



VIMALAKIRTI'S ADVICE

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Vimalakirti's Advice:
A Buddhist Scripture

Translated from the original Sanskrit
By Thomas Cleary

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Glossary

Translator's introduction

Vimalakirti's Advice is one of the most popular scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism. Although surviving in Chinese and Tibetan translations, the original Sanskrit scripture was thought to be lost, like many such texts, until it was rediscovered in the late twentieth century.

This scripture takes the form of a drama, partly surreal, largely in dialogue. The central figure, an enlightened man named Vimalakirti, is identified as a Licchavi, a citizen of the Licchavi kingdom in the time of Gautama Buddha. This tag is repeated consistently, to emphasize the point that Vimalakirti is a layman and a householder, who while in the world is not of it. One of the settings of the play is Vimalakirti's house in the great city of Vaisali, the capital of the Licchavis; another is a certain park, one of hundreds in Vaisali, where the Buddha sometimes sojourned.

The Advice of Vimalakirti represents Vimalakirti and Gautama Buddha addressing a very diverse audience, including members of other peoples, cultures, and religions, as well as individuals immersed in assorted levels of altered states of consciousness conventionally called divine. Particularly prominent, as the drama unfolds, are the Buddhist saints known as disciples, and those known as bodhisattvas.

The disciples are also called listeners or hearers, referred to as elders, and represented by names of major disciples of the historical Buddha who attained the peace of nirvana. The bodhisattvas are more diverse, and seek comprehensive knowledge. One of the principal characters of the play is the bodhisattva symbolic of insight and knowledge, whose name is Manjusri. In this scripture, Manjusri is consistently called the perpetual youth, representing the ever-freshness of immediate insight and the endless progress of knowledge.

The Advice of Vimalakirti deconstructs dogmatic adherence to doctrines and automatic application of practices, yet without denying their specific applications according to individual need, using control of perception and projection to expand awareness and refine attention to complexity of context. It is intentionally disturbing at times to elicit reactions, reveal assumptions and habits of thought, and promote self-understanding.

The Great Vehicle Scripture called the Advice of the Noble Vimalakirti

1. Purification of Buddha-fields

Honor to all past, present, and future Buddhas, bodhisattvas, noble disciples, and individual illuminates.

Thus have I heard: one time the Buddha was sojourning in Vaisali, in Amrapali's Grove, with a group of eight thousand great mendicants, all of them saints who had ended impulse, were free of afflictions, had attained self-mastery, with thoroughly liberated minds, with thoroughly liberated insight, great dragons who had done what was to be done, who had done their work, who had laid down their burden, who had attained their own aim, who had ended bondage to existence, with minds thoroughly liberated by appropriate instruction, who had attained consummate power over all consciousness.

He was also in the company of thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas recognized for higher knowledge, conversant with the preparations for spiritual knowledge, supported by the empowerment of Buddhas, protectors of the city of truth, with a thorough grasp of true principles, roaring the lion's roar resounding throughout the ten directions, good friends to all beings unasked, perpetuating the lineage of the Three Treasures, adversaries of hidden demons, not overcome by the arguments of any others, accomplished in mindfulness, discernment, awareness, concentration, mental mastery, and eloquence, free of all obstruction and compulsion, having reached unhindered liberation, with inalienable brilliance, accomplished in the highest attainments of giving, self-restraint, control, control of the senses, integrity, patience, diligence, meditation, insight, skill in means, vowing, power, and knowledge, turning the wheel of teaching that never turns back, stamped with the seal of the marks of Buddhas, skilled in the knowledge of the faculties of all beings, proceeding with expertise unsurpassed in all societies, having accumulated great stores of virtue and knowledge, bodies adorned with all the signs and evidences of greatness, devoid of adornment though having the finest of forms, with reputations as lofty as the peak of Mount Sumeru, who had indestructible faith in the enlightened, the truth, and the community with will as firm as diamond, who could cause the rain of ambrosia to shower by a ray of light from the jewel of the teaching, who could pronounce the languages of all people perfectly, who completely cut off the habits of views of annihilation and eternity on realizing the profound truth of interdependent occurrence, roaring with voices like fearless lions, roaring the thunder of the great clouds of teaching,

having gone beyond sameness and difference, great caravan leaders with the stores of insight and virtue of the treasure of the teaching, experienced in the guidance of the teaching whose conclusion is peaceful and subtle and which is characteristically hard to see and hard to penetrate, devoted to the sphere of knowledge entering into the comings and goings of all people and people's ways of thinking, enthroned in the enlightened knowledge equal to the peerless, having become familiar with the ten powers, expertise, and unique qualities of Buddhas by determination, purposely showing birth in states of being after having gotten out of the pit of fear of falling into all miserable states of calamity and terror, knowing the formulas for the guidance of all people, aware of the ills of afflictions of all people, skillfully employed in the preparation of appropriate teaching-medicines, with access to an endless mine of virtues, had skillfully adorned endless Buddha-fields with an array of virtues, with effective seeing and hearing, never acting in vain. Even if their virtues were described for ten million million hundreds of thousands of immeasurable eons, an end to their multitude of virtues could never be found. They included the likes of the bodhisattvas named Samadarsin, Sama-asamadarsin, Samadhivikurvitaraja, Dharmesvara, Dharmaketu, Prabhaketu, Prabhavyuha, Ratnavyuha, Mahavyuha, Pratibhanakuta, Ratnakuta, Ratnapani, Ratnamudrahasta, Nityapralambahasta, Nityoksiptahasta, Nityatapas, Nityanandahasendriya, Pramodyaraja, Devaraja, Pranidhanavyasananuprapta, Pratisamvidprasadanaprapta, Gaganaganja, Ratnapradipadhara, Ratnavira, Ratnanandi, Ratnasri, Candrajala, Jaliniprabha, Anupalabdhidhyana, Prajnakuta, Ratnamukta, Marahantr, Vidyuddeva, Vikurvanaraja, Nimittakutasamatikranta, Sinhagarjita-abhyavaghosanasvara, Giryagrasamuddhataraja, Gandhahasti, Gandhakunjaranaga, Nityodyukta, Aniksiptadhura, Pramati, Sundarajata, Padmasrigarbha, Padmavyuha, Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, Brahmajalaka, Ratnasvetasana, Marajit, Samaksetralamkara, Maniratnacchatra, Manicuda, Maitreya, and Manjusri as a perpetual youth; he was with thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas such as these.

Ten thousand Brahmas such as Sikhin from a world of four continents called Sorrowless also came to see the Blessed One, pay respects, attend, and listen to the teaching; they too gathered at this congregation. Twelve thousand Sakras, mighty gods, also came from various quadruple continents; they too gathered at this congregation. Likewise, moreover, Brahma, known as the possessor of great power among possessors of great power, and Sakra too, as well as world guardians, deities, rainmakers, spirits, celestial musicians, titans, rocs, minotaurs, and serpents were also present, assembled in that

congregation. And the four groups as well—mendicants male and female and lay folk male and female—were likewise assembled there.

Then the Blessed One, sitting on a lion seat filled with beauty, surrounded and honored by the congregation of many hundreds of thousands, expounded the teaching, standing out over the whole congregation as Sumeru, king of mountains, towers over the ocean, shining, blazing, radiant on the lion seat filled with beauty.

After that, a Licchavi youth, Ratnakara, a bodhisattva, giving a parasol of seven treasures to five hundred Licchavi youths, went out of the metropolis of Vaisali to Amrapali's Grove where the Blessed One was. Approaching, they bowed their heads to the Blessed One's feet, circled the Blessed One seven times to the right, and covered the Blessed One with the parasols they were holding; having provided protection, they stood to one side.

Those precious parasols that had been presented immediately became one by the power of Buddha, and the whole billion-world universe appeared to be covered by that parasol. And the extent of the billion-world universe was visible within that great precious parasol. All the mountains in the billion-world universe were there, including Sumeru, king of mountains—the Snowy Mountains, the Orange Mountains, Intoxicating with Fragrance, Jewel Mountain, Black Mountain, Circle Mountains, Great Circle Mountains—all were visible inside the great precious parasol.

All the waters in this billion-world universe—oceans, lakes, ponds, lotus pools, rivers, streams, reservoirs, mountain streams—all that too was visible inside the great precious parasol.

The courses of all the suns and moons in this billion world universe, as well as the constellations of stars, celestial mansions and the strongholds of rainmakers, the abodes of spirits, heavenly singers, rocs, minotaurs, and serpents, the palaces of the four great kings, villages, cities, towns, nations, and metropolises, were also all reflected in this one great precious parasol.

All the instruction of Buddhas throughout the world was also broadcast in sound emitted from the one great precious parasol.

Now, having seen such a great miracle of the Blessed One, all those groups marveled. Pleased, enraptured, transported, delighted, gratified

and cheerful, they bowed to the Realized One and stood looking upon him with unblinking eyes.

Then the Licchavi youth Ratnakara, having witnessed this great miracle of the Blessed One, knelt on his right knee, joined his hands in a gesture of supplication and respect toward the Blessed One, and praised the Blessed One with these verses:

*Large eyes clear and bright, like lotus petals,
With pure intention, completely calm, having attained the supreme,
With an accumulation of good actions, an immeasurable ocean of virtue,
Honor to you, o ascetic devoted to the path of peace.*

*Behold the act of power of the most eminent of persons;
All the best adorned fields of the Blissful One are seen.*

*Your teaching talks, going to the noble deathless state,
Are all seen here in the vault of the sky.*

*This is your supreme spiritual sovereignty, o spiritual king;
The treasure of truth is opened up for the worlds by the Victorious One.*

*Highest honor to you, spiritual lord, spiritual king,
Who knows how to analyze things, who shows the ultimate truth.*

*“Void of being and nonbeing,” you point out,
“all these things occur dependent on causes;
In them there are no self, knower or creator.
No action, good or bad, comes to naught.”*

*By you, lord of sages, the overpowering army of demons has been
defeated,
And the deathless tranquility of supremely peaceful enlightenment
attained.*

*That state has no sensation, thought, or intellect, having no
manifestations,
Unknown to all religions and philosophies.*

*Spiritual king, in the presence of celestials and humans
You turn the marvelous wheel of teaching,
Which has three revolutions and many forms,
Is tranquil and inherently pure;*

Then the Triple Treasure is taught.

*Those well guided by the treasure of teaching
Are free of uncertainty and forever at peace.*

*For you are the supreme physician,
Getting to the end of birth, old age, and death;
Highest honor to the measureless ocean of virtue.*

*Immovable as Sumeru by those who've treated you well,
You are equally kind to the disciplined and the badly behaved.*

*Gone forth to impartiality, mind like space—
Who would not honor this jewel among beings?*

*O great sage, these groups that have assembled
Gaze on your visage with a calm, clear mind.*

*The Victorious one is seen by all before them;
That surely is one of the Victor's unique attributes of Buddhas.*

*When one word of the Blessed One is circulated abroad,
It is understood by groups in different languages.
It is understood by all worlds as it benefits themselves—
That is surely one of the Victor's unique attributes of Buddhas.*

*By a single well-spoken word of his
Some have overcome habit, some have attained understanding.
The uncertain in need of a word, the Guide has calmed;
That is surely one of the Victor's unique attributes of Buddhas.*

*Honor to you, courageous leader with ten powers;
Honor to you, fearless one, freed from fear.*

*Honor to you, eye for all worlds,
Who has certainly attained unique qualities;
Honor to the one who cuts off all bonds and fetters.*

*Honor to the one who has reached the other shore,
Who is stable as the earth;
Honor to you, savior of the suffering world;
Honor to the one not dependent
on the currency of the common flow.*

*Gone to the states of beings, acting together with them all,
Yet your mind is liberated from all states.
An immaculate lotus grown in water not wet by the water at all,
The lotus of sages has realized emptiness surely.
All forms and signs vomited out,
You do not apply effort anywhere.*

*The great power of the completely purified Buddha is inconceivable.
I honor the one who is independent, like space.*

Now, having celebrated the Blessed One with these verses, the Licchavi youth Ratnakara said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, please describe a pure Buddha-field to these five hundred Licchavi youths, all of whom have set out for supreme true complete enlightenment, these bodhisattvas who are asking what the pure Buddha-field of bodhisattvas is.”

The Blessed One gave approval to the Licchavi youth Ratnakara for saying this: “Good, good, young fellow! It is good that you ask the Realized One about a purified Buddha-field to begin with. So listen, young fellow, reflect effectively and aptly; I will tell you, to begin with, about a purified Buddha-field of bodhisattvas.”

“Very well, Blessed One.” So saying, the Licchavi youth Ratnakara and the five hundred Licchavi youths listened to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One addressed them in this manner: “Sons of good families, the realm of beings is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field. Why? To the extent that a bodhisattva embraces beings, one is undertaking a Buddha-field; one is undertaking a Buddha-field such as is in accord with how the people are educated. One undertakes a Buddha-field in such a form that people go to the entrance of enlightened knowledge as the entrance of the Buddha-field. One undertakes a Buddha-field in such a form that people go to development of higher faculties as the entrance to the Buddha-field. Why is that? Sons of good families, a Buddha-field of bodhisattvas comes about for the purpose of doing what is useful for people.

“Ratnakara, just as someone who wanted to make something level with the sky might do so, but the sky is not suitable for building or decorating, a bodhisattva who wants to make a Buddha-field for the purpose of maturing people could make such a Buddha-land knowing all things are like space, but a Buddha-field cannot be made or adorned in space.

“Ratnakara, the realm of intention is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people without dishonesty or deception will arrive.

“Sons of good families, the realm of will is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people who have accumulated a store of all roots of good will arrive.

“The realm of application is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people who have taken to all good principles will arrive.

“The production of the lofty mind of a bodhisattva is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people who have set forth on the Great Vehicle will arrive.

“The field of giving is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people who give up everything themselves will arrive.

“The field of integrity is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people who wholeheartedly keep to the path of ten good actions will arrive.

“The field of patience is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people adorned with the thirty-two marks who have reached the ultimate peace of patience and self-restraint will arrive.

“The field of diligence is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people who have generated energy in all good practices will arrive.

“The field of meditation is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people in whom mindfulness and discernment are combined will arrive.

“The field of insight is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people concentrated on truth will arrive.

“The four immeasurables are a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people abiding in kindness, compassion, joy, and impartiality will arrive.

“The four means of integration are a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, all people brought into liberation will arrive.

“Skill in means is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people experienced in all expedient practices will arrive.

“The thirty-seven elements associated with enlightenment are a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, those who know the application of the points of recollection, right exertions, bases of spiritual powers, faculties and powers, limbs of enlightenment, and the path will arrive.

“The will to fully evolve is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, adornments of all virtues become outwardly evident.

“Instruction for stopping the eight inopportune conditions is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, all evils are finally stopped, and the eight inopportune conditions are gone.

“Being steadfast in moral precepts oneself without speaking of the imperfections of others is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, transgression will be unheard of.

“Purification of the path of ten good actions is a bodhisattva’s Buddha-field; in the Buddha-field of that enlightenment, people who with stable health and great wealth who are chaste, truthful, soft-spoken, sociable, skilled at settling the divided, their minds free of envy and without malevolence, and endowed with accurate perception will arrive.

“Thus, son of good family, according to a bodhisattva’s production of the thought of enlightenment, so is the intent; as is the intent, so is the effort. To the extent of the effort, that much the will. To the extent of the will, that much the meditation. To the extent of the meditation, that much the attainment. To the extent of the attainment, that much the development. To the extent of the development, that much the means. To the extent of the means, that far a purified field. As is the purified field, so too are the purified people. As are the purified people, so too is purified knowledge. As is purified knowledge, so is purified teaching. As is purified teaching, so too is the completion of purified knowledge.

As is the completion of purified knowledge, so too is the purified individual mind.

“Hence, son of good family, a bodhisattva should strive to make his own mind perfectly clean to prepare for a purified state of a Buddha-field. Why? As a bodhisattva’s mind is purified, so does the Buddha-field become purified.”

Then, by the power of the Buddha, it occurred to venerable Sariputra, “If the Buddha-field of a bodhisattva is pure according to the purity of mind, when the blessed Sakyamuni was carrying out bodhisattva practice, was his mind not pure, as the Buddha-field in this state does not appear pure?” This occurred to him.

Now the Blessed One, perceiving what venerable Sariputra was thinking, said to him, “Sariputra, what do you think? Are the sun and moon unclear, since they are not seen by those born blind?”

He said, “No, Blessed One. This is the incapacity of those born blind, not the fault of the sun and moon.”

Buddha said, “In the same way, Sariputra, when the array of adornments of virtues of the Buddha-field of the Realized One are not seen by anyone, the deficiency is due to that person’s ignorance; there is no deficiency there due to the Realized One. For the Buddha-field of the Realized One is perfectly pure, but that is not seen by you.”

The Brahma Sikkhī said to venerable Sariputra, “Honorable Sariputra, don’t say the Realized One’s Buddha-land is not perfectly pure. Honorable Sariputra, the Blessed One’s Buddha-field is perfectly pure; the arrangement of the Blessed Sakyamuni’s Buddha-field looks to me like the arrangement of the abode of the celestials who exercise control over others’ emanations.”

Then the elder Sariputra said to Brahma Sikkhī, “Brahman, I see this earth going uphill and downhill, with obstacles, precipices, mountains, and chasms, strewn with filth.”

Brahma Sikkhī said, “So then a Buddha-field like this does not appear pure. Honorable Sariputra, in a mind that goes up and down, the thought of enlightened knowledge is certainly not pure. To anyone, honorable Sariputra, whose impartiality toward people and will for enlightened knowledge are pure, this Buddha-land appears pure.”

Now the Blessed One hit the billion-world universe with his toe. Immediately on being hit, this universe became a collection of many jewels, a multitude of many hundreds of thousands of jewels, an array of many hundreds of thousands of jewels. This universe was like the universe Endless Array of Gems of Virtue, of the Realized One named Array of Jewels. Thus that same entire audience, marveling, thought itself also sitting on jewel lotus seats.

Now the Blessed One said to the venerable Sariputra, "Surely, Sariputra, you see this array of virtues of this Buddha-field."

He said, "Certainly I see, Blessed One."

Buddha said, "Sariputra, this Buddha-field is always like this, but for the sake of maturing weaker people the Realized One shows even the Buddha-field as corrupted by many defects. Sariputra, it is just like the way godlings eat food in one precious vessel, but their individual portion of the ambrosia, the celestial food, depends on the distinction of their accumulation of merit; in the same way, Sariputra, people are born in this Buddha-field according to the purity of their minds."

Gazing upon this array of adornments of virtues of this Buddha-field, eighty-four thousand people conceived the thought of supreme true complete enlightenment. As for the five hundred Licchavi youths who came together with the Licchavi youth, they attained favorable receptivity.

Now the Blessed One gathered in that act of mystic power, and thus the Buddha-field once again appeared as it was before.

Then it occurred to the celestials and humans on the vehicle of disciples, "Accomplishments, alas, are impermanent." Perceiving this, thirty-two thousand of the living acquired the undefiled, pure objective eye that is dispassionate toward all phenomena; eight thousand mendicants unreceptive to impulse became mentally liberated; eighty-four thousand of the living with lofty confidence in Buddha-fields, perceiving all things in terms of imminence of distress, conceived the thought of supreme true complete enlightenment.

2. Inconceivable Skill in Means

At that time, in the metropolis of Vaisali there was also a Licchavi named Vimalakirti, who had served previous Buddhas, planted roots of good, been in the company of many Buddhas, attained receptivity, attained intelligence, sported great higher knowledge, attained mental mastery, maintained expertise, struck down destructive adversaries, was a guide to the profound truth, fully accomplished, completely familiar with the ultimate attainment of insight, understanding the procedures of skill in means, eloquent, distinctly knowing people's dispositions and behaviors, completely familiar with the knowledge of people's better and worse faculties and teaching them according to their capacity. Having set out in this Great Vehicle, he was a knowledgeable and determined worker; abiding by the behavior of a Buddha, he entered into the ocean of highest intelligence, praised by all Buddhas, applauded, extolled, honored by all Sakras, Brahmas, and world guardians was he.

Dwelling in the metropolis of Vaisali for the purpose of maturing people by strategic skill in expedient means, he had inexhaustible wealth to take in people who were helpless and poor; his conduct was impeccable to take in the badly behaved; he had attained patience and restraint to take in hostile, hateful, malicious, immoral, wrathful people; he dwelt in meditation, mindfulness, and concentration to take in people with distracted minds; he had certainty of insight to take in people who were being stupid. Even if dressed as a layman, he behaved like an accomplished ascetic. Even if he lived in a house, he was not involved in the realms of desire, form, or no form. Even if he had a wife and children at home, he was always chaste. Even if seen to be surrounded by a retinue, he was solitary. Even if seen adorned with ornaments, he was endowed with the marks of distinction. Even if seen to partake of food and drink, he always savored enjoyment of the pleasure of meditation. Even if seen in all gaming and gambling spots, he was maturing people addicted to gaming and gambling, and was always impeccably behaved. Even if he sought out all hypocrites, he had unbreakable belief in Buddha. Though he knew worldly and transcendental formulas and sciences, he always trusted in the happiness of delight in truth. Seen the midst of societies everywhere, he was respectable and honored in all.

In order to make the world whole, he became a companion of seniors, the middle-aged, and youth, as one who proclaims the truth. Even if proficient in all professions, he had no longing for profit and property. Even if appearing on every street corner to assault people, he was also

engaged in the duties of government to protect people. To defend against trust in a lesser vehicle and bring people into the Great Vehicle, he appeared among all ascetics conversing. In order to develop children, he even came to primary schools. He went everywhere in order to show the unease associated with desire, even houses of prostitution. In order to establish mindfulness, he also went into all taverns.

By pointing out the best of principles, even among eminent professionals he was respected as an eminent man. By cutting off the acquisitiveness of all consumers, among householders he was also respected as a householder. By establishing the power of patience and gentleness, among warriors he was respected as a warrior. By eliminating conceit, presumption, and arrogance, among Brahmins he was respected as a Brahmin. By commanding proper administration of government, among ministers of state he was respected as a minister of state. By overturning attachment to royal wealth and power, among princes he was respected as a prince. By educating virgins, in the harem he was respected as a chamberlain.

By particular focus on the good of the natural, he attained communion with the whole body of living beings. By showing mastery of power, among Sakras he was respected as a Sakra. By teaching higher knowledge, among Brahmas he was respected as a Brahma. Because of developing all people to maturity, among world guardians he was respected as a world guardian.

Thus the Licchavi Vimalakirti, with immeasurable knowledge of skill in means, was dwelling in the metropolis of Vaisali. When he strategically showed himself seeming to be sick, in order to ask after his illness, the king, ministers, governors, princes, priests, householders, leading professionals, merchants, and citizens of the metropolis of Vaisali—many thousands of people—came to ask after his illness. The Licchavi Vimalakirti pointed out the truth to them gathered there, beginning with the body made of four gross elements:

“Friends, this body is impermanent like this, unstable like this, unreliable. It is weak like this, insubstantial, and injured, of limited time, distressful, diseased, something that changes. So, friends, the wise one does not dwell on this body, a receptacle of many illnesses.

“Friends, this body, being impossible to hold onto, is like a ball of froth. This body is something that doesn’t last long, like a bubble. This body arises from distressing thirst, like a mirage. This body is not solid, like

a banana tree. It is an unstable bundle of sinews, alas, like a machine. This body arises from misperception, like a magic trick. This body is a vision of the unreal, like a dream. This body is like a reflection, appearing as a reflection of past action. This body is dependent on conditions; that is like an echo. This body is like a scattered mind, flying along like clouds. This body is associated with instantaneous disintegration, not abiding, like lightning. This body has no master, arising from various conditions.

“This body has no occupation, like the earth. Like water, this body has no self. This body is like fire, without life. This body is like air, with no person. This body is like space, with no independent existence.

“This body is a nonentity located in the major elements. This body is empty, without self or possession. This body is senseless, like straw, wood, a wall, a clod of earth, an illusion. This body has arisen without sensation, as if equipped with a wind machine. This body is trifling, full of pus and waste. This body is worthless, something that breaks down and perishes even if always oiled and massaged. This body is plagued by four hundred and four diseases. This body is always overpowered by age, like a dried-up well. This body ends in death, ultimately baseless. This body is captive to the clusters, elements, and media of sense, like a deserted village inhabited by murderers and poisonous snakes. With disappointment and anxiety regarding such a body, you should develop trust in the body of the Realized.

“Friends, the body of the Realized is the body of truth, born from knowledge. The body of the Realized is born of virtue, born of giving, born of integrity, born of concentration, born of insight, born of liberation, born of the knowledge and vision of liberation, born from kindness, compassion, joy, and impartiality, born from uplift, restraint, and control, born from the ten good ways of action, born from patience and gentleness, born from good roots of resolute courage, born from meditation, liberation, concentration, and equilibrium, born from learning, insight, and strategy, born from the thirty-seven things favorable to enlightenment, born from stopping and seeing, born from the ten powers, born from the fourfold expertise, born from the eighteen unique qualities of Buddhas, born from all the perfections, born from higher knowledge and analytic knowledge, born from abandoning all bad things and embracing all good things, born of truth, born of completion, born of vigilance.

“Friends, the body of the Realized is born of immeasurable good action; you should develop confidence in such a body as this. In order to quell

all people's afflictions and illusions, you should develop the will for supreme true complete enlightenment."

In this way the Licchavi Vimalakirti pointed out such truth to the crowd asking after his illness that many hundreds of thousands of people aroused the will for supreme true complete enlightenment.

3. What Was Said on Sending Disciples and Bodhisattvas

Then it occurred to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, “While I am sick in bed, the Realized One, the Worthy, the Completely Enlightened One, has not taken notice of me and extended any inquiry into my illness out of sympathy.”

Now the Blessed One, aware of this thought of the Licchavi Vimalakirti, invited the venerable Sariputra, “Go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, Sariputra, to ask after his illness.”

The venerable Sariputra said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, I am unable to go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to ask after his illness. Why is that? Blessed One, I remember one time when I was in retreat at the foot of a tree, when that same Licchavi Vimalakirti came up to the foot of that tree and said, ‘Honorable Sariputra, you should not retire to retreat in such a retreat as you retire to. You should go into retreat such that neither the body associated with the triple world nor the mind is perceived. You should go into retreat in such a way that the conduct of a religious mendicant is externally evident everywhere without emerging from extinction. You should go into retreat in such a way as to appear as an ordinary person without giving up the characteristics of attainment. You should go into retreat in such a way that you neither dwell on your own mind nor think about external form. You should go into retreat in such a way that you are unmoved by opinions, and the thirty-seven things favorable to enlightenment come into range. You should go into retreat in such a way as to merge with nirvana without abandoning the afflictions of the realm of the common flow of existence. Honorable Sariputra, it is those who retire into retreat like this that the Blessed One has called to retreat.’”

“This having been said, Blessed One, having heard this truth, I was unable to respond and was silent. For this reason I cannot go ask after the illness of that good man.”

Now the Blessed One said to the venerable Maudgalyayana senior, “Maudgalyayana, go to Vimalakirti to ask after his illness.”

But Maudgalyayana too said, “Blessed one, I am unable to go ask after the illness of that good man. Why is that? Blessed One, I remember one time in the metropolis of Vaisali I was preaching to householders at the entry of a street when the Licchavi Vimalakirti came up and said to me, ‘Honorable Maudgalyayana, the way you are preaching to lay people is

not the way truth is to be pointed out. Honorable Maudgalyayana, truth is to be pointed out in accord with truth.

“For truth, honorable Maudgalyayana, is remote from people, without people’s emotion. It is selfless, without the emotion of passion. It is inanimate, without birth or death, having no impulses. It is unconnected to past and future. It is characterized by peace and tranquility, free from passion, not relating to objects of sense. It is wordless, puts an end to all speech; impossible to talk about; void of all fluctuation, omnipresent as space, void of form, mark, or appearance, beyond all observances, without possession or personal interest. It is without representation, apart from mind, thought, and consciousness; it is without equivalent, because there is no counterpart. It is contrary to cause, not contained in conditions.

“By permeating the realm of reality, it holds together all things with a universal principle, corresponding to verity. It is ultimately unshakable; hence, standing at the limit of reality, it is unshakable because it is unattached to objects of the six senses. Not having a specific location, it has no going or coming anywhere, being merged with emptiness. It is perfectly evident without having any signs. It has no bad manners of mental creation, even unapplied; it is void of offence. It has no increase. It is without origin or destruction. It has no abode. It is beyond the path of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. It is not high or low; it is stable, immutable reality.

“Being beyond all practices, honorable elder Maudgalyayana, how can there be any instruction in this truth? Honorable elder Maudgalyana, that instruction is talk of imposed terms, and that learning is also imposed learning. Honorable elder Maudgalyayana, where there is no imposed speech, there is no instruction, no learning, and no knowledge. That is like instruction of phantoms by a phantom.

“Truth should be taught in this mental state: you must cultivate skill in accommodating people’s faculties; you should teach with the clear-sighted eye of insight and with friendly compassion, speaking praise of the Great Vehicle, with gratitude to the Buddha, with pure intention, with knowledge of how to express principles, to make the Three Treasures continue unbroken.”

“When this was said, Blessed One, by that exposition of truth eight hundred of the householders conceived the will for supreme true complete enlightenment. But I, Blessed One, was bereft of eloquence. For this reason I cannot go ask after that good man’s illness.”

Then the Blessed One said to venerable elder Kasyapa, “Kasyapa, go ask after the Licchavi Vimalakirti’s illness.”

But elder Kasyapa also said, “Blessed One, I cannot go ask after that good man’s illness. Why is that? I remember one time when I was in a poor neighborhood begging for alms and Vimalakirti the Licchavi came up and said, ‘Since you are avoiding the houses of great people and going to the houses of the poor, honorable Kasyapa, your kindness is partial. Therefore, Kasyapa, you should stand on equality of phenomena; you should seek alms mindful of all people at all times. You should seek food that involves no taking for oneself. You should go for alms in order to dispel grasping of accumulation. You should enter a village for the purpose of developing men and women to maturity. You should go into a house for enlightened knowledge.

“Accept alms without being acquisitive, see forms like those born blind, hear sounds as like echoes, smell scents as like the wind, perceive flavors without particularity, feel feelings without the feeling of knowledge, know things with the consciousness of a phantom. Where there is neither selfhood nor otherness, there is no passion, and what is not impassioned is not becalmed.

“If, elder Kasyapa, in regard to attainment of the eight liberations without going beyond the eightfold falsehood, you enter into equality of truth by way of equality of falsehood, give alms even once to all people, and give to all Buddhas and worthy people respectfully first, if you see any food yourself not connected with affliction or released from affliction, that is how you shall eat.

“Honorable one, whoever gives you alms, for them there is no great reward or small reward, nor a mediocre reward, nor an exceptional reward. They enter into the practice of Buddha, not the way of disciples. Elder Kasyapa, thus will you consume alms of the people that are not in vain.’

“This being said, Blessed One, having heard this teaching I marveled and gained respect for all bodhisattvas. Thinking, ‘If even a layman has such eloquence, who would not conceive the thought of supreme true complete enlightenment,’ while I have not attained the Great Vehicle hitherto, since then I have not introduced anyone to the vehicles of disciples and individual illuminates. Blessed One, for this reason I cannot go ask after that good man’s illness.”

Now the Blessed One said to venerable Subhuti, “You go, Subhuti.”

But Subhuti too said, “I cannot go, Blessed One. On one occasion when I went for alms to the house of the Licchavi Vimalakirti in the metropolis of Vaisali, Vimalakirti asked for my bowl, filled it with prepared food, and said, ‘If you follow equality of phenomena by way of equality of food, follow equality of enlightened qualities by way of equality of phenomena, you consume alms properly, if you have not abandoned desire, aversion, and confusion yet do not dwell with them; if you’ve gone on the path of the One Vehicle without having dismissed the notion of a real body; if you have neither destroyed ignorance and craving nor lost knowledge and liberation; if the five crimes with immediate consequences and liberation are equal to you, and you are neither liberated nor bound; if you do not see the four noble truths yet do not fail to see truth; if you have not attained realization yet are not an ordinary person; if you have not passed away from the state of an ordinary person and are neither holy nor unholy; and also if you are attached to all things but liberated from conceptions of all things, consume these alms. If you haven’t seen the Teacher, haven’t heard even half the Teaching, and haven’t been present in the Community, if you have gone forth in reliance on the six teachers Purana Kasyapa, Maskari Gosaliputra, Sanjayi Vairadiputra, Kukuda Katyayana, Ajita Kesakambala, and Nirgrantha Jatiputra as your teachers, eat.

“If you also go where the six teachers go, entering into all manner of views without you finding any extreme or mean; if, moreover, having come upon the eight inopportune conditions you have not found time; if you are afflicted but haven’t approached purification; if everyone’s noncontention is your noncontention; if you have not purified giving, Honorable One, if those who give you alms cause their own ruin; if you accompany all devils and have become a companion of all afflictions; if the essence of affliction is also your essence; if you have the thought of killing everyone; if you have attacked all Buddhas, disgraced all Buddhas’ teachings, not taken refuge in the Community, and will ultimately never attain perfect peace, then eat this offering of food.’

“This being said, having heard this exposition, thinking, ‘What should I tell him, what should I say, what should I do?’ totally in the dark, I put down the bowl and was leaving the premises when Vimalakirti said, ‘Honorable Subhuti, accept this bowl without being scared by words. Honorable Subhuti, what do you think—if that were said to a projection of the Realized, would the projection be frightened by it?’ I told him, ‘No indeed, sir.’ He said to me, ‘Honorable Subhuti, don’t be afraid of anything, as all things are essentially of the nature of illusory projections. Why is that? All those statements being of that nature, therefore the wise, not attached to words, are not frightened by them.

Why? Since all those words are not fixed and unalterable, leaving all aside is liberation; all things, indeed, are characterized by liberation.'

"Given this instruction, two hundred celestials attained the immaculate, undefiled, pure eye of truth, and five hundred celestials attained suitable receptivity. I, however, was at a loss for words and was unable to reply. For this reason, Blessed One, I cannot go ask after that good man's illness."

Then the Blessed one said to the venerable Purna Maitrayaniputra, "Purna, you go."

But Purna too said, "Blessed One, I cannot. Once when I was somewhere in a forest teaching novice mendicants, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came and said, 'Honorable Purna, concentrate to observe the mentality of these monks, and teach them appropriately after having seen. Don't fill a most precious jewel bowl with putrid gruel. You have to know what the disposition of these mendicants is like—don't compare a gem to glass. Without having determined people's faculties, don't lump them into a restricted faculty. Don't produce a sore on one who has no sore. Those who seek to enter the highway, don't take into an alley. Don't fill the footprint of an ox with an ocean. Don't put a mountain in a mustard seed. Don't oppose the light of the sun with a firefly. Those who seek the true lion's roar, don't take in with the cry of a jackal.

"Honorable Purna, the will for enlightenment of all these mendicants, who had approached the Great Vehicle, has gotten lost. Purna, don't elucidate the vehicle of disciples to them. For the vehicle of disciples lacks knowledge of the order of people's faculties—I consider those disciples as like people born blind.'

"Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti went into such a concentration that memory of various past abodes occurred to those mendicants. Once their own will for enlightenment became evident to them as imbued with roots of good, having associated with five hundred Buddhas for the sake of true complete enlightenment, they bowed their heads to that good man's feet and held out their hands in a gesture of supplication; then he taught them in such a way that they could never again turn away from supreme true complete enlightenment.

"Blessed One, on consideration, it occurred to me that nothing should be taught by a disciple to anyone at all without having distinguished others' mental dispositions. Why? A disciple is not one who discerns

the higher and lower faculties of all people, and is not always concentrated like a realized, able, true complete Buddha.

“Blessed One, for this reason I cannot go ask after the illness of that good man.”

Then the Blessed One said to venerable elder Katyayana, “Katyayana, you go.”

Katyayana said, “Blessed One, I cannot. Once when the Blessed One had spoken an admonitory sutra to mendicants, in order to define the terms of that sutra I was explaining principles such as the meaning of impermanence, misery, selflessness, and peace, when the Licchavi Vimalakirti came up and said, ‘Honorable elder Katyayana, do not present the nature of reality as connected to customary usage, accompanied by production and dissolution. What is ultimately not produced is not produced and will not be produced. What is ultimately not destroyed is not destroyed and will not be destroyed. That is the meaning of impermanence. Realization of no entry into any state by understanding of emptiness in the five clusters is what the meaning of misery is. The nonexistence of both self and selflessness is the meaning of selflessness. What is void of selfhood and otherness is without passion. What is without passion is not tranquilized. Not being tranquilized is the meaning of peace.’

“Given this instruction, those mendicants’ minds became liberated from spontaneous impulses. Hence, Blessed One, I am unable.”

Then the Blessed One said to venerable Aniruddha, “Aniruddha, you go.”

But Aniruddha also said, “Blessed One, I cannot. Once while I was walking around in a certain place for walking around, a Great Brahma named Auspicious Manifestation came with ten thousand Brahmas, lit up that place, bowed their heads at my feet, then stood to one side and said, ‘Honorable Aniruddha, you are said by the Blessed One to have the most excellent celestial sight. How far can be seen by venerable Aniruddha’s celestial sight?’

“I said to him, ‘Friend, I see the Blessed Sakyamuni’s Buddha-field, a universe of a billion worlds, as a tamarind seed in the palm of the hand is seen by a person with eyes.’

“As I was saying this, the Licchavi Vimalakirti approached that place, bowed his head at my feet, and said, ‘Is the honorable Aniruddha’s

celestial sight developed by preparation, or does it have no development? If it is developed, it is the same as the outside five forms of higher knowledge; if it has no development, what has no development is not actualized—given the impossibility of seeing on its part, Elder, how can it see?”

“Spoken to in these terms, I became silent. But that Brahma, hearing this instruction from that good man, marveled; bowing, he said, ‘Who in the world has celestial vision?’ Vimalakirti said, ‘The Blessed Buddhas, indeed, have celestial vision in the world. For in a state of progressive concentration, they see all Buddha-fields without being overpowered by either [the world or the Buddha-fields].’

“Then Brahma and his retinue of ten thousand, having heard this instruction, engendered the will for supreme true complete enlightenment with strong determination. Paying respects to me and that good man, bowing, they disappeared from there. As for me, I was at a loss for words. So I cannot go.”

Then the Blessed One said to venerable Upali, “Upali, you go.”

Upali too said, “Blessed One, I cannot. Once when two mendicants had fallen into transgression and were ashamed to go to the Blessed One, they both approached me and said, ‘Honorable Upali, we have fallen into transgression and are too ashamed to go to the Blessed One. Please clear up our doubt and lead us out of transgression.’

“This having been said, Blessed One, I was talking to those two mendicants about the teaching when the Licchavi Vimalakirti showed up and said to me, ‘Honorable Upali, don’t make those two mendicants’ transgression even more stubborn; don’t make it more foul. You should dispel their remorse for their transgression.

“‘Honorable Upali, transgression is not located inside oneself, not gone away outside, not existing in both; it is ungraspable. Why is that? The Blessed One has said, “People are afflicted due to affliction of mind; purity is accomplished by cleaning the mind.” Strictly speaking, honorable Upali, mind is not inside or outside, and not in both; it is ungraspable. As is mind, so is transgression; as is transgression, so all things—they do not go beyond the nature of reality.

“‘Honorable Upali, the essence of mind is the essence of mind of your liberated mind; who has ever been afflicted, with what essence of mind?’”

“I said, ‘Not this.’

“He said, ‘Honorable Upali, the mind of all people is that very essence. Conviction is affliction; essence has no false notions and no assumptions. Misperception is affliction; essence has no misperception. Assertion of self is affliction; essence is selflessness.

“‘Honorable Upali, as all things occur and pass away, they are not fixed, like phantoms, clouds, lightning. All things are discontinuous, not staying in the same state for even a moment. All things are vision of the unreal, like dreams and mirages. All things are built of convictions of mind, like reflections of the moon in water. Those who exercise such insight are called keepers of the code of conduct. Those who are disciplined thus are well disciplined.’

“Then those two mendicants said, ‘This householder is very insightful. Honorable Upali, who has been called the foremost of keepers of the code of conduct, is not that insightful.’

“I said to them, ‘Don’t pretend to know this householder, you mendicants; except for the Realized One, no one, no disciple or bodhisattva, is capable of overcoming his intelligence—such is his light of insight.’

“Then those two mendicants, casting off their doubt, conceiving the will for supreme true complete enlightenment with strong determination right then and there, bowed to that good man and said, ‘May all people attain such intelligence.’ So I cannot go.”

Then the Blessed One said to the venerable Rahula, “Rahula, you go.”

But Rahula said, “Blessed One, I cannot. Once a number of Licchavi youths came to me and said, ‘Honorable Rahula, you are the Blessed One’s son; what did you gain by giving up rulership and leaving secular life? What is the merit in leaving secular society?’

“This being said, as I was indicating to them the merit in leaving society as appropriate, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came up to me, paid his respects, and said, ‘Honorable Rahula, don’t point out the merits and benefits of leaving society as you are doing. Why? Leaving society is apart from merit, removed from praise. Honorable Rahula, as long as the constructed is operative, so long is there merit and commendation. Leaving society, though, is union with the unconstructed; in the unconstructed there is no merit or praise.

“Honorable Rahula, leaving society is formless, detached from form, free of extreme views of low and high, the path to nirvana, praised by sages, embraced by the wise, defeating all destructive opposition, leaving all mundane states, clarifying the five eyes, attaining the five powers, based on the five faculties. It is invulnerable to others, untouched by evil things, good discipline for other religious leaders, completely aloof of information deep in the mud of desire, without any prop, devoid of possessory interest, egoless, not acquisitive, controlled relinquishment of excitement, discipline of one’s own mind and protection of others’ minds, completeness of calm, impeccability everywhere—that is going forth, leaving secular society. Those who have gone forth thus have gone forth well.

“Young fellows, you should go forth in such a well-expressed way; a Buddha’s emergence is rare, an opportune moment is rare, and a human state is rare.’

“Those youths said, ‘Mister, according to what we have heard was said by the Realized One, one does not become a renunciant without abandoning mother and father.’

“He said to them, ‘You should practice diligently generating the will for supreme true complete enlightenment; then you will have attained renunciation in reality.’”

“Hence he caused three thousand, two hundred youths to conceive the will for supreme true complete enlightenment. So, Blessed One, I cannot go.”

Then the Blessed One said to venerable Ananda, “Ananda, you go.”

Ananda too said, “Blessed One, I cannot. Once when the Blessed One had become physically ill, I was standing at the door of a certain prosperous family of Brahmins seeking milk for the Buddha, when that Licchavi Vimalakirti came by, paid his respects to me, and said, ‘Honorable Ananda, why are you standing at this family’s door with a bowl, even at dawn?’

“I told him, ‘The Blessed One has developed a physical malady; I need milk in order to administer medicine to him.’

“He said to me, ‘Honorable Ananda, don’t talk this way. Honorable Ananda, the body of the Realized One is sturdy as diamond, rid of all

bad habits—how could illness happen to him, who has attained all good qualities? How could sickness affect him?

“Honorable Ananda, go away silently, so as not to ruin the Blessed One. Don’t say this to anyone else, for the great mighty gods and the bodhisattvas gathered in the Buddha’s field will hear.

“Honorable Ananda, if even law-giving rulers with limited roots of good are free from illness, how could there be disease in the Blessed One with immeasurable roots of good?

“Go away, honorable Ananda, so as not to embarrass me. For other cultists—philosophers, wanderers, hermits, ascetics—will hear. They will think, “Hey! If their teacher cannot even prevent his own sickness, how can he prevent people’s sicknesses?” Honorable Ananda, go away without letting anyone see you—someone might hear.

“Honorable Ananda, the Realized Ones are the body of reality, not the physical body nourished by food. The Realized are a body beyond the world, transcending all mundane things. The body of a Realized One is invulnerable, free from pain. For the body of a Realized One is unconditioned, beyond all cultivation. Honorable Ananda, to look for sickness in such as this is unreasonable and incongruous.’

“This said, as I was thinking, ‘Did I hear the Blessed One incorrectly, or take it incorrectly?’ I became extremely embarrassed; then I heard a voice from the sky—‘Ananda, it is as the layman indicates; but since the Blessed One has emerged in an era of five pollutions, the people have to be trained by incomplete teaching and practice. So, Ananda, get some milk and go, without being embarrassed.’

“Blessed One, the Licchavi Vimalakirti’s question, rationale, and instruction were thus; hence, Blessed One, I cannot go.”

In this way, five hundred disciples who were unable to go told the Blessed One their own explanation. Everything that was discussed with the Licchavi Vimalakirti, they told the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One said to the bodhisattva Maitreya, “Maitreya, you go.”

But Maitreya said, “Blessed One, I cannot. Once when I was with a group of completely satisfied gods and gods of the satisfied class,

talking to them about the teaching beginning with bodhisattvas' irreversible stage, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came up and said to me, 'Maitreya, if it has been predicted by the Blessed One that you are bound to attain supreme true complete enlightenment in one birth, in reference to what birth is it predicted? In reference to the past? Or in reference to the future? Or in reference to the present? Any past birth is gone; what is yet to come has not arrived; as for present birth, it does not stay. As the Blessed One has so aptly stated, "Thus, mendicant, in a single moment you are born, you age, you die, you pass away, you come to be." Prediction of no birth is transcendence of limitation in non-origination; but without coming to be you will not become completely enlightened, Maitreya, so how is it predicted of you? By birth of true nature, or by extinction of true nature? True nature has no birth or extinction, not originating and not perishing.

"The true nature of all beings, all things, and all who are wise, is, in fact, Maitreya, your true nature too. This is how the prediction applies to you, and this is how the prediction applies to all people too. Why? True nature is not bounded by division, not bounded by diversity. Therefore, Maitreya, when you fully realize enlightenment, then all people will likewise fully realize enlightenment. Why? Because enlightenment is natural to all people. Maitreya, when you become fully extinct, then all people will become totally extinct too. Why? As long as all people are not totally extinct, the Realized One will not become totally extinct. All those people who have become beatifically extinct therefore appear to belong to the family of nirvana.

"Nothing is established or goes away by enlightenment. Therefore, Maitreya, get these gods to abandon that imaginary view of enlightenment. Enlightenment is not realized by the body or by the mind; for enlightenment is cessation of all signs. Enlightenment is apart from all attribution as an object, beyond all mental concentration and practice, unconnected to any opinionated state at all, free from all thinking. Enlightenment is unconnected to any function of an agitated mind; it is apart from all wishes, detached from all grasping, free from clinging; it is resort to the resource of the realm of reality, associated with true nature, abiding in supreme truth, non-dual in the sense of not having a division of mind and objects, impartial as space, unconditioned in the sense of not having origination or destruction, stasis or change.

"Enlightenment is insight into the minds, behaviors, and dispositions of all people; not a doorway of the sense faculties; free from all habit, resistance, and affliction; not in objects of sense, because it is unconnected to location or no location, not abiding anywhere at all,

becoming manifest as such without being occasioned. Enlightenment is only a name, and the name is immovable. Enlightenment has no coming and going; it has no fluctuation. Enlightenment has no mental disturbance; it is pure in nature, its illumination is inherently pure. Enlightenment has no grasping; independent in the midst of all things, it is undivided because of attainment of impartiality toward all things. Because it cannot be exemplified, enlightenment is without compare, very hard to realize, hence subtle.

“‘Since enlightenment is omnipresent as the nature of space, it is impossible to realize by body or mind. Why? The body is like straw, wood, a wall, a road, a hallucination, while the mind is formless, invisible, inaudible, inscrutable.’

“Blessed One, with the elucidation of this instruction, two hundred of the gods in that assembly gained receptivity to the truth of no origin. I, on the other hand, was speechless. Hence I cannot go.”

Then the Blessed One said to the Licchavi youth Prabhavyuha, “Prabhavyuha, you go.”

Prabhavyuha too said, “Blessed One, I cannot. Once when I had gone out from the metropolis of Vaisali, I encountered the Licchavi Vimalakirti going in. He greeted me, and I said to him, ‘Sir, where have you come from?’ He told me, ‘I’ve come from the peak of enlightenment.’ I said to him, ‘What does that name *peak of enlightenment* refer to?’ He said to me, ‘The peak of enlightenment is the peak of will, by reason of authenticity. It is the peak of effort, by reason of helping get over exertion and labor. It is the peak of determination, as a cause of individual attainment. It is the peak of the thought of enlightenment, by reason of never forgetting.

“‘It is the peak of giving, by reason of not expecting rewards. It is the peak of discipline, by virtue of fulfilling vows. It is the peak of tolerance, because of having no thought of enmity toward anyone at all. It is the peak of effort, by reason of irreversibility. It is the peak of meditation, by reason of workability of mind. It is the peak of insight, by direct perception.

“‘It is the peak of friendliness, by reason of impartiality toward all people. It is the peak of compassion, by reason of ability to effect all remedies. It is the peak of joy, by reason of inclination to enjoy love of truth. It is the peak of impartiality, by abandoning ingratiating and enmity.

“It is the peak of higher knowledge, because of attainment of six forms of higher knowledge. It is the peak of liberation, because of having no false imagination. It is the peak of strategy, in terms of developing people to maturity. It is the peak of the means of integration, by reason of taking in all people. It is the peak of learning, because of the limitlessness of companions in practice. It is the peak of concentration, by dint of thorough attention. It is the peak of the elements that assist and foster enlightenment, by reason of relinquishment of the conditioned and the unconditioned. It is the peak of truth, not deceiving anyone at all. It is the peak of dependent occurrence, by reason of ending of pains, even aging and dying, by ending of impulses from ignorance. It is the peak of cessation of all afflictions, by awakening to being as is.

“It is the essence of all beings, because all beings lack independent existence. It is the essence of all things, because of realization of emptiness. It is the pinnacle of defeat of all destructivity, by reason of imperturbability. It is the pinnacle of the triple world, by detachment from involvement. It is the pinnacle of valor of one who roars the lion’s roar, by reason of having no fear, no terror. It is the pinnacle of all powers, expertise, and unique qualities of Buddhas, being irreproachable everywhere. It is the pinnacle of the threefold mystic knowledge, by elimination of all afflictions. It is the pinnacle of comprehensive realization of all truths in a single instant of thought, by complete attainment of all-knowing knowledge.

“Even so, son, bodhisattvas equipped with the transcendent ways, devoted to developing people to maturity, dedicated to preserving truth, have come from the peak of enlightenment with every step of those going with such roots of good, have come from the teachings of the enlightened, stand firm in the teachings of the enlightened.’

“Blessed One, with this instruction five hundred gods and humans conceived the will for enlightenment, but I was at a loss for words. Hence I cannot go.”

Then the Blessed One said to the bodhisattva Jagatindhara, “Jagatindhara, you go.”

But Jagatindhara said, “Blessed One, I cannot. Once when I was at home, the devil came to me in the guise of a mighty god, accompanied by twelve thousand nymphs; approaching with music and song, he and his retinue bowed their heads at my feet and stood to one side, attentive to me.

“Thinking him to be the mighty lord of gods, I said to him, ‘Welcome, Kausika. Be careful in the midst of all the nectars of desire. Frequently form the idea of the impermanence of reception of energy from body, life, and possessions.’

“Then he said to me, ‘Good man, make these twelve thousand nymphs and these servants of mine your retinue.’

“I said to him, ‘Kausika, what you give is something inappropriate for a Buddhist ascetic. It is not appropriate for us.’

“Vimalakirti the Licchavi came up to the scene of this conversation and said to me, ‘Son, don’t think this is a mighty lord of gods—this is the devil, the most evil destroyer, come to make a mockery of you, not the mighty lord of gods.’

“Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the devil, ‘These nymphs are not appropriate for ascetic Buddhists, so give them to me.’

“Then it occurred to the devil, who was stricken with fear, terrified, ‘This Licchavi Vimalakirti has come to cheat me.’ He tried to disappear but couldn’t; even mustering all his magical powers he was still unable to disappear.

“Then a voice issued forth from the sky: ‘Evil One, you will be able to go back to your own abode after you have presented these nymphs to this good man.’ Then the devil, scared, reluctantly presented those nymphs.

“Then Vimalakirti, receiving the nymphs, said, ‘You have been given to me by the devil, so conceive the will for supreme true complete enlightenment.’ He gave them a talk conducive to maturing enlightenment, and they conceived the will for enlightenment.

“Then he further directed them, ‘Now that you have engendered the thought of enlightenment, henceforth be devoted to the pleasure of gratification by truth, don’t be devoted to the pleasure of desires.’

“They said, ‘What is the enjoyment of gratification by truth?’

“He said, ‘That enjoyment is unbreakable faith in Buddha, desire to hear the teaching; enjoyment in association with the community; enjoyment in honoring teachers, even as projections; enjoyment in combination of the elements without dwelling on objects; enjoyment in viewing the

clusters as like murderers; enjoyment in viewing the elements as snake venom; the enjoyment of discernment in media of sense like a deserted village; enjoyment acting for the welfare of others in preserving the thought of enlightenment; enjoyment without falling from morality in distribution of gifts; in the composure and restraint in patience, in the exertion of energy in accomplishment of good, in the complete experience of meditation and in insight, in the absence of afflictions, and the exalted enjoyment in enlightenment; enjoyment of restraining demons; in destroying afflictions, in purifying a Buddha-field, in accumulating all good to establish the marks and refinements, the enjoyment of hearing the profound truth without fear, in the three doors of liberation, in study and practice, in focus on nirvana, in adorning the peak of enlightenment, and in not making effort at the wrong time, and enjoyment in being of service to associates while not being antagonistic or hostile toward those who are not associates; service to good friends and abandonment of bad friends, trust in truth; it is the ecstasy of faith, and enjoyment of obtaining means, and enjoyment in diligently attending to the elements conducive to enlightenment. Such is inclination for the pleasures of the principles of bodhisattvas.'

"Then the devil said to those nymphs, 'Now go to our abode.'

"They said, 'You gave us to this householder; so now we should properly be devoted to enjoyment of taking pleasure in truth, not devoted to delight in desires.'

"Then the devil said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, 'If a great bodhisattva gives up everything spontaneously and does not grasp mentally, sir, send off these nymphs.'

"Vimalakirti said, 'They may be dismissed, so go away with your retinue. May everyone's determination for truth be fulfilled.'

"Then the nymphs, paying respects to Vimalakirti, said, 'Sir, how can we stay in the devil's place?'

"He said, 'Sisters, there is a method of the teaching called the inexhaustible lamp, which you should learn. What is that, sisters? If a single lamp lights a hundred thousand lamps, the light never goes out. In the same way, sisters, a bodhisattva having established many hundreds of thousands of people in enlightenment, that bodhisattva's inexhaustible presence of mind increases inexhaustibly. And thus, as all good ways are mastered and made known by others, so does teaching

increase in all good ways. This is the teaching method called the inexhaustible lamp.

“While you are staying there in the devil’s place, interest innumerable gods and goddesses in the thought of enlightenment. In this way you will be grateful to the Realized and of service to all beings.’

“Then those nymphs, bowing their heads at the feet of the Licchavi Vimalakirti, went home with the devil. Blessed One, having witnessed the distinction of the Licchavi Vimalakirti’s ability to transform, I cannot go.”

Then the Blessed One said to Sudatta, son of a grandee, “Son of good family, you go.”

Sudatta too said, “Blessed One, I cannot. Once I gave seven days’ alms to all ascetics and priests, all the poor, wretched, pitiful, beggars and those in distress, to perform a great sacrificial rite at the home of my mother and father. On the last day of the rite, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came and said, ‘Young sir, you shouldn’t make a sacrifice as you are doing; you should make true sacrifice—away with your food sacrifice.’

“I said to him, ‘How is true sacrifice to be given?’

“He told me, ‘By whatever true sacrifice people are matured at once, that is true sacrifice.

“And what is that? The great kindness of bringing enlightenment, the great compassion produced by reception of truth, the great joy produced by perceiving the joy of all people, the great impartiality produced by reception of knowledge.

“Perfection of giving produced by peace and restraint, perfection of integrity produced by maturing immoral people, perfection of patience produced by the principle of selflessness, perfection of energy produced by undertaking enlightenment, perfection of meditation produced by analysis of body and mind, perfection of insight produced by all-knowing knowledge.

“Contemplation of emptiness fostered by maturing all people, contemplation of the signless produced by purification of the conditioned, contemplation of indeterminacy produced by intentional rebirth.

“Strength of powers produced by taking up truth; the faculty of life produced by the means of integration; creativity produced by the idea of all people as dependents and pupils; acquisition of body, life, and property by reception of energy from the insubstantial; mindfulness produced by the six recollections; will produced by delightful teaching; purity of livelihood produced by right understanding; attendance on the wise produced by faithful and joyful service; high-mindedness produced by not being hostile to the unwise; skill in learning produced by observation; forest dwelling produced by understanding the principle of noncontention; seclusion produced by attainment of enlightened knowledge; the stage of unifying practice produced by effort for the liberation of all people from affliction.

“A store of merit produced by the marks and refinements, adornment of a Buddha-field, and developing people to maturity; a store of insight produced by knowledge of one principle in all things, that they cannot be obtained and cannot be annihilated; a store of all roots of good produced by abandonment of all afflictions, obstructions, and unhealthy things; production of all things conducive to enlightenment by attainment of all-knowing knowledge and good character; that is propitiation of truth. Based on that propitiation of truth, a bodhisattva is a donor, one who performs a sacrifice properly, and becomes worthy of respect in this world with its gods.’

“Blessed One, with this instruction by the householder Vimalakirti, the thought of supreme true complete enlightenment was inspired in two hundred of the Brahmins in the assembly.

“I too, with faith and wonder, bowed at the good man’s feet, removed a string of pearls worth a hundred thousand from my neck and presented it to him. Then I said to him, ‘Take this pearl necklace and give it to whomever you wish.’

“He accepted the pearl necklace, divided it into two parts, and gave one part to the poor of the city who were despised by all people; the second part he presented to the Realized One Dusprasaha. He demonstrated a miracle by which the world named Marici and the Realized One named Dusprasaha were seen by all the groups. The pearl necklace stood above the head of the Realized One Dusprasaha in a perfect square, a beautiful sight.

“Having displayed this miracle, he said, ‘A donor as generous as the Realized One who recognizes the poor of the city as worthy, giving

everything away with a nondiscriminatory attitude of impartial great compassion, not seeking any reward, has accomplished true sacrifice.'

"Then the poor of the city, having seen that miracle and heard that teaching, conceived the thought of supreme true complete enlightenment.

"For this reason I cannot go to ask after the illness of that good man."

And thus the bodhisattvas too, even those great beings, were unable to go, telling all about their conversations with that good man and the various instructions he gave.

4. Consolation in Illness

Then the Blessed One said to Manjusri the perpetual youth, “Manjusri, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to ask after his illness.”

Even Manjusri said, “Blessed One, the Licchavi Vimalakirti is hard to approach, quick-witted in regard to profound principle, skilled in producing paradoxical statements, resounding statements, with continuous presence of mind, his intellect dedicated without interference in the midst of all people, conversant with all the works of bodhisattvas; secure in the secret state of all bodhisattvas and individual illuminates, he is skilled in turning away from all destructive states. Sporting great higher knowledge, he is practiced in expedients and insight. He has attained the finest and best of the undivided domain of the non-dual realm of reality, expert in teaching arrayed in endless forms by means of the one array of the realm of reality. He sees distinctly, knowing the array of capabilities of all people’s faculties, has reached the goal of skill in means, and is able to settle questions. He cannot be satisfied with a paltry defense and preparation. But with the support of Buddha I would like to talk to him truthfully as best I can.”

Then it occurred to the bodhisattvas, great disciples, Sakras, Brahmas, world guardians, and gods and nymphs in that assembly, “With Manjusri the youth and that good man as the speakers, there is sure to be talk communicating great truths.” So a hundred thousand bodhisattvas, five hundred great disciples, many Sakras, Brahmas, and world guardians, and many hundreds of thousands of deities, went at Manjusri’s invitation to hear the teaching. So Manjusri, in the form of a youth, accompanied by all those bodhisattvas, great disciples, Sakras, Brahmas, world guardians, and deities, went at their head into the metropolis of Vaisali.

Then it occurred to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, “Manjusri the perpetual youth and a huge entourage are coming; so let this house of mine magically become empty.” Then his house magically appeared empty. There wasn’t even a doorkeeper there. There was only one seat, a couch where Vimalakirti lay sick; other than that, there was not a seat to be seen there, not even a couch or a bench.

Then Manjusri and company came to Vimalakirti’s abode, approached and entered, and saw the house empty. There was not even a doorman. So where Vimalakirti lay they didn’t see a single chair, couch, bench, or seat. Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti saw Manjusri the perpetual youth; seeing him, he said, “Come Manjusri, you are welcome; come, you are

very welcome. You show up without having come before, without having been seen, without having been heard.”

Manjusri said, “Sir, one who has come as you say does not still come, and one who has gone does not still go. Why is that? Coming is not perceived in what hasn’t come, and going is not perceived in what is gone. Whatever appears for whatever reason, that is not yet to be seen.

“I hope, good man, that your condition is bearable; I hope you can be cured; I hope your movements are not shaky; I hope pains are decreasing and not increasing. The Blessed One too said he wishes you little pain, little fever, and little suffering; that you may get about easily; that you have the strength to support yourself comfortably, and that pleasant feeling abides.

“Sir, how did this illness of yours occur? How long has it been there? What is it connected to? When will it be allayed?”

Vimalakirti said, “Manjusri, this illness of mine will last as long as ignorance and craving for existence; my illness will last as long as the illness of all beings. When all beings are free of illness, then illness will not happen to me either. Why? Manjusri, a bodhisattva’s place in the common flow is beings, and illness is located in the common flow. When all beings are freed of illness, then the bodhisattva too becomes free of illness.

“Manjusri, it is like when the single son of a distinguished family gets sick, because of his distress both the mother and father get sick. As long as that single son has not become free of illness, so long will both the mother and father be pained. Manjusri, in the same way a bodhisattva is fond of all people as of an only child; when all people are sick, the bodhisattva too becomes sick. When people are not ill, the bodhisattva too is free of sickness. As for your question about where this illness comes from, Manjusri, the illness of bodhisattvas comes from great compassion.”

Manjusri said, “Sir, why is there no one around in this empty house?”

He said, “Manjusri, all Buddha-fields are also empty.”

Manjusri said, “How are they empty?”

He said, “They are empty due to emptiness.”

Manjusri said, "What is empty in emptiness?"

He said, "Conception is empty due to emptiness."

Manjusri said, "Is emptiness impossible to conceive?"

He said, "Total imagination therein being empty, emptiness indeed has no thought construction referring to emptiness."

Manjusri said, "Sir, is emptiness to be sought anywhere?"

He said, "Manjusri, emptiness is to be sought through the sixty-two trends of opinion."

Manjusri said, "Whence are the sixty-two trends of opinion to be sought?"

He said, "They are to be sought in the liberation of one who realizes truth."

Manjusri said, "From where is this liberation of one who realizes truth to be sought?"

He said, "It is to be sought from the behavior of the original mind of all beings."

"Manjusri, you ask why I have no retinue. All demons and false teachers are my retinue. Why? Demons are those who praise the common flow of existence, and the common flow is the retinue of a bodhisattva. In the midst of false teachers who praise trends of opinion, a bodhisattva is unmoved by all trends of opinion. Therefore all demons and all false teachers are my retinue."

Manjusri said, "Sir, of what kind is your illness?"

Vimalakirti said, "Formless and invisible."

Manjusri said, "Is the illness connected to the body, or is it connected to the mind?"

Vimalakirti said, "Because of detachment from the body, it is not connected to the body. Because of the illusory nature of thought, it is

not connected to the mind.”

Manjusri said, “Sir, which element of the four elements—earth, water, fire, air-space—is affected?”

Vimalakirti said, “Whatever the elements of illness of all beings, I am sick because of that. Manjusri, how is an ailing bodhisattva to be consoled by a bodhisattva?”

Manjusri said, “By noting the body is impermanent, not by unknowing dispassion. By noting the body is painful, not by a taste for nirvana. By noting the body is selfless, and by the development of people to maturity. By noting the body as if at rest, but not by extinction. By leading away from all bad conduct, not by transmigration. By noting that one should become a master of medicine eliminating all illness by means of one’s own illness, undertaking fundamentally pure effort, free of greed, to actualize all roots of good in beginningless and endless compassionate mindfulness of other ailing beings, and mindfulness of what is to be done for the benefit of beings. That is how an ailing bodhisattva is to be consoled by a bodhisattva.”

Manjusri then said, “Sir, how should one’s own mind be contemplated by an ailing bodhisattva?”

Vimalakirti said, “Manjusri, one’s own mind should be contemplated by a bodhisattva thus: disorder comes from the encompassing occurrence of activity based on error without primal existence; no ultimate objective reality can be found belonging to the phenomenon called sickness. Why? This body is formed from four major constituents: in those elements there is no ruler or progenitor. This body having no soul, except for adherence to self here, what is called illness is ungraspable in an ultimate sense. So, without adherence to self, one should abide in recognition of the root of illness. Thereby, with the concept of self removed, the concept of phenomena should be engendered.

“For this body is a combination of many phenomena: when it is being born, it is phenomena occurring; when it is passing away, it is phenomena passing away. Phenomena are not conscious of each other, and do not know each other. On occurring, those phenomena do not think, ‘I am occurring,’ and on passing away do not think, ‘I am passing away.’

“Therefore, to understand the concept of phenomena, one should think, ‘Whatever I conceive of these phenomena is error, and error is indeed a serious illness. I should get rid of illness and strive to eliminate sickness.’

“What is getting rid of sickness in that context? It means abandoning egoism and possessiveness. What is abandoning egoism and possessiveness? It means detachment from duality. Then what is the absence of involvement in the internal or the external? It means unmoved, truly unperturbed, detached calm, thorough equanimity.

“What is equanimity in that context? The equality of nirvana with my equanimity. Why? Because of the emptiness of both me and nirvana. How are these both empty? As conventions of terminology they are both empty, so they are not absolutely real. Thus illness is no exception to that perception of equality. Since there is no altering emptiness, illusion too is emptiness.

“Sensation should be viewed as insensate, so the extinction of sensation is not to be actualized. Having attained the Buddhas’ teaching, one should let go of both sensations, but without stopping great compassion for all people in bad states. This is how sickness is expelled in these people by meditating wisely. Nothing is to be suppressed or opposed with these people; for the sake of perfect knowledge of its substratum, whence illness occurs, they should be told the truth.

“What is its substratum? Clinging is the substratum. As long as there is dependence supported by clinging, so long is there a substratum of illness. Clinging where? Clinging to the things of the world. What is perfect knowledge of the substratum of clinging? It is having no dependence and no grasping. No grasping means no clinging. What is no grasping? It means both the notion of self and the notion of other cannot be grasped. Hence it is called no grasping.

“Manjusri, this is how one’s own mind is to be contemplated by an ailing bodhisattva in order to abandon old age, sickness, death, and birth. Manjusri, such is the illness of bodhisattvas; were it not so, effort would be meaningless. Just as one is called a hero on account of killing enemies, one is called a bodhisattva on account of cessation of the suffering of old age, sickness, and death.

“It should be observed by the ailing bodhisattva, ‘As my illness is unreal, so too is the illness of all beings unreal.’ Observing in this way, excluding the engendering of great compassion for beings without

having dropped the notion of benefit, one engenders great compassion toward beings eliminating incidental afflictions. Why is that? With great compassion that has fallen into the notion of benefit, a bodhisattva gets tired of starting over repeatedly. A bodhisattva with great compassion in which the notion of benefit does not occur does not tire of starting over repeatedly. Regenerating without being possessed in mind, one regenerates virtually liberated, comes forth virtually liberated. Regenerating virtually liberated, coming forth virtually liberated, one becomes strong enough to be able to teach bodhisattvas' methods of liberation from bondage. As has been said by the Blessed One, there is no such thing as releasing another from bondage while in bondage oneself; it is possible that one may release another from bondage when one is liberated oneself. Therefore a bodhisattva should act in a manner conducive to liberation, not to bondage.

“In that case, what is bondage, what is liberation? Choosing liberation from existence without expedient means is bondage for a bodhisattva; active engagement in existence with expedient means is liberation. Relishing attainment of meditation and concentration without expedient means is bondage for a bodhisattva; relishing meditation and concentration with expedient means is liberation. Insight not expressed by expedient means is bondage; insight completed by expedient means is liberation. Expedient means not expressed with insight is bondage; expedient means perfected by insight is liberation.

“Then what is the bondage of insight not expressed by expedient means? Comprehension of emptiness, signlessness, and purposelessness without comprehension of the characteristics of Buddha, the adornment of Buddha-fields, and developing people to maturity, is insight not expressed by expedient means, and is bondage.

“Then what is liberation by insight completed by expedient means? It is focusing the mind on the characteristics of Buddhas, adornment of Buddha-fields, and developing people to maturity, while mastering emptiness, signlessness, and purposelessness—this is insight completed by expedient means, and is liberation.

“Manjusri, then an ailing bodhisattva should think on these things thus: understanding the impermanence, pain, emptiness, and selflessness in body, mind and illness—this is that insight. Non-arousal of the body by detachment from illness, along with application to effort for the benefit of beings, without leaving the common flow—that is expedient means.

“Furthermore, understanding that body, mind, and illness, being mutually continuous, are neither new nor old—that is insight. Not consummating the cessation and extinction of body, mind, and illness—that is expedient means.

“Manjusri, an ailing bodhisattva should contemplate his own mind thus, but should not abide in either reflection or no reflection. Why? If one abides in reflection, that is the state of the ordinary person; if one abides in no reflection, that is the state of a disciple. Where there is no fixation is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What is not the realm of ordinary people and not the realm of sages, that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What is not within reach of afflictions even in the realm of the common flow—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What has no resort to final complete nirvana even in the realm of realizing nirvana—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm transcending all destructive states even in the realm of the four destructive forces—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What has no influence of untimely attainment of knowledge even in the realm of the quest for all-knowing knowledge—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What has no influence of untimely acquaintance with truths even in the realm of knowledge of the four truths—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What has no resort to deliberate grasping desirous of being, even in the realm of inner examination—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What has no domain of fixed attainment, even in the realm of examination of non-origination—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What has no resort to objects of all views, even in the realm of dependent occurrence—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What has no influence of affection and attachment even in the context of association with all people—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What has no scope for termination or continuity, even in the realm of distinction—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What has no resort to construing the realm of truth as separate, even in the midst of the world—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“Taking to seeking virtue in every way, even in the context of emptiness—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of diligent effort to focus on people who can be liberated, even in the context of signlessness—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of deliberate demonstration of states of existence, even in the context of purposelessness—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of building all roots of good ceaselessly, even where there is no construction—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of studying the minds and behaviors of all people, even in the course of the six perfections—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What has no scope for termination of impulses, even in the domain of the six forms of higher knowledge—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of ungraspability of wrong paths in the realm of the abode of truth—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The power to avoid involvement in birth in the Brahma world even in the course of cultivating immeasurable kindness, compassion, joy, and impartiality—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“What is not within the range of any distress in the realm of the six recollections, that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The power not to be born under the influence of attainment of absorption even in the realm of attainment of absorption in meditation—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“Where there is no predominance of body, sensation, mind, or phenomenon even in the realm of the four points of mindfulness—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“Where there is no separate objectification of good and bad in the realm of exertion—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of spontaneous mastery of bases of spiritual powers even in the realm of accomplishment of the bases of spiritual powers—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of knowledge of higher and lower faculties of all people in the realm of the five faculties—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of enjoyment of the ten powers of the Realized in the realm of absorption in the five powers—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of skill in knowledge through intelligent investigation in the realm of accomplishment of the seven branches of enlightenment—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of ungraspability of wrong paths in the realm of reliance on the path—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The ability not to fall into final cessation in the realm of equal undertaking of cessation and observation—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of establishing the body of a Buddha with marks and refinements of distinction even in the realm of awareness of the inert aspect of all things—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of continuous striving for Buddhahood even in the course of showing the practice of disciples and individual illuminates—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of showing modes of conduct according to the inclinations of all people even in the realm of accord with the truth of the ultimate purity of the essential nature of everything—that is the realm of bodhisattvas.

“The realm of turning the wheel of the teaching without showing total complete nirvana, and the realm of not giving up the practice of bodhisattvas—this, assuredly, is the realm of bodhisattvas.”

As this teaching was being expounded, eight thousand of the deities who had come with Manjusri the perpetual youth conceived the will for

supreme true complete enlightenment.

5. Teaching on Inconceivable Liberation

It occurred to the venerable Sariputra, “Since there’s not so much as a seat in this house, where do these bodhisattvas and senior disciples sit?”

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti, knowing venerable Sariputra’s thought, said to him, “Honorable Sariputra, did you come for truth, or did you come for a seat?”

He said, “I’ve come for truth, not for a seat.”

Vimalakirti said, “Honorable Sariputra, anyone who seeks truth anywhere would not be doing so for the sake of his own body, so where does concern for a seat come from? Honorable Sariputra, desire for truth is not desire for form, sensation, perception, mental constructions, or consciousness, not desire for the clusters, elements, and media of sense. Desire for truth is not desire for the realms of desire, form, or the formless. Desire for truth is not desire devoted to Buddha, not desire devoted to the teaching or the community.

“Furthermore, honorable Sariputra, desire for truth is not desire for knowledge of suffering, not desire to eliminate accumulation, not desire to actualize extinction, not desire to realize the path. Why? Truth has no conceptualization and no verbalization. So the proposition that suffering is to be recognized, accumulation is to be eliminated, extinction is to be actualized, and the path is to be realized, is not desire for truth; that is desire for conceptualization.

“Honorable Sariputra, truth is calm, peaceful; so whatever involves production and destruction is not desire for truth, not desire for discernment; it is desire for production and destruction.

“Moreover, honorable Sariputra, truth is passionless and pure; so if there is any attachment to anything, even nirvana, that is not desire for truth, it is desire for passion and emotion. Truth has no object; consideration of objects is not desire for truth, it is desire for objects. Truth has no coming or going; any teaching where there is grasping or rejection is not desire for truth, it is desire for taking and leaving.

“Truth has no location; those who are attached to a place are not desirous of truth. Truth is empty, signless; those who follow indications of consciousness are not desirous of truth, they are desirous of signs. Truth has no company; those who dwell with anything at all are not

desirous of truth, they are desirous of dwelling. Truth is not seen, heard, thought, or discerned; those who act on what is seen, heard, thought, and discerned are desirous of the seen, heard, thought, or discerned, but not desirous of truth.

“Honorable Sariputra, truth is not constructed or unconstructed; those involved with the constructed are not desirous of truth, they are desirous of grasping the constructed.

“So, honorable Sariputra, if you seek truth, you shouldn’t seek for anything at all.”

As this teaching was enunciated, five hundred deities developed pure objective perception of things.

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to Manjusri the perpetual youth, “Manjusri, having journeyed to Buddha-fields in the ten directions, to countless hundreds of thousands of Buddha-fields, in which Buddha-field did you see the very best lion seats, complete with all good qualities?”

Manjusri said, “East of here, past as many Buddha-fields as grains of sand in thirty-two Ganges Rivers, there is a world called Merudhvaja; there is a Realized One named Merupradipa Raja presently living there. That Realized One is eighty-four hundred thousand leagues tall. That Blessed One’s lion seat is sixty-eight hundred thousand leagues in size. The bodhisattvas there are forty-two hundred thousand leagues tall, and those bodhisattvas’ lion seats are thirty-four hundred thousand leagues in size. Sir, in that Buddha-field of the Buddha Merupradipa Raja, the world Merudhvaja, the lion seats are best of all, complete with all good qualities.”

Then, at that time, having conceived such a wish, the Licchavi Vimalakirti performed such an exercise of mystic power that thirty-two thousand lions seats this high, this wide, and this beautiful, such as had never been seen by those bodhisattvas, those senior disciples, or those Sakras, Brahmas, world guardians, and deities, were sent by the Realized One Merupradipa Raja of the world Merudhvaja. Having come through the upper atmosphere, they were placed in Vimalakirti’s house. As thirty-two thousand various lion seats were being brought with no room, that house too appeared that spacious. Yet the metropolis of Vaisali was not obstructed, and the four-continent world of Jambudvipa was not obstructed; they appeared the same as before in every way.

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to Manjusri the perpetual youth, “Manjusri, you and these bodhisattvas sit in these lion seats with bodies made to conform to the lion seats.” Then the bodhisattvas who had acquired higher knowledge, their bodies made forty-two thousand leagues tall, sat on the lion seats. As for the bodhisattvas who were novices, they were unable to sit on those lion seats.

So then the Licchavi Vimalakirti taught those bodhisattvas in such a way that they would accomplish five kinds of higher knowledge. Once they had attained higher knowledge, they projected bodies forty-two thousand leagues tall by magical power and sat on those lion seats.

As those senior disciples were unable to sit in those lion seats, the Licchavi Vimalakirti then said to the venerable Sariputra, “Honorable Sariputra, sit on a lion seat.”

He said, “Good man, those seats are too high and too big—I cannot sit down.”

Vimalakirti said, “Honorable Sariputra, pay respects to the Blessed Realized One Merupradipa, and you will be able to sit down.”

Then those senior disciples respectfully saluted that Blessed Realized One Merupradipa Raja, and after that sat on the lion seats.

Now the venerable Sariputra said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, “Sir, it is a wonder how thousands of such a variety of lion seats so high and so huge can fit into such a small house, and the city of Vaisali is not blocked off, and the villages, cities, towns, market places, kingdoms, and metropolises of Jambudvīpa are not blocked off, or even the whole four-continent world, and even the abodes of deities, water spirits, ghosts, celestial musicians, titans, rocs, centaurs, and serpents are not blocked off, but continue to appear as before.”

The Licchavi Vimalakirti said, “Honorable Sariputra, for the Realized and for bodhisattvas there is a liberation called inconceivable. Dwelling in that inconceivable liberation, a bodhisattva places Sumeru, king of mountains, high and huge as it is, inside a mustard seed, showing such a deed without the mustard seed expanding or any diminution in Sumeru. And the four imperial deities and the thirty-three deities do not know where they’ve been put, but the king of mountains Sumeru inside a mustard seed is perceived and is seen by other beings who can be edified by exercise of mystic power. This, honorable Sariputra, is bodhisattvas’ entry into the realm of inconceivable liberation.

“Furthermore, honorable Sariputra, setting the four great oceans in a single pore of a bodhisattva abiding in inconceivable liberation does not hurt the creatures of the water—the fish, turtles, porpoises, frogs; and it does not occur to the rainmakers, celestial musicians, or titans, ‘Where have we been placed?’ As this performance of the bodhisattva appears, there is no harm or disturbance to those beings.

“This same bodhisattva abiding in inconceivable liberation takes a billion-world universe in his right hand like a potter’s wheel and spins it, hurling it past as many worlds as grains of sand in the Ganges River, and the beings thrown do not know where they’ve been removed from or where they’ve come to. Then, too, when taken and put in their own place they’re unaware of any coming or going, even if that action is evident.

“Also, honorable Sariputra, there are people who require immeasurable time to be guided, and there are those who can be guided in a brief time. So the bodhisattva abiding in inconceivable liberation, in order to guide people who require immeasurable time to be guided, shows a week as the passing of an eon; and to people who can be guided in a brief time, shows an eon as passing in a week.

“Thus does a bodhisattva abiding in inconceivable liberation show the arrays of good qualities of all Buddha-fields in one Buddha-field, and, placing all the beings in the palm of the right hand, going by exercise of mystic power fast as thought, shows all Buddha-fields even without having moved from one Buddha-field. Whatever the offerings made to the Blessed Buddhas in the ten directions, the bodhisattva shows in a single pore. The moon, sun, and stars in the ten directions too the bodhisattva shows in a single pore.

“Whatever winds arise in the ten directions, the bodhisattva inhales them all without physical harm, and without destruction of the plants and trees of those Buddha-fields. The bodhisattva swallows all the eon-burning fire incinerating the Buddha-fields of the ten directions and does whatever work he has to do. Going downward past as many Buddha-fields as grains of sand in the Ganges River, he tosses a Buddha-field upward, ascends above as many Buddha-fields as grains of sand in the Ganges River, and tosses it like a leaf picked up with a needle tip by a strong man.

“Thus a bodhisattva abiding in inconceivable liberation takes on the form of all beings. The bodhisattva takes on the form of a law-giving

ruler, and likewise takes on the form of a world guardian, a Sakra, Brahma, disciple, individual illuminate, all beings, or a Buddha.

“That bodhisattva is expert in all the high, middle and low sounds of all beings in the ten directions. Whatever those sounds communicate, the bodhisattva turns them into the voice of Buddha, the Teaching and the Community, expressing impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and selflessness through that voice. Whatever form the Blessed Buddhas of the ten directions show by way of teaching, the bodhisattva causes to be expressed through all those voices.

“Honorable Sariputra, this is only an indication of something of entry into the domain of the bodhisattva abiding in inconceivable liberation. Honorable Sariputra, in reality the entry into the domain of the bodhisattva abiding in inconceivable liberation could not be told in more than an eon or even beyond that.”

Then the elder Kasyapa senior, having heard this exposition of bodhisattvas’ inconceivable liberation, marveled; he said to elder Sariputra, “Venerable Sariputra, just as when rites of all forms are shown to someone born blind, not one of those forms is seen by that person, similarly, venerable Sariputra, when this entry into inconceivable liberation is pointed out to all disciples and individual illuminates, like those born blind, they have no eye to see it, and not a single door to the inconceivable is evident. Having heard about this inconceivable liberation, what clear-sighted person would not conceive the thought of supreme true complete enlightenment?

“What shall we do now, we whose faculties are lost, like scorched or rotten seed, not fit for the Great Vehicle? Having heard this teaching, all of us disciples and individual illuminates let out a cry of distress that can be heard throughout the universe. When all bodhisattvas have heard of this inconceivable liberation, just as a young prince will gladly receive the crown on his head as a matter of law, they should develop their own power of confidence in it. What can any demons do when there is confidence in inconceivable liberation?”

Presented with this instruction by the elder Kasyapa senior, thirty-two thousand celestials conceived the thought of supreme true complete enlightenment.

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the elder Kasyapa senior, “Honorable elder Kasyapa, whatever demons are doing demons’ deeds in the innumerable worlds in the ten directions, they are all

bodhisattvas abiding in inconceivable liberation acting like demons by the strategic skills in order to develop people to maturity. Honorable elder Kasyapa, those in countless worlds in the ten directions who form a relation seeking from bodhisattvas hands, feet, ears, noses, blood, sinew, bone, marrow, eyes, torso, head, limbs, body parts, kingdom, domain, country, wives, sons, daughters, servants, horses, elephants, chariots, vehicles, gold, silver, jewels, pearls, conches, crystals, coral, cat's-eye, priceless gems, food, drink, medicine, or clothing, all those beggars, who are mostly bodhisattvas abiding in inconceivable liberation, are showing this steadfastness of will of bodhisattvas by means of strategic skill. Why is that? Honorable Kasyapa, as bodhisattvas teach by means of such fierce mortification, unless an opportunity is created for people there is no power to oppress bodhisattvas; unless the opportunity is created, it is not possible for a mass of people to bring about killing.

“Honorable Kasyapa, just as a firefly cannot approach the light of the sun, in the same way, honorable Kasyapa, if an opportunity is not created a bodhisattva cannot be successfully attacked by people. Honorable Kasyapa, just as a mammoth elephant cannot be kicked by a donkey, in the same way a bodhisattva cannot be pressured by anyone who is not a bodhisattva. If, of course, a bodhisattva should pressure a bodhisattva, a bodhisattva puts up with the pressure of a bodhisattva.

“Honorable elder Kasyapa, this is an introduction to the power of knowledge of strategy of bodhisattvas abiding in inconceivable liberation.”

6. The Goddess

Then Manjusri the perpetual youth said to Vimalakirti the Licchavi, “Good man, how should all beings be seen by a bodhisattva?”

He said, “Manjusri, as an intelligent person views the moon in water, so should all beings be seen by a bodhisattva. Manjusri, as a magician views a human being produced by magic, so should all beings be seen by a bodhisattva. Manjusri, as a face is seen in a mirror, so should all beings be seen by a bodhisattva.

“Manjusri, all beings should be seen by bodhisattvas like water in a mirage. Manjusri, all beings should be seen by a bodhisattva like the resounding of an echo, like a heap of clouds in the sky, like the past of a clump of foam, like the arising and bursting of bubbles, as comparable to the pith of a banana tree, like a bolt of lightning, like the fifth of four elements, like the seventh of six senses, like the sight of form in the formless states, like the growth of sprouts from scorched seed, like a frog’s fur, like enjoyment of sport in someone who wants to die, like an initiate’s idea of a lasting body; like the third existence of a once-returner; a non-returner’s descent into the womb; passion, hostility and folly in a saint; envy, immorality, malice, or viciousness in a bodhisattva who has attained tolerance; propensities in a Realized One; the sight of form by one born blind; the inhalation and exhalation of one who has attained absorption in extinction; the footprint of a bird in the sky; the erection of a eunuch; the child-bearing of a barren woman; the occurrence of afflictions in an emanation of a Realized One; seeing dream visions in waking consciousness; afflictions where there is no mental construction; fire occurring for no reason; like the regeneration of one who is completely extinct—thus should all beings be seen by a bodhisattva.

“Manjusri, thus, all beings should be viewed with the consciousness of selflessness in the highest sense.”

Manjusri said, “Sir, if all beings are to be seen thus by bodhisattvas, then how will kindness toward all beings come about?”

Vimalakirti said, “Manjusri, when a bodhisattva observes, ‘Having learned this truth, I should show it to these people,’ then kindness toward all beings, a true refuge, comes about: tranquil kindness on account of having no appropriation; kindness without sorrow on account of having no afflictions; kindness of whatever likeness on account of sameness of past, present, and future; kindness without

strife on account of not being overwhelmed; non-dual kindness, on account of inside and outside not being divided; imperturbable kindness, on account of stability; steadfast kindness, on account of the diamond of unbreakable intent; pure kindness, on account of inherent purity; impartial kindness, on account of impartiality of heart; the kindness of saints, on account of killing enemies; the kindness of bodhisattvas, on account of unstoppable development of people; and also the kindness of the Realized, on account of finding truth; the kindness of Buddhas, on account of skillfully awakening people from slumber; self-existent kindness, on account of self-awakening; the kindness of enlightenment, on account of essential equality; kindness without imposition, on account of abandoning love and hate; the kindness of great compassion, manifesting the Great Vehicle; indefatigable kindness, on account of observing emptiness and selflessness; the kindness of giving out teaching, on account of having no closed fist as a teacher; the kindness of character, having consideration for people with bad habits; the kindness of tolerance, to protect self and others; the kindness of diligence, bearing the burdens of all people; the kindness of meditation, not relishing it; the kindness of insight, by reason of timely accomplishment; the kindness of expedient means, showing all doors; kindness without hypocrisy, on account of purification of intention; stable kindness, on account of regret; the kindness of determination, being without blemish; kindness that is not deceptive, being without artificiality; the kindness of bliss, establishing the bliss of Buddhas. Manjusri, *that* is the kindness of a bodhisattva.”

Manjusri said, “What is a bodhisattva’s great compassion?”

Vimalakirti said, “Whatever root of good there may be, that one gives to all beings.”

Manjusri asked, “What is a bodhisattva’s great joy?”

Vimalakirti said, “Being pleased in mind from giving, without regret.”

Manjusri said, “What is a bodhisattva’s impartiality?”

Vimalakirti said, “The production of benefit for both.”

Manjusri said, “To what should one who is anxious due to dread of the common flow of existence resort?”

Vimalakirti said, "A bodhisattva who is anxious due to dread of the common flow should resort to the magnanimity of a Buddha."

Manjusri said, "How should one who wishes to keep up the magnanimity of a Buddha behave?"

Vimalakirti said, "One who wishes to keep up the magnanimity of a Buddha should behave impartially toward all people."

Manjusri said, "Where is one who wishes to keep up impartiality toward all people to stand?"

Vimalakirti said, "One who wishes to keep up impartiality toward all people should stand by service to the liberation of all people."

Manjusri said, "How is one who wishes to effect the liberation of all people to do so?"

Vimalakirti said, "One who wishes to liberate all people should free them from afflictions."

Manjusri said, "How should one who wishes to eliminate afflictions accomplish it?"

Vimalakirti said, "One who wishes to eliminate afflictions must undertake to do so wisely."

Manjusri said, "How does one go about doing so wisely?"

Vimalakirti said, "Application of non-production and non-destruction is wise application."

Manjusri said, "What is non-production, what is non-destruction?"

Vimalakirti said, "Non-production of evil, and non-destruction of good."

Manjusri said, "What is the root of good and evil?"

Vimalakirti said, "The notion of an enduring body is the root."

Manjusri said, "What is the root of the notion of an enduring body?"

Vimalakirti said, “The root of the notion of an enduring body is passion.”

Manjusri said, “What is the root of passion?”

Vimalakirti said, “The root of passion is mental construction of what doesn’t really exist.”

Manjusri said, “What is the root of mental construction of what doesn’t really exist?”

Vimalakirti said, “The root of mental construction of what doesn’t really exist is inverted conception.”

Manjusri said, “What is the root of inverted conception?”

Vimalakirti said, “The root of inverted conception is lacking foundation.”

Manjusri said, “What is the root of lacking foundation?”

Vimalakirti said, “The lack of foundation, Manjusri, has no root whatsoever. In that sense all things are established on a basis that has no foundation.”

Then a goddess dwelling somewhere in that house, hearing this instructive exposition of those great bodhisattvas, was thrilled, enraptured, transported; showing herself in her gross body, she strewed celestial flowers on those great bodhisattvas and senior disciples.

The flowers showered on the bodies of the bodhisattvas fell to the ground. The flowers that fell on the bodies of the senior disciples stuck right there and didn’t fall to the ground. Then those senior disciples tried to brush the flowers off by means of mystical powers, but they still didn’t drop off.

Then the goddess said to venerable Sariputra, “Honorable Sariputra, why get rid of the flowers?”

He said, “Goddess, these flowers are inappropriate, so I am removing these flowers.”

The goddess said, “Honorable Sariputra, don’t talk that way. Why? These flowers are proper. Why? Because the flowers have no false discrimination. It is elder Sariputra himself who construes and discriminates where there are no false discriminations. Honorable Sariputra, what those who have gone forth into the discipline of the teaching conceive and falsely discriminate—*that* is not proper. While the elder conceives and discriminates falsely, having no false discrimination is what is proper.

“Look, honorable Sariputra—flowers don’t stick to the body in the case of the great bodhisattvas, on account of having abandoned false discrimination of mental constructions. Just as nonhuman beings can get at a human being in a state of fright, in the same way form, sound, scent, flavor, and feeling can get at those who are anxious due to dread of the common flow of existence. As for those who are free of fear from all affliction by conceptions, what can form, sound, scent, flavor, or feeling do to them? The flowers stick to those in whom the energy of habit has not been eliminated; the flowers do not stick to the body of those in whom habit energy has been eliminated. So the flowers are not stuck to the body of those who have destroyed all habit energy.”

The venerable Sariputra said to that goddess, “Goddess, how long have you been in this house?”

The goddess said, “For as long as you have been in liberation, elder.”

He said, “Goddess, you have only now been seen in this house.”

She said, “Elder, how long have you been in liberation?”

Now the elder became silent.

She said, “Why are you, the elder foremost in great insight, silent, and do not answer the question immediately now?”

He said, “Goddess, liberation is impossible to speak about; I don’t know how to describe it.”

She said, “Whatever words are spoken by the elder are all manifestations of liberation. Why? Liberation is ungraspable, not internal, not external, and not both. In the same way, those words are not internal, not external, and not both, and are ungraspable. So,

honorable Sariputra, don't understand liberation as removal of words. Why? Since impartiality in all things is the liberation of the wise."

He said, "Goddess, isn't liberation when passion, hostility, and folly are gone?"

The goddess said, "To say that liberation is when passion, hostility, and folly are gone is instruction for the conceited. For those who are not conceited, to them passion, hostility, and folly are inherently liberation."

Then the venerable Sariputra said to the goddess, "Very good, Goddess! What have you attained, what have you realized, to be so eloquent?"

She said, "Honorable Sariputra, I haven't attained anything or realized anything. Hence my eloquence is thus. As for those who think, 'I have attained, I have realized,' in the discipline of the teaching, properly speaking, they are called conceited."

He said, "Goddess, are you on the vehicle of disciples, the vehicle of individual illuminates, or the great vehicle?"

She said, "When demonstrating the vehicle of disciples, I am on the vehicle of disciples; by entering into the door of twelve-part interdependent production, I am on the vehicle of individual illuminates; in not abandoning great compassion I am on the Great Vehicle.

"Honorable Sariputra, it is like when one enters a grove of trees bearing fragrant flowers one does not smell the odor of castor oil plants; rather, when one enters a grove of trees bearing fragrant flowers one smells the fragrance of the flowers: in the same way, honorable Sariputra, one who dwells in this house full of the fragrance of the qualities of Buddhahood do not smell the scent of discipleship or individual illumination.

"Honorable Sariputra, any Sakras, Brahmas, world guardians, deities, rainmakers, ghosts, celestial musicians, titans, rocs, centaurs, monsters, or serpents that have entered this house have also gone off inspired with the thought of enlightenment by the fragrance of the qualities of Buddhahood after having heard this good man's teaching.

"Honorable Sariputra, in twelve years in this house, except for talk devoted to great kindness and great compassion, and talk concerning

the inconceivable qualities of Buddhas, I have never heard talk associated with disciples or individual illuminates.

“Honorable Sariputra, in this house eight wonderful marvelous phenomena are always manifesting. What eight?

“In this house there is always a golden light so night and day are not perceived, and the sun and moon are not seen in this house. This is the first wonderful marvel.

“Furthermore, honorable Sariputra, those who enter this house are no longer tormented by afflictions once they have entered. This is the second wonderful marvel.

“Also, honorable Sariputra, in this house there are always Sakras, Brahmas, world guardians, and bodhisattvas from all Buddha-fields present. This is the third wonderful marvel.

“Also, honorable Sariputra, in this house there is always talk going on concerning the six perfections and proclaiming the truth, and talk of the wheel of teaching that never turns back. This is the fourth wonderful marvel.

“Also, honorable Sariputra, in this house the sound of celestial and human drums and singing is always being produced; the countless notes of the teachings of Buddhas are produced at all times by those drums. This is the fifth wonderful marvel.

“Also, honorable Sariputra, in this house there are four inexhaustible storerooms full of all kinds of jewels; by that capacity a great inexhaustible vessel is obtained by all the poor and distressed. This is the sixth wonderful marvel.

“Also, honorable Sariputra, innumerable Realized Ones of the ten directions, such as Sakyamuni, Amitabha, Aksobhya, Ratnasri, Ratnarcis, Ratnacandra, Ratnavyuha, Duspaha, Sarvarthasiddha, Maharatna, Sinhaprasiddhi, and Sinhavara gather in this house as soon as this good man thinks of them, expound an entryway into truth called the secret of those who arrive at reality, and then go back. This is the seventh wonderful marvel.

“Also, honorable Sariputra, in this house the arrays of all celestial abodes and the adornments of good qualities of all Buddha-fields

appear. This is the eighth wonderful marvel.

“Honorable Sariputra, with these eight wondrous, marvelous phenomena appearing in this house, seeing such an inconceivable state, who would desire the state of a disciple?”

He said, “Goddess, why not change from your female state?”

She said, “I’ve been looking for my female state for twelve years and to this day haven’t found it. Honorable Sariputra, if a magician said to a woman he had conjured, ‘Why not change from the female state?’ what would it say?”

He said, “There’s nothing really there.”

She said, “Honorable Sariputra, in the same way, with all things having no absolute reality, and being essentially projections of illusion, what are you thinking when you ask ‘Why not change from the female state?’?”

Then the goddess made the elder Sariputra look like her, the goddess, and made herself, the goddess, look like the elder Sariputra. Then the goddess in the form of Sariputra asked Sariputra in the form of the goddess, “Honorable Sariputra, why not change from the female state?”

Sariputra in the form of the goddess said, “I do not understand the change into a female body, my male form disappeared.”

She said, “If you could change out of a female form, elder, all women would change out of the female condition. That is why the community has been told by the Realized One that ‘All phenomena are neither male nor female.’”

Then the goddess released the imposition, and the venerable Sariputra was restored to his own form. Then the goddess said to Sariputra, “Honorable Sariputra, where is your female image?”

He said, “It was neither made nor changed by me.”

She said, “In the same way, all phenomena are neither made nor transformed. ‘Neither made nor transformed’ is something Buddha said.”

He said, "Goddess, when you pass away from here, where will you be reborn?"

She said, "Where emanations of the Realized are born, there I too will be born."

He said, "There is no passing away or rebirth in emanations of the Realized."

She said, "All phenomena likewise have no passing away and regeneration."

He said, "Goddess, how long will it take you to realize enlightenment fully?"

She said, "When, elder, you assume the state of an ordinary person, then I will fully realize enlightenment."

He said, "Goddess, there's no possibility of my assuming the state of an ordinary person."

She said, "Honorable Sariputra, in the same way, there's no possibility of my realizing enlightenment fully. Why? Because enlightenment is established nowhere; hence, since it has no location, nobody finds it."

Elder Sariputra said, "It has been said by the Realized One, 'As many Realized Ones as grains of sand in the Ganges River have become fully enlightened, are becoming fully enlightened, will become fully enlightened.'"

The goddess said, "Honorable Sariputra, 'past, future, and present Buddhas' is reference to a convention of words and thought. There being no Buddhas of past, future, and present, enlightenment is beyond the three times. Have you obtained sainthood, Elder?"

He said, "I've obtained it by reason of no attainment."

She said, "In the same way, it is complete enlightenment because there is no complete enlightenment."

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the venerable elder Sariputra, "Honorable Sariputra, this goddess, having attended ninety-two million tens of millions of Buddhas, sports higher knowledge, has realized her

vows, attained patience, set out on the journey never to turn back; she appears in any state at will, by the power of vows.”

7. The Source of the Realized

Then Manjusri the perpetual youth said to Vimalakirti the Licchavi, “Sir, how then does a bodhisattva master the way to the qualities of Buddhas?”

He said, “Manjusri, when a bodhisattva masters futile ways, then the bodhisattva goes the way to the qualities of Buddhas.”

Manjusri said, “What is a bodhisattva’s mastery of futile ways?”

Vimalakirti said, “When a bodhisattva comprehends the five crimes with immediate consequences, there will be no malice, injury, or hatred. Going to states of hells, yet one is ultimately unstained by all afflictions. Going to states of animals, yet one is free from the darkness of stupidity. Going to states of titans, yet one is free of conceit, arrogance, and insolence. Going to the state of the underworld, yet one is equipped with stores of all virtue and knowledge. Going to an imperturbable formless state, yet one is not reborn in that state.

“Going to a state of passion, yet one is detached from enjoyment of all desires. Going to a state of hostility, one does not hurt anyone. Going to a state of folly, one’s mind is devoted to insightful meditation on all truths. Going to a state of envy, with no expectations for the body or livelihood one gives up inner and outer objects. Going to immoral states while showing fear of even a little imperfection and persisting in all the purifying austerities of ascetics. Going to states of malice, harshness, and enmity, yet abiding in ultimately uncorrupted kindness. Going to lazy states yet undertaking ceaseless effort devoted to seeking all roots of good. Going to states where faculties are misused, yet naturally attaining unfailing attention. Going to states of defective intelligence, yet becoming learned in all worldly and transcendental sciences, having approached perfection of insight. Going to states of hypocritical speech and appearances but skilled in allusion, having undertaken the practice of strategic skill in expedient means. Showing the state of conceit, one comes to know all bonds of the world. Going to states of affliction, one is ultimately free of afflictions, inherently pure by nature.

“Going to the state of devils, yet one is not led by another in the teachings of Buddhas. Going the way of disciples, yet one has people hear teaching they haven’t heard. Going the way of individual illuminates, yet one proceeds from the great compassion aiming to develop all people to maturity. Going to a state of poverty, yet one holds

treasures whose enjoyment is inexhaustible. Going to a state of damaged faculties, yet one is adorned with pleasing features. Going to a state of low caste, by accumulating virtue and knowledge one is reborn from the lineage of the Realized. Going to the state of those who are weak, of bad character, and lazy, one has a body with the pleasing appearance of the original human offspring.

“While showing all people the process of sickness and suffering, one has transcended fear of death, has successfully slain fear. Going the way of enjoyment, one is free of all longings and very observant of the idea of impermanence. A bodhisattva, while showing the various enjoyments of the harem, is still solitary, out of the mire of desire. Going the way of the elements and media of sense, one has attained mental mastery and is adorned with various kinds of brilliance. Going the way of other religions, one does not become a cultist. Going on all the ways of the world, one never turns back. Going to the state of nirvana, one does not abandon connection to the common flow of existence. Manjusri, thus does a bodhisattva go the way to all qualities of Buddhas on futile paths.”

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to Manjusri the perpetual youth, “Manjusri, what is the source of the Realized?”

He said, “Sir, an enduring body is the source of the Realized. Ignorance, becoming, and craving are the source. Passion, hostility, folly, the four errors, five obstructions, six sense fields, seven fixations of consciousness, eight falsehoods, nine malicious things, and ten evil ways of action are the source.

“Sir, this is the source of the Realized. In sum, sir, the paths of the sixty-two views are the source of the Realized.”

Vimalakirti said, “Manjusri, what do you mean?”

Manjusri said, “Sir, it is impossible to generate the thought of supreme true complete enlightenment when staying completely immersed in vision of the unconstructed. It *is* possible to generate the thought of supreme true complete enlightenment by seeing the realities of constructed states as a source of affliction.

“Sir, it is like the fact that fragrant flowers—blue lotus, red lotus, white lotus—do not grow in an arid place, but fragrant flowers—blue lotus, red lotus, white lotus—*do* grow on muddy river banks. In the same way, sir, the qualities of Buddhas do not occur in people whose

attainment is fixed on the unconstructed. The thought of enlightenment occurs after having conceived a notion of an enduring body equal to Mount Sumeru; then enlightened qualities grow.

“Sir, in this manner all afflictions are to be seen as the source of the Realized. Sir, just as it is impossible to obtain a priceless treasure without going into the ocean, similarly, without entering the ocean of afflictions it is impossible to develop all knowledge anymore.”

Then the elder Kasyapa senior applauded Manjusri the perpetual youth, “Good, good, Manjusri! This statement is well said; this is true. Afflictions are the source of the Realized. But how can the likes of us generate the will for enlightenment and completely realize Buddhahood? It is possible even for those involved in the five crimes with immediate consequences to arouse the will for enlightenment and realize the teachings of Buddhas. Just as the five objects of sense are worthless and meaningless to a person bereft of sense faculties, similarly, to a disciple who has completely abandoned all connections, all qualities of Buddhahood are worthless and meaningless, and impossible to focus on.

“Hence, Manjusri, ordinary people are grateful to the Realized One, but disciples are ungrateful. Why? Because an ordinary person develops the will for supreme true complete enlightenment to maintain the continuity of the community of the Three Treasures by hearing about the qualities of Buddhas, whereas a disciple can never arouse the will for supreme true complete enlightenment as long as he lives, even having heard of the powers and skills that are qualities of Buddhas.”

Then a bodhisattva named Sarvarupasamdarsana, ‘Showing All Forms,’ arrived at the assembly and sat down. He said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, “Sir, where are your mother and father, and sons and daughters, servants and workers? Where are your friends and relatives? Where are your retinue, horses, elephants, chariots, footmen, and vehicles?”

The Licchavi Vimalakirti spoke these verses to the bodhisattva Sarvarupasamdarsana:

The mother of purified bodhisattvas
Is the perfection of insight;
The father is skill in means—
The guides are born from these two.

The pleasure of truth is the wife,
Kindness and compassion their daughters.
The two truths are the sons;
Understanding the meaning of emptiness is the house.

Thus all afflictions
Are their obedient disciples.
The friends are the expedients of enlightenment;
By them highest enlightenment's produced.

Their ever-present companions
Are the six perfections;
The integrative methods are the women's quarters;
Their conversation is teaching of truth.

Their garden is the elements,
Flowering with expedients of enlightenment;
Liberation and knowledge are the fruit,
The great treasury of teachings the trees.

The liberations are their lotus pool
Filled with the water of concentration,
Covered with the lotus of purity,
The bath of the undefiled.

Higher knowledges are their conveyance,
The unsurpassed great vehicle;
The will for enlightenment is the driver,
The path is peace, with eight branches.

Their adornment is the marks of distinction
And the eighty minor refinements;
Goodwill, modesty, and shame
Are their garments.

They have a store of true teaching;
Practice is their instruction.
Attainment of purification is their great acquisition;
Development is their wealth of enlightenment.

Their beds are the four meditations;
These are spread with pure livelihood.
Knowledge is their awakening;
They are always involved in learning.

Their food is nirvana,
Their drink the juice of liberation.
Pure intention is their bath,
Integrity is their cologne.

By beating the enemy, afflictions,
Those undefeated heroes
Have overpowered all four devils
And raised the flag of enlightenment's troops.

They appear to be born on purpose,
But they're unborn, with no origin.
They appear in all lands too,
Like the risen sun.

Having made offerings to ten million Buddhas,
With all kinds of offerings to the guides,
It never occurs to them,
"We should serve the Buddhas."

Yet for the benefit of beings
They come down from Buddha-fields;
Knowing lands to be like space,
They have no consciousness of beings as being.

The forms, sounds, and gestures of all beings
The expert bodhisattvas show in an instant.

They still know the actions of devils, though,
Of those connected with devils;
Having attained the best of strategies,
They show all those activities.

They show themselves aged, sick, and dead,
Playing with illusory things to develop people.

They also show the eonic fire, burning up the world,
Showing impermanence to people with the notion of eternity.

Invited to one domain by hundreds of thousands of people,
They eat at all their houses and turn them all toward enlightenment.

Any knowledge of incantation or practical arts of many kinds

They have mastered everywhere, bringing happiness to all people.

They go forth in all ways, as many as imposters in the world;
They develop people with various views in order to mature them.

They become moons or suns, Sakra and Brahma, lords of mankind;
They become water, fire, earth and wind likewise.

In times of sickness they become the best of medicines,
By which those people are freed and become happy and healthy.

In times of famine they become food and drink;
Having relieved hunger and thirst, they teach people the truth.

In times of armament they call kindness to mind;
They direct many millions of people to freedom from malice.

In the midst of a major war, too, they are neutral;
Bodhisattvas of great power make complete reconciliation appealing.

Whatever hells be in the inconceivable Buddha-fields,
They go there purposely to work for people's benefit.

Whatever states appear in the animal realm,
They teach truth everywhere, so are called guides.

They show the enjoyments of desire,
And the meditation of meditators too;
They thwart the devil and don't allow access.
Just as it may be declared that a lotus doesn't exist in fire,
So do they show desires and meditation unreal.

They deliberately become courtesans to attract men;
Having enticed the sprout of passion,
They establish them in enlightened knowledge.

They're always becoming village heads, merchants, priests,
Prime ministers and counselors, to work for people's benefit.

For poor people, they become inexhaustible treasuries;
Giving them donations, they inspire their thought of enlightenment.

Among conceited, arrogant people, they become powerful men;

They seek supreme command over everyone puffed up with pride.

They stand together with people in fear, always at the forefront;
Having given them freedom from fear, they mature them for
enlightenment.

Becoming chaste seers with the five higher knowledges too,
They engage people in morality, with self-control taking pleasure in
patience.

Seeing people needing help, the skilled
Become servants or go into apprenticeship.

By whatever division of science a person will come to delight in truth,
They show all applications, being very well versed in expedient means.

For those whose skill is endless, the scope of action is endless too;
Those who've attained unlimited knowledge are liberators of limitless
beings.

No end to their virtues can be told
Even in millions, nay hundreds of millions, of eons,
Even by the Buddhas.

Leaving aside lowly people lacking insight,
What learned person, having heard this teaching,
Would not resolve
On supreme enlightenment?

8. Entry into Non-dual Truth

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to those bodhisattvas, “Good people, what is bodhisattvas’ entry into undivided truth?”

A bodhisattva there named Dharmavikurvana said, “Sir, production and destruction are distinguished; what is not produced and is not born has no destruction. Attainment of acceptance of the truth of no origin is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Srigupta said, “‘I’ and ‘my’ are a pair; where there is no assertion of self, there is no sense of possession. The absence of assertion is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Srikuta said, “Affliction and purification are distinguished. In understanding of affliction there is no thought of purification. The path to uprooting all thought is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Bhadrajyoti said, “Excitation and thought are a pair. What is inert is not a cause of thought; without thought, there is no relation. Detachment from relations is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Subahu said, “The thought of enlightenment and the thought of disciples are distinct. Seeing illusion and thought as equal is neither the thought of enlightenment nor the thought of disciples. Impartiality of thought is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Animisa said, “Perception and no perception are distinct. What has no perception cannot be apprehended; in what cannot be apprehended there is no causation of formation or removal. The absence of causation or action in all things is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Sunetra said, “Oneness and indefinability are distinct. With no cause of thought and no cause of imagination, there is no cause of oneness or indefinability. Entry into equality of description and having no description is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Tisya said, “Good and evil are distinct. Not bringing about good or evil, realizing the non-duality of signs and no signs, is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Simha said, “The objectionable and the blameless are distinct. Not being bound yet not departing, by means of the thunderbolt of analytic knowledge; that is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Simhamati said, “‘This is painful, this is painless’—these are distinct. Having no conception of reason for the concepts of painful and painless, due to attainment of equanimity, with no acquisition of equanimity in equanimity, and no conceptual knot—embodying this is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Sukha-adhimukta said, “‘This is pleasant, this is not pleasant’—these are distinct. Intellect freed of all calculation by purified knowledge, unstained like space—that is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Narayana said, “‘This is mundane, this is transmundane’—these are distinct. The inherent emptiness of the world has no getting out, no entering in, no attainment, and no non-attainment—that is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Vinayamati said, “‘The common flow’ and ‘nirvana’—these are distinguished. With insight into the essence of the common flow, neither the common flow nor complete nirvana is actually there. Knowledge of this is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Pratyaksadarsana said, “Termination and having no termination are distinguished. Termination means having ended entirely. In what has entirely ended there is nothing to terminate, so it is said to have no termination. What has no termination is momentary too; there is no termination in the momentary. This way of entry is going all the way through the door to non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Samantagupta said, “‘Self’ and ‘selflessness’—these are distinguished. Since the reality of self cannot be apprehended, what is to be construed as selflessness? So their non-duality through insight into inherent nature is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Vidyuddeva said, “‘Knowledge’ and ‘unknowing’—these are distinguished. As is the inherent nature of unknowing, so too knowledge. Unknowing is not analyzed, incalculable, beyond the path of conception. Comprehending this is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Priyadarsana said, “Form is certainly empty. It is not empty by annihilation of form; rather, form is empty by nature. So too

the emptiness of sensation, perception, mental constructions, and consciousness. These are distinguished. Consciousness is certainly empty, not by annihilation of consciousness, but consciousness is empty by nature. One who knows this of the five appropriating clusters and is wise by this knowledge enters non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Prabhaketu said, “‘Apart from the four elements, the element of space is distinct’—these are a dualism. The four elements, though, are of the nature of space. The past is of the nature of space, the future is of the nature of space, and so is the present. Knowledge entering into the elements thus is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Agramati said, “‘Eye and form—these are a pair. By comprehension of vision, having no greed, aversion, or confusion in respect to form—that is peace. So also of ear and sound, nose and scent, tongue and taste, body and feeling, mind and phenomena—these are two-fold. By comprehension of mind, to have no greed, aversion or confusion in respect to phenomena—that is peace. Abiding in peace this way is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Aksayamati said, “‘Giving and development of all-knowledge—those are distinguished. The essence of giving is all-knowledge; the essence of all-knowledge is development. In the same way, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, insight, and development of all-knowledge are distinguished. All-knowledge is the essence of discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, and insight; and development is the essence of all-knowledge. Embodiment of oneness therein is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Gambhiramati said, “‘Emptiness is other than signlessness and purposelessness’—these are a dualism. In what is empty, there are no signs at all; where there is no sign, there is no meaning. Where there is no meaning, thought, intellect, and consciousness are not operative. The one door of liberation to be seen in all the doors of liberation—that is entry into the door of non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Santendriya said, “‘Buddha, Dharma, Sangha’—those are distinguished. The essence of Buddha is Dharma, and the essence of Dharma is Sangha; and all those, moreover, are unconstructed. The unconstructed is same as space; the principle of all things is same as space. Such an understanding is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Apratihateksana said, “‘A real body and the extinction of a real body—those are distinguished. The real body itself is

extinction. Why? When the notion of a lasting real body does not occur, what in that view is 'the real body' or 'extinction of the real body' cannot be conceived. What cannot be conceived has no imagination. The essence of extinction consists in utter absence of mental creation. No becoming or annihilation—that is entry into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Suvinita said, "It is restraint of body, speech, and mind that is non-dual. Why? These things are uncultivated. The manifestation of absence of training of the body is lack of cultivation in speech too, and thought. The absence of formulation in all things should be known and recognized for what it is. That knowledge of non-formation is entry into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Punyaksetra said, "'The performance of meritorious, blameworthy or indifferent actions'—these are distinguished. Not performing meritorious, blameworthy, or indifferent practices is non-dual. The inherent characteristic of meritorious, blameworthy, and indifferent performances is emptiness—that has no merit, demerit, or indifference. What does not come about through performance and so has no accomplishment—that is entry into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Padmavyuha said, "Occurrence from self-obsession is what is dualistic. Comprehension of self does not bring about duality. Thus, in the state of non-duality, what has no representation because there is no making it known—that is entry into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Srigarbha said, "Distinction by apprehension is dualistic. What has no apprehension is non-dual. Hence, neither grasping nor rejection is the entry into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Candrottara said, "'Darkness and light'—these are a dualism. Nonbeing of darkness and light is non-dual. Why? In attainment of extinction there is no darkness and no light. All things are also thus, by definition. Embodiment of this impartiality is entry into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Ratnamudrahasa said, "The pleasure of nirvana and the pleasure of the common flow of existence—those are distinct. Neither taking pleasure in nirvana nor taking pleasure in the common flow is non-dual. Why? What is called leaving bondage, yet is ultimately without bondage—how can one seek that liberation? The pleasure or lack of pleasure of neither bondage nor liberation cannot be found by a mendicant—that is entry into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Ratnakuta Raja said, “The path and the wrong path are distinguished. In deep entry into the path, a wrong path has no usage. Where there is no usage, there is no concept of a path or of a false path. Comprehension of concepts does not enter into duality of thought—that is entry into non-duality.”

The bodhisattva Satyarata said, “Truth and falsehood are distinguished. If even truthfulness is not perceived by a view of truth, how can a false notion be perceived? Why? It is not perceived by the physical eye; it is seen by the eye of insight without views. It is seen as is without display. When there is no view and no display, that is entry into non-duality.”

Having had those bodhisattvas each indicate their own ascertainment, Vimalakirti said to Manjusri the perpetual youth, “Manjusri, what is a bodhisattva’s entry into nonduality?”

Manjusri said, “Good people, though well-spoken by all of you, everything you’ve said is dualistic, leaving out one prescription—what is impossible to talk about, impossible to say, is unspoken and impossible to state, beyond representation—*that* is entry into non-duality.”

Then Manjusri the perpetual youth said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, “Since we have each related our ascertainment, sir, you indicate to us the door to non-duality.”

The Licchavi Vimalakirti was silent.

Then Manjusri the perpetual youth applauded Vimalakirti the Licchavi: “Good, good, sir! This indeed is the entry into non-duality for bodhisattvas. There is no word, speech, or representation there.”

When this instruction was given out, five thousand bodhisattvas attained acceptance of the truth of no origin by entry into non-duality.

9. Receiving Emanation Food

Now it occurred to venerable Sariputra, “It’s noon, and these great bodhisattvas aren’t getting up—when do they eat?”

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti, knowing Sariputra’s thoughts, said to him, “Honorable Sariputra, persevere in the eight liberations spoken of by the Realized One. Don’t listen to the teaching with consideration mixed with food. Honorable Sariputra, wait a moment, and you will eat food you’ve never tasted before.”

Thereupon the Licchavi Vimalakirti went into such a state of concentration and executed such a performance of mystic power as to make visible to those bodhisattvas and senior disciples a Buddha-field in the zenith past as many worlds as grains of sand in forty-two Ganges Rivers, a world named Fragrant with all Scents; there was a Realized One named Sugandhakuta, Most Excellent of Fine Fragrances, currently present in that land. In that world, the fragrance of that world, even better than the fragrances from the humans and celestials in the Buddha-fields of the ten directions, arose intensely. In that world not even the names of disciples or individual illuminates existed. The Realized One Sugandhakuta taught an assembly consisting entirely of bodhisattvas. In that world all the penthouses were made of incense smoke. All the promenades, gardens, and vehicles were also made of incense smoke. The food those bodhisattvas were provided with pervaded countless worlds with fragrance.

At that time, the Realized One Sugandhakuta had sat down to eat along with those bodhisattvas. There was a deity there named Gandhavyuhatarpana who had set out on the Great Vehicle; he was intent on attendance upon the Blessed One and those bodhisattvas. The Blessed One and those bodhisattvas sitting down to eat in that world were visible in this way to the whole assembly in Vimalakirti’s house.

Then Vimalakirti said to those bodhisattvas, “Good people, who among you can obtain food from that Buddha-field?”

Here, under Manjusri’s authority, no one was able.

Then Vimalakirti said to Manjusri, “Manjusri, is your company not shameful, being like this?”

He said, “Sir, has it not been said by the Realized One that one should not disdain the unlearned?”

Now Vimalakirti, without getting up from his bed, projected the body of an emanated bodhisattva in the presence of those bodhisattvas, a golden image fully adorned with the marks and refinements of Buddhas, with an appearance that overshadowed everyone there.

Then Vimalakirti said to the projected bodhisattva, “Go upward past as many Buddha-fields as grains of sand in forty-two Ganges Rivers to a world called Fragrant with All Scents; there a Realized One named Sugandhakuta has now sat down to eat. Go to him, pay respects, and inform him of this: ‘The Licchavi Vimalakirti pays utmost respects to the Blessed One and is solicitous of the Blessed One, that he has little discomfort and little disquiet, gets about easily, is strong of limb, comfortable, without complaint, feeling good, and has no illness. Blessed One, please give me the leftovers of the food; Vimalakirti is going to do Buddha-work with it in the world Endurance, by which people of low faith will engender higher faith, and the characteristics of the Realized will develop.’”

Now the bodhisattvas of the Buddha-field of that Blessed Sugandhakuta the Realized One, marveling in wonder, said to the Blessed Sugandhakuta the Realized One, “Blessed One, where did such a great being come from? Where is the world Endurance? As for ‘those of low faith,’ what is that?” This is how those bodhisattvas questioned that Blessed One.

Then that Blessed One said to those bodhisattvas, “Below here, past as many Buddha-fields as grains of sand in forty-two Ganges Rivers, there is a world named Saha, Endurance. There a Realized One named Sakyamuni, in a Buddha-field with five defects, teaches people of low faith. There a bodhisattva named Vimalakirti, who dwells in inconceivable liberation, teaches bodhisattvas. He sends a projected bodhisattva to extol my name and praise this world, and to cause those bodhisattvas’ roots of good to be thoroughly energized.”

Then those bodhisattvas said, “Blessed One, that bodhisattva’s greatness is such that this projection of his has such mystic power and expertise.”

That Blessed One said, “Such is that bodhisattva’s greatness that he sends projections to all Buddha-fields in the ten directions, and those

projections attend to the work of all people in those Buddha-fields by means of the work of Buddhas.”

Now the Blessed Realized One Sugandhakuta tossed some food, scented with all fragrances, onto a plate imbued with all fragrances, then gave it to the projected bodhisattva. Thereupon ninety hundred thousand bodhisattvas were going to go along: “Blessed One, we too are going to that world Endurance to see that Blessed Sakyamuni, pay respects, and spend time in his company, and also see that Vimalakirti and those bodhisattvas.”

That Blessed One said, “Go, if you think now the time. But those people will become intoxicated and go mad, so go with your scent withdrawn. Those people in the world Endurance get frustrated, so leave your own form. Don’t conceive hostile thoughts of that world, thinking of it as lowly. Why? A Buddha-field is a field of space. In order to fully mature people, the Blessed Buddhas do not show all the domains accessible to the enlightened.”

Now that projected bodhisattva, accepting that food scented with all fragrances, together with ninety hundred thousand bodhisattvas, by the power of the Buddha and Vimalakirti’s support, instantly disappeared from the world Sarvagandhasugandha and sat down in the house of Vimalakirti the Licchavi. Vimalakirti magically produced ninety hundred thousand lion seats like the previous ones, and those bodhisattvas sat in them.

Then the projected bodhisattva gave Vimalakirti that plate full of food.

The fragrance of that food then pervaded the metropolis of Vaisali. A delicious fragrance was smelled throughout the world. The priests and householders of Vaisali, and the ruler of the Licchavis, Licchavi Candracchatra, smelling that fragrances, wondered and marveled, physically and mentally soothed; they went into Vimalakirti’s house along with eighty-four thousand Licchavis. In the house they saw it filled with the bodhisattvas sitting in such high gigantic lion seats; at this sight they became confident and joyful. Paying respects to those senior disciples and those bodhisattvas, they stood to one side.

Deities of the earth and deities of the domains of desire and form too, impelled by the fragrance, came together to Vimalakirti’s house.

Now the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the elder Sariputra and the senior disciples, “Honorable ones, eat the food of the Realized, ambrosia

scented with great compassion; don't show any narrow-mindedness, or you won't be able to enjoy the gift."

Then some disciples thought, "How can a tiny bit of food feed such a crowd?"

Then the projected bodhisattva said to those disciples, "Honorable sirs, do not compare the wisdom and virtue of the Realized to your wisdom and virtue. Why? Even if the four oceans could dry up, there would be no exhausting this food. In the same way, even if all beings ate mountainous portions of the food, it would not be exhausted. Why? The remainder of the Realized One's food left on the plate, made of inexhaustible integrity, wisdom, and concentration, can never be exhausted."

So now the whole crowd had their fill of the food, and yet the food did not run out. The bodhisattvas, disciples, gods, world guardians, and other people who ate the food were filled with bliss like the bliss of the bodhisattvas in the world Sarvasukhamandita, Exhilarated with All Pleasures. From all of their pores there wafted a fragrance just like the scent of the trees in that same land Fragrant with All Scents.

Perceiving this, the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the bodhisattvas who had come from the Buddha-field of the Realized One Sugandhakuta, "How does the Realized One Sugandhakuta teach?"

They said, "He does not teach by verbal expressions; the bodhisattvas are guided by that fragrance. Those fragrant trees at the foot of which those bodhisattvas are sitting emit such a scent to those bodhisattvas that just by smelling that scent they attain a concentration called mine of all virtues of bodhisattvas. Just by attainment of that concentration, the virtues of bodhisattvas are produced in all of them."

Then those bodhisattvas said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, "What kind of teaching does the Blessed One Sakyamuni expound here?"

He said, "These people are hard to guide. To these stubborn, unruly people he talks about how the stubborn and unruly are to be guided.

"Who are the stubborn and unruly who can be guided? What is the way to talk to the stubborn and unruly? For example, 'These are hells, this is animality, this is the world of death, these are inopportune conditions, these are inferior faculties; this is misconduct of the body, this is the result of misconduct of the body; this is misconduct of speech, this is

the result of misconduct of speech; this is misconduct of mind, this is the result of misconduct of mind.

“This is violation of life; this is taking what is not given; this is sexual misconduct; this is lying; this is slander; this is insult; this is divisive talk; this is longing; this is malice; this is false opinion; this is their result.

“This is envy, this is the result of envy; this is immorality, this is the result of immorality; this is anger, this is the result of anger; this is laziness, this is the result of laziness; this is stupidity, this is the result of stupidity.

“This is violation of a moral precept, this is the remedy; this is to be done, this is not to be done; this is practice, this is renunciation; this is an obstacle, this poses no obstacle; this is transgression, this is turning away from transgression; this is the path, this is a wrong path; this is good, this is no good; this is blameworthy, this is unimpeachable; this is impulsive, this is not impulsive; this is mundane, this is beyond the world; this is constructed, this is not constructed; this is affliction, this is purification; this is the common flow of existence, this is nirvana.’

“Teaching a variety of principles in this way, the Realized One Sakyamuni settles people’s intractable mind. Just as an intractable horse or elephant becomes tame after being struck in vulnerable spots, in the same way intractable and unruly people are disciplined by elucidation of all suffering.”

Those bodhisattvas said, “So the greatness of Sakyamuni Buddha has been established. Wonderful indeed is the taming of lowly, needy, intractable people. And the bodhisattvas abiding in such a gross Buddha-field have great compassion.”

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said, “That is so, good people; it is as you say. Any bodhisattvas who arise here, their great compassion is very firm. They do a lot of good for people in a single lifetime in this world; in that world Fragrant with All Scents they cannot create this kind of benefit for people even in a hundred thousand eons. Why? Good people, in this world Endurance are ten ways of accumulating good by taking and leaving; they do not exist in that other land. What ten?

“Checking poverty by giving, checking bad behavior with ethics, checking unruliness with patience, checking indolence by effort, checking distraction by meditation, checking folly by wisdom. Showing

those in inopportune conditions how to get past the eight inopportune conditions. Showing those of limited action the Great Vehicle. Winning over those who have not planted roots of good by means of roots of good. Perpetual engagement in development of people by the four means of integration. These ten ways of taking and leaving to accumulate good are not found in the other Buddha-field.”

The bodhisattvas said, “Following what principles will bodhisattvas go to a thoroughly pure Buddha-field whole and unharmed after passing away from this world Endurance?”

He said, “Bodhisattvas following eight principles will go whole and unhurt to a thoroughly pure Buddha-field after passing away from this world Endurance. What eight? Bodhisattvas should consider:

“‘I should treat all beings kindly, without seeking any benefit from them.’

“‘I should endure all pains of all beings, giving away all the roots of good realized to all beings.’

“‘I should not attack anyone.’

“‘I should appreciate all bodhisattvas like a teacher.’

“‘Hearing a teaching I haven’t heard, I should not ridicule it.’

“‘I should be free of envy at others’ gain, free from pride in my own gain, and mentally poised.’

“‘I should observe my own deficiencies and not emphasize others’ faults.’

“‘I should seek all virtues attentively and eagerly.’

“Bodhisattvas following these eight principles will go to a thoroughly pure Buddha-field whole and unharmed after passing away from the world Endurance.”

Now when the teaching was expounded in this way to the assembly gathered there by the Licchavi Vimalakirti and Manjusri as a perpetual youth, a hundred thousand living beings engendered the will for supreme true complete enlightenment. Ten thousand bodhisattvas attained acceptance of the truth of no origin.

10. A Gift of Teaching on the Perishable and Imperishable

At that time, moreover, as the teaching was being expounded by the Blessed One in Amrapali's Grove, the circle expanded and enlarged, and that assembly became imbued with a golden hue.

Then the venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One, "Amrapali's Grove here has expanded and enlarged, and the whole assembly appears golden. What does this portend?"

The Blessed One said, "Ananda, this is a fore sign of the Licchavi Vimalakirti and Manjusri as a perpetual youth coming to the Realized One at the head of an enormous company."

Now the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to Manjusri the perpetual youth, "Manjusri, even these great beings are going to pay respects to the Realized One face to face; so let us both go to the Realized One."

Manjusri said, "Let's go, sir, if you think now the time."

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti executed a performance of mystic power by which he placed the entire assembly in his right hand, lion seats and all, and went to where the Blessed One was. On arriving, he placed the assembly on the ground. Bowing his head at the Blessed One's feet and circling seven times to the right, he stood to one side.

Now those bodhisattvas who had come from the Buddha-field of the Realized One Sugandhakuta got down from the lion seats, bowed their heads at the feet of the Blessed One, and stood to one side with their hands joined in a gesture of respect. All the great bodhisattvas and senior disciples too got down from the lion seats, bowed their heads at the Buddha's feet, and stood to one side. Likewise all those Sakras, Brahmas, world guardians, and deities also bowed their heads at the Blessed One's feet and stood to one side.

Then the Blessed One, having delighted those bodhisattvas with a talk on the teaching, said this: "Let each of you sit on your lion seat." Told to by the Blessed One, they sat down.

Then the Blessed One addressed Sariputra: "Sariputra, did you see the transformations of the bodhisattvas, best of beings?"

He said, "Certainly, Blessed One."

The Blessed One said, “Then what occurred to you?”

He said, “Certainly, Blessed One, I thought it inconceivable. What they do appears so inconceivable as to be impossible to weigh or reckon by thought.”

Then the venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, there is a fragrance perceptible that I’ve never smelled before—whose scent is this?”

The Blessed One said, “Ananda, those bodhisattvas give off such a scent from all the pores of the body.”

Sariputra then said, “Venerable Ananda, such a scent also comes from every pore of our bodies too.”

Ananda said, “Where does the scent come from?”

Sariputra said, “The Licchavi Vimalakirti got food from the Buddha-field in the world Fragrant with All Scents; after having eaten it, such a fragrance radiates from everyone’s body.”

Then venerable Ananda said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, “How long will this fragrance last?”

Vimalakirti said, “As long as the food has not been digested.”

Ananda said, “How long will it take for the food to be digested?”

He said, “It will be digested in seven days and nights. So this food will take as long as seven days to disperse; as long as it has not been digested, no discomfort will occur.

“When that food is eaten by mendicants who have not entered into certainty, honorable Ananda, it will be digested when they have entered into certainty. When the food is eaten by those who have entered into certainty, it will not be digested until their minds are completely liberated. When those who have not conceived the thought of enlightenment eat this food, it will be digested when they’ve conceived the thought of enlightenment. When eaten by those who have conceived the thought of enlightenment, it will be digested if they have not failed to attain patience. When eaten by those who have attained

patience, it will be digested when they are certain to be enlightened in one lifetime.

“Honorable Ananda, it is like when the medicine called *flowing* enters the gut it is not fully digested until all toxins are gone; after that the medicine will be digested. In the same way, honorable Ananda, that food will not be digested until the toxins of all afflictions are gone; the food will all be thoroughly digested after that.”

Then the venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One, “This food, Blessed One, indeed does the work of Buddhas.”

He said, “That is so, Ananda; it is as you say. There are, Ananda, Buddha-fields in which bodhisattvas do the work of Buddhas. There are Buddha-fields where the work of Buddhas is done by light, those where Buddha work is done by the tree of enlightenment, by showing the form of the marks of the Realized, by the rags of a mendicant, by food, by water, by a garden, by a vehicle, by a penthouse. There are, Ananda, Buddha-fields where the work of Buddhas is done by a projection. Ananda, there are also Buddha-fields where the work of Buddhas is done by space; in the same way the work of Buddhas is done by the sky. Thereby those people become tractable.

“Likewise, Ananda, the work of Buddhas is done for those people by showing expressions of illustrations like dreams, reflections, the moon in water, magic tricks, and mirages. There are also Buddha-fields where the work of Buddhas is done for the people with words or speech, demonstration or illustration. There are completely purified Buddha-fields.

“There is no work of Buddhas at all, Ananda, that is not done to tame people by the behavior and usages of the Blessed Buddhas. Ananda, even the four destructive forces and the eighty-four hundred thousand aspects of affliction by which people are afflicted are all means by which the Blessed Ones do the work of Buddhas.

“This, Ananda, is an introduction to truth called entry into the teachings of all Buddhas. Bodhisattvas who have entered this introduction to truth are neither wretched nor exalted in Buddha-fields arrayed with all the finest qualities; in Buddha-fields arrayed with all the finest qualities, they are neither excited nor conceited; they produce a likeness to the Realized. As the Blessed Buddhas have attained impartiality in all things, in order to develop people to maturity they show Buddha-fields of various kinds. That is a marvel.

“Ananda, just as the qualities of Buddha-fields are of various kinds, different from one another, yet the Buddha-fields displayed by way of expedients are not different from space, in the same way, Ananda, the form bodies of the Realized are of various kinds, but the ultimate independent knowledge of the Realized is not different.

“Ananda, all Buddhas’ glow of health, physical appearance, nobility, integrity, concentration, insight, liberation, knowledge and vision, power, expertise, unique qualities, great kindness, great compassion, goodwill, bearing and conduct, length of life, teaching truth, maturing people, liberating people, purifying Buddha-fields, are equal in respect to accomplishment of all teachings of Buddhas. This is why they are called truly completely enlightened, having arrived at reality; having arrived at reality, the Realized are called Buddha, Enlightened.

“A detailed account of the meanings and expressive distinction of these three terms, Ananda, is not easy to understand, even with your competence. Even if all the people in the world had attained excellence like you, Ananda, among the learned with mastery of memory, and all those people equal to Ananda had these three terms—Truly Completely Enlightened, Realized, Buddha—illustrated for an entire eon, they could not reach a definite meaning. This is how infinite the enlightenment of Buddhas is, how inconceivable the insight and intelligence of the Realized.”

Now the venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One, “From now on, Blessed One, I do not acknowledge that I am foremost of the learned.”

The Blessed One said, “Don’t get dejected, Ananda. Why? I have taken notice of you and said you are foremost of the learned among disciples, not among bodhisattvas. Ananda, give up your view of bodhisattvas, for they cannot be grasped by any measure by the learned. The depth of all oceans, Ananda, may be measured, but the depth of insight, knowledge, mastery of mindfulness, and intelligence cannot be measured.

“Ananda, you must disregard the practices of bodhisattvas. Why? The manifestation displayed the other day by the Licchavi Vimalakirti, all the disciples with mystic powers and individual illuminates could not display even in a hundred thousand million eons by performances of projections of all mystic powers.”

Then all those bodhisattvas who had come from the Buddha-field of the Realized One Sugandhakuta, holding their hands in a gesture of respect, honoring the Realized One, said, “Blessed one, we wish to renounce the

ideas and thoughts of inferiority we attributed to this Buddha-field. Why? The skill in expedient means in the realm of the enlightened, the Blessed Buddhas, is inconceivable. In order to mature people according to desire, they show such and such arrangements of fields. Please give us a gift of teaching to bring back a memory of the Blessed One after we've gone to our world Fragrant with All Scents."

The Blessed One said, "There is a liberation of bodhisattvas called the perishable without termination, which you should learn. What is it? The perishable is the constructed, the imperishable is the unconstructed. Therein, a bodhisattva should not terminate the perishable and should not stay in the imperishable.

"In that context, the unending of the constructed is like not losing great kindness; not giving up great compassion; not being distracted from resolute determination and will for all-knowledge; not wearying of developing people to maturity; not giving up the means of integration; giving up body and life to embrace real truth; never resting content with roots of good; application of skill in development; indefatigable search for truth; teaching ungrudgingly; striving to see and honor the Realized; regenerating deliberately without fear; not being uplifted or downcast in success or misfortune; not disdaining the unlearned, and thinking of the learned as fondly as a mentor; thoroughly stopping abundant afflictions; enjoying solitude without adhering to it; having no attachment to one's own pleasures and being detached from others' pleasure; perception of attainment of meditation and concentration as hell, and perception of the common flow of existence as nirvana in a garden; perception of beggars as good friends; perception of total self-sacrifice as fulfillment of all-knowledge; perception of the badly behaved as protection; perception of the perfections as parents; perception of the elements assisting enlightenment as service of a master; never being satiated accumulating roots of good and producing one's own field with the qualities of all Buddha-fields; giving away unlimited sacrifice to fulfill the marks and refinements of Buddhas; adorning body, speech, and mind by not doing any evil; going along in the common flow of existence for countless eons with purity of body, speech, and mind; by virtue of mental courage, not being cowed when hearing of the infinite virtues of Buddhas; wielding the sharp sword of insight to restrain the enemy afflictions; command over the clusters, elements, and media of sense to bear the burdens of all beings; burning with energy to kill the army of devils; seeking knowledge to be free from conceit; having little desire and being content for the sake of preserving truth; not cutting off all things of the world so as to please all people; not losing the capacity for all modes of behavior to effect integration with all people; exercise of higher knowledge to illuminate

all practices; mental control, memory, and knowledge to retain everything heard; knowledge of higher and lower faculties to cut off the doubts of all people; unobstructed power to point out the truth; unhindered eloquence by attainment of brilliant intelligence; enjoyment of celestial and human fulfillment by complete purity of ways of good action; establishing a path to Brahma by the efficacy of the four immeasurables; understanding the voice of Buddhas by soliciting instruction and appreciating and approving it; by restraint of body, speech, and mind, and excellence of conduct, attainment of enlightened deportment by having no attachment to anything; incarnation of the Great Vehicle by integration of the community of bodhisattvas; not being negligent so as not to let any good qualities fail to bear fruit. A bodhisattva engaged in the teaching this way does not terminate the constructed.

“What is not staying in the unconstructed? When there is effectuation of detachment in emptiness but no actual feeling of emptiness; effectuation of detachment in signlessness but no actual feeling of signlessness; effectuation of detachment in purposelessness but no actual feeling of purposelessness; detachment having no contrivance but with no actual feeling of no accomplishment.

“Paying attention to impermanence without complacency about roots of good; paying attention to misery yet regenerating deliberately; paying attention to selflessness without utterly abandoning self.

“Attention to tranquility without instigating cessation; attention to detachment while still physically and mentally energetic; attention to the nonexistence of any asylum, without abandoning the abode of pure truth; attention to non-origination but yet bearing people’s burdens; attention to freedom from impulse, yet establishing connections to the common flow of existence; attention to what has no manifestation while actively appearing for the sake of developing people to maturity; attention to selflessness without giving up great compassion for people; attention to the state where nothing comes up, without falling into the restraint of disciples; attention to the vain, void, masterless, and signless in all things, yet established in the class of the enlightened in the complete sense, in virtue that is not in vain, and in knowledge that is not worthless, and in thoughts of fulfillment, and in consecration with independent knowledge, and in application of independent knowledge.

“A bodhisattva relying on such principles does not remain in the unconstructed and does not terminate the constructed.

“On account of skill in means one does not remain in the unconstructed; with certain insight, one does not terminate the constructed.

“In order to purify a Buddha-field one does not remain in the unconstructed; with the support of the enlightened one does not terminate the constructed.

“To perceive what is beneficial for people, one does not remain in the unconstructed; to illuminate the meaning of the teaching one does not terminate the constructed.

“In order to accumulate roots of good one does not stay in the unconstructed; on account of the influence of roots of good one does not terminate the constructed.

“In order to fulfill vows one does not stay in the unconstructed; because it is not imposed one does not terminate the constructed.

“Because of purity of will one does not stay in the unconstructed; because of purity of purpose one does not terminate the constructed.

“Because of free exercise of five kinds of higher knowledge, one does not stay in the unconstructed; for the sake of the six kinds of higher knowledge in the knowledge of Buddhas, one does not terminate the constructed.

“In order to fulfill the accumulation of the perfections, one does not stay in the unconstructed; on account of enrichment over time, one does not terminate the constructed.

“In order to amass a wealth of principles one does not stay in the unconstructed; because of not seeking limited truth one does not terminate the constructed.

“In order to collect the medicines of the teaching one does not stay in the unconstructed; in order to apply the medicines of the teaching according to suitability one does not terminate the constructed.

“For certainty of commitments one does not stay in the unconstructed; after commitments cannot be thwarted, as one accomplishes them one does not terminate the constructed.

“In order to apply the medicines of the teaching one does not stay in the unconstructed; so in order to apply mild medicines of the teaching one does not terminate the constructed.

“Because of thorough knowledge of all symptoms of affliction, one does not stay in the unconstructed; for the sake of relieving all illnesses one does not seek the termination of the constructed.

“Thus a bodhisattva does not terminate the constructed and does not stay in the unconstructed. That is the liberation of bodhisattvas called the perishable without termination. You too should work on this.”

Then those bodhisattvas, having heard this instruction, pleased, enraptured, transported, overjoyed, gratified and gladdened, in order to honor the Blessed One, and to honor those bodhisattvas and that occasion of teaching, covered this whole world with all the many aromatic powders, perfumes, incense, and flowers reaching to the knees. Having covered the circle of the Blessed One, they prostrated themselves at his feet, circled the Blessed One three times to the right, and expressed their joy. Then, disappearing from this Buddha-field, in an instant they sat down in the world Fragrant with All Scents.

11. Reception of the World of Delight and Vision of the Imperturbable Realized One

Then the Blessed One said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, “When you want to see the Realized, then how do you see the Realized?”

The Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the Blessed One, “When I want to see the Realized, I see one unchanging with vision of those who have arrived at reality. I see the Realized not coming from the past, not going to the future, and not abiding in the present. Why?”

“The Realized One is the essential nature of form as is, yet is without form; the essential nature of sensation as is, yet without sensation; the essential nature of perception as is, yet without perception; the essential nature of mental formations as is, yet without mental formations; the essential nature of consciousness as is, yet without consciousness; not established in the four elements, equal to the element of space; the six senses do not occur; the Realized One has gone beyond the path of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and intellect; the Realized One is not mixed up in things of the world, is free from the three defilements, has realized the three liberations, realized the three knowledges, and attained what has no attainment.

“The Realized One has reached certainty with no adherence to anything, without an actual end, well established in reality as is, beyond relations. The Realized One is not produced by cause, not bound by conditions, beyond description, not having any definition, neither unified nor divided, not conceived, not mentally constructed, not imagined.

“The Realized One is not in the beyond, not in the mundane, not in between; has no hence or thence, no there or elsewhere; cannot be known by consciousness, has no sphere of consciousness, is neither darkness nor light.

“The Realized One has no name, no sign; is not weak or powerful; is not local or partisan; is beyond good and evil, beyond the constructed and the unconstructed, has no expressible substance, cannot be spoken of within the confines of generosity or stinginess, integrity or immortality, tolerance or hostility, diligence or laziness, meditation or excitement, wisdom or folly.

“The Realized One has no truth or falsehood, no understanding or non-understanding, no worldly accomplishment or lack of accomplishment

in the world, is ultimately detached from all speech and action; neither has a sense of a field or lacks a sense of a field, is not worthy of veneration yet does not abstain from enjoyment of gifts; is not something that can be grasped or touched or targeted; not constructed, beyond calculation, impartial, unique as the nature of phenomena, incomparably energetic, beyond comparison, not going, not arrived, not gone past.

“The Realized One is unseen, unheard, not conceived, not perceived; has left all bonds and attained the impartiality of all-knowing knowledge, attained impartiality in all things without exception, is blameless everywhere, disinterested, unaffected, has no thesis or antithesis, is not artificial, has not come about, is not produced, is not existent, is not actual, not an entity, not a nonentity, has no fear, has no asylum, has no sorrow, has no joy, has no fluctuation, is impossible to explain by any conventional description at all.

“The body of the Realized Blessed One is thus; this is how it is to be seen. Whoever sees thus sees truly; whoever sees otherwise sees falsely.”

Then the venerable Sariputra said to the Blessed One, “From what Buddha-field did Vimalakirti pass away to come to this Buddha-field?”

The Blessed One told him, “Sariputra, ask this good man ‘Where did you pass away from to be born here?’”

So then the venerable Sariputra asked the Licchavi Vimalakirti, “Where did you pass away from to be born here?”

Vimalakirti said, “Does the truth you have realized, elder, have any passing away or production?”

He said, “There is no passing away or production in that truth.”

Vimalakirti said, “Honorable Sariputra, since all things likewise have no passing away or production, how can you think, ‘Where did you pass away from to be born here?’” Honorable Sariputra, suppose one were to ask a woman or a man projected by a magician, ‘Where did you pass away from to be born here?’—what would justify that?”

He said, “A projection has no passing away or coming to be; what could answer that?”

Vimalakirti said, “Honorable Sariputra, has it not been said by the Blessed One that all things are of the nature of projections?”

He said, “That is so.”

Vimalakirti said, “With all things, honorable Sariputra, being of the nature of projections, how can you think ‘Where did you pass away from to be born here?’? Honorable Sariputra, passing away is only the appearance of destruction of formation; coming to be is only the appearance of continuity of formation. So even when a bodhisattva dies, that does not terminate the formation of roots of good. And when one is born, that does not reconstruct a continuity of evil.”

Then the Blessed One said to the venerable Sariputra, “Sariputra, this good man has come here from the presence of Aksobhya, the Imperturbable Buddha, of the world Abhirati, Delight.”

He said, “It is a wonder, Blessed One, that this good man who has come from such a pure Buddha-field approves this Buddha-field corrupted by many excesses.”

Now Vimalakirti said to Sariputra, “What do you think, Sariputra—are sunbeams associated with darkness?”

He said, “No indeed.”

Vimalakirti said, “So the two are not connected?”

He said, “The two are unconnected. As soon as the circle of the sun rises, all darkness goes away.”

Vimalakirti said, “Why does the sun rise on earth?”

He said, “To make light and dispel darkness.”

Vimalakirti said, “In the same way, honorable Sariputra, a bodhisattva deliberately is born in incompletely purified fields to purify people, to produce the light of knowledge, and to dispel a great darkness. A bodhisattva does not live with afflictions, but dispels the darkness of afflictions of all people.”

Then it occurred to the entire assembly, “Let us see the world of Delight and the Imperturbable Realized One, and the bodhisattvas and great

disciples there.”

Now the Blessed One, perceiving what the assembly was thinking, said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, “Sir, this assembly wants to see that world Delight and that Imperturbable Realized One. So show the assembly.”

Then it occurred to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, “I will take that world Delight without getting up from this lion seat, including many hundreds of thousands of bodhisattvas, as well as the abodes surrounded by the encircling mountains, and deities, rainmakers, spirits, celestial musicians, and titans, with rivers, ponds, springs, streams, oceans, seas, and the mountains Sumeru and Few Houses, and the moon, sun, and stars, and the places of the deities, rainmakers, spirits, celestial musicians, and the retinue of the palace of Brahma, and villages and cities, towns, communities, dominions, men, women, and houses, and the assembly of bodhisattvas and disciples, and even the enlightenment tree of the Imperturbable Realized One, with the Imperturbable Realized One sitting teaching the oceanic assembly, and those lotuses which are doing the work of Buddhas among the people in the ten directions—I will gather all that up. Three jewel stairways extend from earth to the abode of the thirty-three deities; the thirty-three deities go to earth on them to see the Imperturbable Realized One, pay respects, attend, and listen to the teaching; and the humans of the earth climb those stairs to the abode of the thirty-three deities. Taking them and that world Delight, a mass of such infinite virtues, from the body of water to the highest heaven, taking that like a potter’s wheel and severing it all, picking it up in my right hand like picking up a flower garland, I will insert it into this world Endurance, and having placed it here will show it to this whole assembly.”

Then the Licchavi went into such a concentration as to produce a performance of mystic power by which he cut the whole world Delight free, took it in his right hand, and put it in this world Endurance.

The disciples, bodhisattvas, celestials, and humans there who had attained the higher knowledge of celestial vision cried out, “Blessed One, we are being taken away! Blissful One, we are being taken away! Blissful one, protect us!” they begged.

In order to guide them, the Blessed One said, “You are being carried by Vimalakirti—it’s not within my power.”

The other celestials and humans there did not know or see where they were carried off to. Even with that world Delight being placed in this

world Endurance, no fullness or deficiency in this world was perceived, nor any crowding or confinement. And that world Delight subsequently appeared entirely as before.

Now the Blessed Sakyamuni addressed the whole assembly, “Friends, behold the world Delight, the Realized One Imperturbable, and these multitudes of disciples and bodhisattvas of that Buddha-field.”

They said, “Certainly, Blessed One, we see.”

He said, “Any bodhisattva who wishes to obtain such a Buddha-field should learn all the practices of bodhisattvas of the Imperturbable Realized One.”

Thus by the performance of mystic power producing the vision of the world Delight, and by vision of the Imperturbable Realized One, fourteen myriad celestial and human beings of this world Endurance conceived the thought of supreme true complete enlightenment. And all of them vowed to be born in that world Delight; and the Blessed One predicted that they all would be reborn in the world Delight.

The Licchavi Vimalakirti, having thus matured all the people in this world Endurance that were capable of maturation, put that world Delight back in its place.

Then the Blessed one said to the venerable Sariputra, “Do you see that world Delight and the Realized One Imperturbable?”

He said, “Certainly, Blessed One, I see. May all people have such an array of qualities in a Buddha-field. And may all people attain such mystic power as the Licchavi Vimalakirti. We have truly profited from seeing such a good person. And may any who hear this teaching, whether of a present or extinct Realized One, also truly profit. How much more those who, having heard this teaching, will believe, accept, take up, maintain, read, and study it, and, having confidence, will expound, enter into, and elucidate it for others, with practical understanding!

“Those who truly get this teaching will obtain a jewel mine of truth. Those who contemplate it carefully will become companions of the Realized. Those who honor and attend a believer in this teaching have become guardians of the teaching. Any who write this teaching correctly, uphold it and think about it, the Realized One will sojourn in their house. Those who celebrate this teaching preserve all blessings.

Any who would take up even a four line verse from this teaching and tell it to others would be making a great donation of truth. Those whose acceptance, desire, and intelligence are focused on this teaching in the mirror of aspiration's understanding have it assured to them.

12. Past Practice and the Bequest of Truth

Now Sakra, lord of gods, said to the Blessed One, “Previously, Blessed One, I heard many hundreds of thousands of occasions of teaching from the Realized One and from Manjusri, but I have never before heard such instruction on entry into the principle of transformation as from this occasion of teaching.

“People who will preserve this teaching, uphold it, read it, and study it will also undoubtedly become vessels of such teaching; how much the more those who put it into practice with understanding. They will cut off the way to all bad states; the way to all good states is open to them; they will be seen by all Buddhas; they will be destroyers of all false teachers; all devils will be thoroughly defeated by them; they will be following the purified path of bodhisattvas; going to the peak of enlightenment, they enter the realm of those who arrive at reality.

“A family son or family daughter, Blessed One, who will hold this teaching, I and my retinue will honor and attend. Those villages, cities, towns, communities, dominions, and kingdoms where this teaching is practiced, expounded, elucidated, I will go to with my retinue to listen to the teaching. In family sons without faith, I will inspire faith. To those with faith I will properly be a protector and shelter.”

This having been said, the Blessed One said to Sakra, lord of gods, “Good, Lord of Gods, good. What you have said so well, the Realized One too approves. Lord of Gods, the enlightenment of the Blessed Buddhas of past, future, and present has been expressed through this occasion of teaching. Hence, Lord of Gods, any family sons or family daughters who will preserve this teaching, even so much as write it in a manuscript, keep it and read it and study it, will be honoring the Blessed Buddhas past, future, and present.

“Suppose this whole world, 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, and after the complete extinction of the Realized Ones, in order to honor each of them, were to build memorial towers for them, made of all precious substances, as big as a world with four continents, as high as the world of Brahma, embellished with parasols and flagpoles, repositories of absolute durable undecaying relics, and after having made such a memorial for each individual Realized One, should

honor it for an eon or more with all kinds of flowers, incense, flags, pennants, and with bells, musical instruments, and drums—what do you think, Lord of Gods—would that family son or family daughter produce much virtue on that account?”

“Much, Blessed One; much, Blissful One. It would be impossible to reach the end of that accumulation of virtue in hundreds of thousands of millions of eons.”

The Blessed One said, “Believe, Lord of Gods, you should emulate it: any family son or family daughter who keeps, reads, and studies this teaching of inconceivable liberation produces even more virtue than this. Why? The enlightenment of the Blessed Buddhas, o Lord of Gods, comes about from the teaching; it is possible by honoring the teaching, but cannot be honored by material gifts. You should know this, Lord of Gods, by this example.

“Formerly, Lord of Gods, countless eons in the past, in a time way more than countless immeasurably inconceivably long eons ago, a Realized One named King of Medicine, an able, truly and completely enlightened Buddha, emerged in the world, complete in knowledge and conduct, faring well, unexcelled knower of the world, guide of people, teacher of celestials and humans, a blessed Buddha, in an era of reflection, in the world Great Array. The life span of that Buddha King of Medicine, the truly and completely enlightened worthy who had arrived at reality, was twenty intermediate eons. Thirty-six tens of millions of myriads of disciples and twelve tens of millions of myriads of bodhisattvas were associated with him.

“At that time too, furthermore, there arose a king named Ratnacchatra, sovereign of four continents, possessed of the seven treasures. He also had a thousand sons, who were valiant heroes, physically excellent, slayers of enemy armies.

“That king Ratnacchatra honored the Realized One King of Medicine and his company with all comforts for five intermediate eons. When those five intermediate eons had passed, Lord of Gods, King Ratnacchatra said to his thousand sons, ‘Note that I have honored the Realized One; so now you honor the Realized One too.’

“Then the royal princes, applauding their father King Ratnacchatra, agreed. They too, with their attendants, honored the Realized One King of Medicine with all comforts for five intermediate eons.

“It occurred to one of the princes, Candracchatra by name, when he was alone, ‘Is there any honor that is better and higher than that honor?’ By the power of the Buddha, celestials said from the sky, ‘Honoring true teaching, good man, is the highest honor of all.’

“He said, ‘What is the honoring of true teaching?’

“The celestials said, ‘Go to the Realized One King of Medicine, good man, and ask him what the honor true teaching is. The Blessed One will explain for you.’

“So, Lord of Gods, the royal prince Candracchatra went to the Buddha King of Medicine, bowed his head at the Blessed One’s feet, and stood to one side. Standing aside, prince Candracchatra said to the Blessed One King of Medicine, ‘What, Blessed One, is honoring true teaching?’

“That Blessed One said, ‘Son, the honoring of true teaching refers to the profound scriptures spoken by the Realized, profound revelations, unwelcome by all the world, hard to penetrate, hard to see, hard to know, subtle, acute, not in the domain of conjecture; those scriptures, in the canon of bodhisattvas, stamped with the royal seal of scriptures on mental mastery, showing the wheel of teaching that never rolls back, proceeding from the six perfections, are not encompassed by any conceptions.

““Those scriptures contain all the principles conducive to enlightenment, including the effectuation of the branches of enlightenment, embodying great compassion for beings, showing great kindness, free of all tendencies of destructive views, showing interdependent occurrence.

““In the teachings, those scriptures are without a self, without a being, without a life, without a person, concerned with emptiness, signlessness, purposelessness, deconstruction, non-origination, and no production. They arrive at the peak of enlightenment and turn the wheel of the teaching. They are celebrated and praised by the chiefs of deities, rainmakers, spirits, celestial musicians, titans, rocs, minotaurs, and serpents. Those scriptures perpetuate the lineage of true teaching, hold the treasury of the teaching, embody the highest honor of truth; preserved by all wise people, they elucidate all the practices of bodhisattvas, with objective analytic knowledge of what things really mean. The scriptures of the teaching are emancipators showing the misery of impermanence and the peace of selflessness.

“‘They terminate stinginess, immorality, malice, laziness, distraction, and stupidity, destroy all adherence to dependence on views of false teachers; respected by all who are enlightened, antithetical to the opinions of common currency, they elucidate the bliss of nirvana. Such scriptures, elucidation, remembering, examining, taking in true principles—that is honoring true teaching.

“‘Furthermore, son, honoring true teaching is meditating on truth objectively, attainment of objective truth, fully accepting interdependent occurrence. That is acceptance of no production and no origin, free of all views grasping extremes; entry into selflessness and impersonality of cause and condition, without strife, dispute, or quarrel, free of egoism and possessiveness.

“‘Honoring true teaching is resort to meaning, not resort to expression. It is resort to knowledge, not resort to consciousness. It is resort to scriptures of definite meaning, not adherence to common occupation with conjectural meaning. It is resort to reality, not immersion in adherence to grasping the conception of the notion of person.

“‘Awakening according to the teachings of the enlightened, independence, autonomy—in terms of the twelve elements of interdependent occurrence, for example, *By the extinction of ignorance, even old age, death, sorrow, lament, misery, unhappiness, and irritation cease*—freedom from all opinionated views, accomplished by removing the endless opinions of people—that, son, is unexcelled honor of true teaching.’

“‘Then, Lord of Gods, the prince Candracchatra, having heard about honoring true teaching from the Blessed Realized One King of Medicine, attained suitable receptivity to truth. Honoring the Blessed One with all his robes and jewelry, he said, ‘When the Blessed Realized One has become completely extinct, I can preserve the true teaching to honor preservation of true teaching; let the Blessed One support me so that I may set aside devils and false teachers and preserve true teaching.’

“‘The Realized One, perceiving his will, predicted, ‘In the final age, in the final time, you will protect, safeguard, and preserve the city of the true teaching.’

“‘Then the prince Candracchatra, with faith established by the Realized One, went forth from home to the homeless state and took up good principles diligently. Based on the diligence of his undertaking, he was well established in good practices and soon arrived at mental mastery

and developed five kinds of higher knowledge. He attained unimpeded eloquence, and when the Blessed Realized One King of Medicine had become extinct, he turned the wheel of the teaching by the power of higher knowledge and mental mastery. Like the Realized One King of Medicine, he turned the wheel of the teaching for ten intermediate eons.

“And thus, Lord of Gods, by the mendicant Candracchatra’s effort to preserve true teaching, ten hundred tens of millions of people became irreversible on the path to supreme true complete enlightenment. Forty million people were led to the vehicle of disciples or solitary illuminates. Innumerable people were born in heavens.

“You were thinking, Lord of Gods, the sovereign king Ratnacchatra of that time was someone else. But you should not view him thus anymore. Why? The present Realized One Ratnarcis was at that time the sovereign king named Ratnacchatra. As for the thousand royal sons that Ratnacchatra had, they are bodhisattvas of the present era Bhadra, the Good. In this era Good, a full thousand Buddhas are to be born. Four of them—Kakucchanda and so on—have already been; the rest, from Kakutsunda to Roca, are yet to appear. The Realized One Roca is to be born at the end.

“You were thinking, Lord of Gods, that the prince Candracchatra of that time, who preserved the true teaching of the Blessed Realized One King of Medicine, was someone else. You should not see this way anymore. Why? I myself was he at that time, o Lord of Gods; I was the prince of that time named Candracchatra.

“By this example, Lord of Gods, honor of the teaching is highest, best, supreme, most eminent, complete, excellent, unsurpassed. Hence, Lord of Gods, I should be honored by honoring the teaching, not by material gifts; I should not be respected by material gifts, I should be respected by respect for the teaching.”

Then the Blessed one said to the bodhisattva Maitreya, “This supreme true complete enlightenment that I accomplished over countless tens of millions of eons, Maitreya, I entrust to you, so that in the last age, in the last time, this teaching, like this, will be preserved on earth by your power, will grow and not disappear. Why? In the future, Maitreya, if family sons and family daughters, deities, rainmakers, spirits, celestial musicians, and titans who have set out for supreme true complete enlightenment have not heard this teaching, the roots of good they have planted will be lost. Having heard such a scripture, delighted, they will

gain faith, and receive it with utmost respect. In order to protect those family sons and family daughters, Maitreya, at that time you should spread this scripture, such as it is.

“These, Maitreya, are two marks of bodhisattvas: the mark of perspicuous expression of various standpoints, and the mark of one who is not scared by the profound principle of the teaching and has understood it truly. Those, Maitreya, are the two marks of bodhisattvas. So those bodhisattvas whose highest aim is perspicuous expression of various standpoints should be recognized as beginners who have not been practicing long.

“Beginning bodhisattvas then, Maitreya, wound themselves and do not contemplate the profound teaching for two reasons. What two? Hearing scriptures they haven’t heard before, they are frightened, doubtful, and don’t agree: asking, ‘We’ve never heard this before—where did it come from?’ they reject it. They do not attend, associate with, respectfully approach, or honor the family sons who preserve the profound scripture and teach the profound truth as vessels of the profound truth; they even speak ill of them. For those two reasons beginning bodhisattvas wound themselves and do not prepare themselves for the profound teaching.

“For these two reasons bodhisattvas who believe in the profound wound themselves and do not attain acceptance of the truth of no origin. What two? They look down on beginning bodhisattvas who haven’t practiced long, disrespect them, and do not inspire them, do not enlighten them, do not teach them. Those of little faith in the profound do not respect learning, and they serve people with worldly objects of enjoyment, not with the gift of truth.

“Maitreya, for these two reasons bodhisattvas who believe in the profound wound themselves and do not quickly attain acceptance of the truth of no origin.”

The bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Blessed one, “As the Blessed One has aptly said, that is wonderful. Very well, Blessed One, from now on I shall abandon these two excesses. The supreme true complete enlightenment accumulated by the Realized One over countless hundreds of thousands of millions of tens of millions of eons, this I will protect, I will preserve.

“Any family sons or family daughters in the future who are suitable vessels, I will put this scripture in their hands. I will provide memory

by which they will believe and preserve this scripture, keep it, study it, penetrate it, write it down, and elucidate it extensively for others. I will urge them on. Those then who believe in and penetrate this scripture in that time, Blessed One, should be recognized as having been empowered by Maitreya bodhisattva.”

Now the Blessed One applauded Maitreya bodhisattva: “Good, Maitreya, good! Your statement is well-spoken. The Realized One approves of what you have said so well.”

Then all those bodhisattvas said with one voice, “We too, Blessed One, when the Realized One has passed away, will come from various Buddha-fields and spread this enlightenment of the Realized Buddha, and get those family sons to believe.”

Then the four great governing deities too said to the Blessed One, “Wherever such a teaching is practiced, taught, elucidated—in whatever villages, cities, towns, domains, or kingdoms—there we four major governing deities and our accompanying forces will also go to hear the teaching. We will protect the speakers of the teaching from a league away all around, so that no one looking for weak spots in those who speak the teaching, no one seeking an opportunity to attack, will be able to get at them.”

Now the Blessed One said to venerable Ananda, “Preserve this teaching occasion, Ananda; maintain it and elucidate it widely to others.”

He said, “In preserving this occasion of teaching, what is this teaching called, and how shall I maintain it?”

The Blessed one said, “So then, Ananda, preserve this occasion of teaching as *The Advice of Vimalakirti*, or *Paradoxical Presentation of Pairs*, or *The Book of Inconceivable Liberation*.”

So said the Blessed One.

Transported, the Licchavi Vimalakirti, Manjusri as a perpetual youth, venerable Ananda, those bodhisattvas and great disciples, and the whole crowd, the world with its deities, humans, titans, and celestial musicians, rejoiced at what the Blessed One had said.

Glossary of technical terms

B

Bases of spiritual powers: Will, mindfulness, diligence, concentration.

C

Correct efforts: Efforts to stop bad states that have arisen, to prevent bad states from arising any more, to promote good states that have arisen, and to foster the development of further good states.

E

Eight liberations: 1) examining external form with internal concepts of form; 2) examining external form without internal concepts of form; 3) liberation by purity physically realized; 4) absorption in the infinity of space; 5) absorption in the infinity of consciousness; 6) absorption in the infinity of nothingness; 7) absorption in neither perception nor no perception; 8) extinction of sensation and perception.

Eighteen unique qualities of Buddhas: ideals of complete development not shared by disciples, individual illuminates, or bodhisattvas: impeccability of conduct, speech, and mind; having no discriminatory ideas; unflinching concentration; total relinquishment through knowledge; will that does not diminish; diligence that does not diminish; mindfulness that does not diminish; insight that does not diminish; liberation that does not diminish; knowledge and vision of liberation that does not diminish; always acting in accord with wisdom; always speaking in accord with wisdom; always thinking in accord with wisdom; unobstructed knowledge of past, future, and present.

Eightfold falsehood: seeing the impermanent as permanent, the impure as pure, the painful as pleasant, the selfless as self; seeing the permanent as impermanent, the pure as impure, the pleasant as painful, and the self as selfless.

Eight inopportune conditions: states in which it is difficult to hear enlightening teaching—states of represented by hells, hungry spirits, animals, earthly paradise, the heaven of long life, deafness and blindness, intellectual brilliance in worldly knowledge, before and after the appearance of a Buddha in the world.

F

Five acts with immediate consequences: see Five crimes with immediate consequences.

Five clusters: a representation of the body-mind complex—physical form, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.

These are referred to as “appropriating clusters” when construed as self.

Five crimes with immediate consequences: parricide, matricide, disruption of the harmony of the community, killing an arhat (saint), and shedding a Buddha’s blood. For the esoteric interpretation of these terms, see the Lankavatara Sutra.

Five defects: see Five pollutions.

Four destructive forces: the five clusters (form, sensation, perception, mental formations, consciousness); afflictions (greed, hatred, folly, conceit, etc.), death; and the so-called celestial devil, which stands for the delinquent intellect.

Four devils: a representation of the four destructive forces.

Four errors: misperceiving the impermanent as permanent, the painful as pleasant, the impure as pure, and the selfless as self.

Five eyes: five levels of perception: the physical eye, the celestial or clairvoyant eye, the eye of insight, the objective eye, and the enlightened eye, or eye of Buddhas.

Five faculties: faith, energy, recollection, concentration, awareness.

Five forms of higher knowledge: psychic travel, or projection of awareness; clairvoyance; clairsaudience; mind-reading; and recollection of past states. Where these are called “outside” forms of higher knowledge, this refers to their development by non-Buddhists, in the technical sense of residual attachment to these experiences. The sixth form of higher knowledge, said to be exclusive to Buddhas, again in a technical sense, is knowledge of the end of impulse. When the inputs of the five forms of higher knowledge do not affect the mind, and do not occasion side effects such as obsession, ego-inflation, or belief in one’s own divinity, it is said that impulse is ended.

Five pollutions: pollution of people, pollution of views, pollution of psychological afflictions, pollution of livelihood, pollution of an era.

Five powers: full development of the five faculties, q.v.

Five obstructions: things that can block the way to enlightenment: afflictions, actions, circumstances of birth, ideology, information.

Four immeasurables: Basic practices of emotional cultivation, deliberately arousing feelings of kindness, compassion, joy, and impartiality, then systematically extending these feelings to encompass all creatures.

Four means of integration: Methods of bodhisattvas for integrating people into a Buddha-field; giving, kind speech, beneficial action, cooperation.

Four meditations: an ancient descriptive system for meditation states used by Hindu yogis and adopted by Buddhists: the first meditation is characterized by focused awareness, precise thought, joy, bliss, and single-mindedness; the second by inner purity, joy, bliss, and single-mindedness; the third by equanimity, mindfulness, precise knowledge, bliss, and single-mindedness; the fourth by neither pain nor pleasure, equanimity,, mindfulness, and single-mindedness.

Four noble truths: the fact of suffering, the accumulation of suffering, the end of suffering, and the way to end suffering.

Fourfold expertise: knowledge of doctrines, meanings, phraseology, and appropriate expression.

P

Points of mindfulness: A method of meditation for fostering nirvana: contemplation of the body as impure, sensation as irritating, mind as inconstant, and phenomena as selfless.

S

Sakra (Shakra): an epithet of a Hindu deity commonly referred to as Indra, sometimes called 'emperor of gods,' envisioned as chief of the deities of a heaven of thirty-three celestial states. In Buddhist texts this represents a state or class of attainment, not an individual being, and so may be represented as plural; in the Lotus Sutra, the rank of Indra represents the experience of apprehending the multiplicity of the world as a totality.

Seven branches of enlightenment: discernment, diligence, joy, alleviation, relinquishment, stability, attention.

Seven fixations of consciousness: fixation in human or heavenly states in the realm of desire; fixation in the heavenly state of the first meditation; fixation in the heavenly state of the second meditation; fixation in the heavenly state of the third meditation; fixation in the heavenly state of infinite space; fixation in the heavenly state of infinite consciousness; fixation in the heavenly state of infinite nothingness.

Six forms of higher knowledge: the five forms of higher knowledge (q.v.) plus the knowledge of end of impulse.

Six perfections: giving, integrity, patience, diligence, meditation, insight. This is often used as an outline of the practice of bodhisattvas.

Six recollections: remembrance of Buddha, the teaching, the community, discipline, charity, and heaven.

Sixty-two trends of opinion: this refers to all the religious and philosophical opinions of Buddha's time.

T

Ten good ways: These are defined negatively, as conformity with precepts against murder, theft, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive talk, slander, frivolous speech, greed, hostility, and false views.

Ten powers: Ten powers of knowledge attributed to Buddhas: 1) knowledge of what is so and what is not so; 2) knowledge of results of actions; 3) knowledge of people's various interests; 4) knowledge of the variety of realms of experience; 5) knowledge of higher and lower faculties; 6) knowledge of all destinations, where all paths lead; 7) knowledge of all states of meditation and concentration, how they get contaminated, how they can be purified, and how to emerge from them; 8) knowledge of past states of being; 9) knowledge of the conditions of death and birth of other people; 10) knowledge of the end of impulse.

Thirty-seven elements associated with enlightenment, or thirty-seven things favorable to enlightenment, or aids to enlightenment: four points of mindfulness, four right efforts, four bases of spiritual powers, five faculties, five powers, seven branches of enlightenment, and the eightfold right path [right view, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, recollection, meditation].

Three defilements: passion, hostility, and folly. These are referred to as afflictions, and also called three poisons.

Three doors of liberation: also called three liberations; Emptiness, signlessness, purposelessness. This refers to liberation from belief in the intrinsic reality of concepts, interpretations, and aims projected by human imagination on objects of the senses.

Three knowledges: This term can refer to the threefold mystic knowledge (q.v.); it can also refer to knowledge of emptiness, the conditional, and the middle way.

Three times: past, future, and present.

Three Treasures: Also referred to as Three Jewels; the Buddha, or enlightened one; the Dharma, or teaching; and the Sangha, or community.

Threefold mystic knowledge; knowledge of past lives, clairvoyance, knowledge of the end of impulse.

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