

Sūtra on the Śūraṅgama Mantra
That Is Spoken from above
the Crown of the Great Buddha's Head,
and on the Hidden Basis
of the Thus-Come Ones'
Myriad Bodhisattva-Practices
That Lead to Their Verifications
of Ultimate Truth

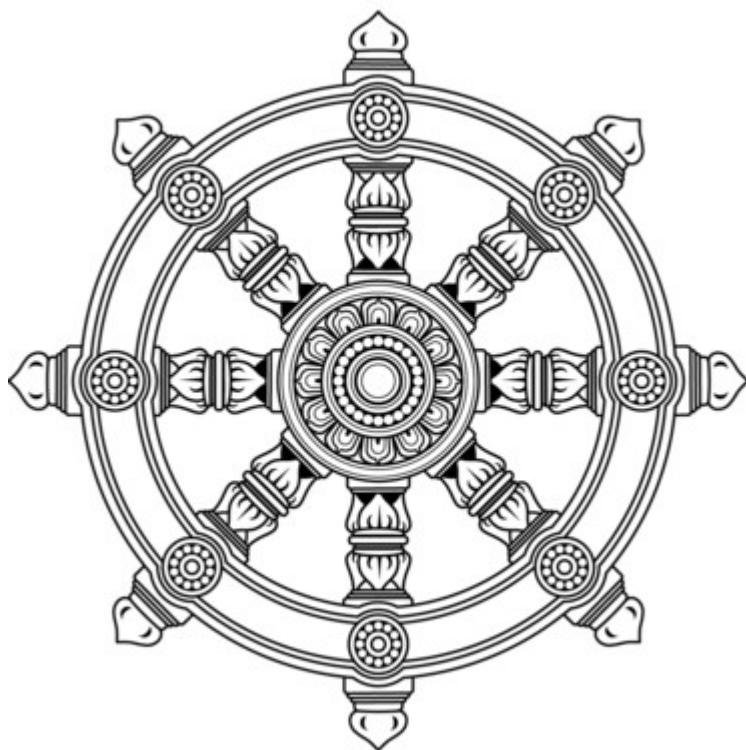
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Prologue



The Occasion for the Teaching

Thus have I heard: at one time the Buddha was staying in the city of Śrāvastī in a sublime abode in Prince Jetri's Grove, together with a gathering of great monks, twelve hundred fifty in all. These disciples of the Buddha were all great Arhats, free of outflows: they abided in the Dharma and upheld it. They had completely transcended all existence, and their perfect demeanor inspired awe in every place they went. They followed the Buddha in turning the Wheel of Dharma, supremely worthy of what he had bestowed upon them. Stern and pure in their adherence to the monastic code, they were great exemplars for beings in the three realms of existence. To liberate beings they appeared in countless bodies in response to what those beings required, and in the future they would rescue other beings, who thereby would transcend the burden of their attachment to sense-objects.

The Arhats' leaders were Śāriputra, great in wisdom, and Mahā-Maudgalyāyana, Mahā-Kauṣṭhila, Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra, Subhūti, Upaniṣad, and others. Innumerable Solitary Sages, who needed no further instruction, as well as other beings who had only recently made a re-solve to attain full awakening, also came to the place where the Buddha and the monks were staying. It was during the Days of Unburdening at the conclusion of the summer retreat. Bodhisattvas from all ten directions were gathered there as well; they desired counsel to resolve their doubts. All were respectful and obedient to the awe-inspiring, compassionate Thus-Come One as they prepared themselves to understand his hidden meaning.

The Thus-Come One, having arranged his seat, sat quietly and peacefully, and then, for the sake of everyone assembled there, spoke of the profound and mysterious. The

assembly, pure in mind and body, learned at that banquet of Dharma what they had not known before. The Immortal's voice was like the call of the kalaviṅka bird, and it could be heard in worlds throughout all ten directions. As many Bodhisattvas as there are sand-grains in the Ganges gathered at that place for awakening, with Mañjuśrī as their leader.

King Prasenajit, on the anniversary day of mourning for his father, the late king, had arranged a vegetarian feast in the banquet hall of the palace. He had invited the Buddha, and he welcomed the Thus-Come One in person to a meal of savory delicacies. He also invited in the great Bodhisattvas. Meanwhile, in the city, elders and other laity had also prepared meals for the Sangha, and they stood waiting for the Buddha to come receive their offerings. The Buddha directed Mañjuśrī to designate Arhats and Bodhisattvas to accept the pure vegetarian food that the donors were offering.

Only Ānanda was late for this assigning of the Sangha. Earlier he had traveled for some distance to accept a special invitation and had not yet returned. No senior monk was accompanying him as his teacher; he was returning on the road alone.

So far that day Ānanda had received no offerings. At the appropriate time, therefore, he took his almsbowl out, and as he walked through the town he accepted alms in sequential order. While receiving alms from his first to his last donor, he thought to himself that he would accept pure food from everyone, not only from Kṣatriyas of honorable family and others from the purer classes, but also from Caṇḍālas and others who were considered impure. While practicing impartiality and compassion, he would not favor the humblest people only; he was determined to assist all beings in creating merit beyond measure. Ānanda knew that the Thus-Come One, the World-Honored One, had admonished the Arhats Subhūti and Mahākāśyapa for being prejudicial on their alms rounds. Ānanda revered the Thus-Come One's instruction: let alms be received impartially so that people will not be led to doubt or slander.

Having crossed the city moat, Ānanda walked slowly through the outer gates, his manner stern and proper as he followed strictly and respectfully the rules for accepting

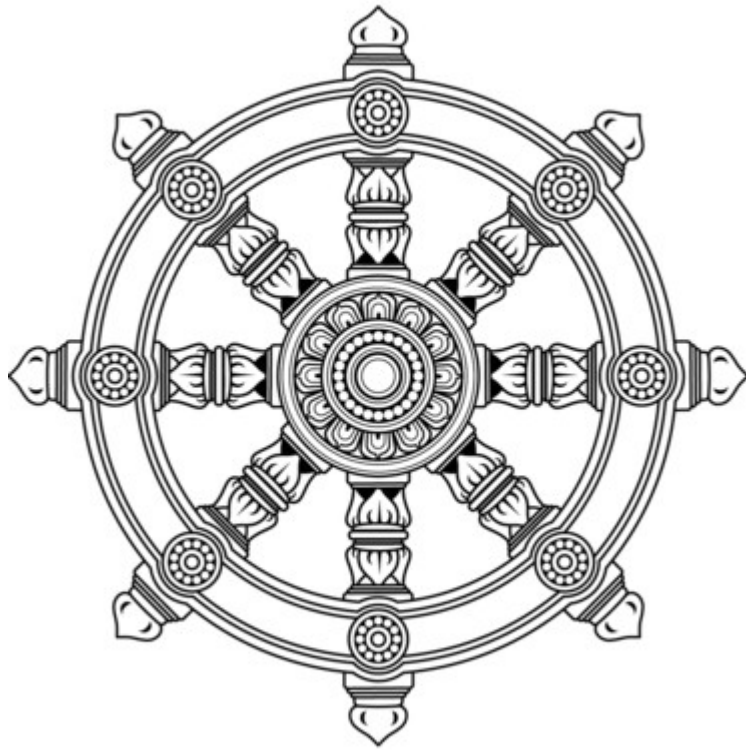
offerings of pure food. Because he was receiving alms sequentially, he soon chanced to pass a house of courtesans, and there he was waylaid by a powerful artifice. Wielding a spell that Kapila had obtained from a god of the Brahma Heavens, a young Mātāṅga woman seduced Ānanda onto her bed. Then she caressed him lasciviously, until the power of his vows was on the verge of being broken.

Knowing that Ānanda was succumbing to the carnal influence of the spell, the Thus-Come One ended his meal immediately and returned to the monastic grounds. The king, his senior ministers, the elders, and the other laity, desiring to hear the essentials of the Dharma, followed after the Buddha. Then from the crown of his head the World-Honored One poured forth invincible light which was as dazzling as a hundred gems. The Buddha Śākyamuni made appear within that light a Buddha, who seated in full-lotus posture on a thousand-petaled sacred lotus, proclaimed a spiritually powerful mantra.

The Buddha instructed Mañjuśrī to go to Ānanda and protect him with the spiritually powerful mantra and, once the evil spell had been defeated, to give support to Ānanda and also to the young Mātāṅga woman, and to encourage both to return with him to where the Buddha was.

I

The Nature and Location of the Mind



1

The Request for Dharma

When Ānanda saw the Buddha, he bowed and wept in sorrow. He regretted that, since time without beginning, he had devoted himself to erudition but had not fully developed his practice on the Path. Respectfully and repeatedly he asked the Buddha to explain for him the elementary steps that lead to attainment in the wondrous practices of calming the mind, contemplative insight, and meditation in stillness — practices through which the Thus-Come Ones from all ten directions had become fully awakened.

Meanwhile, as many Bodhisattvas as there are sand-grains of the River Ganges, along with the great Arhats, Solitary Sages, and others from the ten directions, all eagerly wished to listen. They sat down and waited silently to hear instruction from the Sage.

Then the World-Honored One, before the great assembly, extended his golden-hued arm, circled his hand on the crown of Ānanda's head, and said to Ānanda and to all gathered there, "There is a samādhi called 'The Great and Royal Śūraṅgama that Is Spoken from above the Crown of the Buddha's Head and that Is the Perfection of the Myriad Practices.' It is a wondrous and magnificent Path, the unique portal through which the Buddhas in all ten directions have passed in order to transcend the conditioned world. You should all now listen attentively." Ānanda humbly bowed and waited for compassionate instruction.

The Buddha said to Ānanda, "You and I are members of the same family, and we share the affection that is natural among relatives. At the time you first made the resolve

to become enlightened, what excellent attributes did you see in my Dharma that immediately led you to reject the deep familial affection and conjugal love found in the world?”

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “I saw the thirty-two hallmarks of the Thus-Come One, which were so supremely wondrous and incomparable that his entire body shone like crystal, with an inter-reflecting radiance. I often thought to myself that a body with such hallmarks could not be the consequence of an act of sexual love. Why? The energies of desire are coarse and murky. Foul and putrid intercourse results in a turbid merging of procreative substances; such things as that cannot generate a body with such a wondrous, pure, magnificent, and brilliant concentration of purple-golden light. That is why I admired the Buddha and why I let the hair fall from my head so I could follow him.”

The Buddha said, “Excellent, Ānanda! All of you should know that since time without beginning, all beings have been undergoing death and rebirth over and over simply because they have not been aware of the pure understanding which is the essential nature of the everlasting true mind. Instead, the workings of their minds are distorted, and because the workings of their minds are distorted, they are bound to the cycle of death and rebirth.

“Now you all wish to inquire about unsurpassed enlightenment and to discover the truth of your own nature. You should answer my questions straightforwardly, because that is the path that the Thus-Come Ones everywhere throughout the ten directions have taken as they freed themselves from death and rebirth. Their minds and their words were straightforward, and therefore, at every point in their progress from the first stage to the last, they were never in the least evasive.

“Now, Ānanda, I ask you this: when, in response to the thirty-two hallmarks of the Thus-Come One, you first made the resolve to attain full awakening, just what was it that saw those hallmarks, and who was it that took delight in them and loved them?”

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, I delighted in them and loved

them with my mind and eyes. Because I saw with my eyes the excellent hallmarks of the Thus-Come One, my mind admired and delighted in them. In this way I became resolved to extricate myself from death and rebirth.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “It is as you say: your mind and eyes were the reason for your admiration and delight. Someone who does not know where his mind and eyes are will not be able to overcome the stress of engagement with perceived objects. Consider, for example: when bandits invade a country and the king sends forth his soldiers to drive them out, the soldiers must first know where the bandits are. It is the fault of your mind and eyes that you are bound to the cycle of death and rebirth. I am now asking you: precisely where are your mind and eyes?

2

The Location of the Mind

A. Ānanda Proposes That the Mind Is in the Body

“World-Honored One,” Ānanda then said to the Buddha, “The ten classes of beings in all the worlds believe that the conscious mind dwells in the body; and as I regard the blue-lotus eyes of the Thus-Come One, I know that they are part of the Buddha’s face. Clearly they are also part of his body. It is evident that those physical organs which respond to four kinds of perceived objects are part of my face, and so, my conscious mind, too, is surely found within my body.

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Now as you sit in the Dharma Hall of the Thus-Come One, you can see Prince Jetri’s Grove. Where is the grove?

“This great and sacred Dharma Hall, with its many stories, World-Honored One, is in the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Childless, and the Prince Jetri’s Grove is outside the hall.”

“Ānanda, what is the first thing that you see from your place in the hall?”

“World-Honored One, here in the hall I am looking first at the Thus-Come One. I can also see the great assembly; then, as I gaze out, I see the grove in the park.”

“Why is it, Ānanda, that when you look out, you can see the grove in the park?”

“World-Honored One, since the doors and windows of this great hall have been thrown open wide, I can be in the hall and yet see into the distance.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “It is as you say. Someone in the hall can see far into the grove and park when the doors and windows are open wide. Now, could that person

in the hall not see the Buddha and yet see outside the hall?”

Ānanda answered, “It would not be possible, World-Honored One, to be in the hall and be able to see the grove and fountains, and yet not be able to see the Thus-Come One.”

“Ānanda, the same is true of you. You have the intelligence to understand everything clearly. If your mind, with its clear understanding, were inside your body, then the inside of your body would be what your mind would first come into contact with and have knowledge of. Are there beings that see the inside of their bodies first, before they can observe things outside? Even if they could not see their heart, liver, spleen, or stomach, they still at least would detect the growing of their nails and hair, the twisting of their sinews, and the throbbing of their pulse. Why then are you not able to see these things? And since your mind is definitely not visually cognizant of what is inside your body, how can it have knowledge of what is outside your body? Thus you can know that when you say the mind that is aware and makes distinctions is inside the body, you state what is impossible.”

B. Ānanda Proposes That the Mind Is Outside the Body

Ānanda bowed and said to the Buddha, “Now that I have listened to the Thus-Come One explain the Dharma in this way, I realize that my mind must be located outside my body instead. Why do I say this? For example, a lamp lit in a room will certainly illuminate the inside of the room first, and then its light will stream through the doorway and reach the recesses of the hall beyond it. Since beings do not see inside their bodies but only see outside them, it is as if the lamp were placed outside the room, so that it cannot shed its light inside the room. This principle is perfectly clear and beyond a doubt; it conforms to the Buddha’s ultimate teaching — and so it can’t be wrong, can it?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The monks who followed me to Śrāvastī to receive their alms in sequential order have by now returned to Prince Jetri’s Grove, and they are

eating their meal with their fingers. I have finished my meal, but consider the monks: can all of them be full when only one person has eaten?”

Ānanda answered, “No, World-Honored One. Why not? These monks are all Arhats, but their physical bodies, their own separate lives, are distinct. How could one person cause everyone to be full?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Then if your mind that sees, is aware, discerns, and knows really were outside your body, your body and mind would be separate and unrelated to each other. The body would not be aware of what the mind has knowledge of, and the mind would have no knowledge of what the body is aware of. Now as I hold up my hand, which is as soft as cotton, does your mind distinguish it when your eyes see it?”

Ānanda said, “It does, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha told Ānanda, “Then if your mind and eyes work together to perceive my hand, how can the mind be outside? In this way you can know that when you say the mind that is aware and makes distinctions is outside the body, you state what is impossible.”

C. Ānanda Proposes That the Mind Is in the Eye-Faculty

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said. Because I do not see inside my body, my mind is not located there, and because the body and the mind work together and are not separate from each other, my mind is not outside my body either. Now that I think of it, I know just where the mind is.”

The Buddha said, “Where is it, then?”

Ānanda said, “Because the mind that discerns and is aware knows nothing of what is inside but can see what is outside, I believe, upon reflection, that the mind is hidden in the eyes. For instance, let us say that someone places transparent crystal cups over his eyes. Although the crystal cups cover his eyes, they will not obstruct his vision. In this

way his eyes can see, and discernments are made accordingly. And so my mind that is aware and knows does not see inside because it is in the eye-faculty. It gazes at what is outside the body, seeing clearly and without impediment, for the same reason: the mind is hidden in the eyes.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Let us assume the mind is hidden in the eyes, as you assert in your instance of the crystals. When the person in your example places crystal cups over his eyes and looks at the mountains, the rivers, and all else on this great earth, does he see the crystal cups too?”

“He does, World Honored One. He sees the crystal cups when he places them over his eyes.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “If in fact your mind can be compared to someone’s eyes with crystals placed over them, then when you look at the world of perceived objects, why don’t you see your own eyes? If you could see your eyes, your eyes would be part of your external surroundings. But then your mind and eyes could not work together to make distinctions. And since you cannot see your eyes, why did you say that the mind that is aware and makes distinctions is concealed within the eye-faculty, as in the example of the eyes with crystal cups placed on them? Know then that when you say the mind that is aware and makes distinctions is concealed in the eye-faculty, like eyes with crystal cups placed on them, you state what is impossible.”

D.Ānanda Reconsiders Seeing Inside and Seeing Outside

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, I now offer this reconsideration. Our viscera are located inside our bodies, while our orifices are open to the outside. Our viscera lie concealed in darkness, but at the orifices there is light. Now, facing the Buddha, with my eyes open, I see light. Seeing that light I would call ‘seeing outside.’ Seeing darkness when I close my eyes I would call ‘seeing inside.’ How does that idea sound?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Consider this question, then: when you close your eyes and see darkness, is that darkness in front of your eyes? If the darkness is in front of your eyes, how can it be inside? But if in fact it were inside, then if you were in a room that was completely dark because it was not lit by the sun or by the moon or by lamps, the darkness in the room would have to be the darkness of your own insides. Besides, if the darkness were not in front of you, how could you see it? But suppose you did see inside in a way that is distinct from how you see outside. In that case — if we grant that closing your eyes and thus seeing darkness would be to see the inside of your body — then when you open your eyes and see light, why don’t you see your own face? Since you can’t see your own face, there can be no seeing inside, because if you could see your face, then your eyes and also your mind that knows and understands would be suspended in the air. How then could they be part of your body?

“If your eyes and mind were actually suspended in the air, then it would follow that they would not be part of your body. If, however, they were part of your body and yet they were suspended in the air, then the Buddha, who now sees your face, would be part of your body as well. Thus, when your eyes became aware of something, your own body would be unaware of it. If you press the point and say the body and the eyes each have a separate awareness, then you would have two awarenesses so that you, one person, would eventually become two Buddhas. Therefore, you should know that when you say that to see darkness is to see inside, you state what is impossible.”

E. Ānanda Proposes That the Mind Comes into Being in Response to Conditions

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “I have heard the Buddha teach the four assemblies that because a state of mind arises, various perceived objects arise, and that because perceived objects arise, various states of mind arise. I am now thinking, and that very act of thinking, which is an instance of a state of mind arising in response to perceived

objects, is my mind's true nature. Thus the mind comes into being by combining with perceived objects wherever they arise. It does not exist in just one of the three locations — inside, outside, and the middle.”

Then the Buddha said to Ānanda, “Now you are saying that when perceived objects arise, various states of mind arise, and therefore that the mind comes into being by combining with those perceived objects wherever they arise. But such a mind as this would have no essential nature of its own, and so could not combine with anything. If, having no essential nature of its own, it still were able to combine with perceived objects, then there would be a nineteenth constituent element of perception, because such a mind would be combining with a seventh category of perceived object — and that is impossible.

“Furthermore, if such a mind did have an essential nature of its own, then if you were to pinch yourself, where would your mind that has awareness of the pinch be coming from? Would it be coming forth from the inside of your body, or would it be coming in from outside? If it came out from inside, then once again, you would see the inside of your body. If it came in from outside, it would see your face first.”

Ānanda said, “It is the eyes that see. It is the mind, and not the eyes, that is aware. To suppose that the mind sees is not my idea.”

The Buddha said, “If the eyes could see, then by analogy, when you were in a room, it would be the doorway, not you, that would see what is outside the room. Not only that: when someone has died with his eyes still intact, his eyes would see. But how could a dead person see?

“Ānanda, if your mind which is aware and knows and makes distinctions indeed has an essential nature of its own, then would it have a single essential nature or multiple essential natures? Would this essential nature pervade your body or wouldn't it? Suppose it were a single essential nature: then if you were to pinch one limb, wouldn't you feel that pinch in all four limbs? If you did, the feeling of the pinch would not be confined to one place. And if the feeling of the pinch were confined to one place, it

would follow that your mind cannot have only one essential nature. But if your mind had multiple essential natures, you would be many people. Which of those essential natures would you be? Furthermore, if a single essential nature did pervade your body, then a single pinch — as in the previous instance — would be felt throughout your body. But if this mental essence does not pervade your body, then if you touched your head and touched your foot at the same moment, you would feel the touch on your head but would not feel the touch on your foot. Yet that is not what your experience is.

“Therefore, you should know that when you say the mind comes into being by combining with perceived objects wherever they arise, you state what is impossible.”

F. Ānanda Proposes That the Mind Is in the Middle

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, I have also listened when the Buddha was discussing true reality with Mañjuśrī and other disciples of the Dharma-King. The World-Honored One then said that the mind is neither inside the body nor outside of it. And so I am now thinking that if the mind were inside, it would not see anything, and if it were outside, its awareness would be separate from the body. But since the mind is not aware of what is inside, it cannot be inside; and since the awareness of the mind is not separate from the body, it makes no sense to say the mind is outside. Therefore, since the mind’s awareness and the body’s awareness are not separate, and since the mind does not see what is inside, the mind must be in the middle.”

The Buddha replied, “You say that it is in the middle. A middle must be in some certain place. Propose a middle. Where is this ‘middle’ of yours? Is it outside the body or inside it? If your ‘middle’ were inside the body, it might exist at the surface of the body or else somewhere within it. If it existed at the surface, it would not be in the middle, and to be within it would be the same as to be inside it. Does this ‘middle’ have a location, then? If so, is there some indication of that location? If there were no indication of its location, then the middle would not exist. And even if there were some

indication of its location, that location would be indefinite. Why? Suppose that someone were to place a marker to indicate the location of a middle. Seen from the east, it would be in the west; seen from the south, it would lie to the north. Such a marker would not mark a definite middle, and in the same way, it is unclear what it might mean for the mind to be located in a ‘middle.’”

The Buddha said, “If your mind were located between the eye-faculty and the objects it perceives, would the mind’s essential nature be the same as the essential natures of the eye-faculty and of its objects, or would it not? If the mind’s essential nature were the same as the essential natures of the eye-faculty and of its objects, it would be a confused combination of what is aware and what is not aware. That is contradictory. Where would this ‘middle’ be, then? And even if the mind’s essential nature were not the same as the essential natures either of the eye-faculty or of its objects, then the mind would be neither aware nor unaware. Such a mind would have no essential nature at all. How then could it be in the middle? Therefore, you should know that it would be impossible for the mind to be in the middle.”

G. Ānanda Proposes That the Mind Has No Specific Location

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, when, along with Mahā-Maudgalyāyana, Subhūti, Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra, and Śāriputra — four of the great disciples — I have listened to the Buddha as he turned the Wheel of Dharma, I have often heard him say that the mind that is aware and makes distinctions is not located inside or outside or in the middle; it is not located in any one of those places. That which has no specific location must be what is called the mind. Can what has no specific location be called my mind?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “You say the mind that is aware and makes distinctions is not located in a specific place. However, the air, the lands, the waters, and the creatures that fly over them or move on them or in them — all things, in fact, existing in

the world — do have specific locations.

“Then does the mind that you suppose has no specific location exist in some place, or else does it exist in no place? If it is located nowhere, then it is an absurdity — like a turtle with fur or a hare with horns. How can you speak of something that does not have a specific location? Suppose, however, things could in fact exist without a definite location. Now, what does not exist lacks attributes. What does exist has attributes. And whatever has attributes does have a location. How can you say then that the mind has no specific location? Therefore, you should know that when you say the mind which knows and is aware has no specific location, you state what is impossible.”

3

The Conditioned Mind and the True Mind

Then Ānanda stood up in the midst of the great assembly. He uncovered his right shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, put his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, “The Buddha has bestowed his loving-kindness on me as his youngest cousin, but now that I have entered the monastic life, I have continued to presume upon his kindness, and as a result, all I have done is to become learned, and so I am not yet free of outflows.

“Since I could not resist the Kapila spell, I was lured into a house of courtesans, all because I did not know how to find the realm of true reality. I only hope that the World-Honored One, out of pity and great kindness, will instruct us in the path of calming the mind, will guide people who have no trust in the Dharma, and will counteract the wrong tendencies of the uncivilized.” When he had finished speaking, Ānanda bowed to the ground and, with the rest of the great assembly, prepared himself with keen anticipation to listen reverently to the teaching.

At that time, an array of lights as dazzling and as brilliant as a hundred thousand suns poured forth from the World-Honored One’s face. Six kinds of quaking shook the lands of the Thus-Come Ones, and an infinite number of worlds appeared throughout all ten directions all at the same time. The Buddha’s awe-inspiring spiritual power caused all these worlds to merge into a single world, and in that world, all the great Bodhisattvas — while remaining in their own lands — placed their palms together and listened.

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Since time without beginning, all beings, because of

the many distortions in their minds, have been creating seeds of karma, which then grow and ripen naturally, like a cluster of fruit on a rūkṣa tree.

“People who undertake a spiritual practice but who fail to realize the ultimate enlightenment — people such as the Hearers of the Teaching and the Solitary Sages, as well as celestial beings and others, such as demon-kings and members of the demons’ retinues, who follow wrong paths — all fail because they do not understand two fundamentals and are mistaken and confused in their practice. They are like someone who cooks sand, hoping to prepare a delicious meal. Even if the sand were cooked for eons numberless as motes of dust, no meal would result from it.

“Ānanda, what are the two fundamentals? The first is the mind that is the basis of death and rebirth and that has continued since time without beginning. This mind is dependent on perceived objects, and it is this mind that you and all beings make use of and that each of you consider to be your own nature.

“The second fundamental is full awakening, which also has no beginning; it is the original and pure essence of nirvana. It is the original understanding, the real nature of consciousness. All conditioned phenomena arise from it, and yet it is among those phenomena that beings lose track of it. They have lost track of this fundamental understanding though it is active in them all day long, and because they remain unaware of it, they make the mistake of entering the various destinies.

“Ānanda, because you now wish to know about the path of calming the mind and wish to be subject to death and rebirth no longer, I will question you again.” Then the Thus-Come One raised his golden-hued arm and bent his five fingers — each of them marked with lines in the shape of a wheel — and he asked Ānanda, “Did you see something?”

Ānanda said, “I did.”

The Buddha said, “What did you see?”

Ānanda said, “I saw the Thus-Come One raise his arm and bend his fingers into a fist that sends forth light, dazzling my mind and eyes.”

The Buddha said, “When you saw my fist emit light, what did you see it with?”

Ānanda said, “All of us in the great assembly saw it with our eyes.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “You have answered that the Thus-Come One bent his fingers into a fist that sent forth light, dazzling your mind and eyes. Your eyes can see my fist, but what do you take to be your mind that was dazzled by it?”

Ānanda said, “The Thus-Come One has just now been asking me about my mind’s location, and my mind is what I have been using to determine where it might be. My mind is that which has the capability of making such determinations.”

The Buddha exclaimed, “Ānanda! That is not your mind!”

Startled, Ānanda stood up, placed his palms together, and said to the Buddha, “If that is not my mind, what is it?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “It is merely your mental processes that assign false and illusory attributes to the world of perceived objects. These processes delude you about your true nature and have caused you, since time without beginning and in your present life, to mistake a burglar for your own child — to lose touch with your own original, everlasting mind — and thus you are bound to the cycle of death and rebirth.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, I am the Buddha’s favorite cousin. It was my mind that loved the Buddha and led me to enter the monastic life. That mind of mine has been responsible not only for my serving the Thus-Come One but also for my serving all Buddhas and all good and wise teachers throughout as many lands as there are sand-grains in the River Ganges. It has always been that mind that has marshaled great courage to practice every difficult aspect of the Dharma. If I were ever to slander the Dharma and forsake forever my good roots in it, that mind of mine would be the cause even of that. If this activity of comprehending is not the mind, then I have no mind, and I am the same as a clod of earth or a piece of wood, because nothing exists apart from my mind’s awareness and its knowledge. Why does the Thus-Come One say that this is not my mind? Now I am genuinely alarmed and frightened; neither I nor anyone else here in the great assembly is free of doubt. I only hope that the Thus-Come

One, with great compassion for us, will instruct all those among us who are not yet awake.”

Then to Ānanda and the others in the great assembly the World-Honored One gave instruction in gaining patience with the state of mind in which no mental objects arise.

From the Lion’s Seat he reached out and circled his hand on the crown of Ānanda’s head, saying to him, “The Thus-Come One has often explained that all phenomena that come into being are nothing more than manifestations of the mind. All things that are subject to the principle of cause and effect — from the largest world to the smallest mote of dust — come into being because of the mind. If we examine the fundamental nature of each thing in the world, Ānanda, down to even the smallest wisps of grass, we will see that all have reality. Even space has a name and attributes. Given that, how could the clear wondrous, pure mind — the mind that truly understands and is the basic nature of all mental states — itself lack reality?

“But if, as you insist, that which makes distinctions and is aware of them, which knows and understands them is indeed the mind, then that mind would necessarily have its own essential nature independent of its involvement with objects — with visible objects, sounds, odors, flavors, and objects of touch. Yet now, as you listen to my Dharma, it is due to sounds that you can distinguish my meaning. Even if you were to withdraw into a state of quietude in which all seeing, hearing, awareness of tastes, and tactile awareness ceased, you still would be making distinctions among the shadowy objects of cognition in your mind.

“I am not demanding that you just accept that this distinction-making capacity is not the mind. But examine your mind in minute detail to determine if a distinction-making capacity exists independent of its perceived objects of awareness. That would truly be your mind. If, on the other hand, your distinction-making capacity does not have an essential nature apart from its perceived objects, then it too would be a perceived object — a shadowy mental object. Perceived objects are not permanent, and when that mind ceased to exist such that it had no more reality than a turtle with fur or a hare with horns,

then your Dharma-body would cease to exist along with it. Then who would be left to practice and to perfect patience with the state of mind in which no mental objects arise?”

At that point Ānanda and the others in the great assembly were utterly dumbfounded. They had nothing to say.

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The reason why so many practitioners in the world do not succeed in putting an end to outflows and becoming Arhats — though they may have passed through all nine of the successive stages of samādhi — is that they are attached to distorted mental processes that come into being and then cease to be, and they mistake these processes for what is real. That is why, even though you have become quite learned, you have not become a sage.”

When Ānanda had heard that, he again wept sorrowfully. He then bowed to the ground, knelt on both knees, placed his palms together, and said to the Buddha, “Ever since I followed the Buddha and resolved to enter the monastic life, I have relied on the Buddha’s awe-inspiring spirit. I have often thought, ‘There is no reason for me to toil at spiritual practice,’ because I just expected that the Thus-Come One would graciously transfer some of his samādhi to me. I never realized that in fact he simply could not stand in for me, in body or in mind. Thus I abandoned my original resolve, and though my body has indeed entered the monastic life, my mind has not entered the Path. I am like that poor son who ran away from his father. Today I realize that, though I am learned, I might as well not have learned anything if I do not practice, just as someone who only talks of food never gets full.

“World-Honored One, we all are bound by two obstructions, and as a consequence we are unaware of the mind that is everlasting and still. I only hope the Thus-Come One will take pity on us who are destitute and homeless, will disclose the wondrous mind that truly understands, and will open our eyes to the Path.”

Then the Thus-Come One poured forth resplendent light from the symbol of purity on his chest. The brilliant light, radiant with hundreds of thousands of colors, shone all throughout the ten directions simultaneously to illuminate Buddha-lands as many as

motes of dust, and it shone upon the crowns of the heads of the Thus-Come Ones in every one of those radiant Buddha-lands. Then the light returned to shine upon the great assembly — upon Ānanda and all the others.

Thereupon the Buddha said to Ānanda, “I now will raise for all of you a great Dharma-banner so that all beings in all ten directions can gain access to what is wondrous, subtle, and hidden — the pure and luminous mind that understands — and so that they can open their clear-seeing eyes.”