

IV
The Coming into
Being of the
World of Illusion

Then Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra stood up amidst the great assembly. He uncovered his right shoulder, knelt with his right knee on the ground, respectfully placed his palms together, and said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, you who are foremost in virtue and in inspiring awe have just now eloquently proclaimed, for the sake of all beings, the ultimate truth taught by the Thus-Come Ones. The Thus-Come One has often praised me as the one most skilled in expounding the Dharma, but as I have been listening to the Thus-Come One’s voice as he has been setting forth such subtle and wonderful Dharma, I might as well be a deaf man trying to hear a mosquito from a distance of more than a hundred paces. Such a man could not even see the mosquito, let alone hear it.

“Although the Buddha’s clear explanations have largely dispelled my doubts, I have not yet reached the point at which I might thoroughly understand this truth and so be free of doubt entirely. World-Honored One, although Ānanda and those like him have become enlightened, they have not yet put an end to their habits and outflows. But I am among those in the assembly who are free of outflows. And yet, having just now heard the Buddha explain this Dharma, I find that I am assailed by doubts.

“World-Honored One, if in fact the aggregates, the faculties, the various perceived objects, and the consciousnesses are all the Matrix of the Thus-Come One, which is itself fundamentally pure, then how is it that suddenly there came into being the mountains, the rivers, and all else on this earth that exists subject to conditions? And why are all these subject to a succession of changes, ending and then beginning again?

“The Thus-Come One also said that everywhere throughout the Dharma-Realm, the primary elements — earth, water, fire, and wind — are in their fundamental nature completely inter-fused with each other, tranquil and everlasting. World-Honored One, if the primary element earth extended everywhere throughout the Dharma-Realm, how could it coexist with water? And if the primary element water extended everywhere throughout the Dharma-Realm, the primary element fire could not come into being. How may we understand that primary elements water and fire can both pervade empty space without overcoming each other in mutual annihilation?

“World-Honored One, the nature of the primary element earth is that it is solid, while the nature of the primary element space is that it is a transparent void. How could they both exist everywhere throughout the Dharma-Realm? I am not sure how I should understand the implications of this concept. I only hope that, out of great kindness, the Thus-Come One will explain this to all of us and so clear away the clouds of our confusion.”

Having made his request, Pūrṇa bowed to the ground and then waited respectfully and earnestly to hear the Thus-Come One’s sublime and compassionate instruction.

Then the World-Honored One said to Pūrṇa and to all the other Arhats in the assembly, who were all free of outflows and needed no further instruction, “Today, for the sake of everyone in the assembly, the Thus-Come One will explain the most supreme truth among all supreme truths, so that all the Hearers of the Teaching in this assembly who have no further aspirations, and all of you Arhats who have not yet experienced the two kinds of emptiness but have turned toward the Great Vehicle, as well as others, may enter the true arāṇya, the still and quiet place, the state of genuine practice that will lead you to become Buddhas. Listen carefully as I explain.”

Pūrṇa and all the others, out of reverence for the sound of the Buddha’s words of Dharma, listened in silent respect.

The Buddha continued, “Pūrṇa, you have asked me why the mountains, the rivers, and everything else on this great earth have come into being from the Matrix of the Thus-Come One, which is fundamentally pure. Now, have you not often heard the Thus-Come One speak of the wondrous understanding which is intrinsic to our inherent enlightenment, to our fundamental, wondrous,

luminous understanding?”

Pūrṇa replied, “Yes, World-Honored One, I have often heard the Buddha expound upon this.”

The Buddha said, “When we talk about this understanding which characterizes enlightenment, do we mean an understanding that is intrinsic to our inherent enlightened nature? Or does our inherent enlightenment lack understanding until we gain it when enlightenment is realized?”

Pūrṇa said, “Our inherent enlightenment is characterized by understanding only when that understanding is added to it.”

The Buddha said, “Suppose, as you say, that for our inherent enlightenment to be characterized by understanding, that understanding must be added to it when enlightenment is realized. But an enlightenment to which an understanding is added cannot be a true enlightenment. Such an enlightenment would indeed lack understanding if understanding were not added. But an enlightenment that lacks understanding cannot be the true intrinsic enlightenment that is inherently pure and endowed with understanding. Therefore, if you think that an understanding must be added to your inherent enlightenment, you are falsifying the true understanding, the true enlightenment.

“That is, nothing need be added to true enlightenment, but once an understanding is added nevertheless, that understanding must understand something. Once the category of ‘something understood’ is mistakenly established in the mind, the category ‘that which understands’ is mistakenly established as well. At first, there is neither sameness nor differentiation, but then that which is differentiated is clearly distinguished. That which differs from what is differentiated is distinguished as being uniform. Because the category of what is differentiated and the category of what is uniform have been established, the category of what is neither uniform nor differentiated is further established.

“The turmoil of this mutual complementarity gives rise to mental strain, and as the mental strain is prolonged, grasping at objects of mind begins. Mental strain and grasping at objects together create a turbidity of mind, out of which the afflictions are generated. Motion becomes the world of perceived objects, and stillness is distinguished as space. In addition to space, which is undifferentiated, and the world, which is differentiated, are conditioned phenomena that are neither differentiated nor the same.

“Once a light of understanding is added to enlightenment, the darkness of the primary element space appears, and the interaction of these two complements generates a disturbance in the mind. That disturbance becomes the disk of wind that is the essence of the primary element wind, and this disk then supports the world of perceived objects. In reaction to the mental disturbance generated by the interaction of the darkness of mental space and the understanding that has been added, there arises a firm attachment to that understanding, and this firm attachment is categorized as solidity. This solidity is the disk of vajra, which is the essence of the primary element earth. This is how, from the firm attachment to the light of the added understanding, the disk of vajra, which holds the world together, comes into being.

“Thus the disk of vajra is generated from the firm attachment to the added understanding, and the disk of wind is generated from the disturbance arising from the interaction of the two complements, the light of the added understanding and the darkness of mental space. From the friction between the disk of wind and the disk of vajra there arises the light of the disk of fire, which is characterized by changeability. Moisture arises from the shining of the disk of vajra and turns to vapor in the presence of fire. Thus the disk of water comes into being and encompasses the worlds in the ten directions.

“As fire flares up and water descends, their interaction brings about solidity. From the primary element water, the oceans come into being, while the continents and islands come into being from the primary element earth. Thus fire sometimes emerges from the oceans, and rivers and streams flow across the lands. Mountains form where the primary element fire is stronger than the primary element water; thus rock gives off sparks when struck and melts when heated. Vegetation grows where the primary element water is stronger than the primary element earth; thus the trees and grasses are reduced to ash when burned and exude liquid when they are compressed. These distorted interactions together produce the seeds that become the causes for the perpetuation of the world of perceived objects.

“Further, Pūrṇa, you should know that beings’ deluded understanding is due simply to the error of adding an understanding to inherent enlightenment. The inevitable consequence is the establishment, through delusion, of the categories ‘something understood’ and ‘that which understands.’ So it is that the ear-faculty is aware only of sounds and the eye-faculty is confined to visible objects. All six objects, which are perceived through delusion — visible objects, sounds, odors, flavors, objects of touch, and objects of cognition — are each placed in a separate category, resulting in a division into seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, tactile awareness, and cognition.

“Some beings are born due to being bound together by shared karma; other beings are born due to union or else due to separation.

“A point of light is seen to appear. When the light is seen clearly, deluded thoughts arise — both hatred in response to incompatible points of view and love in response to compatible ways of thinking. The thought of love flows out to the fertilized egg, which is then drawn into the womb. Thus the parents’ intercourse leads to the attraction of a being with whom they share a common karma. Due to these causes and conditions, the fetus develops, passing through the kalala stage, the arbuda stage, and the stages that follow.

“Birth from a womb, birth from an egg, birth in the presence of moisture, and birth via metamorphosis come about in response to these circumstances: birth from an egg arises from mental activity; birth from a womb occurs because of emotion; birth in the presence of moisture occurs through union; and birth via metamorphosis is brought about through separation. Because of emotion, mental activity, union, and separation, beings may shift from one form of birth to another form. They ascend or fall entirely in accord with their karma. These are the causes and conditions for the perpetuation of beings.

“Pūrṇa, beings bind themselves to each other with their thoughts of love, love so strong that they cannot bear to be apart, and thus there come into being all the world’s fathers, mothers, children, and grandchildren in an uninterrupted succession of births. The root of all this is emotional desire.

“Because of excessive desire and emotional love, all crave nourishment, a craving which will not cease. Thus all of the world’s beings, whether born from eggs, via metamorphosis, in the presence of moisture, or from a womb, devour one another and are in turn devoured, each according to the measure of its strength or weakness. The root of all this is the desire to kill.

“Suppose then that a human being eats a sheep. The slaughtered sheep is reborn as a human. When the human who ate the sheep dies, he in turn becomes a sheep. This pattern holds among all ten kinds of beings as they devour one another in a continuing cycle of death and rebirth. The evil karma of this mutual devouring accompanies each of them from life to life to the farthest reaches of the future. The root of all this is the urge to steal.

“Suppose you are in debt to someone for having taken his life; he will want to take your life in repayment. Due to such causes and conditions, beings must pass through hundreds of thousands of eons in an everlasting succession of deaths and rebirths.

“Suppose someone loves someone else for his or her mind, or for his or her beauty. Due to such causes and conditions, beings must pass through hundreds of thousands of eons in an everlasting succession of entanglements.

“The roots of all this are killing, stealing, and emotional love. Those three and nothing else are the causes and conditions for the perpetuation of retribution in accord with karma.

“Pūrṇa, these three distorted perpetuations ultimately derive from adding an understanding to inherent enlightenment. From this added understanding, a false understanding arises. From that, a deluded awareness brings into being the mountains, the rivers, and all the other conditioned phenomena in this world. Due to that illusory awareness, we experience the world as constantly changing patterns, which are perpetually coming into our awareness and then disappearing.”

The Buddhas' Enlightenment Is Irreversible

Pūrṇa then asked, “If our wondrous enlightenment is fundamentally wondrous, awake, and endowed with luminous understanding, and if the mind of the Thus-Come One neither increases nor diminishes, how is it then that all beings and all conditioned phenomena — the mountains, the rivers, and everything else on earth — suddenly arise without a reason? Also, now that the Thus-Come One has realized wondrous emptiness and understanding, will the mountains, the rivers, and all other conditioned phenomena on this earth, as well as the habits and outflows of beings, ever arise for him again?”

The Buddha said to Pūrṇa, “Consider the analogy of someone who loses his way in a village and becomes confused about which way is north and which way is south. Has he mistaken his directions because of confusion, or because of understanding?”

Pūrṇa replied, “He is lost neither because of confusion nor because of understanding. Confusion has no basis in reality, and so how can it be a cause of his being lost? As for understanding, how could that be a cause of being lost?”

The Buddha said, “Suppose this confused person who has become lost in the village unexpectedly meets someone who knows which direction is which and who points out the way to him so that he understands. What do you think, Pūrṇa? He was lost in the village, but now will he become lost again?”

“He will not, World-Honored One.”

“The same is true, Pūrṇa, of the Thus-Come Ones throughout the ten directions. Confusion has no basis in reality. In its very nature it is ultimately empty. There never was anything real about the confusion; it only seems that there have been confusion and understanding. Once one has awakened from one's confusion, the confusion disappears, and from that awakening, no confusion can arise again.”

“Or again, a person with an eye-disease may see a mirage of flowers in the air, but once the disease is cured, the flowers he saw in the air will disappear. Suppose that person is foolish enough to look up at the place where the flowers disappeared and expect to see them reappear. Would you consider such a person to be foolish or wise?”

Pūrṇa replied, “There never were any flowers in the air. They appeared because his visual awareness was distorted. Seeing the flowers disappear into the air was also a distortion. To expect them to reappear would be foolish to the point of madness. How could one possibly call such a crazed person merely foolish, much less call him wise?”

The Buddha replied, “Since you understand that, why have you asked whether mountains, the rivers, and everything else in this world will arise again for the Buddhas, who are the Thus-Come Ones and who have realized wondrous emptiness and luminous understanding?”

“Again, consider the example of a gold mine. The ore contains gold mixed with impurities. Once the gold has been refined, it will not revert to ore. Nor will wood that has burned to ash ever become wood again.

“The same is true of the nirvana that is the full awakening realized by all Buddhas, the Thus-Come Ones.”

The Interfusing of the Primary Elements

“Pūrṇa, you have also asked how it is that the primary elements — earth, water, fire, and wind — are in their fundamental natures completely inter-fused with each other everywhere throughout the Dharma-Realm. You wonder how it is that the primary elements water and fire do not over-come each other in mutual annihilation. You also asked why it is that the primary elements space and earth can both exist everywhere throughout the Dharma-Realm while being incompatible with each other.

“Consider, Pūrṇa, that the essential attribute of space is the absence of anything else; still, that does not prevent everything else from appearing within it. How can that be, Pūrṇa? The sky is bright when the sun shines. It darkens when clouds gather. There is movement through it when the wind blows. After a rain, the sun reappears and the air is clear. A turbid mist arises when water condenses out of the air. In a dust storm, the air is obscured. And reflections appear in water that is clear and still. Do these various conditioned phenomena appearing in different circumstances come into being because of these conditions, or do they come into being from space?

“Suppose, Pūrṇa, that these phenomena arise because of the circumstances just mentioned. Then, for example, when the sun is shining, does the brightness in the air come into being because the sun is shining? If so, then the sun should be everywhere in the ten directions. Why do we see it as a distinct round object in the sky? If, on the other hand, the brightness of the sky comes into being because of space, then all of space would be shining of its own accord. Why is it not resplendent with light at midnight, or when there are clouds or fog? It should be clear to you that the brightness in the sky is not due to the sun or to space, although the brightness cannot be present without both the sun and space.

“The same can be said of the true, wondrous understanding which is enlightenment. If one develops the category ‘space’ in one’s mind, then space will appear within enlightenment. Earth, water, fire, and wind each appear within enlightenment if one establishes each of them as categories. All of them appear interfused together in enlightenment if one establishes the category ‘all.’

“How can they all appear together? Pūrṇa, it is like the sun’s reflection in a body of water. When two people who are observing the reflection move apart, one to the east and one to the west, they will each see the sun’s reflection moving along with them. The reflection moves east with the person moving east and west with the person moving west; in itself the reflection has no fixed location. Do not quibble by asking how a single reflection can move in two separate directions. And do not ask how the two reflections appeared previously as one. Such questions concern mere illusions, and nothing about reality can be established from them.

“You should realize that all these phenomena are fundamentally unreal, and so one cannot specify anything about them. To assert anything about them would be as absurd as to expect illusory flowers in the sky to bear fruit. How then can you ask whether the primary elements will overcome each other in mutual annihilation? You should realize that, in their fundamental natures, the primary elements are a single reality, which is simply the wondrous, awakened enlightenment — the wondrous, awakened, enlightened mind. Fundamentally, the primary elements — water, fire, and the rest — do not exist at all. Why then do you keep asking how they can exist together?

“Pūrṇa, you mistakenly suppose that within the Matrix of the Thus-Come One, space and the primary element earth are mutually incompatible and cannot coexist. But within the Matrix of the Thus-Come One, space and the world of perceived objects are everywhere throughout the Dharma-Realm. Movement associated with wind, the stillness associated with space, the brightness associated with the sun, and the darkness associated with clouds are all present within the Matrix of the Thus-Come One. Beings, however, suffocated by their confusion, turn their backs on enlightenment and embrace this world of perceived objects. Amidst the stress of beings’ entanglement with perceived objects, the world of conditioned phenomena appears.

“With my wondrous, luminous understanding that neither comes into being nor ceases to be, I am identical to the Matrix of the Thus-Come One. The Matrix of the Thus-Come One is itself the wondrous, enlightened, luminous understanding, which illuminates the entire Dharma-Realm. Within it, therefore, the one is infinitely many and the infinitely many are one. The great appears within the small, just as the small appears within the great. I sit unmoving in this still place for awakening, and my Dharma-body extends everywhere and encompasses the infinity of space in all ten directions. On the tip of a fine hair, magnificent Buddha-lands appear. Seated within each mote of dust, I turn the great Wheel of the Dharma. Because I have freed myself from the world of perceived objects, I have become one with enlightenment. Therefore the suchness of reality manifests — the inherent nature that is wondrous, luminous, and awake. “Thus the Matrix of the Thus-Come One — the fundamental, wondrous, perfect mind — is not the distinction-making mind, nor is it space, nor is it earth, nor water, nor wind, nor fire. It is not the eye-faculty, nor the ear-faculty, nor the nose-faculty, nor the tongue-faculty, nor the body-faculty, nor the cognitive faculty. Neither is it visible objects, nor sounds, nor odors, nor flavors, nor objects of touch, nor objects of cognition. It is not the eye-consciousness, nor the mind-consciousness, nor any of the other consciousnesses. It is neither the fundamental ignorance that is the adding of an understanding to our inherent enlightenment, nor the ending of that ignorance, nor is it old age and death nor the ending of old age and death. Neither is it the fundamentally unsatisfying nature of existence, nor is it the accumulation of the causes of dissatisfaction, nor the ending of dissatisfaction, nor the path to the ending of dissatisfaction. It is neither wisdom nor the attaining of wisdom. It is none of the six perfections — neither giving, nor following precepts, nor vigor, nor patience, nor mindfulness, nor wisdom. Nor is it anything else — not the realization of the enlightenment of the Buddha, who is the Thus-Come One, the Arhat, the One of Right and Universal Wisdom. It is not the permanence, the bliss, the true self, or the purity of the great nirvana. It is not any of these things, be they mundane or world transcending. To be none of these is what the Matrix of the Thus-Come One is. That is the wondrousness of the inherently luminous mind that understands.

“Yet it is the distinction making mind, it is space, it is earth, it is water, it is wind, it is fire. It is the eye-faculty, the ear-faculty, the nose-faculty, the tongue-faculty, the body-faculty, and the cognitive faculty. It is visible objects, it is sounds, it is odors, it is flavors, it is objects of touch, and it is objects of cognition. It is the eye-consciousness, the ear-consciousness, and all the other consciousnesses. It is that fundamental ignorance which is the adding of an understanding to our inherent enlightenment, and it is the ending of that ignorance; it is old age and death and the ending of old age and death. It is also the fundamentally unsatisfying nature of existence, the accumulation of the causes of dissatisfaction, the ending of dissatisfaction, and the path to the ending of dissatisfaction. It is all of the six perfections — giving, following precepts, vigor, patience, mindfulness, and wisdom. It is everything, including the Thus-Come One, who is the Arhat and the One of Right and Universal Wisdom. It is the permanence, bliss, true self, and purity of the great nirvana. It is every one of these, be they mundane or world-transcending. To be all of these is what the Matrix of the Thus-Come One is. That is the wondrousness of the inherently luminous mind that understands.

“How then, with their conscious minds, could beings who are bound to worlds in the three realms of existence — or even world-transcending Hearers of the Teaching and the Solitary Sages — possibly fathom the supreme awakening of the Thus-Come Ones? How could they gain the Buddha’s ability to know and to see merely by using the world’s words?

“Marvelous sounds can be brought forth from lutes, harps, and mandolins only when there are skilled fingers to play them. In the same way, all beings, including you, are fully endowed with the resplendent, enlightened, true mind. When I arrange my fingers to form the ocean mudra, the light of the ocean mudra samādhi shines forth. But the moment a thought arises in your mind, you must endure the stress of involvement with perceived objects. It is simply because you have not diligently pursued the path to supreme enlightenment. Instead, you are fond of the Lesser Vehicle and are content with a lesser goal.”

Delusion Has No Basis:
The Parable of Yajñadatta

Pūrṇa said, “The Thus-Come One and I are alike in that we are both fully endowed with the precious, awakened, perfect, luminous, true, wondrous, pure mind that understands. Nevertheless, for a time without beginning I was plagued with the deluded acts of my mind, and for a long time I was bound to the cycle of death and rebirth. Although I have since become a sage, my enlightenment is not fully perfected, whereas the World-Honored One has put an end to all delusion so that only what is wondrous, true, and everlasting remains. I venture to ask the Thus-Come One why all beings suffer from delusion. Why do they keep covered their wondrous, luminous understanding so that they continue to be submerged in saṃsāra?”

The Buddha said to Pūrṇa, “You have put your coarser doubts to rest, but your more subtle doubts have not yet been ended. I will now question you about this matter by referring to a mundane event. Have you not heard about Yajñadatta, the man from Śrāvastī who saw a face with perfectly clear features in the mirror one morning and became enraptured with it? Then he became upset because he supposed he had lost his own face. It struck him that he must have turned into a headless ghost. For no good reason he ran madly out of his house. What do you think? What caused this man to run madly about for no good reason?”

Pūrṇa replied, “He was clearly insane. That and nothing else was the cause.”

The Buddha said, “The luminous understanding of wondrous enlightenment is perfect; that fundamental, perfect luminous understanding is wondrous. How could there be in it any basis for what is clearly a delusion? And if there were a basis for this delusion, how could it be what we call deluded?”

“Thus your deluded thoughts have followed one upon another, each one leading to the next. Confusion is added to confusion, eon after countless eon, numberless as motes of dust. Although the Buddha can reveal this process to you, he cannot reverse it for you.

“Therefore beings are not aware of the cause of their confusion. Because they do not realize that confusion is based only on confusion, their confusion persists. They need merely to realize that confusion has no ultimate basis, and the basis of their deluded thoughts will disappear. There is no need for them to wish that the cause of their confusion would disappear, because no cause existed in the first place. Thus someone who has become fully enlightened is like one who relates the events of a dream from which he has just awakened. His mind is now sharp and clear; what reason could he have then to wish to try to return to his dream to obtain some object that he had dreamt of?

“Even less could delusion have any basis; fundamentally, delusion has no existence. In the same way, there was no reason for Yajñadatta’s experience that day in the city. Were his madness to suddenly cease, it would not be because he had recovered his head from anywhere outside of himself. How could his head have actually been missing, even while he was still in his madness?

“Pūrṇa, the same is true of the essential nature of delusion. Where could its basis lie? All that is needed is for you not to follow after the distinctions you make concerning the perpetuations — the world, beings, and retribution in accord with karma. Once you have eliminated the three conditions that are necessary for the coming into being of these three perpetuations, their three causes will not become active again. Thus the madness in your mind that is like Yajñadatta’s madness will cease of its own accord, and just that ceasing is enlightenment. That supreme, pure, luminous mind that understands has always extended everywhere throughout the Dharma-Realm. It cannot be bestowed upon you by someone else. What need is there to work yourself to the bone in pursuit of awakening?

“Consider, for example, a person who does not know that a wish fulfilling pearl is sewn into his coat. Destitute and homeless, wandering from place to place as he begs for his food, he is indeed poor, but his wish fulfilling pearl is still with him. Then it so happens that someone wise points out his pearl

to him, and now it can fulfill his every wish. He becomes very rich, and he realizes that his magical pearl can only have come from within himself.”

Then Ānanda came forward from his place in the great assembly to bow at the Buddha’s feet. He stood and said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, you have just now been saying that once we put to rest the karmas of killing, stealing, and sexual desire so that these three conditions no longer arise, their three causes will not become active again.

Then the madness in our minds that is like Yajñadatta’s madness will cease of its own accord, and that ceasing itself is full awakening, which no one else can bestow upon us. Isn’t all this clearly an example of the working of causes and conditions? Why then does the Thus-Come One now reject the doctrine of causes and conditions? World-Honored One, it was through hearing about causes and conditions that I became enlightened, as did others of us younger Hearers of the Teaching, who still need instruction. Here also in this assembly now are Mahā-Maudgalyāyana, Śāriputra, Subhūti, and others who once followed Brahmin elders. They too heard the teaching about causes and conditions, and as a result, they made the resolve to enter the monastic life. They put an end to their outflows and became enlightened. Now you say that one does not after all realize enlightenment through causes and conditions. If that is so, the ultimate truth must be what Maskari Gośālīputra and those others in Rājagṛha teach — that enlightenment happens on its own. I only hope that now the Buddha will compassionately clear up the confusion which has been suffocating us.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Let us compare what you have said to the case of Yajñadatta in Śrāvastī. If the causes and conditions for his madness were to disappear, his sanity would naturally reappear on its own. Your argument concerning causes and conditions and things coming into being on their own amounts to nothing more than that. Ānanda, his head was just as it always was. It was already fundamentally part of him. Otherwise he would not have been who he was. How then could causes and conditions be involved in his running madly about out of fear that his face had disappeared?

“His head was intact from the beginning. But if his madness were indeed due to causes and conditions, wouldn’t causes and conditions have also led to his head actually disappearing? Yet his head has always been present. His madness and terror arose from delusion. No actual change had taken place. How then could his madness have arisen from causes and conditions? And if his madness were fundamentally part of him — if madness and terror were the way he was in the first place — then why would his madness not have been already evident? But if his madness was not fundamentally part of him — if he was not deluded about his head all along — why did he run madly about?

“Had Yajñadatta awakened and realized that his head was fundamentally part of him, he would have understood that his running about was madness. From this it should be clear to you that your objections about causes and conditions and about things coming into being on their own cannot be taken seriously. That is why I said that once the three causes and three conditions are eliminated, the enlightened mind is revealed. If you were to say that the enlightened mind comes into being with the cessation of the mind that arises and perishes, then you would be saying that the enlightened mind, too, is subject to arising and perishing. In truth, the effortless path to enlightenment is the ending of both arising and perishing.

“Suppose, further, that it is possible that the enlightened mind could come into being on its own. Then it should be clear that it would come into being only with the perishing of the mind that comes into being and ceases to be. But that is still a coming into being and ceasing to be. Do not think that something which does not arise and perish must therefore be said to have come into being on its own. For example, a mixture is said to be created when components with different attributes are combined. What cannot be mixed together is said to be something that is fundamental. In fact, what is fundamental is not fundamental; what is mixed is not in fact a mixture. Neither what is mixed nor what is fundamental exists. Yet the nonexistence of the mixed and the fundamental must also be negated. Only then do we have a teaching that may be called Dharma that is more than mere speculation. This is a teaching that must be left behind, and the leaving behind, too, must be left behind. That may be

called the Dharma that transcends idle speculation.

“For you, awakening and nirvana are still so distant that you will have to spend eons in difficult practice before you will reach them. Your ability to memorize all twelve types of discourse spoken by the Buddha and proclaimed by the Thus-Come Ones in all ten directions — with their pure and wondrous truths innumerable as the River Ganges’ sands — has merely helped you to indulge in idle speculation. Certainly you have the ability to speak about causes and conditions and about things coming into being on their own with such understanding that people call you foremost in erudition; yet despite your many eons of accumulated learning, you were not able escape your difficulty with the young Mātāṅga woman. Why did you need me to recite the Śūraṅgama Mantra for you? In the young Mātāṅga woman’s heart the fires of lust were extinguished, and instantly she became a sage who is free of rebirth. Now she has joined a group of vigorous practitioners of my Dharma. In her, the river of love has gone dry, and so now you are free of her.

“Therefore, Ānanda, the many eons you have spent committing to memory the Thus-Come One’s esoteric, inconceivable, wondrous, and majestic Dharma are not equal to a single day spent cultivating karma that is free of outflows and is far removed from the two worldly torments of hate and love. The young Mātāṅga woman was a courtesan, and yet her love and desire were dispelled by the spiritual power of the mantra; now she is a nun named Prakṛti. She and Rāhula’s mother, Yaśodharā, have both become aware of their previous lives, and they know that, among the causes of their actions during many lifetimes, their craving for emotional love was the cause of their suffering. Now they have escaped their bonds and have received predictions. Why do you then continue to cheat yourself by standing still, merely watching and listening?”

When Ānanda and the others in the great assembly had heard the Buddha’s instructions, their doubts and delusions were dispelled. Their minds awakened to the truth, and in body and mind they felt a serenity that they had never known before.