



Infinite Life Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha

*Chinese translation by Samghavarman, Indian Tripitaka Master
of the Cao-Wei Dynasty*

English translation by Householder Foqing,
edited by Householder Jingtu



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Published by Pure Land Buddhism Publishing Co.
41, Alley 22, Lane 150, Sec 5, Shin-Yi Road, Taipei 11059, Taiwan

Tel: 886-2-87894818

Fax: 886-2-87807050

E-mail: amt@plb.tw

Website: www.purelandbuddhism.org

Printed March 2024

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Printed in Taiwan



First Fascicle

Thus I have heard. At one time, the Buddha stayed at Mt. Gridhrakuta (Vulture Peak) in Rajgir. He gathered with an assembly of 12,000 senior *bhikkus*. They were all great sages who had attained supernatural powers. Their names were:

Ven. Ājñātakaṇḍinya (Understanding the Original Sphere), Ven. Aśvajit (Correct Vows), Ven. Vāṣpa (Correct Speech), Ven. Mahānāma (Great Name), Ven. Bhadrīka (Benevolent Sage), Ven. Vimalā (Defilement-Free), Ven. Yaśas (Name Well-Known), Ven. Subhūti (Good Reality), Ven. Pūraṇa (Full Perfection), Ven. Gavāṃpati (Bull King), Ven. Uruvilvākāśyapa, Ven. Gayākāśyapa, Ven. Nadīkāśyapa, Ven. Mahākāśyapa, Ven. Śāriputra, Ven. Mahmaudgalyāyana, Ven. Kapphaṇa, Ven. Mahākātyāyana or Upāli or Mahākaṣṭhila (Great Abiding), Ven. Rāṣṭrapāla or Mahākātyāyana (Great Pure Will), Ven. Mahācunda, Ven. Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇiputra (Son of Wish Fulfillment), Ven. Aniruddha (Impediment-Free), Ven. Sundarananda (Flow of Stream), Ven. Kampila (Firm Control), Ven. Vakkula (King of Countenance), Ven. Pārāyaṇika (Excellent Vehicle), Ven. Subhūti or Sīvali (Nature of Benevolence), Ven. Nandika or Nandā (Joy and Happiness), Ven. Svāgata (Good Come), Ven. Rahula, and Ven. Ananda.

They were all like these leading disciples.

Also gathered was an assembly of Mahayana Bodhisattvas, including Samantabhadra (Universal Worthy), Manjusri (Wondrous Virtue), Maitreya (Compassionate One), and all the Bodhisattvas of the present Auspicious *Kalpa*.

Further, there were *Bhadrapala* and other noble beings (lay Bodhisattvas), sixteen in all. Present too were the Bodhisattvas Excellent Reflection, Faith and Wisdom, Immateriality, Blossom of Supernatural Power, Bright Valiant One, Supremacy of Wisdom, Banner of Insight, Serene Root, Vow and Wisdom, Fragrant Elephant, Jewelled Splendor, Middle Abidance, Practice of Restraint, and Liberation.

They all follow the virtue of Mahasattva Samantabhadra, fulfill the infinite practices and vows of all Bodhisattvas, and abide peacefully in all meritorious dharmas. They travel in the ten directions, employ skillful expedient means, enter the Buddha-Dharma treasury, and finally attain the Other Shore (Nirvana). In countless worlds, they manifest the attainment of perfect enlightenment.

While staying in Tushita Heaven, each of them spreads the correct Dharma.

After leaving the heavenly palace, his spiritual consciousness descends into his mother's womb.

Once born from her right rib, he takes seven steps, shining with a brilliance that universally illuminates the ten directions. Countless Buddha Lands experience the Six Kinds of Convulsion. He declares aloud: "I shall be the supremely honored one in the world." Deities Sakra and Brahma attend on him, and all celestial beings pledge their admiration.

He shows proficiency in mathematics, literature, art, archery and horsemanship, mastery of various mystical arts and supernatural

techniques, and erudition through extensive reading. He practices martial arts in the back garden and manifests as engaging in the sensual pleasures of the royal court.

After witnessing aging, sickness and death, he realizes that the world is impermanent. He abandons his kingdom, wealth and throne, and heads into the mountains to seek enlightenment. He sends back his white horse, jewelled crown and ornaments, and takes off his lavish clothes. He dons a monk's robe, shaves clean his beard and hair, and sits upright under a tree. For six years he practices the austerities expected of an ascetic.

Since he has appeared in the world of the Five Turbidities, he behaves like the beings there. He looks dusty and dirty, and bathes in the Golden River. A deity lowers a tree branch, with which he climbs up the bank. With divine birds hovering above, he heads towards the place of his imminent enlightenment.

Sri (Auspicious, a deva-transformed boy) perceives the auspicious omen and appears to foretell the impending attainment. Out of compassion, he accepts the grass from the boy, spreads it under a tree, and sits on it in the full-lotus posture. He radiates great light to let Mara (the Evil One) know. Mara comes with his subjects to threaten and test him. The Bodhisattva subdues the demons with the power of his wisdom. He realizes the profound, wondrous Dharma, and attains supreme, perfect enlightenment.

Deities Sakra and Brahma implore him to turn the Dharma Wheel. He travels as Buddhas travel and teaches the Dharma as Buddhas teach. He beats the Dharma drum, blows the Dharma conch, wields the Dharma

sword, and raises the Dharma banners. He rumbles Dharma thunder, ignites Dharma lightning, pours Dharma rain, and gives Dharma alms (teachings). His Dharma voice incessantly enlightens beings in all worldly realms. His radiance shines throughout countless Buddha Lands. All worlds undergo the Six Kinds of Convulsion.

The entire demonic realm is encompassed. Mara's palace is shaken. Deterred and frightened, all the demons submit. He tears the net of heterodoxy, eliminates false views, dispels worldly weariness, and destroys the traps of desire. He closely guards the Dharma city, opens the Dharma gate, purges [mental] defilements, and reveals what is pure and undefiled. He sheds light on the Buddha Dharma and advocates the correct paths.

When he enters cities for alms, he receives offerings of abundant food, thus enabling beings to accumulate merit and virtue and acting as a seed field for blessings. When he intends to teach the Dharma, he shows a joyful smile and gives various Dharma medicines to cure the Three Sufferings. He demonstrates the infinite merit and virtue of the determination for Buddhahood, and prophesies Bodhisattvas' attainment of perfect enlightenment.

By manifesting *Parinirvana*, he delivers countless sentient beings. He ends their defilements and makes them plant the roots of virtue. He is in full possession of all merit, wondrous and unfathomable.

He travels throughout the Buddha Lands, spreading the teachings of the Way. His practices are pure, immaculate.

Consider a magician who can manifest as different illusions. Sometimes a man and other times a woman, there is nothing he cannot transform into. Since he has thoroughly mastered his speciality, he can do exactly as he pleases.

The Bodhisattvas delve deeply into the sutras and scriptures, mastering their marvellous essentials. abide peacefully in the ultimate truth, and convert all beings without exception. They appear extensively in countless Buddha Lands and refrain from arrogance and laziness in empathizing with all living beings. Such practices are accomplished in full perfection.

The sutras of the Bodhisattvas provide thorough insights into the marvellous essentials. Their names are known far and wide, and they guide beings throughout the ten directions. Countless Buddhas protect and keep mindful of them. They dwell where Buddhas dwell and establish what great sages have established. They propagate the teachings of Tathagatas, act as great mentors to Bodhisattvas, and open the minds of beings with profound meditative wisdom. They penetrate the nature of things, grasp the abilities of beings, and clearly understand all realms.

To make offerings to the Buddhas, they manifest transformed bodies such as lightning flashes in the sky. They well learn the net (all-pervading teaching) of fearlessness and recognize the illusory nature of all dharmas. They destroy the Mara-net, dissolve all bondage, transcend the stages of Sravaka and Pratyekabuddha, and attain the *samadhis* of emptiness, formlessness and desirelessness. They skillfully use expedient means and display the Three Vehicles. At the end of their incarnation in this world, they manifest *Parinirvana*.

There is nothing done. There is nothing achieved. There is neither arising nor ceasing. So they attain the truth of universal equality and fully accomplish countless *dharanis* and hundreds of thousands of *samadhis*. Their roots and wisdom are vast, pervasive, tranquil and undisturbed. They delve deeply into the Dharma Treasury for Bodhisattvas, attain the *Avatamsaka samadhi* of Buddhas, and propagate and expound all the Buddha scriptures. Abiding in deep meditation, they witness countless Buddhas of the present in an instant, missing none.

They bring relief to those who suffer immense hardships, those who have time [to practice Dharma] and those who do not, and separately reveal to them the sphere of ultimate reality. They acquire Tathagatas' wisdom of eloquence and speak all languages to guide and convert living beings. They transcend all worldly dharmas, and their minds dwell constantly on the path of deliverance. With regard to all things and beings, they act at will with absolute freedom. Uninvited, they become friends to multitudes of beings and shoulder their heavy karmic burdens.

They inherit and uphold the Tathagatas' profound Dharma treasury and protect the Buddha-seed-nature from extinction. They invigorate the great compassion, sympathize with living beings, employ eloquence out of kindness, bestow Dharma-eyes, block the Three Wretched Realms, and open the gates to the Fortunate Realms. They offer the Dharma, unsolicited, to ordinary beings, and behave as a truly filial son should out of love and respect for his parents. They treat sentient beings as themselves, and use all their roots of goodness to deliver the multitudes to the Other Shore. They acquire the infinite merit and virtue of Buddhas. Their wisdom is sacred and unfathomable.

Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas like these, their numbers immeasurable, gathered at the assembly simultaneously.

At that time, the sense faculties of the World-Honored One showed joy and delight. His physical form was serene and pure, his countenance majestically radiant.

Ven. Ananda grasped the Buddha's lofty intention. He rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder and prostrated himself on the ground. Pressing his palms together, he said to the Buddha: "Today, World-Honored One, your sense faculties show joy and delight. Your physical form is serene and pure. Your face is radiant and majestic. You are like a clear, bright mirror that shines from within. You project a magnificent expression that surpasses all others. I've never seen such extraordinary brilliance. So, Great Sage, I thought to myself:

"Today the World-Honored One abides in some extraordinary Dharma.

"Today the World Hero dwells where all Buddhas dwell.

"Today the World Eyes focus on the undertakings of a guide and teacher.

"Today the World Valiant One rests in the supreme path.

"Today the Heaven-Honored One performs the virtue of Tathagatas.

"Buddhas of the past, present and future are mindful of one another. Isn't the present Buddha thinking of other Buddhas? Why is he displaying such brilliance and splendor?"

Then the World-Honored One said to Ananda: “Why, Ananda? Did the deities advise you to ask the Buddha? Or was it from your own insights that you asked about my majestic appearance?”

Ananda replied: “No deities advised me. I asked about the implication on the basis of my own observations.”

The Buddha said: “Good, Ananda, what you have asked is very pleasing! You’ve developed deep wisdom and true, wonderful eloquence. You sympathize with sentient beings, so you asked such a wise question.

“With infinite great compassion, the Tathagata commiserates with beings of the Three Domains. Therefore, he appears in the world to disseminate the teaching of the Way, wishing to save the multitudes by endowing them with real benefits. This is difficult to encounter and see for countless billions of *kalpas*, like the *udumbara* flower that blooms but rarely.

“Your question today is of great benefit and will enlighten all celestial and human beings.

“Ananda, you should know that Tathagatas are perfectly enlightened. Their wisdom is unfathomable. They guide beings of diverse aptitudes. Their insights are free of obstacles, and nothing can limit or frustrate them. Nourished by a single meal, a Tathagata can sustain his life for 100,000 billion *kalpas* to immeasurable *kalpas* or even much longer. His sense faculties are filled with joy and delight, free from damage or decay. His physical form never changes, nor does his radiant countenance. Why is this? Because Tathagatas’ *samadhi* and wisdom are supreme,

penetrating and limitless. They are free and at ease amid all dharmas. Ananda, listen carefully. I will explain this to you.”

Ananda replied: “Certainly. I am willing, happy and eager to hear.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “In the distant past, countless and unfathomably limitless *kalpas* ago, Tathagata Dipankara appeared in the world. He taught and delivered innumerable beings, enabled them all to attain enlightenment, and manifested *Parinirvana*. He was followed in succession by Tathagatas Pratapavat (Far-Reaching Light), Moonlight, Candana Fragrance, Virtuous Mountain-King, Heavenly Crown of Sumeru, Sumeru-Like Luminous, Moon Color, Correct Mindfulness, Impurity Free, Non-Attachment, Dragon Deva, Night Light, Sumeru Summit, Immovable Ground, Wondrous Vaidurya Flower, Vaidurya Golden Hue, Gold Treasury, Glowing Light, Glowing Root, Earth Seed, Moon Image, Sun Voice, Liberation Flower, Splendid Radiance, Supernatural Power from Oceanic Enlightenment, Water Light, Great Fragrance, Free of Dust and Dirt, Removing Mental Weariness, Treasure Glow, Wondrous Peak, Valorous Stand, Virtue-Support Wisdom, Outshining the Sun and Moon, Vaidurya Sun and Moon Lights, Unsurpassed Vaidurya Light, Supreme Leader, Bodhi Flower, Moon Brightness, Sunlight, King of Flower Hue, Water Moonlight, Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance, Practice of Removing Hindrance, Pure Faith, Abiding in Goodness, Magnificent Divinity, Dharma Wisdom, Phoenix Voice, Lion Voice, Dragon Voice, and Tathagata Staying in the World. All these Buddhas had already departed.

“Then another Buddha appeared. His name was ‘Lord of Freedom in the World (Lokesvararaja)’, a *Tathagata* (Thus-Come One), *Arhat*

(one worthy of offerings), *Anuttara Samyaksamuddha* (one with supreme perfect enlightenment), *Vidyacarana-Samanna* (one perfect in wisdom and action), *Sugata* (well-gone one), *Lokavid* (one who knows the world), *Anuttara* (unsurpassed leader), *Purusa Damya Sarathi* (trainer of men), *Sasta Devamanusyanam* (teacher of devas and humans), and *Buddha-Bhagavat* (the enlightened, world-honored one).

“At that time, there was a king who heard the Dharma teaching of the Buddha. With a joyful heart, he awakened the aspiration to supreme, perfect enlightenment. He abandoned his kingdom and throne, and became a monk with the Dharma name of Dharmakara. He had pre-eminent talent, courage and intelligence, surpassing all others in the world.

“When he reached Tathagata Lokesvararaja, he bowed at the Buddha’s feet, circumambulated the Buddha clockwise three times, and prostrated himself on the ground. With palms pressed together, he acclaimed in verse:

*Your countenance glows with supreme majesty;
Your divinity is mighty and boundless.
Such brilliance
Is without equal.*

*The sun, the moon and muni-gems,
Though in pearly luster and fiery glare,
Are all bereft of brightness
Like blocks of ink.*

*Your visage, Tathagata,
Peerlessly transcends the world.
Your great voice of perfect enlightenment
Resonates throughout the ten directions.*

*In precepts, learning, diligence,
samadhi and wisdom,
Your sublimity and virtue are unparalleled,
Outstanding and rare.*

*With deep observation and perfect reflection
On the oceanic Dharma of all Buddhas,
You embrace its profundity and subtlety,
And penetrate its utmost breadth and depth.*

*Ignorance, desire and anger
Are forever absent from you, World-Honored One.
You are a hero among men, a lion among beasts;
Your divine virtue is infinite.*

*Your feats are vast,
Your wisdom is penetrating and wondrous.
Your light and your noble features
Shake the Great Chilocosms.*

*I vow to become a Buddha
With the same sublimity as you, Dharma King.
I shall deliver beings from transmigration
And let them all attain liberation.*

*I shall practice generosity (dana) for mental restraint,
Cultivate precepts (sila), forbearance (khanti) and diligence (viriya),
And as such, attain samadhi,
And wisdom (prajna), [all] to the highest stage.*

*I vow to attain Buddhahood
And fulfill this vow universally,
Turning all fears [of sentient beings]
Into great peace.*

*Suppose there are Buddhas
Millions of kotis in number,
And countless great sages
As many as grains of sand in the Ganges River.*

*Making offerings
To all these Buddhas
Cannot compare with seeking the Way
With determination and perseverance.*

*Like the sands of the Ganges,
Buddha Lands are numerous.
Also innumerable beyond measure
Are other worlds and realms.*

*My light shall shine universally
Through all these lands.
With such avid diligence,
My divine power shall be hard to measure.*

*When I become a Buddha,
My land will rank first.
Its inhabitants shall be wonderful,
And its cultivation sites shall be second to none.*

*My land shall be like nirvana,
Peerless and without equal.
I shall commiserate with beings
And deliver them all to liberation.*

*Those born here from the ten directions
Will be delightful and pure of heart.
After reaching my land,
They will have joy and peace.*

*May you, Buddha, verify my sincerity.
You are my true witness.
I have taken my vows before you,
And I will make every effort to fulfill them.*

*World-Honored Ones of the ten directions
Have unhindered wisdom.
May all these venerable ones
Always know my aspirations.*

*Even if my body stays
In bitterness and poison,
I shall exert all diligence
And endure the hardships without regret.*

The Buddha told Ananda: “After speaking the verses, *Bhikku* Dharmakara said to the Buddha (Lokesvararaja): ‘Thus, World-Honored One, I have awakened the aspiration for supreme, perfect enlightenment. May I request you, Buddha, to expound the Dharma sutras. I will practice them in order to select and assimilate the pure splendors of the myriad wonderful realms of Buddha Lands. Let me quickly attain perfect enlightenment in this world so that I can eradicate the roots of rebirth and suffering for sentient beings’.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “At that time, Lokesvararaja Buddha said to *Bhikku* Dharmakara: ‘Regarding the practices for adorning a Buddha Land, you should have known.’ The *bhikku* said to the Buddha: ‘The meaning is vast and profound, beyond my perception. May I wish you, World-Honored One, to elaborate on the Pure Land undertakings of Tathagatas. After hearing, I shall practice accordingly to fulfill my vows.’”

“At that time, Lokesvararaja Buddha knew that *Bhikku* Dharmakara was brilliant and that his vows were profound and far-reaching. The Buddha immediately uttered the following Dharma words to *Bhikku* Dharmakara: ‘Consider a great ocean. Over a number of *kalpas*, a person can drain it with a bucket and obtain treasure at the bottom of the sea. If someone pursues the Way with wholehearted diligence without stopping, he will certainly reap the fruit of success. What vow cannot be fulfilled?’”

“Then Lokesvararaja Buddha introduced in detail 21 billion Buddha Lands, including the goodness and evil of the celestial and human beings there, and the coarseness or exquisiteness of the realms. All were revealed as the *bhikku* wished.

“Hearing the Buddha’s account of the splendid Pure Lands, the *bhikku* saw them all and made supreme, extraordinary vows. His mind was tranquil, and his will free from attachment. No one else in all the worlds can match him. For fully five *kalpas*, he reflected deeply and decided on the pure practices to make splendid his Buddha Land.”

Ananda asked the Buddha: “How long were lifespans in the land of that Buddha (Lokesvararaja)?”

The Buddha replied: “That Buddha had a lifespan of 42 *kalpas*. At the time, Bhikku Dharmakara chose from the pure practices that were performed by the 21 billion Buddhas to adorn wondrous realms. Having completed the selection, he approached the Buddha. He bowed at the Buddha’s feet on his knees, circumambulated the Buddha three times, stood still with palms pressed together and said to the Buddha: ‘World-Honored One, I’ve selected the pure practices to adorn my Buddha Land.’

“The Buddha said to the *bhikku*: ‘You may speak up today. You should know that it’s a good time to inspire and delight the multitudes. After listening, the Bodhisattvas will practice accordingly and thus fulfill infinite great vows.’

“The *bhikku* answered the Buddha: ‘May I entreat you to listen and perceive. I will declare each of my vows:

1. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, there should be hells, hungry ghosts or animals in my land, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

2. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should, after death, be reborn into the Three Wretched Realms, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
3. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should not all be in the hue of genuine gold, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
4. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should have any difference between beautiful and ugly in physique or countenance, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
5. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should not remember their previous lives, or at least should not know the events of 100,000 *koti nayuta kalpas*, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
6. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should not have clairvoyance, or at least should not see 100,000 *koti nayuta* Buddha Lands, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
7. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should not acquire clairaudience, or at least should not hear the teachings of 100,000 *koti nayuta* Buddhas, or should not accept and uphold all these teachings, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
8. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should not possess telepathy, or at least should not know the

thoughts of sentient beings in 100,000 *koti nayuta* Buddha Lands, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

9. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should not obtain teleportation, or at least should not be able to pass through 100,000 *koti nayuta* Buddha Lands in an instant, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
10. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should generate thoughts of attachment to their bodies, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
11. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should not remain in the Assembly of Assured Enlightenment or be bound to accomplish nirvana, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
12. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, my light should have a limit, or at least should not illuminate 100,000 *koti nayuta* Buddha Lands, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
13. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, my life should have a limit, or at least should not last 100,000 *koti nayuta kalpas*, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
14. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Sravakas in my land should be countable, or their number could be known even if all beings in the three-thousand-fold great chiliocosm became Pratyekabuddhas and calculated together for hundreds of thousands of *kalpas*, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

15. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should not have unlimited longevity, or, for those who originally vowed to have a free choice of their own lifespans, their vow should not be fulfilled, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
16. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should even hear non-virtuous names, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
17. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, innumerable Buddhas of the ten directions should not unanimously extol my name, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
18. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, sentient beings of the ten directions who earnestly believe and rejoice, wish to be reborn in my land and recite my name, even ten times, should fail to be born there, may I not attain perfect enlightenment. Excepted are those who commit the five gravest transgressions or slander the correct Dharma.
19. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, sentient beings of the ten directions who aspire to perfect enlightenment, perform various meritorious deeds and sincerely wish to be born in my land, should not, when they die, see me appear before them surrounded by a multitude of sacred beings, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
20. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, sentient beings of the ten

directions who hear my name, focus their thoughts on my land, plant roots of virtue and sincerely dedicate their merit with a wish for rebirth there, should not eventually fulfill their aspiration, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

21. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should not each have all the 32 physical marks of a Great Being (Buddha), may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
22. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas from other Buddha Lands are reborn in my land, they shall definitely attain the utmost stage of being one lifetime removed from Buddhahood. In addition, there are those who originally vowed to manifest freely for the benefit of sentient beings. Fortified by “Great Vow” armor, those Bodhisattvas shall accumulate roots of virtue and deliver all beings. They shall tour Buddha Lands, carry out Bodhisattva activities, make offerings to Buddhas, Tathagatas of the ten directions, guide countless sentient beings as numerous as grains of sands in the Ganges River, and have them established on the path to supreme, perfect enlightenment. They shall transcend the ordinary sequence of Bodhisattva-practice stages and instantly manifest themselves as cultivating the virtues of Samantabhadra. Should this not happen, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
23. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in my land who make offerings to Buddhas by relying on my supernatural power should not be able to reach countless *koti nayuta* Buddha Lands simultaneously within a moment, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

24. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in my land who reveal their roots of virtue in the presence of Buddhas should not be satisfied with the tributes they want to offer, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
25. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in my land should not be able to teach the Dharma with All-Inclusive Wisdom, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
26. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in my land should not possess the body of *Vajra Narayana*, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
27. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, all things of the celestial and human beings in my land should not be sublime, pure, bright and magnificent, extraordinary in form and appearance, of the utmost subtlety and delicacy, and beyond description and imagination, or sentient beings there even with clairvoyance should be able to clearly discern the names and quantities of these things, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
28. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in my land, even those with lesser merit and virtue, should not be able to see the Bodhi-trees in my land shining with infinite light and hues and reaching a height of four million *lis*, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
29. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in my land who receive, read, recite, chant, uphold and expound sutras should

not acquire eloquence and wisdom, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

30. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in my land should have a limit in wisdom and eloquence, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
31. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, my land should not be pure, completely reflecting countless inconceivable Buddha Lands in the ten directions, as if one were looking at one's face in a bright mirror, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
32. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, all things in my land from the ground to the sky, including palaces, mansions, ponds, streams, flowers and trees, should not be composed of countless varieties of treasures and hundreds of thousands of kinds of fragrances, and be adorned with splendors that transcend the celestial and human realms, or should not emit fragrances that permeate the worlds of the ten directions, enabling Bodhisattvas who smell them to cultivate the Buddha-Vehicle, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
33. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, sentient beings in countless unfathomable Buddha Lands of the ten directions are touched by my light, they shall become soft and gentle in body and mind, surpassing celestial and human beings. Should this not happen, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

34. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, sentient beings in countless unfathomable Buddha Lands of the ten directions who hear my name should not attain the Bodhisattva Endurance for the Non-Arising of Dharmas and profound *dharanis*, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
35. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, women in countless unfathomable Buddha Lands of the ten directions who hear my name, rejoice in faith, aspire to perfect enlightenment, and abhor the female body, should reassume the form of a woman after death, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
36. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in countless unfathomable Buddha Lands of the ten directions hear my name, they shall, after death, constantly perform monastic practices until they accomplish Buddhahood. Should this not happen, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
37. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in countless unfathomable Buddha Lands of the ten directions who hear my name, press the ground with the five appendages, bow in worship, rejoice in faith, and perform Bodhisattva practices, they shall receive homage from all celestial and human beings. Should this not happen, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
38. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land wish to have clothes, immediately with that thought exquisite Dharma robes shall spontaneously appear on their bodies, in the way praised by Buddhas. Should there be any need for sewing,

dyeing or washing, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

39. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, celestial and human beings in my land should experience happiness that is inferior to that of *bhikkus* who have eradicated afflictions, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
40. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in my land wish to see countless pure, splendid Buddha Lands of the ten directions, they shall immediately behold them all as they wish, reflected in the jewelled trees, as if looking at their own faces in a bright mirror. Should this not happen, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
41. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in other lands who hear my name should, till Buddhahood, experience lack, deficiency or incompleteness of the sense faculties, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
42. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in other lands hear my name, they shall all attain the *samadhi* of Pure Liberation. Abiding in such *samadhi*, they shall make offerings to countless inconceivable Buddhas, World-Honored Ones, in an instant without losing their meditative concentration. Should this not happen, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
43. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in other lands hear my name, they shall be reborn into honorable families after death. Should this not happen, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

44. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in other lands hear my name, they shall rejoice with excitement, perform Bodhisattva practices, and acquire the roots of virtue in full perfection. Should this not happen, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
45. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in other lands hear my name, they shall all attain the *samadhi* of Universal Liberation. Abiding in such *samadhi*, till Buddhahood, they shall always see countless inconceivable Buddhas. Should this not happen, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
46. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in my land so wish, they shall spontaneously hear the teachings they want to hear. Should this not happen, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
47. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in other lands who hear my name should not forthwith reach the stage of non-retrogression, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.
48. If, when I achieve Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in other lands who hear my name should not immediately accomplish the first, second and third stages of Dharma Endurance, or should not immediately accomplish non-retrogression with respect to the Buddha-Dharma, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “At that time, after proclaiming these vows, Bhikku Dharmakara chanted in verse:

*I have made vows that transcend the world.
I will surely attain the supreme Way.
Should those vows not be fulfilled,
May I not attain perfect enlightenment.*

*If, for countless kalpas,
I should not be a great benefactor
To save all the poor and afflicted,
May I not attain perfect enlightenment.*

*When I complete the Buddha-path,
My name shall transcend the ten directions.
Should it not be heard everywhere,
May I not attain perfect enlightenment.*

*Free from desire, in deep correct mindfulness,
And with pure wisdom, I shall perform monastic practices.
As I aspire to supreme honor,
I shall be a teacher of celestial and human beings.*

*With supernatural powers, I shall radiate great light,
Universally illuminating boundless realms.
I shall remove the darkness of the Three Defilements,
And relieve the distress and difficulties of the multitudes.*

*I shall open their eyes of wisdom,
Remove their confusion and ignorance,
Block the paths to the Wretched Realms,
And open the gates to the Fortunate ones.*

*My virtues shall be in full perfection,
And my majestic effulgence shall illuminate the ten directions.
The sun and the moon will hold back their radiance,
And the heavenly light will fade from sight.*

*I shall open the Dharma Treasury for the multitudes,
And offer meritorious treasures in abundance.
Constantly in the midst of great assemblies,
I shall expound the Dharma the way a lion roars.*

*I shall make offerings to all Buddhas,
Fully acquiring the roots of virtue.
My vows and wisdom shall be completely accomplished.
I shall be a hero of the Three Domains.*

*My unhindered wisdom shall be like that of Buddhas,
Thoroughly illuminating everywhere.
May the power of my merit and virtue
Be equal to those of the Most-Honored Ones.*

*Should these vows be fulfilled,
May the Great Chiliocosm resonate with vibrations,
And may all deities in heaven
Rain down precious, wondrous flowers.*

The Buddha said to Ananda: “After Bhikku Dharmakara spoke the verses, the whole earth immediately experienced the Six Convulsions. Wondrous flowers rained down from the sky and scattered on the ground. Music spontaneously sounded in the firmament, in praise: ‘You will surely accomplish the supreme perfect enlightenment!’ At that time,

Bhikku Dharmakara had fully completed his cultivation of [reflecting on and deciding] those great vows. They had proven true, not false, and world-transcendent. He rested deeply in Tranquil Extinction.

“Ananda, in the presence of Buddha Lokeshvararaja, and before the multitudes of deities, Maras, Brahmas, eight classes of dragons and other supernatural beings, Bhikku Dharmakara proclaimed these great vows. After taking them, he persistently devoted himself to the adornment of a wondrous land. The Buddha Land he was creating would be spacious, expansive, exceptionally splendid and uniquely marvellous. Once established, it would remain permanent, never decaying or changing.

“Over inconceivable, countless *kalpas*, Dharmakara accumulated infinite Bodhisattva virtues. He generated no consciousness of desire, anger or malevolence, and produced no thought of desire, anger or malevolence. He was unattached to forms, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily sensations, and dharmas. He accomplished the power of endurance and made nothing of hardships. With little desire and a contented mind, he remained free from greed, hatred and ignorance. His *samadhi* was in perpetual tranquility and his wisdom was unfettered. His heart was empty of hypocrisy, falsehood, sycophancy and dishonesty.

“He showed a pleasant countenance, uttered loving words, anticipated the intentions of others, and showed them humble solicitude. He was full of courage and diligence, and pursued his vows without weariness. Singlemindedly, he sought the pure, undefiled Dharma so as to benefit sentient beings. He revered the Three Gems, and respected and served his teachers and elders. He solemnly completed all undertakings, enabling sentient beings to accumulate merit.

“He abided in the truths of emptiness, formlessness and desirelessness. Without doing, without arising, he perceived all dharmas as illusory manifestations. He avoided harsh speech that would harm himself, others or both, and learned and practiced kind language that would benefit himself, others and both. He abandoned his kingdom and throne, renounced wealth and sensual pleasures, cultivated the Six Paramitas, and taught others to do the same. Over countless *kalpas*, he accumulated merit and virtue.

“Wherever he was born, infinite treasures spontaneously appeared according to his wish. He guided and converted countless sentient beings, enabling them to abide peacefully on the path to supreme, perfect enlightenment. He appeared as an elder, a layperson, or a member of a prominent caste or honorable family. He also reincarnated as a Ksatriya monarch, a *chakravartin*, a ruler of the Six Heavens of Desire, or a Lord Brahma. He constantly paid homage and made offerings to all Buddhas with the four categories of items (food and drink, clothing, bedding and medicine). The resulting merit and virtue were indescribable.

“His breath was fragrant and fresh, like the scent of a blue lotus. Every pore of his body exuded the fragrance of *candana*, which suffused countless worlds universally. His countenance was dignified, and his physical marks and characteristics were outstanding and marvellous. Endless treasures, clothes, foods, drinks, precious and exquisite flowers and incense, silk canopies, banners, and other magnificent ornaments were constantly coming from his hands. These items surpassed those of the celestial and human realms. He enjoyed freedom with respect to all dharmas.”

Ananda asked the Buddha: “Has Bodhisattva Dharmakara already attained Buddhahood and entered *Parinirvana*? Or has he not yet become a Buddha? Or is he [a Buddha] of the present?”

The Buddha told Ananda: “Bodhisattva Dharmakara has already attained Buddhahood. He now resides in the western direction, ten trillion worlds away from here. His Buddha Land is called ‘Peace and Joy.’”

Ananda further asked : “How long has it been since he attained Buddhahood?”

The Buddha said: “Ten *kalpas* have passed since he became a Buddha.

“In his Buddha Land, the ground is composed of seven natural treasures – gold, silver, *vaidurya*, coral, amber, *tridacna* and agate. It is vast, spacious and boundless. The treasures intermingle and intertwine, shining in glorious radiance. They are elegant, magnificent, pure and sublime, surpassing those in all other worlds of the ten directions. They are the most exquisite of their kind, comparable to the treasures of the Sixth Heaven.

“Moreover, in that land there is no Mt. Sumeru, Mt. Chakravada, other mountains, or any ocean, sea, stream, ditch, well or valley. (Yet) by virtue of the Buddha’s supernatural power, they can be seen as wished. In that land, there is no realm of hell, hungry ghosts, animals or other unwholesome beings. The four seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter also do not exist. It is never cold or hot, but always temperate and pleasant.”

Then Ananda asked the Buddha: “World-Honored One, if that land does not have Mt. Sumeru, on what do its Heaven of the Four Celestial Kings and Heaven of Trayastrimsa rely to exist?”

The Buddha asked Ananda in return: “On what do the heavens from Suyama to Akanishtha rely to exist?”

Ananda answered the Buddha: “The consequential manifestations of causal karma are unfathomable.”

The Buddha said to Ananda: “The consequential manifestations of causal karma are unfathomable. Buddha Lands are also unfathomable. Sentient beings there (rely on) the virtuous power of merit to inhabit that karmically compatible abode. That's how it is.”

Ananda said to the Buddha: “I have no doubt about this principle. I only raised the question on behalf of future sentient beings to dispel their confusion.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “The magnificent light of the Buddha of Infinite Life is the most sublime and superior. The light of other Buddhas cannot compare with it. The light of some illuminates 100 Buddha Lands; others, 1,000 Buddha Lands. Simply put, some illuminate Buddha Lands in the east as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges. The same is true for the south, west, north, four inter-cardinals, above and below. Some Buddhas' light shines seven feet; some, one *yojana*, or two, three, four or five *yojanas*, or multiplied in this way up to illuminating an entire Buddha Land.

“Therefore, the Buddha of Infinite Life is also known as the Buddha of Infinite Light, the Buddha of Boundless Light, the Buddha of Unhindered Light, the Buddha of Incomparable Light, the Buddha of the Flame King’s Light, the Buddha of Pure Light, the Buddha of Joyous Light, the Buddha of Wisdom Light, the Buddha of Unceasing Light, the Buddha of Inconceivable Light, the Buddha of Ineffable Light, and the Buddha of Light Surpassing the Sun and Moon.

“When sentient beings encounter his light, their Three Defilements are eliminated, and their bodies and minds soften. They rejoice with excitement and generate virtuous thoughts. When those in extremely miserable places of the Three Wretched Realms see his light, they are all freed from suffering. After death, they all attain liberation.

“The light of the Buddha of Infinite Life is brilliant, illuminating the ten directions. This is universally known in all Buddha Lands. I am not the only one praising his light today. All Buddhas, Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas and Bodhisattvas unanimously acclaim it in the same way.

“Sentient beings who, having heard of the majestic power and meritorious virtue of his light, marvel at it wholeheartedly day and night without ceasing will be reborn in his land as they wish. They will be praised by all Bodhisattvas and Sravakas for their virtue and merit. When these beings finally attain Buddhahood, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions will applaud their light, just as I am doing today.”

The Buddha continued: “If I were to describe the magnificence and wondrousness of the light of the Buddha of Infinite Life day and night for one *kalpa*, I still would not be done.”

The Buddha said to Ananda: “Further, the lifespan of the Buddha of Infinite Life is long and incalculable. Do you know this? Even if innumerable sentient beings in worlds of the ten directions were born as humans and attained Sravakahood or Pratyekabuddhahood, and they gathered together, meditated single-mindedly and used all their intelligence to make a joint calculation over thousands of millions of *kalpas* to count his lifespan, they could not measure its length or know its limit.

“It is the same with the lifespan of Sravakas, Bodhisattvas and celestial and human beings there. It cannot be perceived by counting or drawing analogies. Moreover, the number of Sravakas and Bodhisattvas there is immeasurable and indescribable. Their supernatural intelligence is penetrating and profound, and their majestic power, unrestrained. They can hold all worlds within their hands.”

The Buddha said to Ananda: “At that Buddha's first Dharma assembly, the Sravakas were innumerable. So were the Bodhisattvas. Even if 100 quadrillion or countless people, all equal to Maha Moggallana, calculated together over *asamkhyeya nayutas* of *kalpas* or even until their attainment of nirvana, they could not determine the exact number. Imagine a great ocean of unlimited depth and width. Suppose a person divides a hair on his body into a hundred parts and dips one part into the ocean to get a drop of water. What do you think? Between that drop and the ocean, which has more (water)?”

Ananda replied to the Buddha: “When this drop is compared to the ocean, the difference in the amount of water cannot be calculated by clever mathematics, algorithms, rhetoric or analogy.”

The Buddha said to Ananda: “Even if people like Moggallana counted the Sravakas and Bodhisattvas in the first Dharma assembly for 100 quadrillion *nayutas* of *kalpas*, the number they could perceive would be like the drop of water, and the part they couldn’t would be like the ocean.

“Further, in that land, seven-jewelled trees spread throughout the space. There are trees of gold, silver, vaidurya, crystal, coral, agate and tridacna. There are also trees made of two, three, or up to seven jewels, and these jewels are integrated.

“Gold trees have silver leaves, flowers and fruits. Silver trees have gold leaves, flowers and fruits. Vaidurya trees have crystal leaves, flowers and fruits. Crystal trees have vaidurya leaves, flowers and fruits. Coral trees have agate leaves, flowers and fruits. Agate trees have vaidurya leaves, flowers and fruits. Tridacna trees have leaves, flowers and fruits made of various gemstones.

“Some jewelled trees have purple-gold roots, silver trunks, vaidurya branches, crystal twigs, coral leaves, agate flowers and tridacna fruits.

“Some have silver roots, vaidurya trunks, crystal branches, coral twigs, agate leaves, tridacna flowers and purple-gold fruits.

“Some have vaidurya roots, crystal trunks, coral branches, agate twigs, tridacna leaves, purple-gold flowers and silver fruits.

“Some have crystal roots, coral trunks, agate branches, vaidurya twigs, purple-gold leaves, silver flowers and tridacna fruits.

“Some have coral roots, agate trunks, vaidurya branches, purple-gold twigs, silver leaves, tridacna flowers and crystal fruits.

“Some have agate roots, vaidurya trunks, purple-gold branches, silver twigs, tridacna leaves, crystal flowers and coral fruits.

“Some have vaidurya roots, purple-gold trunks, silver branches, tridacna twigs, crystal leaves, coral flowers and agate fruits.

“The trees stand in parallel rows. Their trunks are neatly aligned, their branches evenly layered, and their leaves perfectly symmetrical. The flowers bloom in harmony, and the fruits are arrayed in an orderly manner. The lush hues and dazzling radiance cannot be fully appreciated at once. Refreshing breezes blow from time to time, creating pentatonic tunes with beautiful melodies that harmonize naturally.

“Further, the Bodhi-tree in the Dharma-ground of the Buddha of Infinite Life is four million *lis* in height. Its base has a circumference of 5,000 *yojanas*. Its branches and leaves extend 200,000 *lis* in the four directions. All are naturally composed of innumerable jewels and adorned with the Moonlight *Muni* gems, the Master-of-Ocean-Wheel jewels, and other kingly gems. Around the branches hang strings of jeweled ornaments. They have billions of hues, transform in various ways, and glow with infinite radiance, illuminating boundless spheres. Nets of wondrous, precious jewels cover the Bodhi-tree. All the splendid features manifest as wished.

“Gentle breezes blow through the jewelled trees, producing infinite and marvellous Dharma sounds. The sounds spread far and wide,

pervading all Buddha Lands. Those who hear them attain profound Endurance for Dharmas and abide in non-retrogression. Till their Buddhahood, their hearing remains pure, sharp, and free from suffering and disease.

“Those who see the trees with their eyes, smell their fragrance with their noses, taste their flavors with their tongues, touch their light with their bodies, and invoke their dharmas with their minds all attain profound Endurance for Dharmas and abide in non-retrogression. Till their Buddhahood, their six sense faculties remain pure, sharp and free from vexation and disease.

“Ananda, celestial and human beings of that land who see the Bodhi-tree attain three Endurances for Dharmas:

1. Endurance for voices and sounds;
2. Endurance for gentleness and compliance;
3. Endurance for the non-arising of dharmas.

“All these [benefits] result from the majestic supernatural power of the Buddha of Infinite Life and the power of his Fundamental Vows – the vow of fulfillment, the vow of clear understanding, the vow of consolidation, and the vow of ultimate accomplishment.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “A king of this world enjoys hundreds of thousands of kinds of music. From the realm of *chakravartin* up to the Sixth Heaven, the music and sounds of each level exceed those of the lower one by trillions of times. 10,000 kinds of musical sounds in the Sixth Heaven are 100 billion times inferior to one kind of sound from the seven-jewelled trees in the Land of Infinite Life.

“There are also myriad kinds of music that arise naturally. Moreover, the musical tones are nothing but Dharma sounds. Clear, sonorous, wondrous and harmonious, they are the best and highest of all sounds in the worlds of the ten directions.

“The discourse halls, monasteries, palaces and mansions in that land are all adorned with the seven jewels naturally produced by transformation. They are also draped with nets of pearls, Bright-Moon *Muni* gems and other various jewels.

“Inside and outside, right and left, there are bathing ponds, each of which is 10, 20, 30, or up to hundreds of thousands of *yojanas* in length, width and depth. Each (dimension) is equal in measure to the other two. Crystal-clear Water of Eight Meritorious Virtues fills the ponds. The water is pure, fragrant and clean, and tastes like sweet nectar.

“Gold ponds have a silver sand bottom, and silver ponds have a gold sand bottom. Crystal ponds have a vaidurya sand bottom, and vaidurya ponds have a crystal sand bottom. Coral ponds have an amber sand bottom, and amber ponds have a coral sand bottom. Tridacna ponds have an agate sand bottom, and agate ponds have a tridacna sand bottom. White-jade ponds have a purple-gold sand bottom, and purple-gold ponds have a white-jade sand bottom. There are also ponds and sand bottoms composed of two, three, or up to seven jewels.

“On the banks of the ponds are candana trees with their flowers and leaves bending down, pervasively emitting sundry fragrances. The surface of the water is covered with utpalas (blue lotuses), padmas (red lotuses), kumudas (yellow lotuses), and pundarikas (large white lotuses),

blooming in rich colors and luxuriant brightness.

“If the Bodhisattvas and Sravakas of that land enter the jewelled ponds and wish the water surface to cover their feet, the water forthwith covers their feet. If they want it to reach their knees, waists or necks or to shower their bodies, it immediately does accordingly. If they expect the water to resume its original state, it forthwith returns to normal.

“Its temperature spontaneously cools down or warms up according to their wishes. The water refreshes their spirits, delights their bodies, and eliminates their mental impurities. It is crystalline, transparent and clean, as if intangible. Jewelled sands shine throughout the ponds, with no depth unilluminated. Mild ripples swirl and merge into one another. The flows are serene, gentle, neither too fast nor too slow.

“Limitless wondrous sounds naturally rise from the ripples. Everyone hears what he should hear. Some hear the sounds of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Others hear the sounds of quiescence, emptiness, egolessness, Great Compassion, Paramitas, Ten Powers, [Four Kinds of] Fearlessness, [Eighteen] Special Qualities, supernatural powers and wisdom, non-doing, neither arising nor perishing, Endurance for the Non-Arising of Dharmas, nectar empowerment, and a myriad other wonderful Dharma-sounds. Hearers rejoice immensely. They conform to the meanings of purity, freedom from desire, Tranquil Extinction, and absolute reality.

“They submit to the Three Gems, the [Ten] Powers, the [Four Kinds of] Fearlessness, and the [Eighteen] Special Qualities. They follow the path pursued by Bodhisattvas who have supernatural powers and wisdom, as well as that pursued by Sravakas. Names of the suffering in the Three

Wretched Realms do not exist. There are only tones of spontaneous happiness. That is why the Land is called ‘Peace and Joy.’

“Ananda, those who are born in that Buddha Land are endowed with the aforementioned pure physical bodies, wondrous voices, supernatural powers, merits and virtues.

“The palaces in which they live, and their clothes, food, drink, wondrous flowers, incense and ornaments, are like the natural objects in the Sixth Heaven. When they want to eat, seven-jewelled bowls spontaneously appear before them. Bowls of gold, silver, vaidurya, tridacna, agate, coral, amber, bright-moon gem and pearl manifest as desired. They are naturally filled with food and drink of hundreds of flavors.

“Although there is such food, no one actually eats it. When they see the food, smell its flavor, and think about eating it, they are spontaneously satiated. They are soft and gentle in body and mind and have no attachment to taste. When the meal is over, the items disappear by transformation. They reappear at the time of the next meal.

“That Buddha Land is pure, serene, wondrous and joyful. It is equivalent to the realm of unconditioned nirvana. All its Sravakas, Bodhisattvas, celestial and human beings have excellent and brilliant wisdom and thorough, penetrating supernatural powers. They are all of the same type, and there is no difference in appearance. But in order to accommodate other realms, there are the references to ‘celestial and human beings.’ Their countenances are refined, transcendent and extraordinary. Their complexions are exquisite and marvelous, neither

celestial nor human. They are all endowed with natural, immaterial bodies and unlimited forms.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “Consider a penniless beggar in this world standing next to a king. How would you compare their appearances and countenances?”

Ananda replied: “That person standing by the king is deficient, vulgar, ugly and wretched beyond all comparison. He is 100 quadrillion or even countless times inferior. Why? Because the beggar lives in the lowest condition. He has insufficient clothes to cover his nakedness and barely enough food to stay alive. Hunger, cold and hardship deplete his human ethics.

“This is the result of his failure to plant the roots of virtue in previous lives. He accumulated wealth but refused to give. The richer he got, the more miserly he became. He only wanted to reap without sowing, and his greed was insatiable. Not believing in nurturing good, he committed a mountain of evil.

“Thus he reached the end of his life. His wealth dissipated. What he had worked hard to collect became a source of worry and anxiety. It brought him no benefit, and passed into the possession of others for nothing. With no merit or virtue to rely on, he fell into the Wretched Realms after death and suffered prolonged pain. Only when his wrongdoings were atoned for was he able to escape. Then he was reborn as a man of humble origins. With extreme stupidity and indecency, he only looks like a human being.

“A king in this world is the most respected by people because he has accumulated virtues in past lives. He showed mercy and benevolence to others, offered kindness and concern, made good his word, cultivated goodness. He neither quarreled with others nor crossed them. As a reward, after death he ascended to the Virtuous Realms, and was reborn in heaven to enjoy his good fortune.

“Then the remaining merit for his past good deeds rewarded him with a human rebirth in the present life. He was born into a royal family, hence his natural nobility. He has a dignified appearance, receives respect and service from others, and enjoys splendid clothes and sumptuous delicacies as he wishes. This is because the blessings from his previous lives continue in this life.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “You are right! But though the king is exalted among people and has a dignified countenance, when compared with a *chakravartin*, he looks quite ugly and contemptible, like the beggar standing beside the king. A *chakravartin* has an extraordinarily wondrous appearance, the best under heaven, but compared with the Lord of the Trayastrimsa Heaven, he also appears hideous, more than a trillion times inferior. When that celestial lord is compared with the Lord of the Sixth Heaven, he is ten trillion times inferior. And when the Lord of the Sixth Heaven is compared with the Bodhisattvas and Sravakas in the Land of the Buddha of Infinite Life, his face and appearance are 100 quadrillion or incalculable times inferior.

The Buddha told Ananda: “In the Land of the Buddha of Infinite Life, clothing, food, drink, flowers, incense, body ornaments, silk canopies, banners, wondrous music, dwellings, palaces and mansions

for the celestial and human beings are perfectly proportioned in height and size to their respective physical forms. Jewels of one, two or even innumerable kinds appear immediately before them as they wish.

“Further, wondrous garments, adorned with various jewels, cover the ground throughout. All celestial and human beings tread on them when they walk.

“Immeasurable jewelled nettings spread over the Buddha’s Land. All are adorned with gold thread, pearls, countless varieties of treasure, and marvellous, precious gems. Jewelled bells are hung around the netting on four sides. Light and colors dazzle brilliantly, rendering the nettings resplendent.

“Natural breezes of virtue gently arise and whiffle by. With mild, comfortable temperatures, beings feel neither cold nor hot, but warm and cool. Tenderly and softly, the breezes move neither too slowly nor too quickly. When wafting through the nettings and jewelled trees, the breezes generate infinite but subtle Dharma-sounds; they also distribute countless, delicate virtue-fragrances. Those hearing the sounds and smelling the scents see their vexations and defiled habits vanish spontaneously. As the breezes touch their bodies, they feel happy, like the Bhikkus who have attained the *samadhi* of complete extinction.

“Further, the breezes scatter flowers to cover the entire Buddha Land. The flowers fall in sequence, according to their colors and without disarray. They are supple and bright, emitting rich fragrances. Treading on them, our feet sink four inches. When we lift one foot, the flower-bed resumes its original level. After the flowers are used [for offering],

the ground cracks open so they submerge and vanish, leaving the ground clean without residue. In each of the six time periods, the breezes scatter flowers once, and they do so six times [a day].

“Further, a myriad jewelled lotuses blanket the Land. Each, with ten trillion petals, blooms with the radiance of countless colors. The cyan-colored glow with cyan radiance, the white-colored with white light. Blue, yellow, red and purple flowers glisten with the radiance of their respective hues. They are bright and glorious, surpassing the sun and the moon.

“Each flower releases 360 trillion beams of light. From each beam emanates 360 trillion Buddhas. The Buddhas’ bodies are of a purple-golden color; they have extraordinary, outstanding features. Moreover, each Buddha emits hundreds of thousands of light rays as they expound the profound, wonderful Dharma teachings throughout the ten directions. Buddhas such as these induce innumerable sentient beings to abide in the correct path towards Buddhahood.”



Second Fascicle

The Buddha told Ananda: “Sentient beings born in that land all remain in the Assembly of Assured Enlightenment. Why is that? Because in that Buddha Land, there are neither beings whose inability to achieve enlightenment is assured nor those whose enlightenment is uncertain.

“All Buddhas, Tathagatas in the ten directions, as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges River, jointly acclaim the unfathomable majestic power and merit of the Infinite Life Buddha.

“All sentient beings who, having heard his name, rejoice in faith, recite his name even once and make sincere dedication of merit in aspiration to be reborn there, will immediately attain rebirth and achieve non-retrogression. Excepted are those who commit the Five Gravest Transgressions or slander the correct Dharma.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “Celestial and human beings in worlds of the ten directions, who sincerely aspire to be reborn in that land, are encompassed by three tiers.

“Aspirants of the upper tier are those who renounce the householder life, abandon worldly desires, become monastics, resolve to attain enlightenment, consistently and exclusively recite the name of the Buddha of Infinite Life, cultivate merit and virtue, and aspire to be reborn in his land.

“When these sentient beings die, the Buddha of Infinite Life, together with a multitude of sacred beings, appears before them. They follow the Buddha and are reborn in that land. They are born there by spontaneous transformation from within the seven-jewelled lotus. They remain in

the state of non-retrogression and possess unswerving wisdom and unrestrained supernatural powers. Therefore, Ananda, beings who wish to see the Buddha of Infinite Life in their present lives should resolve to attain supreme enlightenment, cultivate merit and virtue, and aspire to be reborn in that land.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “Those of the middle tier are the celestial and human beings in worlds of the ten directions who sincerely aspire to be reborn in that land. Although they are unable to become monastics to cultivate merit and virtue extensively, they resolve to attain supreme enlightenment and recite the name of the Buddha of Infinite Life consistently and exclusively. They also nurture good to a greater or lesser extent by observing the precepts, building stupas and Buddha statues, giving alms to monks, hanging silk banners, lighting lanterns and candles [in Buddha shrines], and scattering flowers and burning incense [before Buddha statues]. They dedicate these merits in aspiration to be reborn in that land.

“When they die, the Buddha of Infinite Life manifests his transformed body, with the same radiance, marks and physical characteristics as the real Buddha, and appears before them with a multitude of sacred beings. They immediately follow the emanation Buddha and are reborn in his land. They remain in the state of non-retrogression. Their virtue and wisdom are second only to those of the upper tier.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “The lower tier consists of the celestial and human beings in worlds of the ten directions who sincerely wish to be reborn in that land. Although they are unable to cultivate merit and virtue, they resolve to attain supreme enlightenment and recite the name of the

Buddha of Infinite Life consistently with a single mind or even ten times, aspiring to be reborn in that land. If they hear the profound Dharma, they rejoice in faith without doubt and recite the name of the Buddha even once, aspiring with the utmost sincerity to be reborn in that land.

“When these people die, they see the Buddha in a dream, and also attain rebirth in the Pure Land. Their virtue and wisdom are second only to those of the middle tier.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “The majesty and power of the Buddha of Infinite Life are boundless. He is acclaimed by inconceivable, countless Buddhas, Tathagatas, in worlds of the ten directions. In Buddha Lands of the east direction, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, innumerable Bodhisattvas approach the Buddha of Infinite Life. They pay homage and make offerings to him and to the multitudes of Bodhisattvas and Sravakas. They listen to his Dharma teachings and spread them far and wide. In the directions of the south, west, north, four inter-cardinals, above and below, it is the same.”

Then the World-Honored One spoke the following verses:

*Buddha Lands in the east
Are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges.
Bodhisattvas in those lands
Go to pay homage to the Infinite Buddha.*

*The south, west, north, four inter-cardinals,
Above and below are the same.
Bodhisattvas in those lands
Go to pay homage to the Infinite Buddha.*

*All the Bodhisattvas,
Bring wondrous heavenly flowers,
Precious incense and priceless robes
As offerings to the Infinite Buddha.*

*Together they play heavenly music,
And fluently sing elegant and harmonious melodies.
Their songs praise the Most-Honored One,
As offerings to the Infinite Buddha:*

*'You have fully attained supernatural powers and wisdom,
And have entered the gates of the profound Dharma.
You possess the entire treasury of merit and virtue.
Your brilliant wisdom is unparalleled.*

*'Your sun-like intelligence illuminates the world,
Dissolving the clouds of birth and death.'
They reverently make three circumambulations,
And worship the Supremely Honored One on their knees*

*Beholding the magnificent Pure Land --
So wondrous, unfathomable,
They awaken infinite aspirations,
Vowing that their own lands will be the same.*

*Then the Infinitely Honored One
Unfolds a joyful smile.
Boundless light radiates from his mouth
Illuminating all worlds of the ten directions.*

*The rays turn back and surround his body.
They circle him three times and enter the crown of his head.
All multitudes of celestial and human beings
Rejoice with excitement.*

*Mahasattva Avalokitesvara
Arranges his robe, prostrates himself,
And asks the Buddha: 'Why are you smiling?
I respectfully entreat you to explain the circumstances.'*

*The Buddha utters in a sacred voice like thunder,
With eight sounds creating a wondrous sonority:
'I will confer my predictions on the Bodhisattvas.
Listen carefully to what I say, benevolent ones.*

*'To all the Bodhisattvas from the ten directions,
I am fully aware of your vows.
You resolve to pursue splendid pure lands,
I predict that you will become Buddhas.*

*'You will realize that all dharmas
Are like dreams, phantoms and echoes.
You will fulfill marvellous vows,
And surely establish Buddha Lands like mine.*

*'Knowing that dharmas are like lightning and shadow,
You will reach the apex of the Bodhisattva path.
You will acquire all the roots of virtue.
You are predicted to become Buddhas.*

*'While thoroughly understanding the nature of all dharmas,
That all is empty and selfless,
You pursue your pure Buddha Lands with dedication.
You will surely establish them like mine.'*

*Every Buddha advises the Bodhisattvas:
'Pay respects to the Buddha of Tranquil Nourishment (Amitabha
Buddha).
Listen to his Dharma teaching, accept it with joy and practice it.
You will quickly attain your pure realms.*

*'When you reach his splendid Pure Land,
You'll soon acquire supernatural powers.
Undoubtedly, before the Infinitely Honored One,
You'll be predicted to achieve perfect enlightenment.'*

*By the power of that Buddha's Fundamental Vows,
Those who hear his name and wish to be reborn
Will all reach his land,
And naturally attain the state of non-retrogression.*

*Bodhisattvas make supreme vows,
Wishing to have lands that are no different from his.
They aspire that, in order to deliver beings universally,
Their names shall be illustrious throughout the ten directions.*

*They serve billions of Tathagatas,
Flying through all lands in manifest bodies.
Filled with reverence and joy, they leave
And return to the Land of Tranquil Nourishment.*

*A person without the root of goodness
Has no chance of hearing this sutra;
Those who are pure and uphold the precepts
Can hear this teaching of correct Dharma.*

*Those who have repeatedly seen the World-Honored Ones
Can believe in this teaching.
Humbly and respectfully, they hear, accept and practice it,
And rejoice greatly with excitement.*

*Those who are arrogant, misguided or indolent
Can hardly have faith in this teaching.
Those who have met Buddhas in previous lives
Take pleasure in hearing it.*

*Sravakas and Bodhisattvas
Cannot fathom the mind of Buddhas,
Like a congenitally blind man
Trying to guide others.*

*The ocean of Tathagatas' wisdom
Is deep and vast, without limit or bottom.
It cannot be surmised by the Two Vehicles.
Only Buddhas know it clearly.*

*Suppose all human beings
Fully attain enlightenment,
Possess pure wisdom, and realize the Essential Emptiness.
Even if they spend billions of kalpas contemplating the wisdom of
Buddhas,*

*And put their utmost effort into explaining it,
They would still not be able to perceive it throughout their lives.
Buddhas' wisdom is boundless,
So it is absolutely pure.*

*Human life is difficult to obtain.
The era of a Buddha is also hard to encounter.
It is difficult for people to have the wisdom of belief.
Once you hear this teaching, pursue it diligently.*

*After hearing the Dharma, keep it in mind,
Show respect and rejoice in the great benefit.
Thus you are my dearest friends.
So awaken your aspiration.*

*Even if the world is burning everywhere,
You have to go through it to hear this teaching.
You will surely complete the Buddha Path,
And deliver all beings from the flow of birth and death.*

The Buddha told Ananda: “Bodhisattvas of that land will all eventually attain the stage of being one lifetime removed from Buddhahood. Besides, there are those who originally vowed, for the benefit of sentient beings, to apply the merit and virtue of their great vows to adorn themselves in order to deliver all beings.

“Ananda, in that Buddha Land, the halo of Sravakas is one *xun* in diameter, and that of Bodhisattvas, hundreds of *yojanas*. There are two Bodhisattvas who are most revered. Their majestic light illuminates the

three-thousand-fold great chiliocosm.”

Ananda asked the Buddha: “What are the names of the two Bodhisattvas?”

The Buddha replied: “One is called Avalokitesvara, and the other, Mahasthamaprapta. They performed Bodhisattva practices in this world. After their lives ended here, they were reborn by transformation in that Buddha Land.

“Ananda, sentient beings reborn in that land each fully possess the 32 physical marks of a Buddha. They have perfect wisdom, profound insight into all dharmas, and thorough understanding of the subtle essence of Dharma teachings. Their supernatural powers are unfettered, and their sense faculties are bright and acute. Those of lesser ability attain the Two Endurances. Those with superior aptitude accomplish the unfathomable Endurance for the Non-Arising of Dharmas.

“Further, Bodhisattvas in that land will never fall into the Wretched Realms till Buddhahood. They have unrestrained supernatural powers and perpetual knowledge of past lives. Excepted are those to be reborn elsewhere in unwholesome worlds of the Five Turbidities [according to their vows]. They will manifest the same forms as the beings there, like how I appear in this world.”

The Buddha said to Ananda: “Supported by that Buddha’s majestic supernatural power, Bodhisattvas in that land reach countless lands of the ten directions in a short moment to pay homage and make offerings to all Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones.

“According to the Bodhisattvas’ wishes, countless tributes, including flowers, incense, music, clothes, canopies and banners, spontaneously appear by transformation and immediately reach them as intended. The items are precious, exquisite, and extraordinarily magnificent, surpassing their kind in the mundane world. They are offered and distributed to Buddhas and multitudes of Bodhisattvas and Sravakas. In the sky, they transform into flowering canopies that shine with colorful brilliance and emit pervasive fragrances. Each flower extends an area of 400 *li* or more by multiples, or even covers the three-thousand-fold great chiliocosm. In the sequential order of their appearance, they disappear by transformation one by one.

“The Bodhisattvas are radiant with joy. They play heavenly music together in the sky, creating wondrous melodies and songs praising the virtue of the Buddhas. They listen to Dharma teachings and rejoice boundlessly. After completing their offerings to the Buddhas, they immediately ascend to the sky and return to their homeland (the Pure Land) before meal time.”

The Buddha said to Ananda: “When the Buddha of Infinite Life expounds the Dharma to Sravakas, Bodhisattvas, and celestial and human beings, they gather in the Seven-Jeweled Lecture Hall. He preaches the teachings of the Way thoroughly, and explains the wonderful Dharma in detail. The entire audience rejoices. They understand in their hearts and achieve realization.

“At that time, breezes naturally rise in the four directions and waft through the Seven-Jeweled Trees, producing pentatonic melodies. Along with the breezes, countless splendid flowers scatter around as natural

offerings, and this goes on without a break.

“All deities bring hundreds of thousands of flowers and incense and 10,000 kinds of music from the heavens as offerings to the Buddha and the multitudes of Sravakas and Bodhisattvas. They scatter the flowers and incense all around and play various kinds of music. They come and go in perfect order, giving way to one another. At this time, they are so heartily joyful that no language can describe it.”

The Buddha said to Ananda: “Bodhisattvas born in that Buddha Land expound the correct Dharma whenever they speak. Their expositions conform to [the Buddha’s] wisdom, without conflict or defect.

“Regarding all the material things in that land, the Bodhisattvas do not have the thought of possessing or a mind contaminated by obsession. When they come and go, move forward and remain still, they are free from emotional attachments. They enjoy unrestrained freedom from worry, and have no thought of partiality or prejudice. They never discriminate between themselves and others, not do they compete or argue.

“They have the beneficent mind of great compassion for sentient beings. They are gentle, pleasant and self-restrained, never harboring a resentful mind. Having abandoned the [five] afflictions, they are pure and without any bored, indolent mind. They cherish the mind of equality, transcendence, profundity and meditation, the mind of loving, relishing and enjoying the Dharma, and the mind of eliminating vexations and leaving the Wretched Realms.

“They complete all Bodhisattva undertakings, accomplish infinite merit and virtue in full perfection, and attain deep *samadhi* and all [six] supernatural powers, [three] insights and [three types of] wisdom. Their minds embrace the seven factors leading to awakening, and they practice the teaching of Mind-Buddha (the One Vehicle).

“Their physical eyes are clear-sighted, capable of discerning all objects. Their divine eyes have wide, penetrating vision, with no limits or boundaries. Their Dharma eyes are observant and fully perceive all paths to enlightenment. Their wisdom eyes see the ultimate truth and can deliver beings to the Other Shore. Their Buddha eyes are all-encompassing, clearly and completely enlightened as to the Dharma nature.

“With unhindered wisdom, they expound the Dharma for others. While viewing the Three Domains as all equal and without substantial existence, they resolve to pursue the Buddha Dharma. They acquire rich eloquence, and dispel the afflictions of sentient beings. They are born of Tathagatas, and understand dharmas in conformity with Ultimate Reality. They are adept in using the skillful means of speech to teach the Four Noble Truths. They dislike worldly talk, but take delight in correct discussion.

“They cultivate a myriad roots of goodness, and resolutely advocate the Buddha path. They realize that all dharmas are in tranquil extinction. Their earthly body and their afflictions, as well as the Two Remnants [of them], are all eliminated. When they hear the most in-depth Dharma teaching, they have no doubts or fears and can always practice accordingly. Their great compassion is profound, far-reaching, subtle,

wondrous and all-encompassing. Having fully accomplished the One Vehicle path, they attain the Other Shore. The ‘net’ of doubt is destroyed, and wisdom arises in their mind. They grasp all teachings of the Buddhas, leaving nothing out.

“Their wisdom resembles the great ocean. Their *samadhi* parallels the king-mountain. Their wisdom radiance is luminous and immaculate, surpassing the sun and moon. They accomplish the pure, undefiled Dharma in full perfection. Like snowy mountains, they reflect all merit and virtue as equal and uniformly pure. Like our Mother Earth, they have no mind to discriminate between pure and impure, good and bad. Like clear water, they wash away worldly weariness and defilements. Like the king-fire, they burn the tinder of vexations. Like the high wind, they travel through all worlds without hindrance. Like empty space, they are not attached to things or beings. Like the lotus flower, they are free from contamination while in mundane worlds.

“Like a great vehicle, they carry sentient beings out of the cycle of rebirth. Like thick clouds, they generate loud Dharma-thunder to awaken the unenlightened. Like heavy rain, they shower the nectar of Dharma to nourish sentient beings. Like the Adamantine Mountain, they cannot be moved by Maras and non-Buddhists. Like the Lord of the Brahma Heaven, they are the supreme leaders for all virtuous deeds. Like the nyagrodha tree, they cast extensive shade for all. Like the udumbara flower, they are rare, and difficult to find. Like the garuda (gold-winged bird), they are powerful in subduing non-Buddhists. Like migratory birds, they have nothing to store or accumulate. Like the bull king, they are invincible. Like the elephant king, they excel at taming and subduing.

Like the lion king, they are fearless. Infinite like the void, their Great Compassion is impartial.

“They destroy jealousy and do not envy others’ excellence. They focus on the pursuit of the Dharma and are never bored or satiated. With unflagging enthusiasm, they spread the Dharma, unfatigued in mind. They beat the Dharma drum, raise the Dharma banner. They shine the sunlight of wisdom and dispel the darkness of ignorance.

“They cultivate the Six Reverent Harmonies, and constantly make Dharma offerings. They are intrepid and persevering, never weakening or losing their determination. They are bright lamps in the world and supreme fields of blessedness. They always act as mentors and guides, and their minds are impartial, free from likes and dislikes.

“They enjoy only the Correct Path and have nothing else to rejoice or grieve over. By plucking the thorns of desire, they pacify all sentient beings. Their virtue and wisdom are extraordinary, so they are revered by everyone. They remove the obstruction of the Three Defilements and exercise supernatural powers as though playing games.

“[They have mastered] the powers of cause, causal condition, will, vow, expediency, perseverance, goodness, mental concentration, intelligence, and learning; the powers of generosity (*dana*), precepts (*sila*), forbearance (*khanti*), diligence (*viriya*), meditation (*samadhi*), and wisdom (*prajna*) (the Six Paramitas); the powers of correct mindfulness, correct contemplation, [six] supernatural abilities, and [three] insights; and the power to bend sentient beings to the Dharma. They have these abilities in full.

“Their bodies, countenances, physical marks and characteristics, virtues, and eloquence are adorned with all kinds of splendor and are beyond all comparison. They pay homage and make offerings to countless Buddhas, and always receive unanimous praise from the Buddhas. They attain in full the Bodhisattva Paramitas and cultivate the [three] *samadhis* of emptiness, formlessness and desirelessness, the *samadhi* of neither arising nor perishing, and various *samadhi* paths. They distance themselves from the Sravaka and Pratyekabuddha stages.

“Ananda, those Bodhisattvas accomplish immeasurable virtues such as these. I have only given you a brief account. If I were to elaborate, I would not finish for thousands of millions of *kalpas*.”

The Buddha told Bodhisattva Maitreya and the celestial and human beings: “The meritorious virtue and wisdom of the Sravakas and Bodhisattvas in the Land of Infinite Life are indescribable.

“Further, that land is exquisite and wondrous, peaceful and joyful, serene and pure, as aforesaid.

“Why not strive to do good and contemplate the naturalness of the Path? It is all-encompassing without [distinguishing between] high and low. It is pervasive and transcends all boundaries. With unremitting diligence, you should each pursue it vigorously.

“You will surely transcend [worldliness], end [samsara], escape [the Saha world], and be reborn in the Land of Peace and Joy. You will quickly cut off [the cycle of rebirth in] the Five Wretched Realms, which will close as a matter of course.

“This Path of ascension is limitless. It is easy to get on but few people do. The Pure Land is not against [our will] and can be attained as a natural process.

“Why not abandon worldly affairs and diligently seek the Path and virtue? You will gain eternal longevity -- an infinite life with infinite joy.

“However, people in the world are shallow and vulgar. They squabble over things that are not urgent. Amid drastic misery and extreme suffering, they work hard for worldly business to sustain their lives. The honorable and the humble, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, men and women -- everyone worries about money and assets. Being rich or not rich makes no difference. Their worries are the same. Out of desperation and anxiety, they rack their brains to nurture schemes. Driven by [deluded] thoughts, they rush about without a moment’s rest.

“Owning land and houses makes them nervous about such property. Cattle, horses, others among the six domestic animals, slaves, servants, money, clothes, food and other possessions also arouse anxiety. They fuss and fret, moan and groan, full of agitation and distress.

“Suddenly [their possessions] are swept away by floods, razed by fires, looted by robbers, or plundered by vengeful adversaries or karmic creditors. Wealth disappears. They are filled with hatred and fear, without a minute of relief. With anger pent up, they cannot shake off frustration. Their firm, stubborn heart and mind never relax or loosen up. Weary to the point of exhaustion, they reach the end of life. When they die, they can take nothing and no one with them. Even noble and rich people have the same problems. With all kinds of worries and anxieties, they

undertake such arduous toil, endure hardships of cold and heat, and live in pain.

“The poor and the lowly live in poverty and suffer from constant lack of necessities. They lament the privation of land and houses and desire to acquire them. They are also perturbed by the scarcity of cattle, horses, others among the six domestic animals, slaves, servants, money, clothes, food and other possessions; they covet these things as well.

“If they have one, they lack another. When they have this, they don’t have that. They expect to have the same as others. When they have nearly everything they want, their possessions soon dissipate and vanish. So worry and pain drive them to undertake a new round of chasing. Unable to obtain what they want in a timely manner, they wrack their brains but to no avail. They are devastated in body and mind, and cannot sit or stand in peace. Anxiety-ridden, they toil arduously, endure cold and heat, and live in pain.

“Sometimes, they die early as a result. Because they were reluctant to do good, follow the Way, and accumulate merit, they depart alone after death. Their destination is fated. No one knows whether it will be a fortunate realm or a wretched one.

“People in the world -- parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, close and distant relatives -- should respect and love one another and avoid hatred and jealousy. We should provide for one another’s needs, not be greedy and stingy, remain kind in speech and attitude, and refrain from offending others.

“Sometimes, an inner disagreement brings outrage. In this life, it might cause only a little resentment. But in subsequent lives, it will increase and grow into great animosity. Why is that? Worldly events arouse enmity. Confrontations may not break out right away, but toxic anger will accumulate. The indignation sticks in the mind and automatically imprints itself on the mental consciousness. It cannot be dispelled. Those involved are reborn together to take revenge on each other.

“Amid worldly affections and desires, people are born alone and die alone. They come and go alone. Carried along by their karma, they reach their rebirth destinations – places of suffering or of joy. Everyone is responsible for his own outcome; no one else can take over. Goodness is transformed into blessings, and evil into misfortunes; the consequences are different. Rewards are determined early, waiting to manifest in strict accuracy. Everyone enters her own future alone. The destination is far away, invisible to others. Good and evil karma follow rebirth naturally. The journey is long, in pitch darkness. Farewells are enduring. People go their separate ways, with scant chance for another encounter. How difficult it would be to meet again, like today!

“Why not renounce worldly affairs, and, while you are strong and healthy, cultivate goodness assiduously? With diligent practice and an aspiration to transcend samsara, you will achieve extreme longevity. Why not pursue the Way? What are you waiting for? What happiness is worth seeking [in this world]?

“People here do not believe that good begets good, or that cultivation leads to enlightenment. They doubt that that rebirth follows death and

that wholesome deeds have auspicious consequences. They are skeptical about the principles governing good and evil, denying them and claiming they don't exist.

“Because of this they cling to their own views. They look around and see others thinking the same way. [Their false beliefs] are passed down from generation to generation, with parents teaching them to their children. Their ancestors never performed good deeds and knew nothing about morality and virtue. With clumsy body, benighted spirit, blocked heart and closed mind, they were blind to the states of death and rebirth, and to the truth of good and evil. And no one tells them. Fortune and misfortune, weal and woe keep them busy, but nobody questions [their erroneous views].

“Birth and death are a constant path, alternating one after the other. Parents weep for the loss of their children, or vice versa. Brothers, sisters, husbands and wives mourn each other's deaths. The normal order of passing is often reversed because impermanence is fundamental. All pass away and nothing remains forever. This is taught and explained, but few believe it. So they float in the stream of reincarnation without ceasing.

“People like these are ignorant, imprudent and have no faith in the Buddha's teaching. Lacking far-sighted thinking, they thirst for quick gratification. They are obsessed with worldly passions, ignorant of morality and virtue, lost in anger and covetous of wealth and carnal pleasure. Therefore they cannot awaken to the truth and are doomed to suffer in the Wretched Realms. The cycle of rebirth never ends. How pitiful! How sad!

“Sometimes, when a family loses a father or son, an older or younger brother, a husband or wife, the surviving members grieve and mourn such a loss. Loving and missing the deceased, they are shackled with sadness and heartache. Sentimental memories persist incessantly. Days and years, there is no release. Although they are taught morality and virtue, they do not become enlightened, but continue to recall affection and cling to emotional attachment. Dazed and stupefied, they are blinded by ignorance, unable to think rationally. They cannot correct the mind, concentrate on practice, and free themselves from worldly concerns. Soon they reach the end. When death comes, they cannot find the path to liberation. How helpless they are!

“All people accumulate confusion and anxiety. Everyone pursues passion and desire. Many are ignorant of the Way. The awakened ones are few. Amid the worldly rush and turmoil, there is nothing to rely on. Honored or humble, high or low, rich or poor, noble or base -- all toil and hurry about their business. Each harbors the poison of killing. Malice is hidden deep in the heart. Out of delusion, people stir trouble, violating the law of the universe and the conscience of humanity.

“When the law of nature rectifies wrong, it initially lets things slide. It allows the offender to continue until his offenses reach an extreme. Then, before the end of his predestined time, his life is abruptly taken. The offender falls into the Wretched Realms to suffer for countless lifetimes. He is reborn there repeatedly for thousands of *kotis* of *kalpas*, with no chance of escape. The pain is indescribable. How pitiful!”

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya and the celestial and human beings: “Today I’ve told you about what’s happening in the

world. As a result, people cannot attain enlightenment. You should think carefully. Stay away from all evil, choose good deeds, and practice them diligently. Affection, desire, worldly fame and wealth do not last. They will be gone, so there is nothing to enjoy. Since you've met a Buddha who has appeared in the world, you should apply unremitting diligence.

“Those who wholeheartedly aspire to be reborn in the Land of Peace and Joy can attain powerful wisdom and transcendent virtue. Do not follow your desires, and fail the teachings and precepts. Do not lag behind. If you have any doubts or questions about my teaching, ask me. I will explain it to you.”

Bodhisattva Maitreya prostrated himself on the ground and said: “O Buddha, your majestic aura is exalted and esteemed. What you have said delights us. When I hear your words, I reflect deeply in my mind: People in the world are just as you've described them.

“Today, out of mercy and compassion, you have revealed the Great Way. Our eyes and ears are enlightened. We attain eternal liberation. All listeners of your speech rejoice completely. From celestial and human beings to worms, insects and the like, all are embraced by your grace and liberated from affliction and suffering.

“Your words, teachings and guidance are profound and wonderful. Your wisdom sees clearly in the eight directions, above and below. Nothing in the past, present and future is not within your thorough, penetrating perception.

“That we achieve liberation today is due to your diligent and painstaking cultivation of the Way in previous lives. Your benevolence embraces all, and your blessings and benefits are outsized. Your light shines everywhere, encompassing the void without limit. You reveal and realize nirvana, teach the essentials of the Dharma, subdue and eliminate [wrong views], and inspire [beings of] the ten directions, vast and limitless.

“You are the Dharma King, and your nobility surpasses all other sacred ones. As the mentor of all celestial and human beings, you enable us to attain enlightenment according to our wishes. Today you are here with us and let us hear the name of the Infinite Life Buddha. We are all so happy. Our hearts are opened and enlightened.”

The Buddha said to Maitreya: “You are right. One who reveres a Buddha does great good. In this world, it takes a long time for a Buddha to appear. Now I’ve become a Buddha here. I speak sutras, teach the Dharma and propagate the Way. I smash the ‘net’ of doubts, uproot passions and desires, and remove the source of vices. I travel through the Three Domains without restraint or hindrance, highlight wisdom as the essence of all practices, and uphold the guidelines of the teachings in clear delineation. I give guidance to [beings of] the Five Realms, deliver the undelivered, and definitively distinguish between the paths of samsara and nirvana.

“Maitreya, you should know that, for innumerable *kalpas*, you have been doing Bodhisattva practices in aspiration to deliver sentient beings. It has been a long time. Those who have followed you and attained enlightenment and nirvana cannot be counted.

“You and all celestial and human beings of the ten directions, including the four assemblies, have transmigrated in the Five Realms for countless *kalpas*, suffering anxiety, fear, exhaustion and hardship beyond description. Until this life, the cycle of rebirth has continued. Now you have met the Buddha, heard my teaching, and know the Buddha of Infinite Life. How fortunate and wonderful. I am happy for you!

“Today, you should also abhor the sufferings of birth, death, aging and sickness. Foul discharges from the body are filthy; nothing brings joy. Make up your mind. Keep your posture upright and your conduct righteous. Do more good deeds. Cultivate yourself to remain pure and wash away the defilements of your heart. Be faithful in word and deed, and remain true to your inner and outer selves. Those who can achieve self-liberation should save and help others. Pursue your aspirations wholeheartedly and accumulate the roots of goodness.

“Although this life is difficult and painful, it lasts only a flash of time. After that, you will be reborn in the Land of Infinite Life, where happiness is endless. You will always shine in the splendor of virtue, forever rid of the root of transmigration, and be eternally free from suffering of greed, anger and ignorance. If you want a lifespan of one *kalpa*, 100 *kalpas* or thousands of trillions of *kalpas*, you will obtain it freely as you please. It is all effortless and spontaneous, almost equivalent to the realm of nirvana.

“Each of you should pursue your aspirations with all diligence. Do not doubt or regret halfway. Otherwise, it is your fault, and you will be reborn in the Border Field [of the Pure Land], stay in the Seven-Jewelled Palaces for 500 years, and face all kinds of adversity.

Maitreya said to the Buddha: “With your weighty instructions, we will focus on learning, following and practicing your teachings. We will never doubt them.”

The Buddha told Maitreya: “You who can maintain a righteous resolve and refrain from evil in this world are sublime in virtue, beyond all comparison in the ten directions. Why is that? Celestial and human beings and the like in all Buddha realms spontaneously do good and rarely do evil. They are easy to uplift and convert.

“Now I’ve become a Buddha in this world in the midst of the Five Evils, Five Kinds of Pain and Five Burnings, which are agonizing circumstances. I teach sentient beings to abandon the Five Evils, get rid of the Five Kinds of Pain, and avoid the Five Burnings. I tame and subdue their minds and guide them to uphold the Five Good Actions, acquire blessed virtue, and attain the path of transcendence, longevity and nirvana.”

The Buddha said: “What are the Five Evils, the Five Kinds of Pain and the Five Burnings? What is it to eliminate the Five Evils, maintain the Five Good Actions, acquire blessed virtue, and attain the path of transcendence, longevity and nirvana?

“The first evil is this. From celestial and human beings to worms, bugs and the like, all tend to do evil; no being is different. The strong subdue the weak, and the weak turn to harming others. Through persecution and slaughter, they devour one another.

“Ignorant about cultivating goodness, they commit evil and immoral

deeds without restraint. Later, they are punished with misfortunes, and spontaneously banished to the Wretched Realms. Their deeds are recorded and marked by divinities. No offender is absolved. So there are those who are poor, base-born, beggarly, lonely, blind, deaf, mute, dumb, foolish, wicked, hunchbacked, insane, abnormal and so on.

“But there are also nobles, tycoons, prodigies and eloquent people. They benefit from the benevolence, filial piety, cultivation of goodness, and accumulation of virtue from their previous lives.

“The world has a social order, state laws, and prisons. The bold and reckless commit crimes and are judged and punished. Though they long for relief, the offenders can hardly be exempted. In the world, this happens before our eyes. After they die, in their subsequent lives, the evildoers suffer more intensely and severely. They fall into dark, desolate realms with reincarnated bodies to receive retribution, just as they suffer from the extreme punishments of state laws.

“That is why, by nature, there are endless sufferings in the Three Wretched Realms [waiting for them]. Their bodies vary with rebirth, and their forms and living realms are always changing. Their lifespans are sometimes long and sometimes short. Their spiritual consciousness is automatically propelled to the destinations. Each one faces rebirth alone. [Karmic creditors] are born together for the chance of vengeance. This goes on and on. They don't let go until the retribution ends. As they turn round and round there, they have no chance of escape. Relief is impossible. The agony is indescribable! Between heaven and earth, this is a matter of course. Even if it is not immediate, karmic retribution is bound to happen abruptly. The consequences of good and evil will inevitably come to pass.

“This is the first great evil, the first kind of pain and the first burning. The hardships and sufferings are such. It’s like a human body being cremated alive in a great fire.

“In the midst of this, if a person can single-mindedly restrain her thoughts, keep her demeanor upright, correct her behavior, perform good deeds exclusively and refrain from evil, she will be liberated, receive blessed virtue, transcend the mundane world, be reborn in heaven and [even] attain nirvana. This is the first great good.”

The Buddha said: “The second evil is this. People in the world – parents and children, brothers and sisters, other family members, husbands and wives – all neglect the established morality and disobey the law. They are extravagant, lustful, arrogant and debauched. Everyone chases immediate pleasure. They indulge themselves as they please, deceive and confuse one another, speak differently than they think, and lack honesty in word and thought. They are fawning and faithless, using artful speech to flatter and curry favor. They envy the righteous, slander the virtuous, and frame the innocent.

“Monarchs lack wisdom in appointing courtiers. The latter are self-assertive, and full of tricks and schemes, always calculating chances and adapting to circumstances. Unrighteous rulers are deceived. They unjustly expel the faithful and the honest, and thus go against the will of heaven.

“Rulers are deceived by their subjects, and parents by their children. Brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, relatives and friends, all lie to each other. Everyone is full of greed, anger and stupidity. They seek their own interests, and their avarice is insatiable. Whether noble or base, high

or low, they all have the same mentality.

“Families are ruined and lives destroyed. But they are indifferent. Because of them, clan extermination befalls their direct and indirect relatives. In other cases, when family members, friends, fellow villagers, townspeople, fools and savages act together, they use and hurt each other, provoking anger and hatred among themselves.

“The rich are stingy and unwilling to give. Clinging to wealth and valuables, they labor and toil with mind and body. Thus they reach the end of life, having no refuge or protection. They come alone and go alone, without any company. Their good and evil karma and the [resulting] weal and woe follow them in their future lives, either in a happy place or in the midst of pain and poison. Late repentance is useless!

“People of the world are dull of wit and short of wisdom. When they see the virtuous, they hate and slander them instead of showing respect and wishing to emulate them. They only want to do evil. They engage in unlawful activities without restraint, constantly harbor intentions to steal, and crave advantage over others. After squandering their gains, they try to repossess them. Because their wicked hearts are skewed, they are afraid of the facial expressions of others. Since they fail to think and plan beforehand, they can only feel regret after things come to a head.

“In this life there are state laws and prisons. According to their wrongdoings, criminals are sentenced to legal punishment. This is because, in previous lives, they disbelieved in morality and failed to cultivate the roots of goodness. In the present life, they do evil again. They are marked by divinities, and their names are accurately recorded.

When they die, their spiritual consciousness departs their bodies and fall into the Wretched Realms.

“That is why, by nature, there is endless suffering in the Three Wretched Realms [waiting for them]. As they turn round and round there for countless lives and *kalpas*, there is no chance of escape. Relief is impossible. The agony is indescribable!

“This is the second great evil, the second kind of pain and the second burning. The hardships and sufferings are such. It’s like a human body being cremated alive in a great fire.

“In the midst of this, if a person can single-mindedly restrain his thoughts, keep his demeanor upright, correct his behavior, perform good deeds exclusively and refrain from evil, he will be liberated, receive blessed virtue, transcend the mundane world, be reborn in heaven and [even] attain nirvana. This is the second great good.”

The Buddha said: “The third evil is this. People in the world reincarnate according to their causal karma. They live together between heaven and earth, each with a limited lifespan. On top are the wise, respected, noble and rich. Below are the poor, base, deformed and foolish.

“In between are the unvirtuous who are constantly evil-minded, obsessed with lewdness and filled with restlessness in their hearts. They wallow in lust and attachment, unable to sit or stand in peace. Out of desire and obsession, they dream of having what they are not entitled to. Ogling the beautiful, they expose their vulgar selves. They despise their own wives, secretly have illicit relations, squander family wealth and

resort to unlawful means. They gang up on one another, gather forces to fight, instigate attacks, loot and kill, and brutally plunder without scruples.

“They harbor malicious intentions, targeting the property of others and refusing to work for themselves. They steal for gain, using violence to do so. They threaten and coerce others, and feed their families with the spoils. They wantonly indulge in immediate pleasures, and use their bodies to the utmost to satisfy carnal desires. As for their kindred, they have no regard for clan hierarchy. Thus they disgust and annoy their family members and relatives. Moreover, they have no fear of state laws and prohibitions.

“Such transgressions are witnessed by people and spirits, revealed under the sun and moon, and marked and recorded by divinities.

“That is why, by nature, there are endless sufferings in the Three Wretched Realms [waiting for them]. As they turn round and round there for countless lives and *kalpas*, there is no chance of escape. Relief is impossible. The agony is indescribable!

“This is the third great evil, the third kind of pain and the third burning. The hardships and sufferings are such. It’s like a human body being cremated alive in a great fire.

“In the midst of this, if a person can single-mindedly restrain her thoughts, keep her demeanor upright, correct her behavior, do all good deeds and refrain from evil, she will be liberated, receive blessed virtue, transcend the mundane world, be reborn in heaven and [even] attain nirvana. This is the third great good.”

The Buddha said: “The fourth evil is this. People of the world have no mind to nurture good. Instead, they incite others to do evil together. Through divisive talk, harsh speech, lies and flowery words, they spread rumors, create mischief and stir enmity and unrest. They resent and envy the virtuous and slander the wise, while gloating on the side.

“They lack filial piety toward parents, disrespect teachers and elders, break promises to friends, and show little integrity. Overbearing and haughty, they claim moral superiority, use force and power to tyrannize, bully and despise others. They never self-reflect and are oblivious to shame for their own misdeeds. Convinced that they are strong and powerful, they hunger for the admiration and reverence of others.

“They fear neither heaven nor earth, devas nor deities, sun nor moon. Reluctant to do good, they are difficult to subdue and convert. They are conceited and prideful, assuming that [their advantage] can last forever. With nothing to worry about or fear, they always remain arrogant.

“Their transgressions are marked and recorded by divinities. Counting on some blessed virtue they accumulated in previous lives, the small good karma helped them gain divine favor and protection. But their unwholesome deeds in this life deplete their blessed virtue. Good spirits walk away and leave them alone. They have no one and nothing to rely on any more.

“When they die, their vices converge into a spontaneous coercive force and take away [their good fortune]. Their names and transgressions are recorded by divinities. Their evil karma drives them to their doomed destinations. Retribution for wrongdoing is a natural process. There is

no way to escape. They have to keep moving until they enter the fiery cauldron. Their bodies and minds are destroyed. Their spirits are in torment. At that moment, it is too late to repent! The law of heaven is manifest, infallible.

“That is why, by nature, there are endless sufferings in the Three Wretched Realms [waiting for them]. As they turn round and round there for countless lives and *kalpas*, there is no chance of escape. Relief is impossible. The agony is indescribable!

“This is the fourth great evil, the fourth kind of pain and the fourth burning. The hardships and sufferings are such. It’s like a human body being cremated alive in a great fire.

“In the midst of this, if a person can single-mindedly restrain his thoughts, keep his demeanor upright, correct his behavior, do all good deeds, and refrain from evil, he will be liberated, receive blessed virtue, transcend the mundane world, be reborn in heaven, and [even] attain nirvana. This is the fourth great good.”

The Buddha said: “The fifth evil is this. People in the world are idle and lazy. They refuse to nurture good, cultivate morality, or pursue proper occupations. Their families and dependents live in hunger, cold, hardship and bitterness. When their parents offer advice and instruction, they stare back angrily, answer petulantly, utter harsh words, oppose and rebel as though facing enemies. Parents would rather not have such children.

“They take from others without restraint, making themselves repulsive. Ungrateful for favors and kindness, they have no intention

of repaying debts of gratitude. When poverty and misery befall them, they are unable to regain wealth and resort to robbery and extortion. They indulge in idleness and wander about, getting used to unjust gains and using them for their own subsistence. They are addicted to wine and women, and they eat and drink excessively. They are unbridled, licentious, reckless and unruly. Unable to empathize with people's feelings, they use coercion on others.

“When they see people doing good deeds, they are jealous and resentful. With no sense of righteousness and propriety, they have nothing to fear or have scruples about. They stubbornly stick to their own judgments and refuse to take the advice of others. They do not care whether their kin and relatives have a source of livelihood. They ignore the grace of their parents and neglect the obligations among teachers and friends. Constantly undertaking evil thoughts, words and deeds, they have nothing good about them.

“They do not believe in the teachings of past sages or Buddhas. They doubt that following the Buddha Truth leads to enlightenment, that spiritual consciousness transmigrates after one's death, and that doing good brings positive results and evil things have negative consequences. They try to kill Persons of Truth (Arhats), cause discord in the monastic assembly, and wish to harm their parents, brothers, sisters or other family members. Their relatives hate them and wish them dead.

“Such people have the same mindset. They are stupid and blind, but think themselves wise. They don't know where beings are born from and where they go after death. They are neither merciful nor tolerant of others, and they defy heaven and earth. Yet in the midst of all this, they

still hope for a chance at happiness. Although craving longevity, they are destined to die.

“There are compassionate teachings that guide them to think of goodness and reveal to them that the cycle of rebirth in fortunate and wretched realms is the natural work [of causality]. But they refuse to believe. Earnest advice is of no use to them. Their hearts are blocked and their minds are benighted.

“When they are about to die, fear and remorse strike them. Having failed to nurture good beforehand, they repent only when they reach a dead end. What good are such tardy regrets? Between heaven and earth, the Five Realms are distinct. They are vast and deep, extending far into infinity and darkness. Good and evil are repaid, and blessings and misfortunes follow. Everyone receives retribution all alone, and no substitutions are possible. Causality follows a natural course; every deed has its karmic result. Misfortune and punishment haunt life. There is no possibility of exemption or remission.

“Good people do good and go from joy to joy, from brightness to brightness. Evil ones commit evil, experience suffering after suffering, and enter darkness from darkness. Who knows this? Only Buddhas know. They teach the Dharma and reveal the truth. But few listeners believe and apply it. The cycle of rebirth continues without end. The Wretched Realms remain imperishable. It is impossible to list exhaustively people such as these.

“That is why, by nature, there is endless suffering in the Three Wretched Realms [waiting for them]. As they churn there for countless

lives and *kalpas*, there is no chance of escape. Relief is impossible. The agony is indescribable!

“This is the fifth great evil, the fifth kind of pain and the fifth burning. The hardships and sufferings are such. It’s like a human body being cremated alive in a great fire.

“In the midst of this, if a person can single-mindedly restrain her thoughts, keep her demeanor upright, correct her behavior, maintain consistency between words and deeds, act with complete sincerity, keep her promises, speak as she thinks, do all good deeds, and refrain from evil, she will be liberated, receive blessed virtue, transcend the mundane world, be reborn in heaven, and [even] attain nirvana. This is the fifth great good.”

The Buddha told Maitreya: “As I have told you, the Five Evils in the world entail these hardships and sufferings. The Five Kinds of Pain and the Five Burnings come up in turn again and again. Those who do nothing but evil and fail to cultivate the roots of goodness will inevitably fall into the Wretched Realms.

“Some of them even begin to suffer misfortune and sickness in this life. They would rather die, but they cannot. While craving for life, they barely live. These are the results of their unwholesome deeds. They are exposed to public attention. After they die, their karma follows them into the Three Wretched Realms, where they experience endless bitterness and are burned in the fires of their own making.

“A long time later [when they are reborn as humans], they accumulate

animosity against one another. Small problems at the beginning culminate in great evil. This is all because of their greed, lust and unwillingness to give. Driven by ignorance and desire, they let their minds wander in random thoughts and become entangled in vexations from which they cannot free themselves.

“Selfishness compels them to seek personal gain. They neither reflect [on their evil] nor learn [from the good]. Wealth, position, fame and glory bring temporary pleasure. If they cannot endure contempt and cultivate goodness, their power and influence are quickly exhausted. Their bodies remain in suffering and pain, which increase greatly with time.

“The heavenly law tenses up and relaxes. It detects and reveals [evil] in its natural course. This net with head-ropes and meshes is escape-proof, catching prey from top to bottom without error. In desperation and panic, evildoers are trapped inside. From ancient times to the present, this is how it works. How painful and heartbreaking!”

The Buddha said to Maitreya: “These are the ways of the world. Buddhas have compassion for [sentient beings there]. With majestic supernatural powers, they destroy the beings’ vices and lead them towards good. They guide them to abstain from unwholesome thoughts, follow the scriptures and precepts, accept and practice the teachings without violation, and finally complete the path to emancipation and nirvana.”

The Buddha said: “You, along with celestial and human beings of the present and people of the future, should, after receiving the Buddha’s teachings, ponder them deeply, and correct your thinking and behavior in accordance with them.

“Those in high positions should act virtuously, set examples for subordinates, and instruct them to uphold morality together. Respect the sacred and the good. Cherish benevolence and fraternity. Do not fail the Buddha’s teachings. Seek liberation from the mundane world. Cut off the roots of reincarnation and transgression. Leave behind the Three Wretched Realms, the path of endless fear and suffering.

“In this world you should all extensively plant the roots of virtue, repay favors and bestow kindness, and refrain from violating the Buddhist precepts. You should also endure provocation, practice diligence, cultivate single-mindedness, and pursue wisdom. You should teach others to do virtuous deeds and uphold goodness.

“Pure observance of abstinence with correct heart and mind for a single day and night is superior to a hundred years of good deeds in the Land of Infinite Life. Why is that? Because in that Buddha Land all is unconditioned and natural. Its inhabitants accumulate virtue without a trace of evil.

“Ten days and nights cultivating good here surpasses 1,000 years of virtuous practice in other Buddha Lands. Why is that? In other Buddha Lands, those who do good are many and wrong-doers are few; blessed virtue arises naturally, and there is no place for transgression.

“Only this world has a lot of evil, but no natural [blessed rewards]. The pursuit of desires requires painstaking efforts, and even mutual deception. In the midst of mental fatigue and physical exhaustion, people drink bitterness and eat poison. In this way, they are forever busy, never enjoying a moment of peace and rest.

“Out of compassion for all of you and for other celestial and human beings, I give teachings and instructions with great diligence, urging you to cultivate goodness. I guide you as appropriate according to your respective abilities, and teach you the sutras. You have all accepted my teaching for practice and are enabled to obtain the Way as you wish.

“Wherever the Buddha goes, whether in states, cities, towns or villages, there is no one who does not benefit. There is peace and harmony between heaven and earth. The sun and moon shine brightly. Wind and rain come in their own time. Catastrophes and plagues do not arise. Countries prosper and people live in peace. Warriors and weapons are not needed. Virtue and benevolence are highly esteemed. Everyone is dedicated to cultivating decency and humility.”

The Buddha said: “My compassion for you and all other celestial and human beings surpasses parents’ concern for their children. Now that I have become a Buddha in this world, I subdue and remove the Five Evils, eliminate the Five Kinds of Pain, and extinguish the Five Burnings. I fight evil with virtue, dispel the suffering of birth and death, and enable beings to attain the five virtues and ascend to the realm of unconditioned peace.

“After I pass away, the Dharma teaching will gradually perish. People will engage in flattery and deceit, and relapse into evil. The Five Burnings and Five Kinds of Pain will reappear and get worse with time. It is impossible to describe them in detail. I have only given you a brief overview.”

The Buddha said to Maitreya: “You should each think seriously about this. Pass on the teaching to others. Observe the Buddha’s sutras. Do not violate them!”

Then Bodhisattva Maitreya pressed his palms together and said: “The Buddha’s words are so true. People in the world really are like that. Out of universal compassion and mercy, you, Tathagata, enable us all to attain liberation. We accept your earnest instructions, and dare not defy them!”

The Buddha told Ananda: “Stand up. Rearrange your clothes. Press your palms together in reverence and pay respect to the Buddha of Infinite Life. Buddhas, Tathagatas of the lands in the ten directions are constantly praising and applauding that Buddha’s non-attachment and non-obstruction in unison.”

Ananda rose. He arranged his robes and stood upright, facing west. With his palms together in reverence, he pressed the ground with the five appendages to pay homage to the Buddha of Infinite Life. He said [to Shakyamuni Buddha]: “World-Honored One, I wish to see that Buddha’s Land of Peace and Joy and the assemblies of Bodhisattvas and Sravakas there.”

After Ananda said this, the Buddha of Infinite Life immediately radiated a great light that shone throughout all Buddha Lands. Mt. Chakravada, Mt. Sumeru and other large and small mountains, as well as everything else, took on the same color.

It was like the flood in the Kalpa of Destruction that fills the entire world – everything in it is submerged out of sight, and the vast, boundless

water is all that can be seen. That Buddha's light was similar. All the luminescence of Sravakas and Bodhisattvas disappeared from view. Only the Buddha's light was visible, shining with a dazzling brilliance.

At that time, Ananda saw the Buddha of Infinite Life manifesting magnificent divinity and grandeur, like Mt. Sumeru high above all worlds. The radiance of his physical characteristics and features illuminated everything. The four groups of disciples in the present assembly all saw this simultaneously. The inhabitants of that land saw this realm the same way.

At that time, the Buddha asked Ananda and Bodhisattva Compassionate One [Maitreya]: "When you look at that land, from its ground to its (Five) Pure Abodes, have you seen all the subtle, magnificent, pure and natural things there?"

Ananda replied: "Yes, we have."

"Have you also heard the great voice of the Buddha of Infinite Life sounding throughout all lands, edifying sentient beings?"

"Yes, we have," replied Ananda.

"The people of that land ride in seven-jewelled palaces, each of which is 100,000 *yojanas* in size. They travel extensively in the ten directions without hindrance, making offerings to Buddhas. Have you also seen that?"

Ananda replied: "Yes, we have."

“Some people in that land are born there by womb. Have you also seen that?”

“Yes, we have. Those born by womb live in palaces of 100 or 500 *yojanas* in size.

There they all enjoy various pleasures, as in the Trayastrimsa Heaven. The joys also come about naturally.”

At that time, Bodhisattva Compassionate One asked the Buddha: “World-Honored One, what are the causes and conditions for the people of that land being born by womb or by transformation?”

The Buddha told Bodhisattva Maitreya: “Consider a sentient being who has doubtful thoughts when he cultivates merit and virtue in aspiration to be reborn in the Pure Land. He does not recognize Buddha-Wisdom, Inconceivable Wisdom, Immeasurable Wisdom, Mahayana All-Embracing Wisdom, and Unequaled Peerless Supreme Wisdom. He is full of doubts and suspicions about these kinds of wisdom. Yet he still believes in karmic retribution and reward, cultivates the roots of goodness, and wishes to be reborn in that land. Such beings are reborn in those palaces with a lifespan of 500 years, during which they can never see Buddhas, hear Dharma teachings, or meet the sacred assemblies of Bodhisattvas and Sravakas. So in that land they are called ‘womb-born.’

“If a sentient being resolutely believes in Buddha-Wisdom to Supreme Wisdom, performs various meritorious deeds, and makes merit-dedication with faith [for rebirth in that land], such a being is naturally born by transformation from within the seven-jewelled flowers, sitting in

the full-lotus posture. In an instant, his physical characteristics, radiance, wisdom and virtue are as fully accomplished in perfection as those of the Bodhisattvas.

“Further, Compassionate One, if great Bodhisattvas in other lands resolve to see the Buddha of Infinite Life and pay respects and make offerings to him and to the sacred assemblies of Bodhisattvas and Sravakas [of that land], such Bodhisattvas will, at the end of their lives, attain rebirth in the Land of Infinite Life. They will be born naturally by transformation from within the seven-jewelled flowers.

“Maitreya, you should know that those are born by transformation because they had superior wisdom [before rebirth in the Pure Land], and those born by womb had no wisdom. For 500 years the latter can never see Buddhas, hear Dharma teachings, meet assemblies of Bodhisattvas and Sravakas, make offerings to Buddhas, know the practices and rites of Bodhisattvas, or cultivate merit and virtue. You should know this is because in previous lives they lacked wisdom and harbored doubts.”

The Buddha told Maitreya: “Think in terms of a *chakravartin* who has a seven-jewelled prison. It is decorated in various ways, furnished with couches and curtains, and hung with silk canopies. His princes who offend him are put in the prison. They are locked up with gold chains, and provided with food, drink, clothes, bedding, flowers, incense and musical performances, the same as those enjoyed by the *chakravartin*, who lacks nothing. What do you think? Would the princes like to stay there?”

“No, they would not,” replied Maitreya. “They would make every effort to seek help from powerful people to get free.”

The Buddha told Maitreya: “So it is with those sentient beings [born by womb]. Because of their doubts about Buddha-Wisdom, they are born in those seven-jewelled palaces. There is no punishment, not even a moment of displeasure. But for 500 years they cannot see the Three Gems, make offerings, or cultivate the roots of goodness. This is their pain. Despite other pleasures, they do not like to stay there.

“If those beings realize their original fault, deeply repent and long to leave that place, their wishes are immediately granted. They approach the Buddha of Infinite Life to pay homage and make offerings. They are also able to visit countless Buddhas extensively and cultivate merit and virtue. Maitreya, you should know that Bodhisattvas who have doubts lose great benefits. So you should firmly believe in the supreme wisdom of Buddhas.”

Bodhisattva Maitreya asked the Buddha: “World-Honored One, in this world, how many non-retrogressive Bodhisattvas are reborn in that Buddha Land?”

The Buddha told Maitreya: “In this world, 6.7 billion non-retrogressive Bodhisattvas are reborn in that Buddha Land. Each of them has made offerings to countless Buddhas, and their attainment stage is equal to Maitreya’s. Bodhisattvas of lesser practice and practitioners of lesser merit and virtue, whose numbers are uncountable, will also be reborn there.”

The Buddha told Maitreya: “Not only the Bodhisattvas from my land are reborn in the Pure Land. Those from other Buddha Lands are the same.

“The first Buddha is called Distant Illumination, who has 18 billion Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The second Buddha is called Precious Treasury, who has 9 billion Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The third Buddha is called Infinite Voice, who has 22 billion Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The 4th Buddha is called Nectar Flavor, who has 25 billion Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The 5th Buddha is called Dragon Winner, who has 1.4 billion Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The 6th Buddha is called Triumphant Power, who has 14 thousand Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The 7th Buddha is called Lion, who has 50 billion Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The 8th Buddha is called Stain-Free Light, who has 8 billion Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The 9th Buddha is called Head of Virtue, who has 6 billion Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The 10th Buddha is called Mountain of Wondrous Virtue, who has 6 billion Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The 11th Buddha is called Human King, who has 1 billion Bodhisattvas, all of whom will be reborn there.

“The 12th Buddha is called Unsurpassable Blossom, who has countless immeasurable Bodhisattvas, all of whom are non-retrogressive and full of wisdom and courage. They have made offerings to countless Buddhas. Within seven days, they can accomplish the solid Dharma practiced by Mahasattvas (great beings) for 100,000 *koti kalpas*. All these Bodhisattvas will be reborn in the Pure Land.

“The 13th Buddha is called Fearless, who has 79 billion Mahasattvas and countless lesser Bodhisattvas and *bhikkus*, all of whom will be reborn there.”

The Buddha said to Maitreya: “Not only the Bodhisattvas of these fourteen Buddha Lands will be reborn in the Pure Land, but also the Bodhisattvas of countless Buddha Lands in the ten directions. They are too many to count. If I were to mention only the names of those Buddhas in the ten directions and their Bodhisattvas and *bhikkus* who will be reborn in that land day and night for one *kalpa*, I could not complete the list. Today, I’ve given you only a brief account.”

The Buddha told Maitreya: “If a person hears that Buddha’s name, rejoices and recites it even once, you should know that this person has received the utmost benefit, which is to possess supreme merit and virtue in full.

“Therefore, Maitreya, even if there is a fierce fire pervading the three-thousand-fold great chiliocosm, you should dive through it to hear this

sutra and rejoice in faith. You should accept, uphold, read and chant it, and practice accordingly. Why is that? Because many Bodhisattvas wish to hear it but cannot.

“Sentient beings who hear this sutra will never retrogress on the supreme path. So believe and accept it single-mindedly. Uphold it. Chant it. Expound it. Practice it.

“Today I have spoken this sutra for sentient beings and enabled you to see the Buddha of Infinite Life as well as all and everything in his land. That which you ought to do, do it. Do not wait until I pass into *Parinirvana* to grow doubts.

“In times to come, sutras and Dharma teachings will perish. But out of pity and compassion, I will specially retain and preserve this sutra and keep it in the world for one hundred years more. Sentient beings who encounter it can all obtain deliverance as they wish.”

The Buddha said to Maitreya: “The appearance of a Tathagata in the world is difficult to encounter and see. Buddhas’ sutras and teachings are hard to obtain and hear. The superior Dharma for Bodhisattvas and the Paramitas are difficult to hear, too. It is also hard to come across a Dharma mentor, hear his teaching, and practice accordingly. Hearing this sutra, rejoicing in faith, accepting it and upholding it is the most difficult of all difficulties. Nothing is harder! That is why my Dharma is so made, so spoken and so taught. You should believe, comply and practice accordingly.”

At that time, [after] the World-Honored One spoke this sutra, countless sentient beings developed the aspiration to supreme, perfect enlightenment. 12 thousand *nayuta* people acquired pure Dharma eyes. 2.2 billion celestial and human beings attained *Anagami* (the stage of non-returner). 800 thousand *bhikkus* expunged their defilements and liberated their minds. 4 billion Bodhisattvas achieved non-retrogression. With the merit and virtue of their great vows, they adorned themselves and will accomplish perfect enlightenment in future lives.

At that time, the three-thousand-fold great chiliocosm experienced the Six Kinds of Convulsion. Great light illuminated lands in the ten directions. Hundreds of thousands of musical tones spontaneously sounded. Countless miraculous flowers fell from the sky.

After the Buddha spoke this sutra, Bodhisattva Maitreya and other Bodhisattvas from the ten directions, as well as Ven. Ananda, other great Sravakas and all other beings, without exception, were filled with joy.