intermediate eons honoring that Exalted One, the Realized One Bhaiṣajyarāja, and his retinue, with everything they might need for their pleasure and comfort. And so it was, Lord of the Gods, that at the end of those five intermediate eons King Ratnacchatra said to his thousand sons, ‘Be it known to you, my good sirs, that I have made offerings to the Realized One. Now you should make offerings to the Realized One.’ So it was, Lord of the Gods, that those princes replied, ‘Very well!’ to their father, King Ratnacchatra, and then, all of them acting in concert and concord, for a further five intermediate eons they honored that Exalted One, the Realized One Bhaiṣajyarāja,

with everything he might need for his pleasure and comfort.

- 12.9 "Among them was one prince by the name of Somacchatra, to whom the thought came when he was alone and in private, 'Is there another offering more noble and more excellent than this offering?'

"And to him, through the sustaining power of the Buddha, a divinity spoke from the sky, 'Good man, the offering of the Dharma is more excellent than all other offerings.'

"He said, 'What then is this offering of the Dharma?'

"The divinity said, 'What is this offering of the Dharma? This is something, good man, which you should go to the Realized One Bhaiṣajyarāja and ask him about. The Exalted One will explain it to you.'

"Then, Lord of the Gods, that Prince Somacchatra went to where the Exalted One, the Realized, Truly Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One Bhaiṣajyarāja was, and having gone there and prostrated himself at that exalted one's feet he took up a position to one side. After taking up a position to one side Prince Somacchatra said to the Exalted One, the Realized One Bhaiṣajyarāja, 'People keep saying "offering of the Dharma," Exalted One, but what is this offering of the Dharma?'

- 12.10 "The Exalted One said, 'Good sir, the offering of the Dharma is the act of teaching the discourses spoken by the realized ones which are profound and appear profound, to which the whole world is resistant, which are hard to plumb, hard to see, hard to understand, subtle, finespun, and defying comprehension, which are included in the Basket of the Bodhisattvas,<sup>276</sup> which are sealed with the seals of the royal mnemonic formulae and the royal discourses, which make known the wheel unstoppable in its progress, which are born of the six perfections, in which the means of drawing others to oneself are fully included,<sup>277</sup> in which the factors that contribute to awakening are followed, which have as their support the constitutive elements of awakening, which lead one into great compassion for living beings, which teach great love, which are free from Māra and his false views, which teach dependent origination,<sup>§</sup> in which there is no self, no living being,
- 12.11

no soul, and no person, in which there is emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, and effortlessness,<sup>278</sup> which bring one to the seat of awakening, which turn the wheel of the Dharma, which are praised and extolled by gods, nāgas, yakṣas, and gandharvas,<sup>279</sup> which do not cut off the lineage of the True Dharma, which guard the treasury of the Dharma, in which the supreme offering of the Dharma is made manifest, which are embraced by all noble people, which expound all the practices of a bodhisattva, which inculcate the special modes of knowledge<sup>280</sup> of the Dharma in its true meaning, which arise out of the summary statements of the Dharma in terms of transitory, unsatisfactory, selfless, and peaceful, which sap the strength of the immoral,<sup>281</sup> which strike fear into all adversaries attached to bad views and misapprehensions, which are extolled by all buddhas, which run counter to the cycle of rebirth and reveal the bliss of final release—it is the act of expounding, keeping in mind, and reflecting upon such discourses as these, it is the act of embracing the True Dharma,<sup>282</sup> this is what is meant by the offering of the Dharma.

- 12.12     “Furthermore, good sir, the offering of the Dharma is where, with regard to all dharmas, there is deep reflection on dharmas and putting the dharmas into practice, being in conformity with dependent origination and the absence of all extreme viewpoints, patient acceptance of non-birth and non-origination and engagement with the absence of self and of other living beings, the lack of conflict, strife, and disagreement with causes and conditions, the absence of possessiveness and the absence of acquisitiveness, reliance on the sense rather than reliance on the letter, reliance on knowledge rather than reliance on sensory experience, reliance on discourses with a direct and straightforward meaning rather than attachment to the conventional sense of those with a meaning that has to be inferred, reliance on the way things are rather than obtaining one’s views from persons, being unattached to any belief one might cling to<sup>283</sup> and following the Dharma exactly as it is, committing oneself to the absence of attachment and destroying attachment,<sup>284</sup> the quelling of ignorance and

so on until we come to: the quelling of old age, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, despair, and anguish, and in this way one keeps dependent origination with its twelve elements in view,<sup>285</sup> one realizes it with a realization which is indestructible, and one disregards false views because of one's regard for other living beings. This too, good sir, is called the supreme offering of Dharma.'

- 12.13 "And so it was, Lord of the Gods, that when he heard about this offering of the Dharma from that Exalted One, the Realized One Bhaiṣajyarāja, Prince Somacchatra reached the state of acceptance of the Dharma which brings one into natural accord with it. He draped that exalted one with the garments and ornaments he was wearing, and said, 'Exalted One, I am willing and able to take possession of the True Dharma, perform the offering of the True Dharma, and defend the True Dharma of the Realized One.<sup>286</sup> May the Exalted One empower me in such a way that I may take possession of the Exalted One's True Dharma, defeating my adversaries, Māra in all his forms!' That realized one, knowing his resolve, predicted that he would in the last age be a guardian and defender of the city of the True Dharma.

- 12.14 "Furthermore, Lord of the Gods, while that realized one was still living, Prince Somacchatra went forth out of faith from his home into the homeless life, and continued to strive heroically in the cultivation of virtuous qualities. Striving heroically to the point where he became secure in those virtuous qualities, before long he realized the five supernormal faculties and mastered the formulae which support mental retentiveness, becoming one whose inspired eloquence knew no interruption. By the power of the supernormal faculties and the formulae which support mental retentiveness, he went on turning the wheel of Dharma which had been turned by that Exalted One, the Realized One Bhaiṣajyarāja for a full ten intermediate eons after that Exalted One had won final release. Furthermore, Lord of the Gods, that monk Somacchatra, devoted as he was to embracing the True Dharma, caused a thousand million living beings to become unstoppable in their

progress towards that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed, induced fourteen billion<sup>287</sup> living beings to become followers of the way of the advanced disciples and the way of the solitary buddhas, and set countless living beings on course for the heavens.

- 12.15 “Furthermore, Lord of the Gods, you might think that a different person was at that time and at that juncture the universal emperor named Ratnacchatra, but, Lord of the Gods, that is not the way to see it. Why is that? It is the Realized One Ratnārcis who was at that time and at that juncture the universal emperor Ratnacchatra. As for the thousand sons of that King Ratnacchatra, they were the bodhisattvas of the Auspicious Eon, who shall arise as a full thousand buddhas in this Auspicious Eon—of whom four have already arisen and the remainder are yet to arise—starting with Krakucchanda and ending with Roca, the Realized One Roca being the final one.<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, Lord of the Gods, you might think that a different person was at that time and at that juncture the prince named Somacchatra, who embraced the True Dharma of that Exalted One, the Realized One Bhaiṣajyarāja, but, Lord of the Gods, that is not the way to see it. Why is that? It is I myself who was at that time and at that juncture the prince named Somacchatra.

“In this way, then, Lord of the Gods, you should know that of all offerings made to the realized ones, the offering of the Dharma is said to be the first of them, it is said to be the best, the greatest, the choicest, the foremost, the finest, the highest, the paramount. Therefore, Lord of the Gods, you should make offerings to me with the offering of the Dharma, not with offerings of material things; you should honor me by honoring me with the Dharma, not by honoring me with material things.”

- 12.16 <sup>289</sup>At that point the Exalted One addressed himself to the Bodhisattva Maitreya, “I entrust to you, Maitreya, that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed, that took me a million incalculable eons<sup>290</sup> to achieve, so that with your sustaining power and support, in the last time<sup>291</sup> and the last age after the final release of the Realized One, formulations of the Dharma



such as this will become widely distributed in Jambūdvīpa, and will not disappear. Why is that? There will be in future, Maitreya, ladies and gentlemen, as well as gods, nāgas, yakṣas and gandharvas, who will have put down the roots of merit<sup>292</sup> and set out for that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed. May they not be lost because they failed to hear this formulation of the Dharma! When they hear discourses such as this they will experience intense love for and serene faith in them, and they will take them reverentially upon their heads. It is in order to take care of such ladies and gentlemen as these that you ought to ensure that discourses of this kind are widely distributed at that time.<sup>293</sup>

- 12.17 “There are two seals, Maitreya, which stamp bodhisattvas as bodhisattvas. What are the two? The stamp of serene faith in unusual and beautiful<sup>294</sup> language, and the stamp of fearlessness with regard to the guiding principles of the profound dharmas and of understanding and accepting them as they really are. These, Maitreya, are the two seals which stamp bodhisattvas as bodhisattvas. In that regard, Maitreya, you should know that those bodhisattvas in whom serene faith in unusual and beautiful language predominates are novice bodhisattvas, while on the other hand, Maitreya, you should know that those who circulate, listen to, are convinced by and teach this discourse which is profound, whose form is flawless,<sup>295</sup> and which takes apart words which go together by producing pairs of contradictory statements<sup>296</sup>—they are bodhisattvas who have lived the holy life for a long time.

- 12.18 “In that regard there are two reasons, Maitreya, why novice bodhisattvas destroy themselves, and do not achieve a deep comprehension of the profound dharmas. What are the two? When they hear profound discourses which they have never heard before, they are frightened, beset by doubt, and do not rejoice over them, but they go so far as to reject them, thinking ‘Where now have these things come from which we never heard before?’ And they do not follow, serve, or wait upon the gentlemen who are bearers of the discourses of the profound dharmas, vessels of the profound dharmas, and teachers of the

profound dharmas, but they become disrespectful to them and speak ill of them time and time again. For these two reasons, Maitreya, novice bodhisattvas destroy themselves, and do not achieve a deep comprehension of the profound dharmas.<sup>297</sup>

- 12.19 "There are two reasons, Maitreya, why a bodhisattva who is strongly inclined to the profound destroys himself, and does not attain acceptance of the fact that things do not arise. What are the two? He looks down upon those novice bodhisattvas who have not been practicing a long time, he has contempt for them, he does not make them learn anything or give anything up, he does not instruct them. And precisely because of that strong inclination to the profound he does not take training seriously. He looks after living beings with the gift of worldly, material things, but not with the gift of the Dharma. For these two reasons, Maitreya, a bodhisattva who is strongly inclined to the profound destroys himself, and does not speedily attain acceptance of the fact that things do not arise."<sup>298</sup>

- 12.20 After this had been said, the Bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Exalted One, "It is wonderful, Exalted One, how well said what the Exalted One has said is. Exalted One, we<sup>299</sup> will avoid these mistakes, and we will also look after and preserve that perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed of the Realized One, that it took him incalculable hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of eons to achieve. We will ensure that discourses such as these pass into the hands of future ladies and gentlemen who are suitable recipients of them. We will also provide them with the power of memory they will need to appreciate discourses such as these, to learn, master, memorize, circulate, copy, and teach them in full to others, Exalted One, and we will lend them our support. Furthermore, Exalted One, should anyone appreciate and circulate such discourses as these at that time, one should know, Exalted One, that it is due to the sustaining power of the Bodhisattva Maitreya."

Then the Exalted One voiced his approval of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, "Bravo, Maitreya, bravo! These words of yours are well said indeed. The Realized One rejoices in and approves of what has been well said."

12.21 Then those bodhisattvas spoke with one voice, “We too, Exalted One, shall come from our respective buddha-domains after the Realized One has attained final release and ensure that this awakening of the realized ones and buddhas is widely distributed, and we shall also ensure that those gentlemen appreciate<sup>300</sup> it.”

12.22 Then the Four Great Kings said to the Exalted One, “In whatever villages, cities, towns, kingdoms, or capitals such formulations of the Dharma as these are circulated,<sup>301</sup> taught or expounded, there, Exalted One, we Four Great Kings will go with our forces, our mounts,<sup>302</sup> and our retinues in order to hear the Dharma. And for the teacher of that Dharma we shall provide protection for a hundred leagues all around, so that no one seeking or looking for a way to get at that teacher of Dharma will be able to find an opening.”

12.23 At that point the Exalted One addressed the Venerable Ānanda, “Learn this formulation of the Dharma, Ānanda, memorize it, recite it, and expound it in full to others.”

He said, “I have learned this formulation of the Dharma, Exalted One. What is the name of this formulation of the Dharma, Exalted One, and how should I memorize it?”

The Exalted One said, “Therefore, Ānanda, memorize this formulation of the Dharma as the Teaching of Vimalakīrti (*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*), the Production of Matching Pairs of Contradictory Statements (*Yamakaṣaṭṣaṭyastanirhāra*),<sup>303</sup> the Chapter on the State of Freedom through the Dharma which is Inconceivable<sup>304</sup> (*Acintyadharmavimokṣaparivarta*).”

This was what the Exalted One said. Delighted, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, Prince Mañjuśrī, the Venerable Ānanda,<sup>305</sup> the great advanced disciples, and that entire assembly, as well as the whole world with its gods, human beings, asuras and gandharvas rejoiced at what the Exalted One had said.

Whatever dharms come into being from a cause,  
The Realized One has indeed told us their cause,  
As well as what their cessation is;  
The Great Ascetic is the one who tells it as it is.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is the religious donation of the monk Śīladvaja,  
follower of the excellent Mahāyāna.

May whatever merit there is in it lead to the attainment  
of the fruit of that cognition which cannot be surpassed  
on the part of the entire mass of living beings, begin-  
ning with my teacher, preceptor, mother, and father.

This was copied by the attendant Cāṇḍoka on the 29th  
day of the month Bhādra<sup>306</sup> in the year 12 of the reign  
of His Majesty Gopāladeva.

## Appendix A

### Emendations to the Sanskrit Text

Page references given in parentheses for TSG<sup>Ed</sup>

- §1.3 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(2): *dharmaratnavikaraṇāmṛtajalasam-varṣakaiḥ*. Emend to °vikiraṇa°.
- §1.3 TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(2): *āgatisatvāśayamatimanupraviṣṭajñānaviṣayibhiḥ*. Emend to *āgatigatisatva°*.
- §1.5 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(3): *anekāc caturmahādvīpakāl loka-dhātor*. Emend to *aśokāc*, etc.
- §1.9 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *namasyantī*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(5): *namasyatī*. Emend to *namasyantī*, in line with the manuscript and TSG<sup>Text</sup>.
- §1.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(5): *śramaṇaśāntipathapraṇetum*. Read as *śramaṇa śāntipathapraṇetum*.
- §1.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(6): *naivātra ātmana ca kāraku*. Read as *naivātra ātma na ca kāraku*.
- §1.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(6): *yasminn avedita*. Read as *yasmin na vedita*.
- §1.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(6): *sarvakutīrthikagaṇāś*. Emend to *sarve kutīrthikagaṇāś*.
- §1.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *teṣān akalpana punar madate praśāntā*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(6): *teṣām akalpana punaḥ satate praśāntā*. Emend to *teṣā na kalpana punaḥ sada te praśāntā*.
- §1.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *nivivyasi*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(7): *nividyasi*. Emend to *nividhyasi*.
- §1.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(7): *daśabala satyavikramaṃ*. Read as *daśabalasatyavikramaṃ*.
- §1.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *satvai*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(8): *satvair*. Emend to *satve*.

- §1.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(8): *acintiyaṃ buddhamahānubhāvaṃ*. Read as *acintiyaṃ buddha mahānubhāvaṃ*.
- §1.13 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *sambhavati*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(11): *sambhavanti*. Emend to *sambhavati*, in line with the manuscript and TSG<sup>Text</sup>.
- §1.15 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(12): *yas tathāgatasya*. Emend to *yat tathāgatasya*?
- §1.18 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *upatiṣṭhato*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(13): *upatiṣṭhataḥ*. Emend to *upatiṣṭhate*.
- §2.3 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(15–16): *lakṣaṇaparicchinnaḥ*. Emend to *lakṣaṇaparicchannaḥ*.
- §2.6 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(17): °*kauśala*°. Emend to °*kauśalya*°.
- §2.11 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(18): *asaṃbhūto*. Emend to *abhūto*.
- §3.12 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(23): °*viññāptyā*. Emend to °*viññāptyā*.
- §3.18 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(25): *lakṣaṇam*. Emend to *kṣaṇam*.
- §3.22 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *akṣatām*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(27): *akṣatām*. Emend to *akṣatān*.
- §3.22 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(27): *amuṣitabodhicittāḥ*. Emend to *āmuṣitabodhicittāḥ*.
- §3.29 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(28): *triṃ sāhasramahāsāhasraṃ*. Emend to *trisāhasramahāsāhasraṃ*.
- §3.33 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *tat sāhārthāyusmann*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(30): *utsāhāyāyusmann*. Emend tentatively to *tatsāhārtha āyusmann*.
- §3.39 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *yathōā*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(32): *panthā*. Emend to *patho*.
- §3.39 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(32): *paṃke/panke saṃkramaḥ*. Emend to *paṃkasaṃkramaḥ*.
- §3.39 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(32): *svacittadarśanī*. Emend to *svacittadamanī*.
- §3.43 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *sarvamahojaskakuśaladharmasamanvāgataḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(33): *sarvamahaujaskakuśaladharmasamanvāgataḥ*. Emend to *sarvakuśaladharmasamanvāgataḥ*.
- §3.50 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *bhikṣo*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(35): *bhikṣaḥ*. Emend to *bhikṣo*, in line with the manuscript and TSG<sup>Text</sup>.

- §3.52 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *yaithān deputrāṇāṃ bodhiparikalpanadr̥ṣṭis tān etān utsarjaya*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(35): *yaiṣāṃ devaputrāṇāṃ bodhiparikalpanadr̥ṣṭis tām etām utsarjaya*. Emend to: *yaiṣāṃ devaputrāṇāṃ bodhiparikalpanadr̥ṣṭis tām etān utsarjaya*.
- §3.52 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *sarveṃjita*[TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(36) *sarveñjita*]*manya-syanditānām*. Emend to: *sarveñjitamanyanāspanditānām*.
- §3.52 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *adhiṣṭhānaṃ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(36): *anadhiṣṭhānaṃ*. Emend to *aviṣṭhānaṃ*.
- §3.60 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(38): *pratiṣṭhante*. Emend to *pratitiṣṭhante*.
- §3.62 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(39): *nimantraya yathā*. Emend to *nimantrayathā*.
- §4.2 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(45): *mahādharmasrāvaṇasāṃkathyaṃ*. Emend to *mahādharmasrāvaṇasāṃkathyaṃ*.
- §4.5 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(46): *kṣapanīyam*. Emend to *kṣamanīyam*.
- §4.8 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(47): *aparikalpanāś ca śūnyatāyāḥ śūnyatāḥ |*. Emend to *aparikalpanā śūnyatāyāḥ śūnyatā |*.
- §4.9 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *kāyasamprayukto ṣa cittasamprayuktaḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(48) *kāyasamprayukta uta cittasamprayuktaḥ*. Emend to *kāyasamprayukto 'tha cittasamprayuktaḥ*.
- §4.9 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(48): *evaṃ dhātuko*. Read as *evaṃdhātuko*.
- §4.12 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *dharmasamjñāyaivaṃ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(49): *dharmasamjñāyā evaṃ*. Emend to *dharmasamjñāparijñāyā evaṃ*.
- §4.12 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *dhyātmaṃ bahirdhā ca | samudācāraḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(50): *adhyātmaṃ bahirdhā ca samudācāraḥ*. Emend to *adhyātmaṃ bahirdhā cāsamudācāraḥ*.
- §4.12 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *katamo dhyātma bahirdhā samudācāraḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(50): *katamo 'dhyātmaṃ bahirdhā samudācāraḥ*. Emend to *katamo 'dhyātmabahirdhāsamudācāraḥ*.
- §4.19 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(52): *na nidhyaptau*. Emend to *na nidhyaptāv anidhyaptau*.

- §4.20 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *na cākālajñānaprāptigocaraḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(53): *na cākāle jñānaprāptigocaraḥ*. Emend to *na cākālajñānaprāptigocaraḥ*, in line with the manuscript and TSG<sup>Text</sup>.
- §4.20 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(53): *na cākāle satyaprativedhagocaraḥ*. Emend to *na cākālasatyaprativedhagocaraḥ*.
- §4.20 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(54): *buddhiprabheda°*. Emend to *buddhaprabheda°*.
- §5.19 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(62): *saṃpratyetyayaḥ*. Emend to *saṃpratyēṣṭavyayaḥ*.
- §5.20 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *ye ca te*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(62): *yāvadbhīr*. Emend to *yaiś ca te*.
- §5.20 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(63): *vastrāṇi cotpīdya*. Emend to *vastrāṇi votpīdya*.
- §6.2 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(66): *ātmaparākṣaṇyanatayā*. Emend to *ātmaparārakṣaṇatayā*.
- §6.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(70): *prāptaṃ vā sāksātkṛtaṃ ceti*. Emend to *prāptaṃ vā sāksātkṛtaṃ veti*.
- §6.13 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(72): *evaṃ pramukhā*. Read as *evaṃpramukhā*.
- §6.14 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(73): *strīnirmitā*. Read as *strī nirmitā*.
- §6.14 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *sā*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(73): *sa*. Emend to *sā*, in line with the manuscript and TSG<sup>Text</sup>.
- §7.3 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(78): *adr̥ṣṭisatyena*. Emend to *adr̥ṣṭa-satyena*.
- §7.6 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *°patti°*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(79): *°pati°*. Emend to *patti*, in line with the manuscript and TSG<sup>Text</sup>.
- §7.6 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(80): *dharmāḥ saṃgītivāditam*. Emend to *dharma-saṃgīti vāditam*.
- §7.6 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(80): *vimuktijñānaṃ ca*. Read as *vimukti jñānaṃ ca*.
- §7.6 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(80): *vimuktirasapānakam*. Read as *vimuktirasa pānakam*.



- §7.6 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *teṣam anantaśīkṣā hi*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(83): *teṣām anantaśīkṣā hi*. Emend to *teṣām anantā śīkṣā hi*.
- §8.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(85): *ya evaṃ praveśo*. Read as *ya evaṃpraveśo*.
- §8.13 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *yaivaṃ budhyanā ayaṃ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(85): *yaivaṃ budhyanāyaṃ*. Read as *yaivaṃbudhyanāyaṃ*.
- §8.22 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(87): *buddhasya hi dharmah*. Emend to *buddhasya prakṛtir hi dharmah*.
- §8.32 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(89): *avocat*. Emend to *avocan*.
- §10.9 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *ta pā parisuddhāni*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(102): *tādrśāni parisuddhāni*. Emend to *tathā parisuddhāni*.
- §10.11 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(102): *yatra yatra*. Emend to *yatra*.
- §10.13 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(103): *°dhāriṇī°*. Emend to *°dhāraṇī°*.
- §10.17 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(105): *caturapramāṇotpādanatāyai*. Emend to *caturapramāṇotpādanatayā*.
- §10.18 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(106): *nītārtho buddhavaṃśe*. Emend to *nītārthe buddhavaṃśe*.
- §11.1 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(109): *avedanām*. Emend to *avedanam*.
- §11.1 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *niṣkalo*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(110): *niṣkalaḥ*. Emend to *niṣkalpo*.
- §11.2 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(111): *kutas tvam cyutvehopapanna iti*. Emend to *kutas tavaivaṃ bhavati kutas tvam cyutvehopapanna iti*.
- §11.3 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *sarvan tamo payānti*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(111): *sarvaṃ tamo 'payānti*. Emend to *sarvaṃ tamo 'payāti*.
- §11.6 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(113): *kriyāmahe*. Emend to *hriyāmahe*, the reading of the manuscript (three occurrences).
- §11.6 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(113): *kriyamāṇānām*. Emend to *hriyamāṇānām*, the reading of the manuscript.
- §12.1 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *°dharmanayapraveśāśrutapūvo*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(116): *°dharmanayapraveśāśrutapūrvo*. Emend to *°dharmanayapraveśaḥ śrutapūrvo*.

- §12.3 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *dhārmīraṃkṣāvaraṇaguptiṃ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(116): *dhārmikiṃ rakṣāvaraṇaguptiṃ*. Emend to *dhārmīṃ rakṣāvaraṇaguptiṃ*.
- §12.6 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *prativedayā*[line break from fol. 72a3 to a4] *taḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(117): *prativedaya | ataḥ*. Emend to *prativedayāmi te | ataḥ*.
- §12.10 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *asaṃgrhītagrahāṇāṃ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(119): *saṃgrhītagrahāṇāṃ*. Emend to *susaṃgrhītasamgrahāṇāṃ*.
- §12.11 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(120): *°pratisaṃcitāvatārāṇāṃ*. Emend to *°pratisaṃvidāvatārāṇāṃ*.
- §12.12 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *avekṣya te*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(120): *avekṣyate*. Emend to *avekṣate* or read *avekṣya*, deleting *te*?
- §12.16 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *varame kāle*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(122): *paścime kāle*. Emend to *carame kāle*.
- §12.16 TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(122): *cāvaropitakuśalā*. Emend to *cāvaropitakuśalamūlā*.
- §12.17 TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *rūpalepaṃ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>(123): *arūpalepaṃ*. Perhaps emend to *anupalepaṃ*?

## Appendix B

### Glossary of Sanskrit Terms

Arranged in English Alphabetical Order

*abhijñā*: supernormal faculty

*adhiṣṭhāna*: sustaining power, empowerment

*adhyāśaya*: ambition

*advaya*: non-duality

*akṣaṇa*: (eight) unfavorable circumstances in which one  
can be reborn

*ānantarya*: (five) sins entailing immediate retribution

*animitta/ānimitta*: signlessness

*antarakalpa*: intermediate eon

*ānulomikī kṣānti*: the state of acceptance which brings one into  
natural accord with the Dharma

*anutpattikadharmakṣānti*: acceptance of the fact that things  
do not arise

*anuttarā samyaksaṃbodhi*: that perfect awakening which  
cannot be surpassed

*anuvyañjana*: secondary marks of greatness

*apāya*: lower realms

*apramāṇa*: boundless states

*apraṇihita*: wishlessness, purposelessness

*arhat*: truly worthy one

*asaṃkhyeyakalpa*: incalculable eon

*asaṃskṛta*: unconditioned

*āśaya*: motivation

*āsrava/āśrava*: corrupting influences

*avaivartika*: unstoppable in one's progress

*avivartya*: unstoppable in one's progress

*āyatana*: spheres of the senses

*bhagavat*: Exalted One

*bhūtakoti*: highest level (and limit) of reality

*bodhicitta*: aspiration to awakening

*bodhimaṇḍa*: seat of awakening

*bodhipakṣyā/bodhipakṣā dharmāḥ*: the factors that contribute to awakening

*bodhyaṅga*: constitutive elements of awakening

*brahmacaryā*: the holy life

*buddhadharma* (pl.): the qualities of a buddha;

*buddhakṣetra*: buddha-domain

*cakravartin*: universal emperor

*dāna*: giving; generosity

*daśabala*: ten powers

*daśakuśalakarma(patha)*: ten paths of meritorious conduct

*dhāraṇī*: mental retentiveness and the formulae which support it

*dharma*: quality; teaching; justice; reality, real thing, thing;  
sometimes left untranslated

*dharmadhātu*: totality of things

*dharmaṃparyāya*: formulation of the Dharma

*dhyāna*: meditation

*dṛṣṭi*: false view

*durgati*: unfortunate states of rebirth

*dvaya*: duality

*gotra*: lineage

*jina*: victorious one

*kalyāṇamitra*: companion in what is good

*karuṇā*: compassion

*kaṣāya*: (fivefold) degeneration

*kleśa*: affliction; defilement

*kṣānti*: acceptance; patient acceptance

*kuladuhitr*: lady (as term of reference)

*kulaputra*: gentleman (when used as term of reference); good sir  
(when used as term of address)

*kuśalamūla*: root(s) of merit

*lakṣaṇa*: distinctive features (of greatness); distinguishing feature;  
(defining) characteristic; characteristic feature

*lokadhātu*: world-system

*lokapāla*: Divine Guardians of the World

*mahāyāna*: the Great Way; the Great Vehicle

*maitrī*: love (as between friends)

*mātsarya*: meanness; stinginess

*muditā*: empathetic joy

*nāyaka*: guide

*nimitta*: sign; distinguishing mark

*nirvāṇa*: final release

*pañcakaṣāya*: the five forms of degeneration

*pañcānantaryāṇi*: five sins entailing immediate retribution

*pāpamitra*: companion in what is bad

*paramārtha*: ultimate truth

*pāramitā*: perfection

*pariṇāma*: dedication

*prajñā*: insight

*prajñāpāramitā*: perfection of insight

*prasāda*: serenity of faith, serene faith

*pratibhāna*: inspired eloquence

*pratisaṃvid*: special modes of knowledge

*pratītyasamutpāda*: dependent origination

*pratyekabuddha*: solitary buddha

*punya*: merit

*ṛddhi*: magical powers

*rūpa*: form

*saṃādhi*: concentration; meditative concentration

*saṃāpatti*: (state of) absorption

*saṃāropa*: false imputation

*saṃgrahavastu*: (four) means of drawing others to oneself

*saṃjñā*: conception

*saṃkleśa*: defilement; affliction

*saṃrāñjanīyadharma*: forms of behaviour which endear one to others

*saṃsāra*: cycle of rebirth

*saṃskāra*: conditioning; (karmic) condition

*saṃskṛta*: conditioned

*samyakpradhāna/samyakprahāṇa*: right efforts

*saṃyojana*: fetters

*satkāyadṛṣṭi*: false view of the existence of a real person

*śīla*: morality; moral conduct

*skandha*: aggregate

*śrāvaka*: advanced disciple

*sugata*: Sublime One

*śūnyatā*: emptiness

*tathāgata*: realized one

*traiḍhātuka*: the world with its three realms

*trimala*: three impurities

*triratna*: Three Treasures

*trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu*: cosmos of a billion worlds

*trividyā*: threefold knowledge

*upalambha*: objectification; apprehension (of an object)

*upāya*: stratagem

*upāyakauśalya*: mastery of stratagem

*upāyakuśala*: master of stratagem

*upekṣā*: serene equanimity

*vaiśāradya*: (modes of) self-assurance

*vajra*: thunderbolt

*vāsanā*: lingering trace (of karma)

*vedanā*: feeling

*viññāna*: consciousness; sensory consciousness

*vikalpa*: conceptual construction, construct

*vimokṣa*: (state of) liberation; (state of) freedom

*vimokṣamukha*: doors to liberation

*viparyāsa*: misperception

*vīrya*: heroic effort

*vyāpāda*: malice; ill-will

## Appendix C

### Glossary and Index of Key Terms

Arranged in English Alphabetical Order with Sanskrit  
Equivalents, Additional Explanations, and  
Index of Occurrences

Note: With few exceptions, numerical categories appear under the headword, not the number. For example, the six perfections appear under “perfections.”

acceptance of the fact that things do not arise (*anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*): A definitive acceptance of the emptiness of all phenomena, attained when one fully realizes that they do not come into being and pass away as discrete realities, as is normally imagined. The third of three successive states of acceptance (*kṣānti*). The first, not mentioned in the VñN, is that in which one “follows the voice” of the teacher of Dharma, i.e., accepts them at their word (*ghoṣānugā kṣānti*). The second stage is that in which according with the Dharma, both in belief and in practice, becomes second nature, i.e., is *anuloma*, literally “in the direction of the hair” or, as we would say, “with the grain” rather than *pratiloma*, “against the grain.” The third, highest and most transformative stage is the acceptance of the fact that things do not arise. 4, 39, 93, 99, 108, 137. See also 17, 70, 79, 111, where attainment of the states of acceptance implies the achievement of all three levels.

acceptance which brings one into natural accord with the Dharma (*ānulomikī kṣānti*): See the previous entry for an explanation. 16, 29, 134.

advanced disciple (*śrāvaka*): The term *śrāvaka*, the literal meaning



of which is “hearer,” implies more than just being a disciple of the Buddha, but generally connotes a disciple who has attained a high level of realization as a result of hearing the Dharma. Although it is usually applied to well-known monks like Śāriputra and Mahāmaudgalyāyana (referred to as the *mahāśrāvaka*, or great advanced disciples), its range goes well beyond this group. The way of the advanced disciples (*śrāvakayāna*) is the path that leads to arhatship or the state of a truly worthy one (*arhat*) and final release (*nirvāṇa*). 16, 27, 30, 33, 36, 49–50, 57, 59, 61, 63–64, 67, 73–77, 82, 84–85, 93–94, 101, 105, 113, 116, 124–126, 131, 135, 138.

affliction (*kleśa*): 20–21, 71, 74, 123. See also defilement.

aggregates (*skandha*): Five constituents of a person and of experience: form (i.e., bodily form, or matter generally), feeling, conception, conditioning, and consciousness. 20, 31, 42, 61, 95–96, 115, 121.

ambition (*adhyāśaya*): An even higher degree of *āśaya* (which we translate as “motivation”). 4–5, 12, 14, 32–33, 39, 45, 68, 72, 86, 118.

aspiration to awakening (*bodhicitta*): The aspiration to become a buddha with which bodhisattvas begin the pursuit of awakening and which continues to sustain their practice. 12, 14, 30, 39, 41–42, 44, 76, 84, 86, 90, 93–94, 111.

asura: A class of lesser deities who are in continual struggle with the gods. Sometimes translated as “demigods” or “titans.” 6–7, 64–65, 76, 81, 124, 138.

boundless states (*apramāṇa*): Also known as the *brahmavihāras*, this term refers to four positive emotional states and meditative practices, i.e., love (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), empathetic joy (*muditā*), and serene equanimity (*upekṣā*). 13, 58, 115.

Brahmā: In Buddhist cosmology the chief god of the realm of pure bodily form (*rūpadhātu*). Often paired with Śakra. 6, 15, 17, 19, 31–32, 49–50, 58, 63, 76, 89, 105, 110, 115, 125.

buddha-domain, domain of a buddha (*buddhakṣetra*): A world presided over by an awakened being, and often different from the world we inhabit in many ways. Sometimes translated as “buddhafield.” 5, 11–16, 31–32, 35, 43, 46, 51, 55–56, 59, 63, 66, 76–77, 87, 89, 101–104, 106–113, 115, 117, 119, 123–124, 126, 138.

companion in what is bad (*pāpamitra*): A friend who leads one to the accumulation of demerit, evil or “sin” (*pāpa*) and brings one to spiritual ruin. 43.

companion in what is good (*kalyāṇamitra*): A mentor who encourages one’s pursuit of virtue and the accumulation of merit (*puṇya*), and supports one’s pursuit of the spiritual path. 3, 43, 114.

compassion (*karuṇā*): The second of the boundless states, and also one of the key qualities of buddhas and bodhisattvas. 13, 21, 25–26, 39, 45, 47, 51–52, 54–55, 71–72, 75–76, 82, 85, 105, 107, 112, 114, 116–117, 132. Also used for *anukampā*. 23

concentration (*samādhi*): While a general term for a deep state of absorption and mental focus, *samādhi* can also refer to the practice one engages in to bring this about, as well as to specific practices of this type with particular characteristics and benefits, which bear their own names. 4, 18, 21, 27–28, 30, 32, 55, 58, 63, 82, 86, 101, 105–106, 112, 114, 125.

conceptual construction/construct (*vikalpa*, sometimes *kalpa*, *kalpana*, *parikalpa*, *parikalpana*): *Vikalpa* refers to the mind’s habit of forming or imagining the world which it apprehends. This is generally regarded as a problem. 9, 38, 40, 51, 70, 97, 123.

conditioned, conditioned things (*saṃskṛta*): Formed by and subject to the operation of karma, i.e., causality. 34, 40, 45, 62, 83, 107, 114, 116–118, 122.

conditioning (*saṃskāra*): The fourth of the five aggregates (q.v.), denoting the psychic patterning caused by past actions and their continuing effects. Sometimes translated as

“volitions” or “karmic formations.” When the term refers to causally determined formations generally, we translate it as “conditions” or “karmic conditions.” 16, 61, 96, 98, 121.

consciousness (*viññāna*): The fifth of the five aggregates (q.v.), *viññāna* refers specifically to sensory consciousness, not only of the objects of the five senses as normally understood (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) but also, in Buddhist doctrine, of the objects of the mind (i.e., the *dharma*s). 24, 61–62, 83, 96–97, 121–122.

constitutive elements of awakening (*bodhyaṅga*): Seven factors which produce and characterize the awakened state: mindfulness (*smṛti*), the analytic observation of things (*dharmaṃpravacaya*), heroic effort (*vīrya*), rapture (*prīti*), tranquility (*praśrabdhī*), concentration (*samādhi*), and serene equanimity (*upekṣā*). 13, 45, 59, 85–86, 132.

corrupting influences (*āsrava*): Conceived of as flows—whether inwards or outwards is not always clear—the *āsrava* (the alternative form *āśrava* is not found in the V<sub>k</sub>N) are sensual desire (*kāma*), existence, i.e., the wish for continued rebirth (*bhava*), ignorance (*avidyā*), and false views (*dṛṣṭi*). 3, 16, 31, 36, 40, 58, 94, 107, 116.

cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*): *Samsāra* (literally “wandering”) is conceived of as a beginningless and potentially endless sequence of births, deaths and rebirths in six states (as gods, humans, asuras, animals, spirits of the departed (*pretas*), and inhabitants of the hell realms). Some Buddhists counted only five states, omitting the asuras as a separate class of beings. 10, 24, 27, 51–52, 56–57, 65, 72, 74, 83, 95, 98, 107, 114–116, 133.

dedication (*pariṇāma*, *pariṇāmanā*): “Dedication” refers to the process of assigning or redirecting one’s merit to a particular goal of one’s own—e.g., awakening, rebirth in a buddha-domain—or, more frequently, to other people, so that they can achieve those goals too. 13–14, 56, 86, 96, 114.

defilement (*kleśa*, *saṃkleśa*): *Kleśa* is commonly translated as “affliction,” but the Buddhist usage of the word often carries the strong sense of a kind of soiling, and so we have chosen “defilement” here. There are two overall types, cognitive and emotive, and various lists of specific defilements, such as the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusion. It is not clear what list the author of the Vñ had in mind (but see §3.35, which suggests that cognitive defilement is the author’s major concern). When *saṃkleśa* is used in the text, it usually refers to the process of defilement as a whole, and it is paired and contrasted with purification (*vyavadāna*). 3, 24, 26, 28, 33, 38, 40, 42–43, 46, 53, 55–57, 70, 72–73, 76, 81–85, 87, 93, 107, 111–112, 114–115, 118, 124. See also affliction.

dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*): Refers to the twelve-linked chain of causation accounting for human rebirth and experience within the cycle of rebirth. 40, 57, 132–134.

distinctive features and secondary marks of greatness (*lakṣaṇa-anuvyañjana*): A shorthand way of referring to the 32 Features of the Great Man (*mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*) and the eighty Secondary Marks (*anuvyañjana*) which distinguish the bodies of buddhas and universal emperors (*cakravartins*). We add the words “of greatness” to clarify this implication. 4, 12, 18, 43, 46, 55–56, 59, 82, 86, 102, 111–112, 115, 117.

divine eye (*divyacakṣus*): See supernormal faculty. 31–32, 125.

Divine Guardians of the World (*lokapāla*): Also known as the Four Great Kings, these are the kings of the lowest heaven in the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*), who watch over their respective quarters and serve the Dharma, i.e., Dhṛtarāṣṭra (east), Virūdhaka (south), Virūpākṣa (west) and Vaiśravaṇa or Kubera (north). 6–7, 17, 19, 49–50, 63–64, 76, 105, 110, 138.

doors to liberation (*vimokṣamukha*): Three aspects of reality, or ways of understanding it, which lead to liberation: emptiness (*śūnyatā*), signlessness (*ānimitta*) and wishlessness (*apraṇihita*). 43, 97, 121.

elements (*bhūta*, *mahābhūta*): The basic list is four: earth, fire, wind, and water. Sometimes space is added as a fifth. 19–20, 52–53, 69, 96, 121. We also use the word “element” to translate *dhātu*.

empathetic joy (*muditā*): Joy in the joy of others, one of the four boundless states (q.v.). 13, 21, 39, 45, 72.

Exalted One (*bhagavat*): The most common honorific term of address and reference for a Buddha, often translated as “Blessed One,” or “Lord,” or left untranslated. 3, 6–7, 9, 11, 14–16, 23–37, 39, 41, 44, 46–47, 49–50, 55, 63–64, 78, 102–104, 106–107, 109–111, 113–114, 118–119, 121, 123–127, 129–132, 134–135, 137–138.

factors that contribute to awakening (*bodhipakṣyā/bodhipakṣā dharmāḥ*): thirty-seven factors which, taken together, constitute a summary of the path to awakening and a description of its qualities: the four applications of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna*), the four right efforts (*samyak-pradhāna/prahāṇa*), the four bases of magic or supernormal power (*rddhipāda*), the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*), the five powers (*bala*), the seven constitutive elements of awakening (*bodhyaṅga*), and the eightfold path of the noble ones (*āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*). 13, 21, 24, 40, 43, 46, 115, 132.

false view (*dṛṣṭi*). Any viewpoint which is inconsistent with the Dharma and thus held to be contrary to reality and inimical to the pursuit of liberation. A standard list of sixty-two false views is alluded to several times in the VñN. Given in full in the *Brahmajālasutta/sūtra* and in other sources, the sixty-two views include erroneous notions about the finitude of the universe, how the self is to be understood, what happens after death, the nature of final release, and so on. 28, 51–52, 54, 83, 89, 97, 106, 132, 134.

false view of the existence of a real person (*satkāyadrṣṭi*): Another way of referring to the belief in a real self. In the Sanskrit text it is sometimes referred to simply as *satkāya*, which

we take as a shorthand form for the longer expression. 27, 70, 73, 84, 97.

favorable circumstances (*kṣaṇa*): A set of situations in which one can be reborn which are favourable to spiritual progress and liberation, i.e., as a human being, at the supposed center of the civilized world, during the lifetime of a buddha, and with the intelligence required to understand that buddha's teaching. 28, 35.

fetters (*saṃyojana*): Ten forces which keep one in bondage in the cycle of rebirth: the false view of the existence of a real person; doubt; excessive attachment to religious rules and observances; sensual desire; malice or ill-will; craving for rebirth as a deity in the realm of pure bodily form; craving for rebirth as a deity in the incorporeal realm; pride; mental restlessness; and ignorance. 84.

final release (*nirvāṇa*): The summum bonum of Buddhism, the final extinction (the literal meaning of the word) of suffering. 24, 27–28, 34, 37–38, 43, 52–54, 57, 59, 62, 70, 83, 95, 98, 107, 126, 130, 133–135, 138.

fivefold degeneration (*pañcakaṣāya*): Five ways in which a cosmic cycle deteriorates as it nears its end, i.e., in terms of lifespan (it gets shorter), false views (they proliferate), defilements (they get worse), living beings (they become shorter, weaker, less intelligent, etc.), and the cosmic eon (the whole environment worsens). 36, 103.

form (*rūpa*): The body or, more broadly, physical matter, the first of the five aggregates. 61, 66–67, 69, 74, 77–78, 95–96, 102, 121. Occasionally, also translated as “shape.” 26, 34, 70, 88.

formulation of the Dharma (*dharmaparyāya*): A particular way of presenting the Dharma or the teaching, used as a term for a specific discourse. The literal meaning of *paryāya* is revolution, turning, or round. 119, 126–127, 129–130, 135–136, 138.

Four Truths of the Noble Ones (*āryasatya*): The truth of suffering, its origin or arising, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation, which is the eightfold path of the noble ones. 28, 57.

gandharva: A class of supernatural or non-human beings, gandharvas (literally, those who subsist on fragrance) are often conceived of as a class of celestial musicians. 6–7, 64–65, 76, 124–125, 133, 136, 138.

garuḍa: A class of supernatural or non-human beings, usually depicted as giant birds, and thought to be a natural enemy of nāgas, who are serpent deities. 6–7, 64, 76.

giving (*dāna*): Like many words in Sanskrit, *dāna* covers both the process (the act of giving) and the product (the gift) of the relevant action. Also translated here as “gift” or “generosity,” it is the first of the six perfections. 4, 12, 21, 39, 42, 44–45, 71, 96, 107, 122, 137.

Great Way (*mahāyāna*): Also translated as the Great Vehicle, it refers to the path of the bodhisattva aspiring to the full awakening of a buddha. The Sanskrit term can be understood in both ways, and occasionally in the Vkn it is clear that Great Vehicle is the intended sense. 12, 17–18, 25, 27, 30, 67, 71, 75, 86, 102, 108, 116, 139.

guide (*nāyaka*): Another term for a buddha. 8, 10, 85, 87, 90.

heroic effort (*vīrya*): One of the six perfections (q.v.). 4, 12, 18, 21, 39, 42, 45, 71, 82, 96, 107.

highest level (and limit) of reality (*bhūtakoti*): This difficult term is sufficiently vague to allow for multiple interpretations. In some contexts equated with ultimate truth (*paramārtha*) or the way things are (*tathatā*) and their realization by the awakened, in others it refers to the attainment of *nirvāṇa* by the advanced disciples. 25, 38, 121.

hindrances (*nivaraṇa/nīvaraṇa*): Five hindrances to the attainment of higher states of meditative consciousness: (1) sensual desire; (2) malice or ill-will; (3) sloth and torpor; (4) restlessness and worry; and (5) doubt. 4, 83.

holy life (*brahmacaryā*): This term refers generally to the pure lifestyle of a religious striver, and has the specific connotation of celibacy. 136.

impediments (*āvaraṇa*): Two types of obstructions or obstacles to spiritual progress, those relating to the defilements or afflictions (q.v.), and those relating to cognition. Overcoming afflictive impediments (*kleśāvaraṇa*) is something advanced disciples and solitary buddhas can do, but removing the cognitive impediments (*jñeyāvaraṇa*) is possible only for bodhisattvas and buddhas. 4, 46, 107.

impurities, three (*trimala*): Also referred to as the three poisons, these are greed, hatred, and delusion or confusion. 121.

incalculable eon (*asaṃkhyeyakalpa*): An incredibly long period of time. According to some sources, the career of a bodhisattva requires three of these eons to reach its culmination. 115, 131, 135.

insight (*prajñā*). Often translated as “wisdom,” this is the sixth and last of the six perfections (*pāramitā*). 3–4, 13, 17–18, 21, 25, 33, 39, 43, 45–46, 55–56, 71, 75, 81–82, 85, 87, 92, 96, 99, 105, 108, 112–113, 115, 117, 122.

inspired eloquence (*pratibhāna*): While the word *pratibhāna* itself means something like “shining” or “illumination,” the term refers to the capacity to be inspired spontaneously by the teachings as well as to give voice to that inspiration in an effortless and powerful flow of words. It is, in effect, inner illumination expressed in speech, or, as we might put it using a contemporary idiom, the ability to “channel” the Dharma. 4, 17, 27, 33, 49, 75, 83, 113, 115, 134.

intermediate eon (*antarakalpa*): Generally the shortest major unit of cosmic time. but still an enormous number of human years. 89, 131, 134.

karmic conditions (*saṃskāra*): See conditioning.

kinnara: A class of supernatural or non-human beings either half-horse and half-human or, more commonly, half-bird and



half-human, although capable of taking an entirely human form. They are also given to the making of music, like the gandharvas. 6–7, 64, 76.

Lesser Way (*hīnayāna*): The inferior and less ambitious path to salvation, comprising the Way of the Advanced Disciples (*śrāvakayāna*) and the Way of the Solitary Buddhas (*pratyekabuddhayāna*), as opposed to the Great Way (*mahāyāna*) of the bodhisattvas. 18.

liberations, three (*trivimokṣa*): Another way of referring to the three doors to liberation (q.v.).

Licchavi: The ruling clan in the city-state of Vaiśālī. 11, 16–17, 19, 21, *et passim*.

lingering traces (*vāsanā*): Literally “perfuming,” the term *vāsanā* refers to the residual impressions left by past activity, i.e., karma, which “perfume” or impregnate the thought-continuum of living beings in subtle ways and continue to affect the way they are and behave. 4, 35, 38, 70, 74, 117.

love (*maitrī*): Alternatively translated as “friendliness,” “loving-kindness,” “benevolence,” etc., *maitrī* denotes above all love between friends. 9, 13, 21, 26, 39, 45, 71–72, 76, 82, 85, 89, 112, 114, 117, 132.

lower realms (*apāya*): Literally “going down” or “downfall,” the term is more or less synonymous with *durgati*, “unfortunate destiny,” i.e., the lower states of rebirth. 5, 13, 129.

mahāsattva: This word is left untranslated, but it means a person of great courage, one who is big-hearted or magnanimous, often used as a stock epithet of a bodhisattva. 5, 37, 43, 47, 50, 73–74, 101, 103, 109.

mahoraga: A class of supernatural or non-human beings who, like nāgas, have the form of snakes. 6–7, 64, 76.

malice (*vyāpāda*): One of the ten fetters (q.v.). 70, 81–82, 89, 106, 122.

Māra: The Buddhist deity associated with death and desire, sometimes compared to the Devil or called “the Buddhist

Satan.” While different from him in many ways, he is more than a mere demon. Often appearing in the plural, since each world-system has its own Māra, Māra is also referred to as fourfold: Māra in the form of the aggregates, which undergo death (*skandhamāra*), Māra in the form of the defilements, which keep beings in saṃsāra, the realm of death and rebirth (*kleśamāra*), Māra as death itself (*mṛtyumāra*), and Māra the actual divinity, who personifies these forces (*devaputramāra*). These are the four Māras. 3, 8, 17, 28, 34, 40–44, 49, 51–52, 57, 67–68, 82, 87–88, 90, 112, 115, 129, 132, 134.

mastery of stratagem (*upāyakaśālyā*): See under stratagem. 13, 17, 19, 68, 82, 85, 88, 114.

meanness (*mātsarya*): 70. See also stinginess.

means of drawing others to oneself (*saṃgrahavastu*): Four means by which buddhas and bodhisattvas attract other living beings for the purpose of saving them: gift-giving (*dāna*), kindly speech (*priyavādita*), acting for their benefit (*arthacaryā*), and sharing their aims and aspirations, or, we might say, making common cause with them (*samānārthatā*). 13, 40, 45, 86, 108, 114, 132.

meditation (*dhyāna*): Used both as a general term, e.g., as one of the perfections (q.v.), or with reference to the specific states going by that name. 4, 13, 18, 39, 42, 45, 55, 58, 71, 87, 90, 96, 107, 114. Also translated as “meditative concentration.” 18, 21.

mental retentiveness and the formulae which support it (*dhāraṇī*): *Dhāraṇī* is a polysemous term derived from the verbal root *dhṛ-*, “to hold,” which is difficult to translate. Sometimes it simply means “memory,” especially in the sense of the ability to hold or retain the teachings in the mind, and sometimes it refers to the mnemonic formulae that aid such retention. These coded formulae then begin to share some functions with *mantras* as a kind of magic charm or spell for purposes which go beyond the ability to hold things in the mind. Our

translation is an attempt to capture the multiple senses of the term. 4, 17, 83, 86, 113, 115, 132, 134.

merit (*puṇya*, sometimes *kuśala*): The result of good deeds, conceived of almost as a kind of wealth which can be accumulated, spent, and shared or given away. 4, 12–14, 16, 19, 21, 42, 46, 81–82, 97–98, 105, 116–117, 127, 130–131, 139. See also root of merit.

misperception (*viparyāsa*): The stock set of four *viparyāsas*, also translated as “perverted views,” are the misperception of the impermanent as permanent, of suffering or pain as pleasure, of the impure as pure, and of what is not the self as the self. 20, 33, 53, 83.

mnemonic formulae (*dhāraṇī*): 132. See also mental retentiveness.

modes of self-assurance (*vaiśāradya*): Four things about which a buddha is perfectly confident: that he is fully awakened with regard to all things; that he has completely eliminated the corrupting influences in himself; that he has correctly identified all the obstacles that stand in the way of liberation; and that the path to release which he teaches does in fact lead to release. Often grouped with the ten powers and the eighteen qualities unique to a buddha. 5, 10, 17, 21, 40, 85, 112.

moral conduct or morality (*śīla*): The second of the six perfections. 4, 17, 12, 21, 39, 42, 45, 71, 81, 87, 91, 96, 105, 107, 112, 122.

motivation (*āśaya*): Although a general word for disposition or inclination, in texts like the V<sub>k</sub>N *āśaya* refers to one’s deep-seated resolve to pursue the path. 4, 7, 12, 14–15, 17, 25, 29, 38–39, 46, 72, 87, 117.

nāga: A class of supernatural or non-human beings associated with snakes, often represented in art as human beings with the hoods of cobras, often more than one. 6–7, 64–65, 76, 124, 133, 136.

Nārāyaṇa: A divine or semidivine figure, in Hinduism often identified with Viṣṇu, and in Buddhist sources referred to

primarily as a paragon of bodily strength. 82. Also the name of a bodhisattva. 95.

paths of demeritorious conduct, ten (*daśākuśalakarmapatha*): Killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slander, harsh speech, frivolous chatter, covetousness, malice or ill-will, and false views. 83.

paths of meritorious conduct, ten (*daśakuśalakarmapatha*): The avoidance of the ten paths of demeritorious conduct. 12, 14, 115.

patient acceptance (*kṣānti*): One of the perfections, *kṣānti* denotes both the ability to put up with pain, hardship and mistreatment by others (in this sense it is more like endurance) and the capacity for accepting truths which may be unpalatable or even frightening. 4, 12, 19, 21, 39, 42, 45, 71, 91, 96, 107, 122, 127, 133. See also acceptance.

perfect awakening which cannot be surpassed, that (*anuttarā samyaksambodhi*): The highest form of awakening, realised only by buddhas, which is the goal of the bodhisattva. 11, 16, 21, 25, 27, 30, 32–33, 35, 37, 42, 46–47, 60, 67, 83, 85, 108, 126, 135–137.

perfections (*pāramitā*): The virtues and practices of a bodhisattva. The standard list consists of six: giving or generosity (*dāna*), moral conduct (*śīla*), patient acceptance (*kṣānti*), heroic effort (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and insight or wisdom (*prajñā*). This list is often extended to yield ten perfections by adding stratagem (*upāya*), vow or wish-making (*praṇidhāna*), power (*bala*) and knowledge (*jñāna*), but the combination of the first six with stratagem is also quite common. 17, 21, 40, 45, 58, 76, 82, 85, 115, 118, 132.

powers, five (*bala*): The same list as the five spiritual faculties. 13, 34, 45, 59.

powers, ten (*daśabala*): The ten powers which a buddha possesses, not always listed in the same order: (1) knowing what is possible and impossible; (2) knowing the consequences

of actions; (3) knowing the paths that go everywhere; (4) knowing the characters of other beings; (5) knowing the inclinations of other beings; (6) knowing the degree of capacity other living beings possess; (7) knowing the full range of meditative practices and how they are defiled and purified; (8) knowing the ability to remember former lives; (9) knowing clairvoyance (the “divine eye”), sometimes described as the ability to see others dying and being reborn; and (10) knowing the destruction of the corrupting influences. Numbers 8–10 also feature in the list of six supernormal faculties (*abhijñā*). 5, 10, 21, 40, 59, 85, 112.

precious substances or treasures, seven (*saptaratna*): A commonly occurring list of seven gems and precious metals: gold (*suvarṇa*), silver (*rūpya*), beryl (*vaiḍūrya*), crystal (*sphaṭika*), carnelian or agate (*musāragalva*), red pearl or ruby (*lohitikā* or *lohitamuktā*), and emerald (*aśmagarbha*). After the first four, the list is variable and the identification of some of its members is problematic. What is certain, however, is that in the Indian Buddhist sources *vaiḍūrya* is not lapis lazuli, but the translucent or even transparent gem beryl, which comes in a variety of colors, including blue (in which case it is called aquamarine), green (emerald), yellow (golden beryl, heliodor), and pink (morganite), or is even colorless (goshenite). 6, 68, 125, 130.

qualities of a buddha (*buddhadharmāḥ*): One list comprises the ten powers, the four modes of assurance, and the eighteen unique attributes a buddha, to which are often added great love, great compassion, and various other qualities. 27, 40–41, 54, 59, 76, 81–85, 103, 112.

realized one (*tathāgata*): One who has come (*āgata*) or gone (*gata*) in that way (*tathā*), but also interpreted as one who has realized or understood (*gata*) reality or the way things are (*tathā*), i.e., an awakened person. Typically used by the Buddha to refer to himself. 7, 11, 15–16, 21, 35–37, 44, 46–47, 51, 59, 63–64, 70–71, 77–79, 82–84, 101–106, 109–114, 121, 123–127, 129–132, 134–135, 137–138.

realm of pure bodily form (*rūpadhātu*): The second level of the world with its three realms (q.v.). 18, 61, 81, 105.

recollections (*anusmṛti*): A set of six practices involving remembering or calling to mind the Buddha, the Dharma, the Saṅgha, moral conduct, liberality and the gods. A tenfold set is also found in other sources, adding death, the body, breathing, and peace. 45, 58.

right efforts (*samyakprahāṇa/samyakpradhāna*): This term refers to the fourfold endeavor (1) to eliminate bad or unwholesome states or qualities that have arisen in oneself, (2) to prevent the same from arising, (3) to cause wholesome or good states or qualities to arise in oneself, and (4) to foster and develop the same when they have arisen. 13, 58.

root of merit (*kuśalamūla*): Usually occurring in the plural, and sometimes translated as “roots of goodness,” this term refers to the potential for wholesome outcomes accumulated by the bodhisattva through the performance of meritorious actions. Although the metaphor is primarily agricultural, it may also evoke monetary associations, given that the word *mūla* can also mean capital or principal (the use of the word “stock” in English combines financial and botanical senses in a similar but not identical way). It is not clear whether the term is inspired by wet rice cultivation, where the planting of roots—or we would say seedlings—makes sense. 17, 21, 30, 36, 40, 43, 46, 52, 56, 58, 72, 82, 103, 108, 114–117, 124, 136. See also merit.

Śakra: The Buddhist name for Indra, lord of the gods of the Trayastrimśa heaven, and in effect the chief god of the heavens of the realm of desire. Often paired with Brahmā. 6, 17, 19, 41, 49–50, 63, 76, 89, 105, 110, 129–130.

seat of awakening (*bodhimaṇḍa*): The place where Siddhārtha Gautama attained awakening and, by extension, the seat of any buddha’s realization. Sometimes translated as the Terrace of Awakening. 39, 41, 43, 87, 129, 133.

serene equanimity (*upekṣā*): The fourth and last of the boundless states (q.v.). 13, 21, 40, 45, 72.

serenity of faith / serene faith / trust (*prasāda*): *Prasāda*, literally “settling down,” is a difficult term to render in English, since it covers a wide semantic range, including brightness, clarity or limpidity (as of muddy water which has settled), emotional states of calmness, serenity, confidence, and faith. 4, 42, 45–46, 129, 136.

sign (*nimitta*): Usually *nimitta* is used in the sense of mental representation, or the distinguishing feature by which something is identified in the mind as what it is. 11, 38, 94, 97.

signlessness (*ānimitta*): One of the three doors to liberation (q.v.). 25, 45, 55–56, 58, 94, 96, 116, 133.

sins entailing immediate retribution, five (*pañcānantarya*): According to Buddhism, these are the very worst misdeeds that one can commit, resulting in immediate rebirth in the lowest hell realm, *Avīci*. They are killing one’s father, killing one’s mother, killing a truly worthy one (*arhat*), shedding the blood of a buddha, and causing schism in the *Saṅgha*. 28, 81, 84.

solitary buddha (*pratyekabuddha*): A person who has achieved awakening, typically by understanding dependent origination, but who does not possess the full insight and compassion of a perfectly awakened one and thus does not normally bring others to the same realization. 27, 59, 67, 75–76, 82, 101, 113, 135.

special modes of knowledge (*pratisaṃvid*): Four types of knowledge which are especially relevant to one’s work as a teacher of Dharma, i.e., knowledge of phenomena (*dharmas*), of meaning (*artha*), of etymology or languages in general (*nirukti*), and inspired eloquence (*pratibhāna*). 133.

spheres of the senses (*āyatana*): The twelve *āyatana* are the six sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind) and their respective objects. 20, 38, 42, 61, 69, 83, 115, 121.

- spiritual faculties (*indriya*): The five spiritual faculties are faith (*śraddhā*), heroic effort (*vīrya*), mindfulness or memory (*smṛti*), concentration (*samādhi*), and insight (*prajñā*). 13, 34, 58–59.
- state of freedom / liberation (*vimokṣa*): Generally the term *vimokṣa* (freedom, liberation) implies an advanced state of meditative attainment or realization, rather than freedom in the abstract. See next entry, “states of liberation.” 4, 40, 64–68, 103, 114, 118, 129–130, 138.
- states of liberation (*vimokṣa*): Eight progressive meditative attainments above the four *dhyānas* and leading to the higher states of consciousness of the formless or incorporeal realm. 21, 26, 86, 101.
- stinginess (*mātsarya*): Often—and potentially misleadingly—translated as “jealousy,” *mātsarya* refers to not wanting to part with what one has, rather than wanting what others have. It can also be translated as “meanness” or “miserliness.” 81, 106, 122. See also meanness.
- stratagem (*upāya*): The ability to find and use the most effective approach (the literal sense of *upāya*) to all people and in all situations; also a particular approach or method that one might adopt in a situation. Often translated as “skillful means.” While not an exact match, the English word “stratagem” seems the best fit for the semantic range and uses of the Sanskrit *upāya*, since, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it refers both to a particular plan or ploy, often with an implication of deviousness, as well as to the devising of such plans or schemes, and skill in this devising. It has a similar application to military contexts, and can be used in the singular in the same way as *upāya*. The common compound *upāyakauśalya*, commonly translated as “skillful means” or “skill in means,” is here rendered as “mastery of stratagem.” 4, 13–14, 17, 19, 21, 40, 43, 49, 55–56, 68, 72, 82, 85, 88, 91, 114, 117.



Sublime One: *Sugata*, a title for a buddha which literally means “well gone,” i.e., “fared well” or “fortunate.” 8, 125, 130–131.

supernormal faculty (*abhijñā*): The five supernormal faculties are (1) magical powers of various kinds, such as the ability to fly, walk on water, pass through solid objects, etc.; (2) clairvoyance, the so-called divine eye; (3) clairsaudience, the divine ear; (4) the ability to remember one’s former lives; and (5) the ability to read others’ minds. To these five, which are regarded as mundane and potentially accessible to all advanced practitioners, a sixth *abhijñā* is added which is supramundane and can be realized only by those pursuing the Buddhist path, the knowledge of the destruction of the corrupting influences (*āsrava*). 3, 17, 21, 31, 40, 49, 58, 64, 79, 86, 91, 115, 118, 125, 134.

Three Treasures (*triratna*): The Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, i.e., the Awakened One, his Teaching, and the Community of his followers. Sometimes translated as “Triple Gem” or “Three Jewels.” 3, 9, 85, 97.

threefold knowledge (*trividyā/traividyā*): Supposedly the elements of the Buddha’s own awakening, attained in successive watches of the night: (1) the ability to remember one’s past lives; (2) the “divine eye” or clairvoyance, by which one can see others dying and being reborn throughout the cosmos; and (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the corrupting influences (*āsrava*). These three also feature in the lists of the ten powers and the six supernormal abilities. 40, 121.

thunderbolt (*vajra*): Although commonly translated as “diamond,” *vajra* denotes both the thunderbolt or lightning bolt as the mythical weapon of the god Indra as well as the substance of which it is supposedly made, harder and stronger than any other. We try to capture the second sense with the English word “adamantine.” 4, 35, 71, 94.

totality of things (*dharmadhātu*): The world as it really is, as the sphere (*dhātu*) of all things that really exist (*dharmas*). 25, 38, 49, 57.

- treasures of a universal emperor, seven (*saptaratna*): The universal emperor is distinguished by, among other things, his possession of seven treasures consisting of a wheel, an elephant, a horse, a gem, a woman, a treasurer, and a counsellor. To be distinguished from another common list of seven treasures (see under precious substances). 131.
- truly worthy one: Sanskrit *arhat*, a person who has achieved the definitive cessation of suffering, i.e., *nirvāṇa*. 3, 70–71, 79.
- ultimate truth (*paramārtha*): The higher level of truth, according to which things are seen as they really are, contrasted with conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*), in which reality is covered or obscured by the erroneous constructions of the unawakened mind. 8, 53.
- unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*): Not subject to karmic causation. 31, 34, 36, 38, 40, 62, 83–84, 97, 107, 114, 116–118, 122.
- unfavorable circumstances in which one can be reborn (*akṣaṇa*): Eight situations into which one can be reborn which are unfavorable to spiritual progress and liberation, i.e., birth in the hells, as an animal, as a departed spirit (*preta*), as a long-lived deity, in an uncivilized border region, with wrong views, without intelligence, and at a time when there is no buddha. 13, 28, 106, 108.
- unfortunate states of rebirth (*durgatī*): Three are enumerated: the hell realm, the animal realm, and the realm of departed spirits (*preta*), sometimes called the realm of Yama, Lord of the Dead. Occasionally the asuras are added as well. 5, 54.
- unique attributes of a buddha (*āveṇikabuddhadharma*): Eighteen qualities which buddhas share with no others, not always listed in the same order: (1) they never stumble; (2) their speech is not faulty; (3) their memory is not defective; (4) their minds are always in a state of concentration; (5) they have no concept of difference, i.e., they do not make spurious distinctions; (6) their serene equanimity is not unconsidered; (7) there is no lapse or diminution in their zeal; (8) nor in their heroic effort; (9) nor in their memory

or mindfulness; (10) nor in their concentration; (11) nor in their insight; (12) nor in their liberation; (13) all their activity of body is preceded by knowledge and in conformity with it; (14) so too with their activity of speech; (15) so too with their activity of mind; (16) their knowledge and vision of the past is unobstructed and unimpeded; (17) so too of the future; (18) so too of the present. 5, 21, 40. See also 9–10 for additional qualities unique to a buddha.

universal emperor (*cakravartin*): Literally, a wheel-turning king, the *cakravartī rājā* is a monarch whose sway extends much more widely than a normal king, who is additionally distinguished by the possession of seven treasures (q.v.). 34, 36, 66, 131, 135.

unstoppable in one's progress (*avaivartika/avivartya*): This term refers to a stage reached by bodhisattvas at which they cannot turn back in their progression towards awakening. Commonly translated as "irreversibility" or "non-regression," it is the point of no return on the path of the bodhisattvas, at which they become assured of reaching their goal. 4, 30, 37, 39, 76, 79, 132, 134.

victorious one (*jina*): An alternative designation for a buddha. 9–10, 17.

wishlessness (*apraṇihita*): One of the three doors to liberation (q.v.). It may also be translated as "purposelessness." 25, 45, 55–56, 58, 97, 116, 133.

world with its three realms (*traiḍhātuka*): A typical world-system within saṃsāra consists of three levels: the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*), the realm of pure bodily form (*rūpadhātu*), and the incorporeal realm (*arūpyadhātu*), arranged one on top of another with their multiple strata. The realm of desire comprises most living beings and the lower classes of gods, while only the higher deities inhabit the two upper realms, which may, however, be visited by humans who have mastered the relevant meditational techniques. 18, 23, 40, 42, 54, 57, 121.

- world-system/world/cosmos (*lokadhātu*): This term covers a range of meanings. At one end of the spectrum it can refer to a single world with Mt Meru at the center encircled by concentric mountain ranges and oceans in which sit the four main continents, complete with its heavens and hells, its own sun, moon and stars, and with the five or six destinies in which beings can be reborn (*gati*). At the other end of the spectrum it refers to large assemblages of such worlds, most commonly the cosmos of a billion worlds (*trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu*), containing  $1000^3$  (i.e., a thousand million) such worlds, which we might take as roughly equivalent to the entire universe. 6–7, 15–16, 31, 46, 63, 65, 67–68, 101–108, 110, 113–114, 119, 124–126, 130–131.
- wrong practices (*mithyātva*): The eight wrong practices are the reverse of the Eightfold Path of the Noble Ones, i.e., wrong view, wrong intention, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, and wrong concentration. 26, 83.
- yakṣa: A class of supernatural or non-human beings, potentially dangerous, often associated with trees, and represented as powerful, stocky figures. 6–7, 64–65, 76, 124, 133, 136.

## APPENDIX D

### Index of Proper Names

### Appearing in the Translation

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# Notes

## Chapter 1: Purification of Buddha-domains

1. We use “Exalted One” to translate Skt. *bhagavat* both as a term of address and as a term of reference. Many translators prefer “Blessed One” or “Lord,” but “Lord” has Christian or theistic overtones, while “Blessed One” may convey the sense of a recipient of divine favor. The term *bhagavat* is glossed in multiple ways in Buddhist sources, but one common understanding is that it denotes the possession of a set of endowments or excellences (*bhaga*) in especially high degree, i.e., power, ability, prowess, authority, potency, endowment and dominion. In some ways its use resembles English forms of honorific address and reference like “Your/His Excellency,” “Your/His Eminence,” and “Your/His Highness.”

2. The literal meaning of the Skt. term *arhat* is “worthy” or “deserving” (of offerings, veneration), but to mark its use as a technical term for someone who has achieved nirvāṇa, we add the modifier “truly.”

3. Our interpretation of *abhijñānābhijñātaiḥ* follows KJ and Xz.

4. Skt. *mahābhijñāparikarmaniryāta*. Cf. KJ 大智本行皆悉成就, Xz 大神通業修已成辦, Tib: *mngon par shes pa chen po yongs su shyangs pa las nges par byung ba*. See PTSD s.v. *parikamma*, BHSD s.v. *niryāta*. The text puns with the previous phrase by playing on the double meaning of *abhijñāna*. For the supernormal faculties see the glossary (Appendix C).

5. Cf. Tib., which reads the compound *nihatamārapratyarthikaiḥ* as containing a *dvandva* (co-ordinative compound): *bdud dang phyir rgol ba bcom pa*.

6. As is often the case, the word is used here to pun on its etymology while referring to the quasimagical powers of the *dhāraṇī* (which include the empowerment of wisdom) and its more general meaning as the power of memory.

7. The list is similar to the ten *pāramitās*, but seems to be unique to the present passage and does not conform to any canonical list: *dānadama-niyamasamṣyamaśīlakṣāntivīryadhyānaprajñopāya(niryātaiḥ)*. Tib. and Xz both interpret the list as the conventional ten *pāramitās*, adding the word *pāramitā* at the end of the compound (before *niryātaiḥ*) and completing the list with *prañidhāna*, *bala*, and *jñāna*. Tib. *sbyin pa dang | dul ba dang |*



*mi 'gyur ba dang | yang dag par sdom pa dang | tshul khriṃs dang | bzod pa dang | brtson 'grus dang | bsam gtan dang | shes rab dang | thabs la mkhas pa dang | smon lam dang | stobs dang | ye shes kyi pha rol tu phyin pa las nges par byung ba |*. For the use of the English word “stratagem” to render the Skt. *upāya* in preference to “skilful means” or “skill in means,” see the glossary (Appendix C), where our choice is explained.

8. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed.</sup>: *dharmaratnavikaraṇāṃr̥tajalasamvarṣakaiḥ*. We emend to °*vikiraṇa*°. Tib., Kj and Xz also suggest *vikiraṇa*, but understood as *kiraṇa*, “ray of light.” One could follow the lead of the Chinese translations and read the compound as a *dvandva*: “spreading the jewels of the Dharma about and pouring down the rain of ambrosia.” However, taking it all together produces a more complex metaphor that presumably invokes Indian monsoon rains, which produce large bubbles when striking the ground.

9. The term *vāsanānusandhi* forming the object of *samucchinna* at the end of this unusual compound (*gambhīradharmapratītyāvatārāntānanta-drṣṭivāsanānusandhisamucchinna*) must mean, technically, the continuous or uninterrupted flow of cause and effect in which the lingering traces or residual impressions of past karma (*vāsanā*) manifest themselves as a person’s behavior and states of mind. Unfortunately there is no compact, elegant way to translate this.

10. Cf. Kj and Xz: *yanfa wuwei you shizi hou* 演法無畏猶師子吼 “they proclaimed the Dharma fearlessly, roaring like lions.”

11. Tib. *chos rin po che'i shes rab dang bsod nams kyi tshogs yang dag par sgrub pa'i ded dpon chen po* (literally, “great caravan leaders who had acquired the stocks of insight and merit which are the treasure of the Dharma”) suggests an even longer compound amplifying the metaphor of the traveling merchant.

12. TSG<sup>Ed.</sup>: *āgatisatvāśayamatimanupraviṣṭajñānaviśayibhiḥ*. We emend tentatively to °*āgatigatisatva*°, assuming haplography of *gati*. This is strongly suggested by Tib. *sems can rnam kyi 'ong ba dang | 'gro ba dang | sems can gyi bsam pa rtogs pa'i rjes su zhugs pa'i ye shes kyi yul dang ldan pa*. Cf. also Kj: *shan zhi zhongsheng wanglai suoqu ji xin suoxing* 善知衆生往來所趣及心所行; Xz: *you qu wu qu yile suogui* 有趣無趣意樂所歸.

13. The first phrase (*amoghaśravaṇadarśanaiḥ*) is ambiguous. It could mean that seeing and hearing them were unfailingly beneficial, which is the interpretation we find in Tib. and the Chinese translations.

14. For stylistic reasons we do not translate *mahāsattva*, which almost always appears coupled with *bodhisattva* as a stock epithet meaning something like “of great courage.” We interpret it as a *bahuvrīhi* (exocentric

compound), and not as a *karmadhāraya* or descriptive compound, as is commonly done (i.e., “great being”). Note that the spelling in the manuscript is always *bodhisatva* and *mahāsatva*, but we follow English convention in the translation.

15. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *anekāc caturmahādvīpakāl lokadhātor*. We emend to *āśokāc*, etc., in line with Tib. *gling chen po bzhi pa'i 'jig rten gyi khams mya ngan med pa nas* and Xz 從本無憂四大洲界. Even though a graphic confusion of *śo* and *ne* seems unlikely—as it happens, *śo* and *ne* come closer—*aneka* (“many”) is difficult to reconcile with the singular number of the head noun and its adjective, and emending *anekāt* to *āśokāt* is more parsimonious than changing everything to *anekebhyas caturmahādvīpakebhyo lokadhātubhyo 'bhyagatair*. We must, however, admit that the evidence of ZQ and Kj is not consistent with this, and the very next sentence refers to the Śakras (i.e., Indras) gathering from multiple worlds. The name *Āśoka* means “Free of Sorrow.”

16. The verbs in this paragraph are all singular, but we translate them as plural, since Ratnākara is clearly joined in each action by his five hundred companions.

17. Here we use “jeweled” simply as convenient shorthand, since the seven precious substances or kinds of treasure (*sapta-ratna*) of which the parasols are made include gold and silver.

18. The Buddha, with his mere presence, can induce in his audience thoughts and feelings, this is his *anubhāva*. The word appears to be from the causative of *anu-bhū-*, “to experience,” “to have particular feelings.” The word seems to carry some of the connotations of *anubhāva* as royal presence or majesty, and part of the denotation of the word’s usage in classical drama: the actor’s success in inducing a particular feeling in his audience. However, in this particular passage, the *anubhāva* is affecting external objects.

19. The sense of the locative case here is uncertain, but two interpretations seem possible, i.e., the whole cosmos comes into view laid out beneath the gigantic parasol, or it is seen by those looking upwards as reflected on the concave inner surface of the parasol, made as it is of bright and highly reflective gold, silver, and precious stones.

20. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *namasyantī*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *namasyatī*. We read *namasyantī* with the manuscript and TSG<sup>Text</sup>.

21. Skt. *tathāgata*. See the glossary entry “realized one” (Appendix C) for an explanation of this term and our translation of it.

22. That is, his left shoulder, thereby exposing his right one as a mark of respect. No other version refers to the covering of the left shoulder with

the monastic cloak, an action typical of a member of the Saṅgha. Its appearance in the Sanskrit text is probably the result of an unconscious formulaic amplification.

23. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *śramaṇaśāntipathapraṇetum*. We read as *śramaṇa śāntipathapraṇetum* with Iwamatsu (2007c: 73).

24. We construe this line as a compound. The verse is distinguished by its use of *anuprāsa* or alliteration (repetition of the sound *ś*), which we have tried to replicate, albeit by using the sound *p*. The meter is Vasantatilaka for verses 1–8, thereafter Triṣṭubh-Jagatī.

25. We use curly brackets to provide alternative translations wherever we have good reason to believe the text is playing on several meanings of the same word. Fondness for puns (*śleṣa*) is one of the hallmarks of Sanskrit verse. In this case the primary conceit is the Buddha as a munificent king bestowing wealth on his subjects, while the secondary meaning is the Buddha as a great teacher. The alliteration in this verse is on the sounds *dh* and *d*.

26. Our interpretation of the whole stanza as a quotation attached to *giraṃ prabhāṣi* is guided by Tib., which puts *zhes gsung gis ston* at the end.

27. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *naivātra ātmana ca kāraku*. We read as *naivātra ātma na ca kāraku* with Iwamatsu (2007c: 74).

28. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *yasminn avedita*. We read as *yasmin na vedita* with Iwamatsu (2007c: 74).

29. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *sarvakutīrthikagaṇāś*. We emend to *sarve kutīrthikagaṇāś* with Iwamatsu (2007c: 74).

30. This may refer to the period immediately following the awakening.

31. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *teṣān akalpana punar madate praśāntā*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *teṣām akalpana punaḥ satate praśāntā*. We emend to *teṣā na kalpana punaḥ sada te praśāntā* in line with Tib. (*de dag rtog pa ma mchis rtag par rab tu zhī*). Cf. Iwamatsu (2007c: 75): *teṣāṃ na kalpa na punar madate praśāntāḥ*.

32. The multivalency of *vāca* is lost in English: a single utterance, a single voice, a single word, or a single language. This carries over to the next line with the use of the word *ruta*. The verb *vijānati/vijānate* here is similarly multivalent: “understand,” “recognize,” “perceive,” thus “hear” in its broadest sense (perceive and understand).

33. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *nivivyaśi*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *nividyasi*. We emend to *nividhyasi* with Iwamatsu, but see his discussion of the complex problems this verse presents (2007c: 76). There is possibly a pun at work here, invoking the notions of *nirvedha* (from *nir-vyadh-*), “penetration,” and *nirveda* (from *nir-vidh-*), “disgust (with the world).” This is suggested by the rendition of K<sub>j</sub> (which

Xz repeats almost verbatim). However, it is not supported by Tib.: *kha cig rtogs par byas*, “some you have caused to comprehend.”

34. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *daśabala satyavikramam*. We construe this as one compound: *daśabalasatyavikramam*.

35. Implied are the four modes of self-assurance, which along with the ten powers and the eighteen unique qualities form part of the standard description of a buddha.

36. It is impossible to convey in English the strong sense of movement in this verse (*vikramam, gatam, gatam, jagat*). The momentum carries over into the following verses with their repetitions of *gata*, “gone,” “reached,” and *gati*, “way of going,” “destination,” “state of existence.”

37. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *satvai*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *satvair*. We emend to *satve* with Iwamatsu (2007c: 77), construing it as a BHS accusative plural, and thus the object both of *samādhānagatam* and of *gatīgatam* in its other sense of “thoroughly comprehended.” Note that the verse boundaries could be drawn differently. Although we have kept the numbering of TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, a division according to thematic content would be 13a–c (3 lines); 13d–14b (3 lines); 14c–15b (4 lines); 15c–d (2 lines). We take 13d–14b as completing the metaphor of 13a–c: the Buddha is a ferryman who never stops on either bank, but constantly ferries living beings across, going back and forth over the river of saṃsāra even though he has himself already reached the safety of the far shore. Hence 13a–14b could even be regarded as a single 6-line verse.

38. The topic here in 14c–15b is the three *vimokṣamukha* or “gates of liberation”: emptiness, signlessness and wishlessness or purposelessness (*śūnyatā, animitta, apraṇihita*).

39. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *acintiyam buddhamahānubhāvam*. We read as *acintiyam buddha mahānubhāvam* with Iwamatsu (2007c: 77), but the line remains one syllable short. Perhaps *acintiyam buddha mahānubhāva tam*?

40. The Buddha speaks to all five hundred Licchavis, but addresses Ratnākara as their representative, using the term *kulaputra*, the literal meaning of which is “son of (good) family.” We understand *kulaputra* and *kuladuhitr* as ordinary forms of polite reference and address, used generally when speaking to persons of equal or lower rank, and translate them as “gentleman” and “lady,” or, if used as terms of address, as “good sir” and “good lady,” partly for balance and partly to signal with this less common locution that the person so addressed is not of higher rank.

41. That is to say, the domain exists for the sake of others, i.e., those living beings reborn in it. Here and in the following sentences the manuscript is sometimes defective, and TSG<sup>Ed</sup> supplies wording which has fallen out because of the highly repetitive nature of the text.

42. The verb *māpayati* has a range of meanings (to measure out, prepare, fashion, arrange, build), and its use here suggests the bodhisattva's vision or blue-printing of his domain, as well as his building of it.

43. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *sambhavati*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *sambhavanti*. We read *sambhavati* with the manuscript and TSG<sup>Text</sup>.

44. These qualities correspond to the list of the ten *kuśalakarmāpathas*, but the match is not always clear with those relating to speech.

45. Context seems to require that we begin with *bodhicitta*, which is not found in the Sanskrit text, but does appear in Tib. (*byang chub sems dpa'i byang chub kyi sems bskyed pa ci 'dra bar bsam pa yang de 'dra'o* |) and in Xz. In Sanskrit the sequence of terms appears to have been scrambled at the beginning, and the manuscript is defective in at least one place. Both Tib. and Xz imply the progression *bodhicitta* – *āśaya* – *prayoga* – *adhyāśaya* – *nidhyapti*, etc. We have followed this in our translation, putting within square brackets what is not found, or found in a different order, in the Sanskrit text. That Tib. and the Chinese translations do not always agree with each other may indicate various attempts over time to rewrite the passage by those who found its logic opaque. Like the TSG editors we assume that some of the wording has dropped out due to haplography, but although we are inclined to restore more in our translation than they have, we refrain from proposing drastic emendations to the Sanskrit text.

46. The sequence in Kj runs *upāya* – *satva* – *kṣetra* – *deśanā* – *jñāna*, while in Xz it is *sānti?*/*upaśama?* (*jijing* 寂靜) – *satva* – *kṣetra* – *deśanā* – *puṇya* – *prajñā* – *jñāna*. ZQ, however, offers an exact match at this point for the order of terms in Skt. and Tib.

47. That is, the *citta* of *svacitta* could also be understood in a more specific sense as *bodhicitta*, the bodhisattva's own aspiration to awakening, with which the series began. In this way, the passage has come full circle.

48. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *yas tathāgatasya*. Emend to *yat tathāgatasya?*

49. Supplying *buddhakṣetrasya* after *sākyamuneḥ*, as indicated by Tib. and Xz.

50. That is, the Paranirmitavaśavartin deities (so, explicitly, Tib. and Xz), the inhabitants of the highest heaven in the realm of desire.

51. The name Anantaṅgaratnavyūha means something like "Splendid panoply of infinite precious qualities."

52. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *upatiṣṭhato*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *upatiṣṭhataḥ*. We emend to *upatiṣṭhate* (-to presumably a misread -te followed by a *daṇḍa*).

53. "Advanced disciple" is our translation for the technical term *śrāvaka*, literally "hearer." See the glossary (Appendix C).

54. According to Tib., committed to the noble buddha-domain (but *udārabuddhakṣetrādhimuktānām* seems unlikely). The attainment of this last group appears only in Sanskrit and Tib., and not in any Chinese translation. It is anomalous, since the same attainment by the same number of beings already appears in §1.19 in all versions, albeit without the attendant realization.

## Chapter 2: Mastery of Stratagem

55. While the Sanskrit text has *pratibhānasamanvāgataḥ* at this point, and this is supported by Tib. (*spobs pa dang ldan pa*), it is redundant, since Vimalakīrti's *pratibhāna* has already been mentioned. All three Chinese versions reflect the reading *prañidhānasamanvāgataḥ*, e.g., Xz *dayuan chengman* 大願成滿 “he had fulfilled his great vows.”

56. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *lakṣaṇapāricchinnaḥ*: we emend to *lakṣaṇapāricchannaḥ* (cf. TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, 16n1), since this is supported not only by Tib. but also by Kj and Xz. The idea here is that Vimalakīrti has the splendid features of a high spiritual being, which would render normal ornaments redundant.

57. So the Skt. and Tib. texts (*laukikalokottara*, *’jig rten pa dang ’jig rten las ’das pa*), but the three Chinese versions all suggest that *lokottara* (“transcendental,” “supramundane”) is a later interpolation. It makes better sense to contrast Vimalakīrti's mastery of worldly theory and practice with his constant focus on the Dharma, which alone transcends the world.

58. In many items in this section a play on words gives an extra twist to the message. The puns defy translation in most cases. Here, for instance, the word *śreṣṭhin* (“guildmaster,” “leading merchant,” “banker”) is picked up by *śreṣṭha*, “best.” The best dharma is presumably the Mahāyāna.

59. In Kj and Xz the Brahmās come before the Śākras (Indras). In ZQ the order is as in Skt. and Tib.

60. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: °*kauśala*°. We emend to °*kauśalya*°.

61. This sermon delivered by Vimalakīrti and part of its narrative framing (i.e., §§2.7–12, including also the last sentence of §2.6 but omitting the last sentence of §2.12) is quoted in its entirety in the *Sūtrasamuccaya* (SūS), which is attributed to Nāgārjuna but cannot have been compiled by the author of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*. See Bhikkhu Pāsādika, *Nāgārjuna's Sūtrasamuccaya: A Critical Edition of the Mdo kun las btus pa* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1989), 73–76 for the relevant text. Unfortunately, this work is currently accessible only in its Tibetan and Chinese translations (and the Chinese lacks this citation, along with a

whole string of other citations dealing with the body which are found in the Tibetan version). Furthermore, the Tibetan translators of the SūS simply took their text from the canonical translation of the Vkn, with few modifications, so the SūS citation has little value as an independent witness. A Sanskrit manuscript of the SūS has recently been discovered, but only a small section of it has yet been published.

62. This item is not found in any of the Chinese translations, but appears in Tib. (and thus in the SūS citation).

63. This item is also missing from the Chinese translations, but is found in Tib. Without this item and the one mentioned in the previous note, we have here a succession of stock images of impermanence and insubstantiality, mostly drawn from the natural world.

64. ZQ and Kj have only the primary four elements, in the order earth, fire, wind, water. Xz has five, including space, in the same order as the Sanskrit text, but links some of them to different terms.

65. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed.</sup>: *asaṃbhūto*. We emend to *abhūto*, in line with Tib., Kj and Xz (the testimony of ZQ is inconclusive). This reading is more consistent with the play on words (*bhūta* = true; *bhūta* = element) that connects this item to the preceding section. The compound *mahābhūtānām* may contain a play on words as well, for it can also be read *mahā+abhūtānām*, “the great unrealities.”

66. It is tempting to take the word *vāṭayantra* (“wind machine”) to refer to the kind of ceiling fan now commonly called a *punkah*, with its perpetual back and forth motion, but this may be anachronistic. Cf. Kj and Xz: *shi shen wu zuo feng li suo zhuan* 是身無作風力所轉, “This body has no action (of its own), it is turned by the power of the wind.”

67. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed.</sup>: *paryantasthāyī*. Our translation is inspired by ZQ *shi shen wei qiong dao* 是身為窮道 “This body has come to the end of the road.” However, we recognize that *paryantasthāyī* can also be read as “utterly stable” or “utterly trustworthy” (in the sense that we can be absolutely sure that death is its end). Tib. *mthar mi gnas pa* (literally “not remaining at the end or limit”) suggests a negative *paryantasthāyī*, and this is also implied by Kj’s *shi shen wu ding* 是身無定, “this body is unstable,” which Xz repeats. If we translated accordingly we might say that the body is “terminally unstable.”

68. See the informative discussion of these stock images for the *skandhas*, *dhātus* and *āyatanas* in Lamotte 1962: 136n28 (cf. Boin 1976: 37n28).

69. The multivalency of the term *dharmakāya* is impossible to convey in a single translation. Among other things it denotes the body of the

Dharma as the teaching or truth as a whole, the body (i.e., collection) of the dharmas as multiple teachings, and the body of the dharmas as the qualities and practices that make the Buddha who he is. Given what follows, this last sense seems to be uppermost here.

70. Taken together, the Tib. and Chinese translations indicate that the words *puṇyanirjātas tathāgatakāyo jñānanirjātas tathāgatakāyaḥ* (or something similar) have dropped out of the Sanskrit text here, and so we supply them in our translation within square brackets. We follow the order of the Chinese; Tib. places knowledge before merit. Note also that both Kj and Xz begin this section with “Why is that?” (Skt. *tat kasya hetoḥ*), and that the order of terms throughout it is somewhat different in all the Chinese versions.

71. The mention of generosity or gift-giving (*dāna*) here in Skt. and Tib. seems to be a later interpolation in the standard list of the five *dharma-skandhas*. All Chinese versions lack it. Its intrusiveness is underlined by its reappearance a few lines later.

72. Tib. adds at this point: “It is engendered by the path of the ten virtuous actions (Skt. *daśakuśalakarmapatha*).” This is not found in any of the Chinese versions.

73. The sense of *vidyā* here is not certain. We have translated following Kj and Xz, which both have *san ming* 三明, “the three understandings.” This implies *traividya* (see BHSD, s.v.), here undoubtedly the three kinds of knowledge which Śākyamuni attained at awakening, which overlap with the supernormal faculties or *abhijñā*. The three kinds of knowledge are also mentioned at §3.59 and §11.1 (Kj and Xz also *san ming* 三明, ZQ *san da* 三達 or *san dazhi* 三達智)

### Chapter 3: Dispatching the Disciples and Bodhisattvas

74. The element *visarjanapraśna* in the chapter title, *śrāvaka-bodhisatvavisarjanapraśna*, is difficult to interpret; *visarjana* may mean “answering a question,” “rejecting” or “being dispatched,” and *praśna*, “question,” “interrogation,” “point at issue,” but the order of the two elements is puzzling, and hardly supports Lamotte’s “*Le refus d’interroger des Śrāvaka et des Bodhisattva*” (cf. Boin 1976: 42: “The refusal to inquire by the śrāvakas and the bodhisattvas”). We are not at all sure either that it can be interpreted as “the answers and questions of the śrāvakas and the bodhisattvas,” especially since the chapter contains very few actual questions. The Chinese translations offer no help: all of them divide the chapter into two separate chapters simply entitled “The śrāvaka chapter” and



“The bodhisattva chapter.” The Tib. *nyan thos dang byang chub sems dpa’ gtang bar rmas pa* (literally, “the śrāvakas and the bodhisattvas are asked to send/be sent”) makes it clear that the Tibetan translators did not construe *visarjanaprasāna* as a co-ordinative compound (*dvandva*). We have adopted a title that reflects the content of the chapter as we understand it, in the manner of previous translators.

75. Given the more technical sense of *piṇḍagrāha* this could be a pun: “for the sake of removing others’ notion of material objects, i.e., objectification” or “to get rid of grasping at the alms of others.”

76. This final statement, present but construed quite differently in ZQ and yet absent from Kj, may mean that one should approach the members of all families or clans with the idea that they are members of the family of the Buddha. This appears to be the implication of Xz.

77. Kj (followed by Xz), appears to have read a positive *jñānasparśanatayā*: “Experience all sensations as the attainment of wisdom” or “Regard all touch as if you were realizing wisdom.” Tib. supports the negative reading (*ye shes la reg pa med pas*), as does ZQ (“Take no further pleasure in what can be touched”).

78. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed.</sup>: °*vijñāptyā*. We emend to °*vijñāptyā*.

79. This appears to be an allusion to the Fire Sermon, in which we are told that the six senses are ablaze. It is not found in ZQ.

80. The eight wrong practices (*aṣṭamithyātva*) are the opposites of the elements of the Eightfold Path of the Noble Ones, which consists of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

81. Taking *mithyā* as equivalent to *mithyātva* and referring back to the *aṣṭamithyātva*.

82. Here the text employs a stock phrase used to describe the religious mendicant who is a complete parasite, eating up the gifts of the faithful without any return for them in the form of merit.

83. Alternatively, “mental objects” for *dharma*s in contrast to “sensual/material objects” for *āmiṣas*. It is difficult to translate “dharma” in such a way that maintains continuity between this clause and the following one; in this clause “things” seems like a better translation, but in the next one “properties” or “qualities” seems more appropriate.

84. Kj and Xz lack the negative here.

85. Or, possibly, “in a state of equanimity,” if we emend the Sanskrit text (*samādhivimukti*) to *samatāvimukti*, in line with Tib. and the Chinese translations, none of which mention *samādhi* at this point. See e.g., Xz: *neng*

*yi wujian pingdeng faxing er ru jietuo pingdeng faxing* 能以無間平等法性而入解脫平等法性.

86. Here we see word play that points up the difficulty or the risks involved in translating the word *dharma*: you are not endowed with all dharmas, and yet you have thoroughly understood all dharmas, you are not in possession of any dharmas, and yet you have obtained all dharmas, you are not in possession of anything, yet you thoroughly understand everything. Tib., Kj and Xz imply a different Sanskrit text, that could be reconstructed as *sarvadharmasamanvāgataś ca sarvadharmasamjñāvigataś ca*: “you are in possession of all dharmas, yet you are free of any conception of all dharmas.”

87. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup> add the syllables *cāryaman* between *sarva-dṛṣṭigateṣu* and *antargato*. We have not been able to determine what this might mean.

88. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *lakṣaṇam*. We emend to *kṣaṇam*, on the basis of Tib., Kj and Xz, but cannot explain why the manuscript reads *lakṣaṇam*.

89. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *saṃkleśena cāsi samāvyavadānam adhigataḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *saṃkleśena cāsi samo 'vyavadānam adhigataḥ*. The sense is not certain here, and so our interpretation has been guided by Tib. “you have not understood purification,” which perhaps suggests a reading like *saṃkleśena cāsi samo na vyavadānam adhigataḥ*. Cf. Kj and Xz, which imply something like “you are devoid of or separated from purification” (*vyavadānavigataḥ?*).

90. That is to say, “nothing special.” The text refers here to qualities in terms of which Subhuti was considered by the Buddha himself to be preeminent above all others.

91. Here the text puns on *akṣara*, which means both “word,” “syllable,” or “letter,” and “imperishable,” “unalterable.”

92. Tib. and all three Chinese versions point to the reading *mahā-vanasya*, etc., i.e., in the Great Wood, the forest near Kapilavastu.

93. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *akyatām*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *akṣatām*. We emend to *akṣatān*.

94. The *bhaṇḍarathyām* of the text appears to be corrupt. All other versions seem to reflect an original expression meaning “the narrow path.”

95. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *amuṣitabodhicittāḥ*. We emend to *āmuṣita-bodhicittāḥ*, on the basis of Tib. and the Chinese versions, and also in light of the way the argument proceeds in §3.23.

96. The Sanskrit text appears to be defective at this point, since in all other versions Pūrṇa reports how he reflected that advanced disciples should not teach the Dharma to anyone without considering their minds,

because they do not know the different capacities of other living beings, nor are they constantly in a state of deep concentration like the buddhas.

97. The text here refers to those occasions on which the Buddha, after giving short, condensed teachings, fell silent (or retired), and Mahākātyāyana was called upon to fill in the gaps and explain things more fully, an activity in which he attained pre-eminence. See Lamotte 1962: 163–167, especially note 49 (cf. Boin 1976: 62–65, n49).

98. Tib. and Xz provide a more elegant and symmetrical statement of this argument, stating that things have not been born, are not being born, and will not be born, and they have not ceased, are not ceasing, and will not cease.

99. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *pañcānāṃ skandhānāṃ śūnyatānugamānutpādānirodhārthaḥ*. Cf. Tib. *phung po lnga po dag la stong pa nyid du rtogs pas skye ba med pa rtog pa'i don*. We translate the Sanskrit as literally as we can, although we believe it is problematic, and no other version agrees with it; none of them mentions *anīrodha*. However, we do not see a plausible emendation. All Chinese versions, despite slight differences in wording, carry the same clear message: “Understanding that the five aggregates are empty and do not arise, this is the meaning of ‘suffering.’”

100. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *triṃ sāhasramahāsāhasraṃ*. We emend to *trisāhasramahāsāhasraṃ*.

101. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *tat sāhārthāyusmann*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *utsāhāyāyusmann*. We emend tentatively to *tatsāhārtha āyusmann*, from which secondary *sandhi* may have produced the reading of the manuscript. The wording which precedes *āyusmann* may in any case have been a commentarial gloss on what went before it. It is not reflected in any of the Chinese or Tibetan translations.

102. Alternatively *na ubhayam antareṇa* can be translated, as it is in Tib., “nor (is it to be found) apart from those two.” The three Chinese versions all follow the “and not in between the two” interpretation.

103. This allusion to a *Samyuktāgama sūtra* is discussed in Lamotte 1962: 52–53 (cf. Boin 1976: lxxiv, in which Lamotte supplies important additional details not found in his original French version).

104. Sanskrit *vinayadhara*, those who keep in their mind or memory the text of the Vinaya, of whom Upāli was the foremost. No other version supports the occurrence of *vinayadharo* at this point, so it may be a commentarial intrusion. Without it, we would have “It is this layman who possesses insight, rather than the Reverend Upāli.”

105. These two sentences are not found in ZQ or Kj.

106. §§3.38–41 are cited in the *Dasheng xiuxing pusa xingmen zhujing yaoji* 大乘修行菩薩行門諸經要集 (T 847), a Chinese translation of an Indian anthology of Mahāyāna sūtras of uncertain date but similar to the SūS and the Śikṣ (see T 847, 17: 939b13–c9 for the text). The translation differs from those of ZQ, KJ and Xz.

107. Or activity which is directed towards the conditioned. Thus the religious life is something focused on the unconditioned, i.e., on nirvana. This understanding may be implied by the Tib. *rab tu byung ba ni 'dus ma byas par sbyor ba yin*.

108. Tib. suggests an omission here: *thog ma dang tha ma'i mthar lta ba dang bral ba'o*. Cf. also ZQ, KJ and Xz.

109. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *yathōā*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *panthā*. We read the manuscript as *yatho* (i.e., without any correction), and emend to *patho* (*pa* and *ya* being easily confused). As Péter-Dániel Szántó has kindly pointed out (personal communication), it can be no accident that so many of the terms in this sequence begin with *pa* or *pra* (as in Skt. *pravrajyā*, Pāli *pabbajjā*, Gāndhārī *pravaja/prabaja/pavaja/pabaja*), in addition to which the last term is *anavadya* (Pāli *anavajja*, Gāndhārī *aṇavajo*), i.e., we are probably looking at another example of a play on words—or at least on sounds—rendered less recognizable by transposition into Sanskrit.

110. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *paṃke/paṃke saṃkramaḥ*. We emend to *paṃkasamkramaḥ*, since the locative is problematic. Tib. suggests *kāmapaṃkasamkramaḥ*: 'dod pa'i 'dam la zab pa (read *zam pa*). Note that the order of the following items differs in Tib., KJ and Xz.

111. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *svacittadarśanī*. We emend to *svacittadamanī*, reading with Tib., ZQ and Xz (cf. TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, 32n2). Note, however, that KJ's *neihuaixi* 內懷喜 may imply either *svacittaharṣaṇī* or, as Chen Ruixuan has pointed out (personal communication), *svacittaramaṇī* (both meaning “delighting one's own mind”). The translation in T 847 also presupposes the reading *svacittadamanī*.

112. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *sarvamahojaskakuśaladharmasamanvāgataḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *sarvamahaujaskakuśaladharmasamanvāgataḥ*. We emend to *sarvakuśaladharmasamanvāgataḥ*, omitting the word *mahaujaska*, for which there is no equivalent in Tib. or any Chinese version, and which is clearly a botched attempt at a correction. It is written on fol. 19b4 in smaller letters following *nāprahīṇaḥ sarva*, also written in smaller letters, over an erasure which would have accommodated *nāprahīṇaḥ sarva* written in normal size perfectly. Faint traces of the letters *mahojaska* can also be seen in the bottom margin, signalling a correction which should have been applied to the defective *mahauskā* on 19b6.

113. Tib. and Xz suggest *kuśalamūla* here, but such an emendation is not supported by ZQ and Kj.

114. The translation is hypothetical and follows our attempt to fill an obvious lacuna in the manuscript. TSG<sup>Text</sup> reads: *sarvasaṃkhyāvigatasya bhadanto*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup> emends to: *sarvasaṃkhyāvigataḥ | tasya bhadanto*. We have restored *sarvasaṃkhyāvigataḥ | idṛśasya kāyasya bhadanto*, although one could also posit an original *sarvasaṃkhyāvigataḥ | tasye-dṛśasya bhadanto* (missing *akṣaras* in bold). What further complicates the problem is a possible confusion in the textual transmission between *saṃskāra* and *saṃkhyā* and *saṃskṛta* and a hypothetical *saṃkhyāta* (underlying the present reading *saṃkhyāvigataḥ*). All of the extant versions differ, and more may have dropped out of the text than we can tell at this point.

115. Following the emendation proposed in the previous note.

116. At this point all Chinese versions begin a new chapter, chapter 4, entitled “The Bodhisattvas.”

117. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *bhikṣo*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *bhikṣaḥ*. The reading of the manuscript is correct.

118. On this citation of an as yet unidentified canonical text, see Lamotte 1962: 192n91 (cf. Boin 1976: 88n91).

119. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *yaithān deputrāṇāṃ bodhiparikalpanadṛṣtis tām etān utsarjaya*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *yaiṣāṃ devaputrāṇāṃ bodhiparikalpanadṛṣtis tām etān utsarjaya*. We read instead: *yaiṣāṃ (yā + eṣāṃ) . . . tām etān utsarjaya*, understanding *etān* as the correlative of *eṣāṃ*, *tām* as the correlative of *yā*.

120. TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *sarveṇjitamanyasyanditānām*. We emend to *sarveṇjita-manyanāspanditānām*.

121. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *adhiṣṭhānaṃ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *anadhiṣṭhānaṃ*. We emend to *aviṣṭhānaṃ*, being unconvinced by the emendation advanced by the Taisho editors. This is to some extent tentative, but perhaps makes more sense of Tib. *mi ’jug pa*. The testimony of the Chinese versions offers no clues, at least none that we can interpret.

122. Cf. Tib. *byang chub ni de bzhin nyid rjes su rtogs pa’o*, “Awakening is realizing the way things are.”

123. Here we follow Tib. taking the compound *utpādabhaṅgasthity-anyathātvavigatā* as containing a pair of *dvandvas*. So too Xz: *shengzhuyimie bijing li gu* 生住異滅畢竟離故, “because it is utterly free from arising, abiding, change, destruction.” However, both ZQ *li qifenzhu* 離起分處, “free from arising, differentiation, abiding,” and Kj *wu shengzhumie gu* 無生住滅故, “because it lacks arising, abiding, and destruction,” imply an original *utpādabhaṅgasthitivigatā*.

124. Cf. §11.1, where the same thing is said of the Realized One. Note that Xz attaches the *tathatā* of the next item to this one: *wuchu shi puti yu zhenru zhong yiqie fangchu suo yuanli gu* 無處是菩提於真如中一切方處所遠離故, “non-location is bodhi, because it is separated from all place and location in terms of true suchness (= *tathatā*).”

125. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed.</sup>: *nirātmikā*. Curiously, both Tib. *rlabs med* and Xz *wu lang* 無浪 imply a different reading, *nīrūrmikā* (“without waves,” i.e., “without surges of emotion”), while Kj’s *ru hua* 如化, “like a magical transformation,” points to something like *nīrmitikā*. The term *nīrūrmika* also appears in §11.1 (Tib. *rlabs ma mchis pa*).

126. It would be natural for the section to end by returning to its starting point, and therefore the addition of speech is intrusive. Both Tib. and Xz have only body and mind. ZQ and Kj, however, conclude with the statement that awakening is subtle and difficult to comprehend. Tib. adds two more sentences explaining why awakening cannot be comprehended by body or mind.

127. Here the text plays on the various senses of *maṇḍa* in the compound *bodhimaṇḍa*, which means both the seat or terrace of awakening as an actual location (the place where Siddhārtha became the Buddha), as well as the essence or even quintessence of awakening. One could therefore understand the text as saying “the seat and very essence,” for this and for the following items.

128. So Skt. and Tib., but according to the Chinese translations only conditioned things are given up.

129. All three Chinese versions suggest that the point is that the twelve links in the chain of causation (*pratītyasamutpāda*), i.e., ignorance, etc., are not eliminated or that they are inexhaustible. This reading is contrary to Skt. and Tib.

130. Or, as Xz makes clear, perform any action whatsoever.

131. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed.</sup>: *pratiṣṭhante*. We emend to *pratitiṣṭhante* on the basis of Tib. and all the Chinese versions, and since the locative makes no sense with the verb *pra-sthā*.

132. The word *viḥāra* in the original could refer to a monastery, since, as we soon find out, Jagatindhara is a *śramaṇa*. All translations render it in the same neutral way that we have, except for Kj, whose use of *jingshi* 靜室 indicates a hermitage or dwelling for religious practice.

133. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed.</sup>: *nimantraya yathā*. We emend to *nimantra-yathā*, understanding this as the unaugmented second-person singular Ātmanepada imperfect form *nimantrayathāḥ* with *sandhi* before *na* and

dittography of *ya*. A free-standing *yathā* makes no sense here, especially followed by *na hi*.

134. The phrase *yān ahaṃ nājñāsiṣam* appears to be a later insertion; literally, “which I did not know.” The phrase is not found in the Chinese versions, and is represented in Tibetan by *de bdag gis mthong ste*, “which I saw,” using a different verb and a positive instead of a negative statement. We cannot explain the Tibetan in light of the extant Skt.

135. The precise sense of *bodhyākāra* here eludes us. Note that the Tibetan translation should presumably read *byang chub kyi rnam pas*, not *byang chub kyi rnam par*.

136. Tibetan reads *byang chub tu rtsom pas mngon par bsgrubs pa'i brtson 'grus kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*, “the perfection of heroic effort which is achieved by striving towards awakening.” The Chinese translators do not pair the items in the same way, switching the phrases modifying *vīrya*- and *dhyāna-pāramitā*.

137. The forms of behavior which endear people to each other (here *saṃrañjanīyadharma*, commonly *sārāyaṇīyadharma*) are the six principles which help people to live together in communal harmony. The six are showing love (*maitrī*) to others in acts of body, speech and mind, both in public and in private (this counts as three principles); sharing whatever one has with others; scrupulous observance of codes of conduct, both in public and in private; and maintaining the correct view of the spiritual life, both in public and in private, which leads one who lives in accordance with it to the destruction of suffering.

138. “Life in the forest” is a more or less literal rendering of *araṇyavāsa*, a term which evokes the life of the hermit in the wild, away from society, but which also refers to life in the monastery. Here we also see a well-established pun connecting *araṇya*, “forest,” with *araṇā*, “freedom from conflict,” “peace.”

139. This sentence evokes the brahmanic notions of the proper sacrifice (*dharmayajña*) and the sacrificer's fees (*dakṣiṇā*). The bodhisattva performs a dharma sacrifice (according to the Buddhist Dharma, which is superior to the brahmanic dharma), and he becomes worthy of veneration and of the sacrificer's fee. With this, Vimalakīrti suggests that the bodhisattva's sacrifice is far superior to the one that is being performed by the brahmins in the present audience.

140. The expression “the poorest man in the city” translates *nagara-daridra*. We understand this term as an implicit superlative, analogous to *janapadakalyāṇī*, “the fairest woman in the land.”

## Chapter 4: A Sick Man is Consoled

141. The difficult compound *vyastasamastavacananirhārakuśalaḥ* (Tib. *tshig snrel zhi dang rdzogs pa'i tshig bsgrub pa la mkhas pa*) finds no counterpart in the three Chinese translations, which is also the case with two closely related compounds in Chapter 12. See note 296 below for an extended discussion of the relevant terms and our interpretation of them in that context, which informs our rendering here too. The matching pair *vyasta* and *samasta* is open to a variety of interpretations, and could even mean “simple words and compounds,” but the context calls for something with greater significance and weight. Vimalakīrti is, we might say more loosely, a master of the paradoxical utterance.

142. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *mahādharmasrāvaṇasām̐kathyaṃ*. We emend to *mahādharmasrāvaṇasām̐kathyaṃ*, following Tib. *chos bsgrags pa'i gdam chen po*.

143. On the differences between the Sanskrit and the other versions of this difficult passage, which plays on the various forms of the root *ā-gam-*, (“to come”) see the summary discussion in the introduction to TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, paragraph (d), pages xix–xx. As Lamotte 1962: 223n6 (cf. Boin 1976: 116n6) points out, Mañjuśrī’s reply is reminiscent of Nāgārjuna’s discussion of the impossibility of motion in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*.

144. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *kṣapanīyam*. We emend to *kṣamanīyam*. See Lamotte’s discussion of this common locution (1962: 223n7; cf. Boin 1976: 117n7).

145. Again, a stock phrase. See Lamotte 1962: 223n8; cf. Boin 1976: 117n7.

146. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *aparikalpanāś ca śūnyatāyāḥ śūnyatāḥ* |. The *visarga* at the end has a small cancellation mark above it, not noted by the Taishō editors. We emend to *aparikalpanā śūnyatāyāḥ śūnyatā* |, also removing the *ś ca* and reading *aparikalpanā* (singular) on grammatical grounds. This appears to be supported by Tib., Kj and Xz.

147. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *kāyasam̐prayukto śa cittasam̐prayuktaḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup> *kāyasam̐prayukta uta cittasam̐prayuktaḥ*. We emend to *kāyasam̐prayukto 'tha cittasam̐prayuktaḥ*, since *tha* and *śa* resemble each other closely. This less drastic emendation is still in line with Tib.

148. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *evaṃ dhātuko*. We read as a compound: *evaṃdhātuko*.

149. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *dharmasam̐jñāyaivaṃ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *dharmasam̐jñāyā evaṃ*. We emend to *dharmasam̐jñāparijñāyā evaṃ*, on the basis of Tib., Xz, and possibly ZQ.



150. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *dhyātmaṃ barhirdhā ca | samudācāraḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *adhyātmaṃ bahirdhā ca samudācāraḥ*. We emend to *adhyātmaṃ bahirdhā cāsamudācāraḥ*, on the basis of Tib. and Chin., also in view of the fact that *cā* can easily be misread as *ca* | (but a *daṇḍa* makes no sense here).

151. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *katamo dhyātma barhirdhā samudācāraḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *katamo 'dhyātmaṃ bahirdhā samudācāraḥ*. We emend to *katamo 'dhyātmabahirdhā-samudācāraḥ* (i.e., reading this as a compound), again on the basis of Tib. and Chin. Cf. previous note.

152. The term *vedanā* is ambiguous here: feeling or sensation in general and painful feeling in particular, especially that attendant upon an illness. In some contexts *vedanā* can also mean “torture.”

153. Reading in line with the manuscript *sākṣātkartavyo 'paripūrṇeṣu*, etc., without inserting punctuation as in TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, which changes the text to *sākṣātkartavyaḥ | aparipūrṇeṣu*, etc. Tib. takes the locative absolute phrase with what comes after it, but all Chinese translations attach it to what precedes it, and we follow their lead.

154. This must be an allusion to a passage in an Āgama text which echoes a similar passage in the *Sallekha-sutta* of the Majjhima-nikāya (Sutta No. 8) in structure, but not actual wording.

155. §4.17 is quoted in the *Sūtrasamuccaya* attributed to Nāgārjuna (Pāsādika 1989: 182–183), where it is followed by a quotation of selected parts of §4.20 (Pāsādika 1989: 183–185). In the Chinese translation of SūS (see T 1635, 32: 72a9ff.) the quotation of §4.17 is preceded by the sentence “Insight that is not supported by stratagem is bondage; insight that is supported by stratagem is liberation” from §4.16. In Xz (but not in ZQ or Kj), §4.16 ends with this sentence.

156. That is to say, as inextricably intertwined, as unable to be disentangled from each other. The passage is difficult. On the basis of Tib. and Chinese we emend by reading *nirnavatāniḥpurāṇatāṃ pratyavekṣate* as opposed to *na nirnavatāniḥpurāṇatāṃ pratyavekṣate* of TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, in order to make sense of it. Note that an additional complication is that the topic of the paragraph, if we go by the two earlier Chinese translations ZQ and Kj, appears originally to have been the relationship between body and illness, and not the relationship between body, mind and illness, as in the Skt. text, Tib., and Xz.

157. The translation is based on the Tib *mi skyed pa*, since the Sanskrit form *atyayati* is not easily explained, and we see no totally plausible emendation (perhaps *arpayati*?).

158. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *na nidhyaptau*. We emend to *na nidhyaptāv*

*anidhyaptau*, following Tib. and the suggestion of the TSG editors (see TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, 52n6).

159. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *na cākālaññānaprāptigocaraḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *na cākāle jñānaprāptigocaraḥ*. We read with the manuscript, as a compound.

160. TSG<sup>Text</sup>&TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *na cākāle satyaprativedhagocaraḥ*. We emend to *na cākālasatyaprativedhagocaraḥ*, in line with the manuscript reading for the preceding item.

161. This item turns on the sense of *nimitta* as target, reason or motive. In this context “marklessness” might work better than “signlessness.”

162. The text now goes through the thirty-seven factors that contribute to awakening.

163. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *buddhiprabhedā°*. We emend to *buddhaprabhedā°*, because, although supported by Tib. *blo*, *buddhi* makes little sense in the context. It is also the reading implied by Kj and Xz. ZQ lacks this item, its version of §4.20 being very short, with only seventeen sentences, less than half of what we find in Skt. (thirty-five sentences) and Xz (thirty-seven). Kj is somewhat shorter than Skt., with thirty-one separate items, while Tib. has thirty-three. All this indicates that the passage has been progressively expanded over time.

164. Of the thirty-five sentences in this section, if we count on the basis of the Sanskrit text, SūS cites eleven without any elision markers (Nos. 1–3, 6–8, 10, 13, 16, 30, 35). Both Tibetan and Chinese translations of this commentary are consistent in this regard, although the Chinese does not abbreviate the text as the Tibetan version does. We note, however, that the extreme truncation of the passage in the SūS is not identical with that of ZQ, which, even though short (seventeen sentences), has a number of the items which SūS omits. This suggests that the author of SūS was cherry-picking and that his selection does not point to a significantly shorter recension, even if he may have been working from one not as long as our Skt. text. The last sentence he quotes from §4.20 (No. 35) is also quoted in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*. See Bendall’s edition, 273.6–7. Bendall reads *saddharma°*, but the manuscript (Cambridge Add. 1478) shows *sa* corrected to *ya*.

## Chapter 5: Inconceivable Freedom

165. Throughout §§5.2–5.5 the text is playing on the different senses of the key term *dharma*, which refers both to truth, reality, or the teaching as a whole (in English, Dharma in the singular with a capital ‘d’) and to things as they truly are, realities, the fundamental building-blocks of our

experiences (dharma in the plural with a small 'd'). We find it difficult if not impossible to convey this ambiguity in our translation.

166. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *catvāriṃśat*[t written with *virāma*] *yojanaśatasahasram*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *catvāriṃśadyojanaśatasahasra*. Tib., ZQ and Xz indicate that this figure should be 4,200,000 (i.e., *dvā-* or *dvicātvāriṃśadyojanaśatasahasra*), making both measurements for the bodhisattvas exactly half those for the Buddha. This is also the figure we find in §5.8. We translate accordingly.

167. Skt. text has simply *apūrvāṇi*, but Tib. and all Chinese translations suggest *adr̥ṣṭapūrvāṇi*; we translate accordingly.

168. And therefore it would be contrary to the rules of the Vinaya for a monk or nun to sit on them.

169. This is our attempt to render *viṣayānām* in the phrase *viṣayānām viṣayāvatāranirdeśam*, which may be a commentarial intrusion into the Sanskrit text, as it is unsupported by Tib. and the Chinese versions.

170. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *saṃpratyetavyaḥ*. We emend to *saṃpratyeṣṭavyaḥ* in the light of Tib. and the three Chinese translations.

171. The rest of this paragraph, with the exception of the simile of the firefly and the sun, is quoted in the Tibetan version of the *Sūtrasamuccaya* (Pāsādika 1989: 188–190). So too in the Chinese translation of SūS, except that it also includes the first sentence about the Māras (T 1635, 32: 72c16–25).

172. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *ye ca te*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *yāvadbhir*. We propose the less drastic emendation *yaiś ca te* in line with Tib. *gang dag gis*, and translate accordingly.

173. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *vastrāṇi cotpīḍya*. We emend to *vastrāṇi votpīḍya*, since a switch from *vā* to *ca* makes no sense here.

174. We assume that the text is defective here, since the grammar of the sentence is not clear. That is, it probably read something like *nāsti hi śaktiḥ prākṛtajanasya*, etc.

## Chapter 6: The Goddess

175. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *tathāgatanirmitasyānutpannāḥ kleśāḥ*. This suggests “defilements not arising in a phantom created by a realized one” (so too Tib.), but we translate in line with KJ and Xz, which in our view make better sense in the context. However, the next item in Xz, which appears to have no equivalent in any other version, may also be connected to this, which makes our rendition less than certain.

176. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *ātmaparākṣaṇatayā*, a form we cannot explain. We emend to *ātmaparārakṣaṇatayā* on the basis of the Tib. and all Chinese versions.

177. §6.4 is quoted in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, Bendall's edition, 145.11–15. There, in the first question and answer, the verb is *pratisartavyaṃ* instead of *pratipattavyaṃ*. Both verbs have a wide range of meanings; our choice is guided by the Tibetan and Chinese translations.

178. §6.6 is quoted in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, Bendall's edition, 264.6–9, with several variant readings.

179. That is, unfitting or unsuitable (*akalpika*). See above in the "Introduction to the Translation," pages xxi–xxiii, for a discussion of the word-play which informs this part of the text.

180. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *prāptaṃ vā sāksātkṛtaṃ ceti*. We emend to *prāptaṃ vā sāksātkṛtaṃ veti*.

181. The champak or magnolia champaca (Skt. *campaka*) is a large tree with extremely fragrant flowers.

182. This second wonder is quoted in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*. See Bendall's edition, 269.11–12.

183. Tib., ZQ and Xz all point to a reading *avivartyadharmacakra-kathayā*, "talk concerning the wheel of the Dharma which is unstoppable in its progress." Only Kj, like the Skt., lacks the word "wheel."

184. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *evaṃ pramukhā*. We read as a compound: *evaṃpramukhā*.

185. This question seems intrusive, and breaks the flow. It is not found in any other version.

186. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *strīnīrmitā*. We read as two words: *strī nīrmitā*.

187. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *sā*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *sa*. We accept the reading of the manuscript: *sā*.

188. Judging by Tib. and all Chinese versions, which lack any equivalent for it, *gataṃ*, "gone," appears to be a gloss on the meaning of *kṛtaṃ* here. The wordplay in these sentences with *kṛtaṃ* ("put," "made," "done," etc.) and *vikṛtaṃ* ("destroyed," "changed," "modified," etc.) can scarcely be rendered in English.

## Chapter 7: Lineage of the Realized Ones

189. Chapter 7 begins with a complex play on the many layers of meaning in the terms *gati* and *gatiṃgata*, and possibly in the term *gatimant* as well,

by implication. These terms admit of various translations given that they relate to a semantic field which encompasses going and understanding, and includes the manner of going, the way by which or in which one goes, the place to which one goes, the arriving at that place, and so on. We have tried to translate *gatiṃgata* in a way which brings out two of its possible meanings at once (“take the path that ends in mastering”), since only by doing this can one make sense of the logic of §7.1 as a whole. It is instructive to compare the Chinese translations. For *gatiṃgato bhavati buddhadharmēṣu* KJ has *tongda fo dao* 通達佛道, “understand the way of a buddha,” cleverly choosing wording which also conveys the sense of reaching a destination, while Xz has *yu zhufoda dao jiuqing qu* 於諸佛法到究竟趣, “arrive at the final destination in respect of the dharmas of a buddha.” For *agatigamanam gacchati*, KJ has *xing yu feidao* 行於非道, “follow the wrong path,” “take the wrong way,” while Xz opts for *xing yu feiqu* 行於非趣, “go to the wrong destination.” We wonder if *buddhadharma* (plural) here means the practices or actions characteristic of a buddha rather than his attributes or virtues. In either case one can understand Vimalakīrti’s response as a complex paradox opposing *gati* as attainment, expertise, virtue, intelligence, success, practice, and a state of rebirth to not acting, not advancing, unsuccessful action, wrong conduct, not being in any state of rebirth. Yet another play is with the meaning of *gatiṃgata*, literally “gone to understanding,” i.e., “adept,” “expert” (see BHSD. s.v.), so that *agati* can be taken to imply that there is no expertise that can lead to the state of a buddha.

190. That is, the realm of the *pretas*, as ZQ and KJ make clear by using the term *egui* 餓鬼 “hungry ghost.”

191. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *sarvadharmēṣu*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *sarvasatveṣu*. Tib., KJ and Xz clearly presuppose an original *sarvasa(t)tveṣu* instead of *sarvadharmēṣu*, hence the emendation of the Taishō editors. However, we follow the reading of the manuscript as yielding a reasonable interpretation: like *maitrī*, its opposite *dveṣa* (*doṣa*) can be directed at *sattva* or *dharma*, at persons or things.

192. §§7.2–5 are cited in the sūtra anthology *Dasheng xiuxing pusa xingmen zhujing yao ji* 大乘修行菩薩行門諸經要集 (see T 847, 17: 939a5–b12).

193. The seven *vijñānasthiti* correspond to different levels of the world according to Buddhist cosmology, from the plane of humans, the lower gods and the inhabitants of the unfortunate states of rebirth at the bottom (Plane 1) up to the sphere of nothingness at the top (Plane 7). See Lamotte 1962: 289n16 for references (Boin 1976: 177n16).

194. The nine causes of resentment or ill feeling (*āghātavastu*) are the

thoughts that someone has done, is doing, or will do an injury to me (1–3), has done, is doing, or will do an injury to someone else who is dear to me (4–6), or has done, is doing, or will do a kindness to someone else who is hateful to me (7–9).

195. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *adr̥ṣtisatyena*. We emend to *adr̥ṣtasatyena*, which seems required by the context and is supported by Tib., ZQ and Xz. The truths referred to here are the Four Truths of the Noble Ones.

196. The received text is uncertain. We translate the reading of TSG<sup>Ed</sup> *kleśāgāra*, which follows a correction in the manuscript itself: *kleśācagāra*, as in TSG<sup>Text</sup>. But the classical translations do not agree. Tib. *’byung gnas* presupposes *kleśākara*, “the source or mine of the defilements,” but ZQ *chenlao shi* 塵勞事, “dirt and troubles,” and Xz *fannao zhu xing* 煩惱諸行, “the activity of the afflictions,” both suggest an equally suspicious *kleśākāra* or *kleśācāra*, while Kj’s *fannao ni zhong* 煩惱泥中, “in the mire of the afflictions,” might point to *kleśakardama*. Note that although we usually translate *kleśa* as “defilement,” the Chinese equivalent *fannao* 煩惱 carries no implication of soiling, and must therefore be rendered as “affliction.”

197. That is, *nirvāṇa* or final release.

198. This sentence is quoted in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (Bendall’s edition, 6.10–11).

199. The Sanskrit (*yathā sarvakleśās tathā tathāgatānām gotram*) is elliptical (“As all the defilements, so the lineage of the realized ones”), and the Tib. and the Chinese all express the relationship of the two terms as a straight equation (“The defilements are the lineage . . .”).

200. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *°patti°*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *°pati°*. We follow the manuscript in reading *patti*, which normally means infantry, one of the four standard divisions of an army. The reading is supported by Tib. *dpung bu chung*.

201. The forty-two verses which follow are all in the Anuṣṭubh meter. Over half of them—verses 16, 18–41—are quoted in Chapter 18 of the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, in the same order (Bendall’s edition, 324.11–327.4).

202. The *pāda* is hypermetrical. One possible solution, as suggested by Iwamatsu (2008: 27), is to emend to *maitrī karunā ca dhītarau*, with two light (*karu-*) read as one heavy. Another is to emend to *maitrī kṛpā ca dhītarau*, but this may go too far, and in any case yields three iambs.

203. That is, *satya* and *dharma*. ZQ, however, implies *satya* and *dama*, “truthfulness and self-control.” Note that through this verse may run a playful use of personal names as Buddhist technical terms, along the lines of “His wife is Joy, his daughters Amity and Charity,” and so on.

204. This is a nice touch: their home, says Vimalakīrti, like my house

with nothing in it, is indeed a place for pondering what it means to be empty. K<sub>j</sub>, however, suggests something like *grham atyantaśūnyatā* (“their home is absolute emptiness”).

205. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *dharmāḥ saṃgītivāditam*. We emend the text of *pāda d* to *dharmasaṃgīti vāditam*, contra Iwamatsu (2008: 27n22), who emends to *dharmāṇsaṃgīti vāditam*. We accept part of his emendation for *pāda c* and read: *stryāgāraḥ saṃgrahās teṣāṃ*.

206. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *cittam*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *citam*. The Chinese versions may suggest *citram*.

207. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *vimuktijñānaṃ ca*. We read *vimukti jñānaṃ ca*.

208. Here we follow the reading presupposed by the Chinese translations, *dharmavanam mahat* instead of *dharmadhanam mahat* (“the great treasure of the Dharma”), a variant easily accounted for graphically.

209. ZQ, K<sub>j</sub> and Xz all supply the number of liberating meditations (eight), while K<sub>j</sub> and Xz both have “seven purities.” Cf. Lamotte 1962: 294n26 (cf. Boin 1976: 181n26).

210. Reading *abhijñāvāhanaṃ* as a compound adjective qualifying *mahāyānam*, here clearly understood as the Great Vehicle rather than the Great Way. So too K<sub>j</sub> and Xz, translating *vāhanaṃ* as *xiangma*, literally “elephants and horses.” An alternative translation, if we read *abhijñā vāhanaṃ* with TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, is “Their conveyance is the supernormal faculties, the Great Vehicle which cannot be surpassed . . .”

211. The Chinese translations (*huaman* 華鬘 in ZQ and K<sub>j</sub>, *man* 鬘 in Xz) all suggest that the *pāda* must contain a word which means hair ornament or garland of some kind, i.e., “their garlands are their virtuous resolves,” which would be entirely consistent with the sustained conceit of this group of verses. Tib., however, lacks any equivalent for such a word. It is possible that *mālyāny adhyāṣayāḥ śubhāḥ* has changed into *kalyāṇadhyāṣayāḥ śubhāḥ*, but it is not easy to account for this on graphical grounds.

212. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *vimuktirasapānakam*. We read *vimuktirasa pānakam* rather than as a single compound, following the lead of all three Chinese translations. The word *rasa* is ambiguous, meaning both juice and taste. The verse thus alludes to the well-known statement that all the Buddha’s teachings have one taste, that of liberation.

213. Tib., K<sub>j</sub> and Xz suggest *bodhimaṇḍadhvajocchritāḥ*, loosely, “Having raised their standard on the seat of awakening.”

214. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *saṃcintyajātin darśenti*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *saṃcintyajāti darśenti*. With Iwamatsu (2008: 29) we accept the reading of the manuscript: *saṃcintya jātiṃ darśenti* (the *pāda* is a *ma-vipulā*).

215. Kj and Xz (“they make no distinction between themselves and the buddhas”) imply the reading *na . . . kurvanti niścayaṃ*, i.e., “they have no fixed opinions (about themselves and the buddhas).”

216. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *māyādharmavihārīṇaḥ*. In the Śikṣ this *pāda* is less ambiguous: *māyādharmavikrīḍitāḥ*, loosely, “the art of illusion is play for them.” This wording is also reflected in Tib. (*sgyu ma'i chos kyi rnam rtsen pas*) and in Xz.

217. On the idea of the *antarakalpa* or intermediate eon, see Lamotte 1962: 296n37 (cf. Boin 1976: 184n37).

218. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *kṣudhāpipāsām apanetvā*. The meaning is clear, but the line is unmetrical, even if we read *kṣutpīpāsām apanetvā*. We do not see how to fix it, unless, in the light of *kṣudhāpipāsām apanīya* of the Śikṣ citation, we emend to *kṣutpīpāsām apanīya (na-vipulā)*. *Apanīya* is an already attested gerund form, cf. BHSG §35.44. Iwamatsu (2008: 31n134) conjectures a possible *onītvā* or *apanītvā* with two lights read as one heavy (*ma-vipulā* in either case), and this also has some merit.

219. Our translation of *pādas* b and d follows the text of the quotation in Śikṣ: *abhūtaṃ taṃ vinirdīset . . . abhūtaṃ te vidarśayī*. The reading *abhūtaṃ* is more consistent with the Tib. translation (*yang dag ma yin*), although the Chinese versions imply the reading *adbhutaṃ* (miracle, wonder) which we find in the Sanskrit of the manuscript. The discrepancy may result from different resolutions of a Prakritic play on words (cf. PTSD, s.v. *abbhuta*).

220. Our translation of *pāda* b follows the text of the quotation in Śikṣ: *nidhānā bhonti akṣayāḥ*.

221. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *saṃpaśyeha vināyakāḥ*. The Tib. translation of this *pāda* (*'jigs pa med pas 'dir mthong na*) reflects the wording of the Śikṣ citation of this verse: *paśyantīha viśāradaḥ*.

222. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *teṣāṃ anantaśikṣā hi*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *teṣāṃ anantaśikṣā hi*. With Iwamatsu (2008: 34) we emend to *teṣāṃ anantā śikṣā hi*, on the basis of the reading in Śikṣ (*ma-vipulā*).

## Chapter 8: Truth of Non-Duality

223. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *ya evaṃ praveśo*. We read as *ya evaṃpraveśo*.

224. The Chinese versions (at least Kj and Xz) suggest that the duality at issue here is *saṃskṛta* and *asaṃskṛta*, “conditioned” and “unconditioned.” Tib. reads with the Sanskrit (*bde ba / mi bde ba*).



225. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *yaivaṃ budhyanā ayam*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *yaivaṃ budhyanāyam*. We read *yaivaṃbudhyanāyam*, construing *evaṃbudhyanā* as a compound.

226. This difficult passage turns, we assume, on a playful pairing of sounds (*kṣaya*, *akṣaya*, *kṣanika*) and on the idea that entities believed to come into existence and pass away ought to take three moments to do so (arising, duration, perishing), not one. The pair *kṣaya* and *akṣaya* could also be translated as “perishable” and “imperishable,” but our choice of “ending” and “not ending” is determined by our handling of these terms in §§10.16–19, where they are at the center of the discussion, as reflected in the title of that chapter.

227. §8.17 is quoted in the *Sūtrasamuccaya* attributed to Nāgārjuna (Pāsādika 1989: 163–164).

228. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *buddhasya hi dharmah*. We emend to *buddhasya prakṛtir hi dharmah*, the reading presupposed by Tib., ZQ and Xz (and not *buddhaprakṛtiko dharmah*, as conjectured in TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, 87n2!). Kj has no word for nature, but its rendering follows the same logic: *fo ji shi fa fa ji shi zhong* 佛即是法法即是眾, “The Buddha is the Dharma, the Dharma is the Saṅgha.”

229. The sentence is difficult, and we have taken some liberties in the translation to make it less opaque.

230. *Vipaśyanā* here presumably has a dual meaning, based on different senses of the verbal prefix *vi-*, referring to misperception or seeing incorrectly, and to discernment as a meditative practice (i.e., what is usually called “insight meditation”).

231. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *avocat*. We emend to *avocan*.

## Chapter 9: A Phantom Delivers a Meal

232. So too Tib., but the Chinese translations all tell a slightly different story. For instance, ZQ: “In front of the assembly he went upwards and suddenly disappeared, and the whole assembly saw him go.”

233. Taking our cue from Xz, we interpret *sarvagandhasamīhite* as equivalent in sense to *sarvagandhasamīrite*. See BHSD, s.v. *samīhati*.

234. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *sāhasro lokadhātuḥ*. So too Tib., but all Chinese versions give the cosmos of a billion worlds here (*sanqian daqian shijie* 三千大千世界 = *trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātuḥ*).

235. There is evidently a large lacuna in the Sanskrit text, which the Taishō editors attempt to fix in a minimal fashion by adding *licchavi-sahasraiḥ* (see TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, 94n3, but see also xx–xxi for a full reconstruction).

All Chinese versions, including ZQ, indicate there was much more here, and they are consistent with the Tibetan, a translation of which we provide here within brackets. It is highly likely that a whole line—or even two—was skipped by a scribe working on a previous copy of the Sanskrit text.

236. Literally “purify the offering.” The same idea—that holy persons purify donations given to them with their own virtue and thus make them worthwhile for the donors—is invoked in §§3.18 and 11.1.

237. §9.13 is quoted in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (Bendall’s edition, 269.13–270.3).

238. That is, of all the ten paths of demeritorious conduct just listed.

239. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *ayaṃ yoga idaṃ pradhānam*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *ayaṃ yogaḥ idaṃ pradhānam*. There are some problems with the text here, and the meaning of yoga in this context is not altogether clear. The whole section appears to have been amplified considerably over time, growing from a simple reference to rebirth in the hells and the animal and preta realms and to the consequences of bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct in ZQ to the long list we see here, and find also in Tib. and Xz.

240. Our translation removes the syntactic incongruity of the first two items with those that follow, since in the Sanskrit they appear in the form of statements of intent, with a puzzling switch from first to third person: “I should benefit all living beings, but should not seek any benefit from them; He should endure the suffering of all living beings and he should give away his entire stock of merit to all living beings.” In this respect we follow the example of Kj.

241. One would expect “all living beings” rather than “all bodhi-sattvas.” The latter reading is what we find in Skt., Tib., ZQ and Kj, so it is well attested, but the former is in line with the reading of Xz and the brief reference to this passage in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (Bendall’s edition, 153.20–22), which quotes the words *sarvasatveṣu śāstrprema*. Note that both Kj and Xz make it clear that *śāstr* is not just any teacher, but the Buddha himself. Śāntideva’s accompanying comment has previously been misidentified as a quotation from the sūtra; see, e.g., Lamotte 1962: 1n1 (cf. Boin 1976: xxv, n1); the translation Lamotte gives needs to be reconsidered in more than one respect.

## Chapter 10: Ending and Not Ending

242. As all Chinese translations make clear, *dharmyaṃ kathayā* in this context does not mean “with a sermon on the Dharma”—that comes later—but refers to the customary words of salutation and enquiry after

one's visitors' health appropriate to the occasion.

243. §10.6 is quoted, with some sentences omitted, in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (Bendall's edition, 270.4–7), at least in the Sanskrit version of that work. Like the immediately preceding citations from §§6.13 and 9.13, it does not appear in the Tibetan and Chinese translations of the Śikṣ.

244. The repetition of the words *buddhakṣetrāṇi yeṣu* at this point in the manuscript (see TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, 101n6) is evidence of the omission of additional items here, items which we find in Tib. and all the Chinese versions, viz., clothing, food, gardens, and buildings. However, in K<sub>j</sub> these items come before the mention of the buddha's body, while in the other versions they come after it. We suspect that the original order of our Sanskrit version matched what we find in K<sub>j</sub>.

245. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *ta pa pariśuddhāni*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *tādṛśāni pariśuddhāni*. We emend to *tathā pariśuddhāni*.

246. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *yatra yatra*. Presuming this to be dittography, we emend to *yatra*.

247. We have supplied this “not.” The Sanskrit text, like Tib., actually says “he does not sink into despondency or dejection when buddha-domains are endowed (or: in buddha-domains which are endowed) with magnificent panoplies of every good quality.” However, this makes little sense, in addition to which all Chinese versions agree in stating that the bodhisattva is not elated when he sees (so K<sub>j</sub> and X<sub>z</sub>; ZQ “obtains,” perhaps meaning “reaches, finds himself in”) a pure or magnificent buddha-domain, and he is not sad or downcast when he sees (ZQ “obtains”) one that is impure or lacking in good qualities. While noting that the Sanskrit text (and the Tibetan) reverses this order of positive and negative responses, we still cannot see how it came to read as it does, and are unable to propose a satisfactory emendation, unless perhaps we conjecture *sarvodāravayūhaguṇāsamanvāgateṣu*.

248. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *kṛṣyati*, but *utkṛṣyate* would be a preferable reading, and we have translated accordingly.

249. The text plays here on the meaning of *samyak* in *samyaksam-buddha* (perfectly awakened ~ awakened in the same way) and on one possible reading of *tathā* in *tathāgata* (“gone the same way [as others have]”). At first sight, §§10.12 and 10.13 seem to contradict each other. Perhaps this contradiction is resolved if we understand the “difference in physical bodies” in §10.12 to refer to their plurality: perfect awakening appears in multiple forms, but those forms are always essentially the same form, single in its perfection, but occupying different spaces and times.

250. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: °*dhāraṇī*°. We emend to °*dhāraṇī*°, on the basis of Tib. and the Chinese versions and in light of the same compound in §10.14. The scribe appears to have made a number of mistakes at this point in the text. Accordingly, we do not translate the words marked in TSG<sup>Ed</sup> as possibly redundant.

251. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *udyānanirmāṇa*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *udyānavimāna*. This emendation is clearly inspired by the renditions of Kj and Xz. We find it paleographically problematic even though it offers the most plausible interpretation, and thus we follow it in our translation, for want of a better solution. Tib. *skyed mos tshal dang mya ngan las 'das pa lta bur* presupposes the reading *udyānanirvāṇa*, which we find problematic from the point of view of sense.

252. This term (*cittaśūratayā*) could go equally well with the following item, as in Tib. and perhaps Xz (and so it is taken in TSG<sup>Ed</sup>). Here we follow ZQ and Kj.

253. The text presents difficulties here, but we read with TSG<sup>Ed</sup>. Tib. suggests a different wording without *dharmaparyeṣṭyai*: “Searching for knowledge because one is without pride; having few desires and being perfectly content in order to receive the Dharma.”

254. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *caturapramāṇotpādanatāyai*. Following the lead of Tib., we emend to *caturapramāṇotpādanatayā*, thinking that an instrumental makes more sense than a dative here, as in the previous item.

255. Kj and Xz also suggest a dative here, which we might translate as “in order to draw them into the community of bodhisattvas.”

256. Here too a dative might be better: “being vigilant so that all of one’s good qualities do not perish.”

257. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *nītārtho buddhavaṃśe*. We emend to *nītārthe buddhavaṃśe*.

258. This is a guess at the meaning of *yathāpītvā-*, of which we are uncertain.

## Chapter 11: Abhirati Brought into Sāhā

259. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *avedanām*. We emend to *avedanaṃ*.

260. There may be a double meaning here, taking the *vi* of *vijñāna* as privative: “nor established by the lack of ordinary understanding.”

261. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *niṣkalo*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *niṣkalaḥ* (literally “without parts”), but in light of Tib. *mi rtog pa* we tentatively emend to *niṣkalpo* as more consistent with the context.

262. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *kutas tvam cyutvehopapanna iti*. We emend to *kutas tavaivam bhavati kutas tvam cyutvehopapanna iti*, on the basis of Tib. *ci'i phyir khyod 'di snyam du khyod ga las shi 'phos te 'dir skyes snyam du sems*, assuming the omission of *tavaivam bhavati kutas* as a result of scribal error of the type *saut du même au même*.

263. The Sanskrit text as it stands (*cyutir iti . . . abhisamskāralakṣaṇa-padam etat*) is hardly satisfactory, when considered in the light of the context and the testimony of all three Chinese versions. Our translation assumes the omission of some nominal form of the verbal root  $\sqrt{kṣi}$  (e.g., *kṣa*, *kṣapaṇa*, *kṣaya*) as suggested by the use of *kṣapayati* in the next sentence, and it may also be possible that the use of the term *lakṣaṇa*, attested by Kj, Xz and Tib. but not found in ZQ, results from some confusion with this form. Be that as it may, we find the emendation of TSG<sup>Ed</sup> (*abhisamskāralakṣaṇalakṣaṇapadam*) not entirely convincing, even though it is based on similar considerations (see TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, 111n3).

264. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *sarvan tamo payānti*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *sarvaṃ tamo 'payānti*. We emend to *sarvaṃ tamo 'payāti*.

265. The three presumably form a single staircase with three parallel runs of stairs, each made of a different precious substance—typically gold, silver and beryl—as found in textual and iconographical depictions of the miracle at Sāṃkāśya and the descent of the Buddha from Trayastrimśa.

266. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *kriyāmahe*, but, as our colleague Michael Hahn first noticed, the manuscript actually reads *hriyāmahe*. In this script *kri* and *hri* are easily confused. The text is to be corrected in four places (*kriyāmahe* to *hriyāmahe* three times, *kriyamāṇānām* to *hriyamāṇānām* once). Note incidentally that the exalted one being addressed here must be Akṣobhya.

267. Here we follow the lead of the Tib. and the suggestion in TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, 114n7), reading *adhimucya* instead of *adhimokṣyanti*, since this verb has already appeared at the beginning of the sequence (in the form *adhimokṣyante*). We also take *adhimucya* to stand for the whole sequence of actions from *adhimokṣyante* to *paravāpsyanti*, i.e., the typical set of operations which one performs on texts for oneself, which are in a sense personal and individual. It is after completing these activities that one turns to more public activity, much of which relates to disseminating the text to other people.

268. TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *ito dharmaparyāyād antaśaś catuṣpadikām api gāthām saṃvaram api*. The use of *saṃvara* here is unusual, and initially baffled us. The term is not reflected in any of the Chinese translations, although Tib. *tshig bzhi pa'i tshigs su bcad pa gcig tsam dang* | *sdom pa'i tshig tsam yang* attests it, understanding *saṃvara* to mean something like “summary words” or “keywords,” cf. *uddāna*, which is often rendered in Tib. as

*sdom tshig*. However, a parallel is found in the Kashgar Manuscript of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (SP), where the sequence *antamaśaikagāthām api antamaśaikagāthāsaṃvaram api ito dharmaparyāyā[t]* appears on folio 212a5–6 (see Hirofumi Toda, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra: Central Asian Manuscripts Romanized Text*, 2nd ed., [Tokushima: Kyōiku Shuppan Center, 1983], p. 110). We take it here to imply either a summary of a single verse, that is, its restatement in a few words (*saṃvara* as contraction?), or a single line from it, one of its *pādas* (*saṃvara* as selection?). Apparently puzzled by the term, Toda proposes the deletion of °*saṃ*° in a critical edition, but in the light of its occurrence in the VkN, this emendation is no longer necessary. It is interesting that this use of *saṃvara* does not appear at all in the later Nepalese recension of the SP, but it is reflected in Kumārajīva's Chinese translation of a version of the Indic text that must have read at this point like the Kashgar Manuscript: *naizhi yiji yiju* 乃至一偈一句, “as much as one verse or one line of verse” (T 262, 9: 30c5); *yiju* 一句 may also be translated as “one phrase.” Our rendition follows Kumārajīva's lead.

269. That is, of their eventual attainment of the full awakening of a buddha. It is possible that something has dropped out of the text here, and that there is a different way of linking the relative and correlative clauses at the end of the paragraph. According to the Chinese versions, those who teach a single *gāthā* receive an actual prediction to full awakening as a reward for their devotion (so Kj and, less clearly, ZQ). Xz is phrased in terms of the attainment of *avaivartika* status for those who teach the single *gāthā*, with the prediction to full awakening then extended to those who respond to the teaching in the appropriate fashion, with belief, acceptance, etc.

## Chapter 12: Conclusion and Entrustment

270. The Tib. title of *le'u* 12 is *sngon gyi sbyor ba dang dam pa'i chos gtad pa* (“Previous connection or linkage [i.e., tale of a previous life, Skt. *pūrvayoga*] and entrusting of the True Dharma”), while in all Chinese versions this chapter is divided into two, 13 (ZQ, Kj and Xz: “The Offering of the Dharma”) and 14 (ZQ: “Entrustment to Maitreya”; Kj and Xz: “Entrustment”).

271. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: °*dharmanayapraveśaśrutapūvo*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: °*dharmanaya-praveśaśrutapūrvo*. We emend to °*dharmanayapraveśaḥ śrutapūrvo*. Tib. *rnam par sprul pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i tshul la 'jug pa* suggests *acintyavikurvitanayapraveśa* rather than *acintyavimokṣavikurvita dharmanayapraveśa*. The Chinese translations are also variable, for which see Lamotte 1962: 370n1 (cf. Boin 1976: 252n1). Elsewhere in the VkN

*acintyavimokṣa*, “Inconceivable State of Freedom,” appears to be the core term. Cf. also §12.23 below.

272. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *dhārmīraṃkṣāvaraṇaguptīm*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *dhārmikīm rakṣāvaraṇaguptīm*. We emend more conservatively to *dhārmīm rakṣāvaraṇaguptīm*, on the grounds that the *anusvāra* intended for *rmī* has simply been written over the following letter *ra* by mistake.

273. The order of terms here follows the “waxing syllable principle” (shorter words before longer), which applies to English just as much as it does to Sanskrit (ladies before gentlemen but men before women, cf. *kula-putra* before *kuladuhitr*, but *strī* before *puruṣa*).

274. The sequence of actions in the Sanskrit seems somewhat unusual, in mentioning copying twice. It is possible that *pustakalikhitam api karīṣyanti* should be *pustakalikhitam api satkarīṣyanti*, “pay homage to it as a written book.” (This is certainly the reading implied by K<sub>j</sub> and X<sub>z</sub>.) We see no need to change all the Sanskrit verbs from plural to singular here, despite the syntactical inconsistency, although we translate them in the singular anyway.

275. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *prativedayā*[line break from fol. 72a3 to a4]*taḥ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *prativedaya | ataḥ* (without note). We emend to *prativedayāmi te | ataḥ*, assuming that the scribe’s concentration lapsed at the end of the line.

276. That is, the *bodhisattvapiṭaka*, a term used to refer to the full collection of Mahāyāna sūtras, but not precisely defined in terms of the number of texts included or their identity.

277. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *asaṃgrhītagrahāṇām*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *saṃgrhītagrahāṇām*. We emend to *susaṃgrhītasamgrahāṇām* on the basis of the Chinese versions, whose testimony is very clear. Note that Tib. ‘*dzin pa rnams yongs su bzung ba* does not support a negative here.

278. Tib. adds two more terms here: *ma skyes pa dang | ma byung ba dang ldan pa* (*ajātānām anutpannānām?*), “in which there is no birth and no arising.” These do not appear in ZQ and K<sub>j</sub>, but X<sub>z</sub> also has an extra term.

279. Tib. has a longer list of non-human beings, but all Chinese versions agree more or less with Skt.

280. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *°pratisaṃcitāvatārāṇām*. We emend to *°pratisaṃvidāvatārāṇām*. Cf. TSG<sup>Ed</sup>, 120n3.

281. Tib. has a much longer item here: “which dismay those who are mean, immoral, malicious, lazy, negligent and stupid.” ZQ and K<sub>j</sub> agree with the Skt. text, X<sub>z</sub> with Tib.

282. The term *saddharmasamgrahaḥ* looks intrusive (TSG<sup>Text</sup> actually reads *sarddharmasamgrahaḥ*), but Tib. has it (*dam pa’i chos kun sdud pa*).

ZQ and Kj, however, both suggest something like *saddharmasaṃgrahāya*, “in order to embrace the true dharma.”

283. This item (*na grāhyābhiniviṣṭatā*) may be a later addition. No Chinese version appears to have it.

284. Both Tib. and Xz appear to construe *ālaya* here in its later, more technical sense as “storehouse consciousness.” This is not the case in ZQ or Kj. Cf. BHSD, s.v. *ālaya* for the compound *ālayasamudghāta*.

285. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *avekṣya te*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *avekṣyate*. Emend to *avekṣate* or read *avekṣya*, deleting *te*?

286. Tib. adds “(even) after he has attained final release” (*tathāgatasya parinirvṛtasya*). So too all Chinese versions.

287. Tib. ten billion. All Chinese versions agree with Skt.

288. For the different take on the sequence in the Tib. version and for the general conception of the buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa, see Lamotte 1962: 385n29 (cf. Boin 1976: 266n29).

289. Chapter 14 begins at this point in all three Chinese versions.

290. Alternatively, “incalculable millions of aeons,” taking *asaṃkhyeya* in a less technical sense, which is how it is interpreted in Tib., ZQ, and Xz. Kj appears to read it in both senses.

291. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *varamē kāle*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *paścime kāle*. We emend more conservatively to *caramē kāle*, since confusion of *ca* and *va* is common.

292. TSG<sup>Text</sup> and TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *cāvaropitakuśalā*. We emend to *cāvaropitakuśalamūlā*, in line with Tib., ZQ and Xz.

293. The next three paragraphs §§12.17–19 are cited in the *Sūtrasamuccaya* (SūS) attributed to Nāgārjuna, see Pāsādika’s edition, 187–188.

294. Skt. *vicitra* has a variety of meanings, many of which may be in play here: different, diverse, wonderful, surprising, beautiful, colorful. All three Chinese versions convey quite clearly the sense of literary ornamentation and beautiful language.

295. TSG<sup>Text</sup>: *rūpalepaṃ*; TSG<sup>Ed</sup>: *arūpalepaṃ*. We translate according to the edition, but remain unsure whether a different reading, e.g., *anupalepaṃ*, might be more appropriate and correspond better to Tib. *ma gos pa*.

296. Here the Sanskrit text presents a number of problems which are so complicated that an unusually long note is necessary to deal with them. It reads *yamakavyatyastanihārapadapuṭaprabhedam*. In §12.23 below



one of the titles of the sūtra as a whole is given as *yamakapuṭavyatyastanihāram*, and we take the longer compound here in §12.17 to be a reference to this title, even though in the later passage the title is a little shorter, with a different sequence of terms: *padapuṭaprabhedam* drops out, but *puṭa* is inserted between *yamaka* and *vyatyasta*. (In both cases we understand *nihāra* as *nirhāra*.) ZQ, KJ and Xz lack identifiable equivalents altogether, both in this section and at §12.23, suggesting that this title had not yet been added to the recensions of the text they reflect. As to when it was incorporated in the sūtra, we cannot say, but it is significant that it does appear in the citation of §§12.17–19 in the SūS. In the Tibetan version of that work (Pāsādika 1989: 187) we find the rendition *phrugs dang snrel zhi'i rgyud kyī tshig dang rim pa rab tu dbye ba*, which is virtually identical to that of the canonical translation of the VκN (see below), no doubt reflecting the fact that the Tibetan translators of the SūS consulted that translation when they carried out their work. This would undercut any historical conclusions we might draw—the Tibetan version of the SūS being a contaminated witness—were it not for the fact that in the Chinese translation of the SūS (T 1635, made by Dharmarakṣa et al. during the period 1018–1058) we also find, in its citation of §12.17, an equivalent: *pushe zhongzhong wen yi chabie zhi men* 普攝種種文義差別之門 (roughly: the teaching which provides a comprehensive collection of differences between various words and meanings). From this we can then conclude that the author of the SūS, whoever he was, did indeed know a recension of the VκN which had already incorporated something resembling this title by his time (5th or 6th century?).

Turning now to the meaning, neither compound is easy, but Lamotte (1962: 33–37; cf. Boin 1976: liv–lx) provides an extremely helpful discussion which demonstrates that the text is referring to some of the linguistic and rhetorical devices which Mahāyāna sūtras use to overturn our usual patterns of thought. This is immediately suggested by the fact that *yamaka* (literally “pair”) also refers to a literary figure of speech (repetition of the same words with a different meaning, play on words, pun, paranomasia, etc.); for a full treatment of the many types of *yamaka* see, e.g., Gerow 1971: 223–238. This may underlie Lamotte’s translation of the Tibetan as “Production de (sons) couplés et inversés” (Boin: “Production of paired and inverted [sounds]”), but such a rendering strikes us as both opaque and insipid. Thurman, faced with the same Tibetan text, came up with “Reconciliation of Dichotomies,” but while this sounds more plausible, it is hard to see how he gets the idea of reconciliation from the Tibetan.

Indeed, in the absence of any Chinese equivalents, only the Tibetan text can help us, but it is not much less problematic than the Sanskrit, and inevitably we are drawn into the rather shaky exercise of interpreting each

in the light of the other. For *yamakavyatyastanihārapadapuṭaprabhedam* Tib. has *phrugs pa dang | snrel zhi'i rgyud kyi tshig dang | rim pa rab tu dbye ba* (= separating/analyzing the words and the order of the sequence of pairs and inversions?), while it renders *yamakapuṭavyatyastanihāram* as *phrugs su sbyar ba snrel zhir mngon par bsgrubs pa*, which we might loosely render as “causing things that are connected in pairs to be inverted.” The word *snrel zhi* here (disorder, confusion, topsy-turvy, crosswise, sloping, oblique) clearly renders Skt. *vyatyasta*, “inverted,” which can also mean “perverse” or “preposterous.” Skt. *yamaka* is rendered literally by *phrugs*, “pair,” and Skt. *puṭa* presumably by *rim pa* (series, succession, order) in §12.17 and by *sbyar ba* (joined, connected) in §12.23. What is especially revealing in Tib. is that although in §12.17 it appears to treat *yamakavyatyasta* as a *dvandva* or co-ordinative compound (A and B), in §12.23 its use of the terminative *snrel zhir* without a preceding *dang* implies a different understanding (A as B). This is in our view a clue to the correct understanding of the compound in both passages, which must in any case accord with the actual content of the VkN. This is a problem with Lamotte’s rendering, which assumes that *yamakavyatyasta* is a *dvandva*, and with Thurman’s.

Our contention is that *yamaka* does not here have its technical sense, but does indeed mean pair, in this case pairs of sentences, which are in some way *vyatyasta*, inverted, contrary, opposed to each other. Thus we arrive at “pairs of inversions,” i.e., pairs of sentences which are opposed to each other, pairs of contradictory statements. But problems remain. The word *puṭa* is especially challenging, since its primary sense is “pocket,” “hollow,” “slit,” or “cavity.” Taking our cue from the Tibetan, however, here we assume the sense here is of two things placed in close contact with each other, so as to form a unity, fold, a wrapping, a vessel. A *puṭikā*, for instance, is a bivalve shell. We note also the compounds *puṭabhid* and *puṭabhedaka*, which mean “burst or cleft asunder” (see MW, s.vv. *puṭ*, *puṭa*, *puṭaka*). Thus we understand *yamakapuṭa* to mean something like “conjunct or closely connected pairs” and *padapuṭaprabhedam* as “dividing/analysing closely linked words.” In the latter case it is interesting to note that *puṭabhedam* also means “parting of the eyelids,” which might generate a second meaning: “having words which are eye-opening.”

Hence we arrive at the somewhat freer translation for the first occurrence of (or allusion to) the title in §12.17 as “[that] which takes apart words which go together by producing pairs of contradictory statements,” and render its second occurrence at §12.23 as “the production of matching pairs of contradictory statements.” Although these renderings are still to some extent tentative, a glance at certain sections of the VkN reveals that they are consistent with the sūtra’s content. For example, §7.1 contains the following:

He takes the path of rebirth in the hells, and yet he is free of all stain and defilement. He takes the path of rebirth as an animal, and yet he is free of the darkness of ignorance. He takes the path of rebirth as an asura, and yet he is free of conceit, arrogance and pride. He takes the path of rebirth in the realm of Yama, and yet he has acquired all the provisions of merit and knowledge. He takes the path of rebirth in the realm of pure bodily form and in the even higher realms where there is no movement, and yet he does not take those realms as his goal. He takes the path of passion, and yet he remains free of passion for any object of sensual enjoyment. He takes the path of hatred, and yet he is not averse to any thing whatsoever. He takes the path of delusion, and yet his mind approaches all things with insight and deep reflection. He takes the path of stinginess, and yet he gives away everything, his property and his own person alike, with complete disregard for life and limb. He takes the path of the immoral, and yet he remains firm in his practice of all forms of moral conduct, of all the precepts, of the stricter ascetic practices and total abstinence, seeing danger in even the slightest cause for reproach. He takes the path of malice, harshness and anger, and yet he remains in a constant state of love, his thoughts absolutely free of malice . . .

From this example and many others (see also §§2.3–2.6; 3.3; 3.13; 3.16; 3.18; 4.20; 10.18–10.19, etc.) we can see that it is not that sounds are paired and inverted, *pace* Lamotte. Thurman's reconciliation of dichotomies comes closer to the general sense, although the dichotomies do not disappear; the tension between them remains, opening up a potent and productive realm of paradox for the bodhisattva to navigate. According to §4.20, it is that very realm which is the bodhisattva's proper domain or field of action (*gocara*).

Lamotte (1962: 33–34; cf. Boin 1976: lvi–lvii; cf. also *Traité* III, Lamotte 1970: 1627–1628) also draws attention to the occurrence of the epithet *yamakavyatyastāhārakuśalāḥ* in a list of unique qualities of a bodhisattva given in the *Ratnameghasūtra* and reproduced in the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, where it is translated *zung snrel zhi'i rgyud la mkhas pa rnams* (= those who are skilled in the inverted ordering of pairs or skilled in the relating of pairs and their inversions?). In light of the considerations outlined above we suggest the Sanskrit means “skilled in the production or uttering of pairs of inversions,” i.e., of pairs of contradictory statements, or paradoxical pairs of statements. Interestingly, a similar expression occurs in

the Vkn, in §4.1 where Mañjuśrī describes Vimalakīrti as *vyastasamastavacananirhārakuśaḥ* (Tib. *tshig snrel zhi dang rdzogs pa'i tshig bsgrub pa la mkhas pa*). Once again, this finds no counterpart in any of the Chinese translations, even Xz. We translate it as “adept at expressing himself with both paradoxical and perfectly straightforward statements.”

Finally, to return to the overall message of this section, we see that while novice bodhisattvas have faith in the unusual language of Mahāyāna sūtras, veteran bodhisattvas actually understand it, despite the challenges it presents.

297. Both ZQ and Xz have four reasons here, dividing each item in the Sanskrit text into two. Kj agrees with Skt. & Tib.

298. In this section Xz is alone in giving four reasons rather than two.

299. The verb forms here are all plural, and we translate them as such, but the Tib. and all Chinese versions use the singular, presumably understanding a majestic plural (*pluralis maiestatis*).

300. The verb *ārocayati* can also mean “announce,” so one could translate “and we shall also communicate it to them,” but here we are guided by the interpretation of ZQ and Tib. and the use of *rocayati* in §12.20. The literal meaning of *ārocayati*, “to cause to shine,” calls to mind the English expression “to take a shine to.” Before one can do anything with a new religious teaching (learn it, memorize it, etc.), one must first have a positive reaction to it.

301. Or “performed,” “practised,” as *pracariṣyanti* is understood by Tib. and ZQ.

302. We translate Sanskrit *vāhana* in the light of its technical sense in Indian religious iconography, but it may mean simply “chariot” here. Lamotte’s “nos jouvenceaux” (Sara Boin: “our youths”) and Thurman’s “young warriors” come from a simple misreading of *bzhon pa* (vehicle) as *gzhon pa* (youth) at some point in the transmission of the Tibetan text.

303. As is the case with the variant form of this title in §12.17, there is no counterpart in any of the Chinese versions, which give only the first and the third titles at this point. On the many problems of interpretation which this title raises, see our lengthy note 296 above.

304. One would expect *acintyavimokṣaparivarta*, and indeed Tib. and the Chinese translations suggest that *dharma* here is intrusive. Be that as it may, in the compound as we find it the word *acintya* could refer to either *dharma* or *vimokṣa*, and we have translated in such a way as to preserve the ambiguity.

305. At this point Tib. inserts “those bodhisattvas” (*byang chub sems*

*dpa' de dag dang*). Bodhisattvas are also mentioned in ZQ and Xz, but not in Kj.

306. That is, mid-August to mid-September.

## Translators

Luis Gómez (1943–2017), esteemed scholar of Buddhism, had a long career in Buddhist Studies and translation. From 1973 to 2009 he taught at the University of Michigan, where he founded the PhD program in Buddhist Studies and trained many scholars now prominent in the field. Later, as academic director of the Mangalam Research Center for Buddhist Languages, he helped establish the Buddhist Translators Workbench to translate Sanskrit terms into English. He also held the position of Profesor Investigador at El Colegio de México. Among his many influential works are definitive studies on the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* sūtras, published as *The Land of Bliss: The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light*, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, including an English translation in the *Norton Anthology of World Religions*, and Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*.

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