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Fifty Demonic States of Mind

Dangers May Arise with Advanced Practice

Then the Thus-Come One prepared to leave the Dharma seat. Rising from the Lion's Throne, he placed his hand on the table before him, which was wrought of the seven precious things. But then, moving his body, which was the color of purple-golden mountains, he sat down again, and he said to Ānanda and to the rest of the great assembly, "You who still need instruction, you Hearers of the Teaching and you Solitary Sages, have now dedicated yourselves to attaining a great awakening — the supreme and wondrous enlightenment. I have now taught you the right method for practice. But you are still not aware of the subtle demonic events that can occur when you undertake the practices of calming the mind and contemplative insight. If you do not purify your mind, you will not be able to recognize demonic states as they arise. You will not find the right path, and you will fall into the error of wrong views.

"Demons may arise within you from the five aggregates. Or a celestial demon or a ghost or a spirit — perhaps a mountain spirit or an animal possessing ghost — may come to possess you. If your mind is not clear when this happens, you may well take a burglar to be your own child. Or you may feel satisfied with a small accomplishment, as did that monk who was ignorant of the Dharma. Having only reached the level of the fourth dhyāna, he made the false claim that he had become a sage. When his reward of celestial life had run its course and the signs of decay had appeared, he vilified the Arhats' enlightenment, and so he was reborn in the Unrelenting Hell. Listen carefully while I explain this matter in detail."

Ānanda and the others in the assembly who still needed instruction stood up, bowed to the ground joyfully, and then quieted their minds in order to be ready to receive the Buddha's compassionate teaching.

The Buddha said to Ānanda and the rest of the great assembly, "You should know that although the twelve classes of beings in this world have outflows, they are, nevertheless, fundamentally identical to the Buddhas of the ten directions, in that they all are fundamentally endowed with the wondrous enlightened understanding — with the awakened, perfect, essential mind. But their thinking is deluded and they have a confused view of the truth, and so they stubbornly cling to emotional attachments.

"As a result, space appears, and as they become more and more confused, worlds come into being. In the lands in the ten directions, numerous as motes of dust, beings who have outflows are created out of confusion, obstinacy, and deluded thinking. You should know that space is created within the mind. It is like a wisp of cloud in the vastness of the sky. The worlds in the emptiness of space are even less significant. If you discover true reality by returning to the source, space throughout the ten directions will disappear. How could all the lands not cease to be as well?

"When you practice meditation in stillness and enter samādhi, the essence of your mind merges with the minds of the Bodhisattvas of the ten directions and with the minds of all the great Arhats, who have ended outflows. You abide in a place of profound purity. Then the kings of demons, ghosts, and spirits and the general population of gods see their palaces collapse inexplicably. Their lands quake. Terror strikes the creatures who move through water, on land, and in the air. Ordinary people, in the darkness of their confusion, know nothing of these events.

"All these demonic beings have five spiritual powers; they lack only freedom from outflows because they are still attached to the stress of entanglement with perceived objects. How could they be happy with seeing their palaces destroyed? Celestial demons, shape shifting ghosts, and succubus demons will all come to disturb your samādhi. But despite their furious rage, they are subject to the stress of entanglement with perceived objects, while you abide within wondrous enlightenment. Therefore they can do you no harm any more than wind can blow light away or a knife cut water. You are like water at the boil, and they are like ice frozen solid; as they come close to your warmth, they will melt. They have only their spiritual powers, so they can visit you only briefly. They cannot disturb you except through your mind, which is the host of the five aggregates. Only when the innkeeper is befuddled can his guests do as they please.

"When you are absorbed in meditation, fully awake and free of delusion, how will the deeds of these demons be able to affect you? For you, the five aggregates will have dissolved, and you will have entered into the light of understanding. These deviant hordes rely upon dark energy, and your light will overcome their darkness. If they come near you, they will be destroyed. How will they dare to linger and try to disrupt your samādhi? But if you have not awakened to the light of understanding and are confused by the five aggregates, Ānanda, you yourself could become a disciple of demons and could turn into a demon yourself."

“Your encounter with the Mātāṅga woman was an exception, and it turned out to be a minor incident. Though she tried to make you break the Buddha’s rules, all she was able to do was to cast a spell on you. In the end, you only broke one among all the eighty thousand rules of conduct. Because your mind was pure, you did not fall. But if the demons of the aggregates had been able to destroy your precious Dharma-body, you would have become like a member of the family of a government minister whose property has been confiscated. The family is uprooted and scattered, with no one to pity them or come to their aid.

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Ten Demonic States of Mind Associated with the Aggregate of Form

“You should know, Ānanda, that when you sit in a place for awakening, all your thoughts may melt away. When your thoughts come to a halt, only an essential awareness will remain. Movement outside your mind will seem the same as stillness, and the presence of thoughts in your mind will seem the same as the absence of thoughts. When you abide in this state, having entered samādhi, you will be like someone who ordinarily can see clearly but who finds himself in a dark place. His essential nature will be wonderfully pure, but his mind does not yet emit light. He is in the region of the aggregate of forms.

“When his mind’s vision does become bright, then ten directions will open out before him, and the darkness will be dispelled. Having come to the end of the aggregate of forms, he will now transcend the turbidity of time. His contemplations show him that the illusion of solid matter is the basis of this aggregate.

[1] “However, Ānanda, in the midst of his mental darkness, this person’s intense scrutiny within his wondrous awareness may reveal that the four primary elements are not ultimately interwoven into the body. Then in an instant he will be able to leave his body. This state is called ‘the essential awareness being able to emerge into one’s

surroundings.’ What the practitioner has gained is temporary. It does not indicate that he has become a sage. There is nothing unwholesome about his state unless he thinks that he is now a sage. If he does think he is a sage, he will be open to a host of deviant influences.

[2] “Further, Ānanda, in the midst of his mental darkness, this person’s intense scrutiny within his wondrous awareness may allow him to see inside his own body. Suddenly he may find that he can pull intestinal worms out of his body without harming himself or the worms. This state is called ‘the essential awareness being able to reach deep into the physical body.’ What the practitioner has gained is temporary. It does not indicate that he has become a sage. There is nothing unwholesome about his state unless he thinks that he is now a sage. If he does think he is a sage, he will be open to a host of deviant influences.

[3] “Further, in the midst of his mental darkness, this person’s intense scrutiny may be directed both inward and outward. Then his will and the vital energies of his individual spirit may merge or become dissociated or exchange roles. His body will be unaffected. Suddenly he may hear the sound of someone teaching the Dharma in the middle of the air, or he will hear voices throughout the ten directions proclaiming identical esoteric teachings. This state is called ‘essential mental elements becoming dissociated and reintegrated as the result of the sprouting of wholesome seeds.’ What the practitioner has gained is temporary. It does not indicate that he has become a sage. There is nothing unwholesome about his state unless he thinks that he is now a sage. If he does think he is a sage, he will be open to a host of deviant influences.

[4] “Further, in the midst of his mental darkness, a brilliant light may appear within this person’s mind and then shine forth to imbue everything throughout the ten directions with the purple-golden color of the River Jambu. He may see creatures of every kind becoming Thus-Come Ones. At that moment, he will see Vairocana Buddha seated upon a dais of celestial light and surrounded by a thousand Buddhas. Each of these Buddhas, while seated on a lotus flower, will appear in a hundred million lands at once. This state is called ‘the mind and spirit becoming imbued with a spiritual awakening while the mind illuminates all worlds clearly and in detail.’ There is nothing unwholesome about his state unless he thinks that he is now a sage. If he does think he is a sage, he will be open to a host of deviant influences.

[5] “Further, in the midst of his mental darkness, as this person continues these contemplations within his wondrous awareness, he may be unable to bring them to a halt. When he tries to subdue his mind so that these visions do not become overwhelming, all of space throughout the ten directions may suddenly take on the colors of the seven precious things or perhaps the colors of a hundred precious gems. Each of these colors will pervade all of space, but without interfering with each other. The practitioner will see the blues, yellows, reds, and whites with perfect clarity. This state is called ‘restraining the mind so that its contemplations do not become excessive.’ What the practitioner has gained is temporary. It does not indicate that he has become a sage. There is nothing unwholesome about his state unless he thinks that he is now a

sage. If he does think he is a sage, he will be open to a host of deviant influences.

[6] “Further, in the midst of his mental darkness, this person’s awareness may shine constantly with a brilliant light. Then in the middle of the night and in darkened rooms, he may be able to see as clearly as if it were broad daylight. Objects that would ordinarily be hidden may be clearly visible to him. This state is called ‘refining the mind and purifying the vision to reveal what is hidden so that one can see in the dark.’ What the practitioner has gained is temporary. It does not indicate that he has become a sage. There is nothing unwholesome about his state unless he thinks that he is now a sage. If he does think he is a sage, he will be open to a host of deviant influences.

[7] “Further, in the midst of this person’s mental darkness, what is external and what is internal may become mutually inter-fused within his awareness. In this state, this person may suddenly become incapable of sensation. It may seem to him that his limbs are made of grass or wood. If he is burned, he will feel nothing. If he is stabbed, he will feel that his body is like a piece of wood that is being carved. This state is called ‘rejecting the four primary elements so that sense-objects disappear and only awareness remains.’ What the practitioner has gained is temporary. It does not indicate that he has become a sage. There is nothing unwholesome about his state unless he thinks that he is now a sage. If he does think he is a sage, he will be open to a host of deviant influences.

[8] “Further, in the midst of his mental darkness, this person’s awareness may become pure, and as a result, his skill will be perfected. Then he suddenly may see the whole world throughout the ten directions being transformed into a Buddha-land. This land will be filled with the seven precious things and will be suffused with light. In his vision the sky will be filled with magnificent and beautiful multi-storied palaces and with Buddhas — with as many Thus-Come Ones as the sand grains in the River Ganges. Nothing will obstruct this person’s vision of the hells below and of the palatial abodes of the gods above. This state is called ‘thoughts of pleasure and displeasure gradually being transformed and purified as day by day one’s concentration deepens.’ This state does not indicate that the practitioner has become a sage. There is nothing unwholesome about his state unless he thinks that he is now a sage. If he does think he is a sage, he will be open to a host of deviant influences.

[9] “Further, in the midst of his mental darkness, this person’s mind may explore distant places. In the middle of the night, he may suddenly see marketplaces, or public wells, or streets and lanes. He may see relatives or friends, and he will be able to listen to them conversing. This state is called ‘the mind, having been restrained to an extreme, flying outward to see much that has been blocked from view.’ This state does not indicate that the practitioner has become a sage. There is nothing unwholesome about his state unless he thinks that he is now a sage. If he does think he is a sage, he will be open to a host of deviant influences.

[10] “Further, in the midst of his mental darkness, as he pushes his mental explorations to their limit, this person may have a vision of himself as a good and wise teacher. He may be able to change his appearance from moment to moment, quickly taking on different forms one after another. This state is called ‘a vision arising from a deviance in

the mind, leading to possession by a nightmare ghost, a mountain spirit, or a celestial demon.’ While he is possessed, the practitioner may speak spontaneously of what he supposes to be the Dharma, and he may claim to have discovered wondrous truths. The practitioner has not become a sage. There is nothing unwholesome about this state unless he thinks that he is now a sage. If he does think he is a sage, he will be open to a host of deviant influences.

“These ten states, Ānanda, may manifest when these beings practice meditation in stillness and interact with the aggregate of form. They may be dulled and confused by these experiences, and they will no longer be capable of taking a proper measure of themselves. When faced with these circumstances, they will become further confused, and in their failure to know themselves, they will make the claim that they have reached the level of a sage. This egregious falsehood will cause them to fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

“After my nirvana, you must explain my teachings and transmit them to beings of the time of the Dharma’s ending so that all beings everywhere will understand what I have taught. Do not allow the celestial demons to have their way. Protect these practitioners and lend them support so that they can realize the supreme enlightenment.”

3

Ten Demonic States of Mind Associated with the Aggregate of Sense-Perception

“Ānanda, as this good person practices samādhī and as his mind becomes still, he no longer will experience the aggregate of form. He may see the mind of the Buddhas appear to him as if in a mirror. But he may not know how to make use of that mind. He may undergo what seems to him to be a kind of paralysis. It is as if a deviant being has come into contact with his mind and has prevented him from moving, even though his hands and feet are intact and his vision and hearing are unimpaired. He is now in the region of the aggregate of sense-perception.

“If the paralysis subsides, his mind will be able to leave his body, and he will be able to look back and see his own face. He will be able to stay or go as he pleases, without further hindrance. Having reached the end of the aggregate of sense-perception, he will now transcend the turbidity of perception. He contemplates how this aggregate arises, and he sees that its basis lies in illusion and deluded thinking.

[1] “Ānanda, in this situation, this good person experiences an inner light of great brilliance. If he has been restraining his mind too severely, then wherever he sees beings illuminated by the light that shines forth from his mind, he may immediately be overwhelmed by a boundless sorrow. He will look upon even mosquitoes and worms as he would look upon a newborn child. His mind will be filled with pity, and he will frequently burst into tears without knowing why. This state is called ‘an excess of

severity in one's practice.' If he understands this state, he will not suppose that he has become a sage, and he will not become confused. Eventually the state will disappear of its own accord. But if he thinks that he has become a sage, then a demonic sorrow will enter into the depths of his mind. Whenever he sees someone, he will feel such sadness that he will break into uncontrollable sobs. Having lost his ability to enter correct samādhi, he is certain to fall.

[2] "Further, in this samādhi, once this good person has seen the aggregate of form disintegrate, he will see the aggregate of sense-perception appear. He may then have a vision of his own superiority, for which he feels an overwhelming gratitude. Immediately a boundless courage and intensity may arise within him so that he comes to believe that his resolve is equal to the resolve of all Buddhas. He will announce that he can accomplish in a single moment of thought what others need three quadrillions of eons to accomplish. This state is called 'an excessive and improper haste in trying to excel in one's spiritual practice.' If he understands this state, he will not suppose that he has become a sage, and he will not become confused. Eventually the state will disappear of its own accord. But if he thinks that he has become a sage, a demonic insanity will enter into the depths of his mind. He will boast about himself to everyone he meets. In his boundless arrogance he will acknowledge neither Buddhas nor ordinary people. Having lost his ability to enter the correct samādhi, he is certain to fall.

[3] "Further, in this samādhi, once this good person has seen the aggregate of form disintegrate, he will see the aggregate of sense-perception appear. He may then see nothing further to accomplish, while being unable to return to his previous state. He no longer has the wisdom to understand what is happening to him, and he enters a state in which it seems he is in a land that is desolate as far as the eye can see. Suddenly he will experience an overwhelming feeling of inner aridity and longing. He will be plunged at all times into memories that will not fade. He will mistake his situation for evidence that he is being diligent and vigorous. This state is called 'losing one's way by practicing without sufficient wisdom.' If he understands this state, he will not suppose that he has become a sage. But if he thinks that he has become a sage, then a demonic longing for things past will enter into the depths of his mind. Day and night this longing will grasp hold of his mind, and he will not be able to let go of it. Having lost his ability to enter correct samādhi, he is certain to fall.

[4] "Further, in this samādhi, once this good person has seen the aggregate of form disintegrate, he will see the aggregate of sense-perception appear. He may have developed his wisdom more strongly than he has developed his samādhi, and as a result he may lose himself in a fierce boldness. He will cherish a belief in his own superiority, and he will make the mistake of supposing that he has become Vairocana Buddha. He will be content with what he believes he has achieved, although in fact he will have accomplished very little. This state is called 'mental effort leading to a loss of steady discernment upon becoming immersed in a wrong understanding of one's state of mind.' If he understands this state, he will not suppose that he has become a sage. But if he thinks that he has become a sage, then his contentment with an inferior accomplishment

will become demonic and will seize hold of his mind. Under its influence he will announce, ‘I have discovered the supreme and ultimate truth.’ Having lost his ability to enter correct samādhi, he is certain to fall.

[5] “Further, in this samādhi, once this good person has seen the aggregate of form disintegrate, he will see the aggregate of sense-perception appear. But he may feel that he has not accomplished anything new, as he feels he should have. Yet he cannot resume his previous state of mind, nor can he move forward to a new state. In both what is behind him and what is ahead of him he will sense that he is in peril. Immediately he will become extremely despondent. It may seem to him that he is lying on a bed of hot iron or that he has swallowed a dose of poison. He will have no wish to go on living, and he will persist in asking people to take his life so that he can escape his anxiety with an early death. This state is called ‘losing sight of what method is suitable to one’s practice.’ If he understands this state, he will not suppose that he has become a sage. But if he thinks that he has become a sage, then his chronic despondency will become demonic and will take over his mind. He may seize a sword and slash his own flesh, happy to give up his life, or driven by his chronic despondency, he may flee into the mountain forests because he cannot bear the company of other people. Having lost his ability to enter correct samādhi, he is certain to fall.

[6] “Further, in this samādhi, once this good person has seen the aggregate of form disintegrate, he will see the aggregate of sense-perception appear. He may come to abide in a state of purity, and his mind will be at peace. A feeling of boundless joy may suddenly well up within him. He will take such pleasure in this state of mind that he loses control of it. This state is called ‘feeling what one takes to be serenity but lacking the wisdom to exercise self-control.’ If he understands this state, he will not suppose that he has become a sage. But if he thinks that he has become a sage, then his fondness for joy will become demonic and will take hold of his mind. He will laugh whenever he meets someone, and he will sing and dance in the streets. He will claim to have attained an unimpeded liberation. Having lost his ability to enter correct samādhi, he is certain to fall.

[7] “Further, in this samādhi, once this good person has seen the aggregate of form disintegrate, he will see the aggregate of sense-perception appear. Now he may tell himself that he has done enough, and immediately an unreasonable and intense arrogance will well up within him. He will feel pride in his actual status, and further, he will arrogantly consider himself to be the equal of people whose status is in fact above his. He may also have the arrogance to think that he is not merely equal to but superior to people whose status is above his. He may cherish the arrogant belief that he is already enlightened. Finally, he will come to the arrogant conclusion that he is almost the equal of people who are greatly superior to him. These feelings arise in him all at the same time. He will think disparagingly even of the Thus-Come Ones throughout the ten directions, not to speak of the sages at the lower levels of realization — the Hearers of the Teaching and the Solitary Sages. This state is called ‘having the view that one is superior and lacking the wisdom to free oneself of this view.’ If he understands this

state, he will not suppose that he has become a sage. But if he thinks that he has become a sage, then a demonic arrogance will enter the depths of his mind. He will refuse to bow when he visits stupas or temples, and he will destroy sutras and images of the Buddhas. He will say to those who give him alms, ‘These images are nothing but gold or bronze, nothing but clay or wood. The sutras consist of nothing but palm leaves or layers of cloth. What is everlasting and real is my physical body, yet you do not revere it. Instead you venerate clay and wood. That is to get it backwards.’ Some people will believe in him so strongly that they follow him in smashing images or in discarding sutras in refuse pits. He will raise doubts in people’s minds and lead them straight into the Unrelenting Hell. Having lost his ability to enter correct samādhi, he is certain to fall.

[8] “Further, in this samādhi, once this good person has seen the aggregate of form disintegrate, he will see the aggregate of sense-perception appear. He may perfect an even more subtle basis for his already refined understanding. He may reach a state in which everything is in accord with his wishes. Immediately a feeling of infinite serenity may arise in his mind. He may tell himself that he has become a sage and has achieved complete mastery of himself. This state is called ‘becoming pure and serene on the basis of wisdom.’ If he understands this state, he will not persist in supposing that he has become a sage. But if he continues to think that he has become a sage, then a demonic pleasure in serenity will enter into the depths of his mind. The good person will tell himself that he has done enough, and he will no longer try to make progress. In this he will be acting much like that ignorant monk. He will lead people into delusion and error, and as a result they will fall straight into the Unrelenting Hell. Having lost his ability to enter correct samādhi, he is certain to fall.

[9] “Further, in this samādhi, once this good person has seen the aggregate of form disintegrate, he will see the aggregate of sense-perception appear. Within what has been his clear understanding, an illusory understanding may arise, and immediately he may come to the conclusion that there is no existence after death. His preoccupation with this wrong idea of emptiness may cause him to deny the existence of causation. He will be convinced by this wrong idea so much so that he will come to the further conclusion that after death there is nothing at all. If he understands this state, he will not suppose that he has become a sage. But if he thinks that he has become a sage, then a demonic wrong view of emptiness will enter into the depths of his mind. He will speak ill of keeping the precepts, saying that precepts are the province of the Lesser Vehicle. He will say that since Bodhisattvas have understood emptiness, how could there be any keeping or breaking of precepts where Bodhisattvas are concerned? In the presence of alms givers who have faith in him, he will often drink alcoholic beverages, eat meat, and defile himself with lustful promiscuity. His demonic power will keep his followers from doubting him and questioning his doctrines. When this ghostly state of mind has possessed him for a long time, he may even drink urine and eat excrement, saying that these things are the same as emptiness. Because he himself will feel free to violate the Buddha’s regulations, he will induce others to commit offenses. Having lost his ability

to enter correct samādhi, he is certain to fall.

[10] “Further, in this samādhi, once this good person has seen the aggregate of forms disintegrate, he will see the aggregate of sense-perception appear. Now his previous illusory understanding may become so strong that it fills his mind and permeates his bones. Then a boundless craving may suddenly arise in his mind and may become so extreme that he goes mad with sexual desire. This state is called ‘being in a samādhi in which one’s mind seems filled with contentment and making the mistake of succumbing to desire because one lacks the wisdom needed for self control.’ If he understands this state, he will not suppose that he has become a sage. But if he thinks that he has become a sage, a demon of desire will enter the depths of his mind and possess him. He will constantly speak of desire as the Bodhisattvas’ path. He will teach his white-robed followers that those who indulge in indiscriminate promiscuity will be the ones who will inherit his Dharma. Because in the time of the Dharma’s ending credulous people will be easily swayed by the power of ghosts and spirits, he will be able to attract a following of one or two hundred or perhaps five or six hundred people, or even a thousand or ten thousand people. But when the demon that has possessed him becomes weary of possessing him, it will abandon him. Then his charisma will vanish, and as a result he will become entangled in legal difficulties with the royal government. He will confuse his followers and lead them straight into the Unrelenting Hell. Having lost his ability to enter correct samādhi, he is certain to fall.

“These ten states, Ānanda, may manifest when these beings practice meditation in stillness and interact with the aggregate of sense-perception. They may be dulled and confused by these experiences, and they will no longer be capable of taking a proper measure of themselves. When faced with these circumstances, they will become further confused, and in their failure to know themselves, they will make the claim that they have reached the level of a sage. This egregious falsehood will cause them to fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

“After my nirvana, you must explain my teachings and transmit them to beings of the time of the Dharma’s ending so that all beings everywhere will understand what I have taught. Do not allow the celestial demons to have their way. Protect these practitioners and lend them support so that they can realize the supreme enlightenment.”

Ten Demonic States of Mind
Associated with the Aggregate of Cognition

“Ānanda, when a good person who has been practicing samādhi no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will be able to leave his body as if he were a bird escaping from a cage, although he will not have put an end to his outflows. He retains his ordinary human body, but he already has the potential to ascend through the sixty stages of a Bodhisattva. He is now able to use his mind to create a spiritual body that can travel about freely just as he wishes. He will be like a man who talks while sound asleep but who does not realize he is doing it. His voice will be clear enough and his words will make sense enough to be understood by others who are awake. He is now in the region of the aggregate of cognition.

“Now, if the movement of thought in his mind ceases such that all superfluous cognition dissipates, then his awakened mind will cease to be defiled. He will understand with complete clarity the deaths and rebirths of all the classes of beings, without exception. He has reached the end of the aggregate of cognition and will now be able to transcend the turbidity of affliction. He will contemplate how this aggregate arises, and he will see that its basis is the pervasive influence of deluded mental activity.

[1] “Ānanda, in the wonder that ensues when this good person no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will not give rise to any harmful anxiety. As he perfects his concentration, he will experience light, and within his samādhi he may come to crave a more ample illumination. He will intensify his concentrated thought as he

seeks avidly to develop his skill.

“Then a celestial demon, seizing the opportunity it has been waiting for, will descend upon some other person and possess him. This other person will not realize that he has been possessed, and so when he is speaking about the sutras, he will claim that he himself has entered the supreme nirvana. He will then seek out the good person who has avidly desired to develop his skill. Then the possessed person will arrange a seat and begin to teach his methods.

“He will be able to instantly change his appearance, causing his listeners to see him as a monk or as Lord Śakra, or as a precepted laywoman or a nun. He may cause his body to emit light while he is reclining in a darkened room. His listeners will have such confidence in him that they will be fooled into thinking that he is a Bodhisattva. He will disturb their minds profoundly. As a result, their sexual desires will overwhelm them, and their lusts will lead them into illicit and clandestine liaisons in violation of the Buddha’s moral guidelines.

“This possessed person will also take pleasure in predicting extraordinary occurrences, whether calamitous or auspicious. He may announce that a Thus-Come One has appeared in the world in a certain place. He may speak of fires at the end of eons; he may predict war. In this way he will frighten people into recklessly squandering their families’ wealth.

“This is called ‘being troubled and confused by an uncanny ghost that in its old age has become a demon.’ When the demon has wearied of troubling and confusing the person it has possessed, it will abandon him. Then he and his followers will run afoul of the law of the royal domain.

“You should be aware of all this in advance so that you will not be reborn among these celestial demons. If you do not recognize what is happening to you, you will become confused, and you will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

[2] “Further, Ānanda, in the wonder that ensues when this good person no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will not give rise to any harmful anxiety. As he perfects his concentration, he will experience light, and within his samādhi he may come to crave the experience of roaming far and wide by letting his concentrated thought fly forth. He may avidly seek such experiences.

“Then a celestial demon, seizing the opportunity it has been waiting for, will descend upon another person and possess him. This other person will not realize that he has been possessed, and so when he is speaking about the sutras, he will claim that he himself has entered the supreme nirvana. He will then seek out the good person who avidly wishes to roam far and wide. Then the possessed person will arrange a seat and begin to teach his methods.

“He himself will not change his appearance, but he may cause the people who are listening to him to suddenly see themselves sitting on magnificent lotus flowers, with their entire bodies transformed into masses of purple-golden light. They all will feel that they have experienced something entirely new. They will be fooled into thinking that the possessed person is a Bodhisattva, and as their minds are weakened by lust, they will

enter into illicit and clandestine liaisons in violation of the Buddha's moral guidelines.

"The possessed person will like to say that Buddhas are appearing in the world. He will claim that in such and such a place, such and such a Buddha has appeared as a particular person. Or he will claim that such and such a person is some particular Bodhisattva who has come to teach people and transform them. Those who witness all this will be filled with admiration. Their wrong views will imperceptibly grow into a dense profusion, while the seeds from which wisdom grows will be destroyed.

"This is called 'being troubled and confused by a drought causing ghost that in its old age has become a demon.' When the demon has wearied of troubling and confusing the person it has possessed, it will abandon him. Then he and his followers will run afoul of the laws of the royal domain.

"You should be aware of this in advance so that you will not be reborn among these celestial demons. If you do not recognize what is happening to you, you will become confused, and you will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

[3] "Further, in the wonder that ensues when this good person no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will not give rise to any harmful anxiety. As he perfects his concentration, he will experience light, and within his samādhi he may come to crave the experience of a sustained merging of minds. He will purify his mind at its subtlest levels in his avid search for that merging.

"Then a celestial demon, seizing the opportunity it has been waiting for, will descend upon another person and possess him. This other person will not realize that he has been possessed, and so when he is speaking about the sutras, he will claim that he himself has entered the supreme nirvana. He now will seek out that good person who craves a merging of minds. Then the possessed person will arrange a seat and begin to teach his methods.

"He himself will not change his appearance, nor does he cause people who have come to hear him to change their appearance. But even before they begin listening to him, he will make them undergo a series of constantly changing mental experiences. He may enable them to remember their past lives, or to read other people's minds, or to see into the hells, or to be aware of all the good and evil events that are occurring in the human realm. Or he may enable them to speak spontaneously in verse or to recite sutras. They all will rejoice in their belief that they have just experienced something entirely new and extraordinary. They will all be fooled into thinking that the possessed person is a Bodhisattva. He will make them feel inexhaustible cravings, and they will enter into illicit and clandestine liaisons in violation of the Buddha's moral guidelines.

"This possessed person will delight in saying that some Buddhas are greater and some lesser, or that some Buddhas are senior and some junior, or that some are genuine and some are false, or that some are male and some are female. He will say the same of Bodhisattvas. Hearing all this will erode his listeners' connection with their fundamental minds so that it becomes easy for them to adopt deviant ideas.

"This is called 'being troubled and confused by an animal-possessing ghost that in its old age has become a demon.' When the demon has wearied of troubling and

confusing the person it has possessed, it will abandon him. Then he and his followers will run afoul of the laws of the royal domain.

“You should be aware of this in advance so that you will not be reborn among these celestial demons. If you do not recognize what is happening to you, you will become confused, and you will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

[4] “Further, in the wonder that ensues when this good person no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will not give rise to any harmful anxiety. As he perfects his concentration, he will experience light, and within his samādhi, he may crave knowledge of ultimate origins. He may wish to make a thorough investigation of beginnings and endings as he contemplates the changing natures of all things. He may seek to refine his understanding of things, and he avidly seeks analytical explanations.

“Then a celestial demon, seizing the opportunity it has been waiting for, will descend upon another person and possess him. This other person will not realize that he has been possessed, and so when he is speaking about the sutras, he will claim that he himself has entered the supreme nirvana. He now will seek out the good person who craves knowledge of ultimate origins. Then the possessed person will arrange a seat and begin to teach his methods.

“His body will have an overwhelming spiritual presence that will allow him to intimidate those who seek him out. Even before he has begun to speak, he will effortlessly subdue the minds of the people who sit at his feet. He will say to all of them, ‘This physical body of mine that you see before you is none other than the Dharma-body of the Buddhas’ full awakening, which is nirvana. This everlasting Dharma-body has been passed down from father to son in uninterrupted succession. What you see at this moment is nothing else but the land of the Buddha. The pure abode is nowhere else, and no other body has the hallmark of golden light.’ His listeners, accepting his words on faith, will abandon their former intentions. They will offer up their lives to him in the belief that they have obtained something new and extraordinary. They will be fooled into thinking that the possessed person is a Bodhisattva. Striving slavishly to anticipate his wishes, they will enter into illicit and clandestine liaisons in violation of the Buddha’s moral guidelines.

“The person who has been possessed will delight in saying that the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are the Pure Land and that the male and female genital organs are the real locus for full awakening to nirvana. Ignorant people will believe such degrading words.

“This is called ‘being troubled and confused by a surpassingly evil hex-poison ghost that in its old age has become a demon.’ When the demon has wearied of troubling and confusing the person it has possessed, it will abandon him. Then he and his followers will run afoul of the laws of the royal domain,

“You should be aware of this in advance so that you will not be reborn among these celestial demons. If you do not recognize what is happening to you, you will become confused, and you will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

[5] “Further, in the wonder that ensues when this good person no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will not give rise to any harmful anxiety. As he

perfects his concentration, he will experience light, and within his samādhi, he may begin to crave psychic responses from afar. He will make an intense and wide reaching investigation as he avidly seeks responses that ordinary people cannot perceive.

“Then a celestial demon, seizing the opportunity it has been waiting for, will descend upon another person and possess him. This other person will not realize that he has been possessed, and so when he is speaking about the sutras, he will claim that he himself has entered the supreme nirvana. He now will seek out that good person who craves psychic responses. Then the possessed person will arrange a seat and begin to teach his methods.

“This possessed person will be able to briefly appear to his listeners as a man who is a hundred years old or even a thousand years old. Their minds will be infected with such devotion to him that they cannot bear to be parted from him. They will act as his personal attendants and never weary of making four kinds of offerings to him. Each wishes to sit at his feet, and he makes them all believe that he was their teacher in previous lives, their good and wise mentor. Out of a singular infatuation for his teachings, and in the belief that they have experienced something new and extraordinary, his followers will cleave to him as if they have been adhered to him with glue. They will be fooled into thinking that he is a Bodhisattva. Seduced by his teachings, they will enter into illicit and clandestine liaisons in violation of the Buddha’s moral guidelines.

“The person who has been possessed will delight in saying that in the past, during such and such a previous lifetime, he had brought the teachings to a certain group of people, who in their previous lives had been his wives or concubines or his older or younger brothers. He will say, ‘Now we are together again so that I can come to your rescue. We will all return to such and such a world and make offerings to the Buddha there.’ Or he may speak of another place, a heaven filled with brilliant light, a place where a certain Buddha dwells and where all the Thus-Come Ones find rest and repose. People who have no wisdom will believe his mendacious ravings, and they will forget their original intent to practice in accord with Dharma.

“This is called ‘being troubled and confused by a plague-ghost that in its old age has become a demon.’ When the demon has wearied of troubling and confusing the person it has possessed, it will abandon him. Then he and his followers will run afoul of the laws of the royal domain.

“You should be aware of this in advance so that you will not be reborn among these celestial demons. If you do not recognize what is happening to you, you will become confused, and you will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

[6] “Further, in the wonder that ensues when this good person no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will not give rise to any harmful anxiety. As he perfects his concentration, he will experience light, and within his samādhi he may crave deep mental concentration. He will diligently exercise self control, and he will enjoy silent and secluded places as he avidly seeks stillness and quietude.

“Then a celestial demon, seizing the opportunity it has been waiting for, will descend upon another person and possess him. This other person will not realize that he has been

possessed, and so when he is speaking about the sutras, he will claim that he himself has entered the supreme nirvana. He now will seek out that good person who craves states of deep mental concentration. Then the possessed person will arrange a seat and begin to teach his methods.

“He will enable his listeners to know the karma they created in their previous lives. He may say to one follower, ‘Although you have not yet met your death, you have already become an animal.’ He may order another follower to stand behind the first follower, saying, ‘Step on his tail.’ And immediately that first follower will be unable to stand up when he is ordered to do so. At this, all who are present are filled with admiration for the person who has been possessed.

“The possessed person will be able to discern immediately the thoughts that arise in people’s minds. He will require extreme ascetic practices that go beyond what is permitted by the Buddha’s precepts and rules for deportment. He will slander monks and scold his followers. He will expose people’s private affairs such that they cannot escape ridicule and contempt. He will take pleasure in foretelling events that bring disaster or good fortune, and when the time comes, it will turn out that his predictions were accurate in every respect.

“This is called ‘being troubled and confused by a ghost of great power that in its old age has become a demon.’ When the demon has wearied of troubling and confusing the person it has possessed, it will abandon him. Then he and his followers will run afoul of the laws of the royal domain.

“You should be aware of this in advance so that you will not be reborn among these celestial demons. If you do not recognize what is happening to you, you will become confused, and you will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

[7] “Further, in the wonder that ensues when this good person no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will not give rise to any harmful anxiety. As he perfects his concentration, he will experience light, and within his samādhi he may come to crave knowledge that he alone will possess. With diligence and toil, examining and probing, he will avidly seek to know about previous lives.

“Then a celestial demon, seizing the opportunity it has been waiting for, will descend upon another person and possess him. This other person will not realize that he has been possessed, and so when he is speaking about the sutras, he will claim that he himself has entered the supreme nirvana. He will now seek out that good person who craves exclusive knowledge. Then the possessed person will arrange a seat and will begin to teach his methods.

“At the place where he has been teaching his methods, the possessed person will inexplicably come into possession of a large pearl. Because a demon has possessed him, he may be able to transform himself into an animal that carries the pearl in its mouth. Or the animal carries other jewels, or letters and other documents, or bamboo tablets, or tallies or talismans, or other peculiar objects. Anyone who takes one of these objects from the animal will be possessed by the demon.

“He may beguile his listeners into believing in him by saying that the place where

they are is illuminated by a pearl that is buried underground and yet emits the light of the moon. All who witness this feel that they have experienced something entirely new and extraordinary.

“The possessed person may restrict his diet to medicinal herbs, or he may simply refrain from eating fine foods. Or he may eat only one sesame seed and one grain of wheat a day, and yet his body will remain sleek and robust, sustained by the power of the demon. He will slander monks, scold his followers, and expose people’s private affairs such that they cannot escape ridicule and contempt. He will delight in speaking about treasures to be found in other places or in speaking about remote locations where sages from the ten directions dwell in seclusion. Those who accompany him in his wanderings will encounter strange and remarkable people.

“This is called ‘being troubled by a ghost or spirit that has become a demon in its old age.’ It may be a ghost or spirit of a mountain forest, or of the earth, or of a walled town, or of a river or a mountain peak. The possessed person may publicly advocate lustful behavior in violation of the Buddha’s precepts, while privately he and his attendants indulge themselves in the objects of the five desires. Perhaps he may adhere strictly to a diet of wild plants and the bark of trees, but he will not exert himself to practice samādhi. When the demon has wearied of troubling and confusing the person it has possessed, it will abandon him. Then he and his followers will run afoul of the laws of the royal domain.

“You should be aware of this in advance so that you will not be reborn among these celestial demons. If you do not recognize what is happening to you, you will become confused, and you will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

[8] “Further, in the wonder that ensues when this good person no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will not give rise to any harmful anxiety. As he perfects his concentration, he will experience light, and within his samādhi he may come to crave spiritual powers, including extraordinary bodily powers. He will seek to know the source of these powers and capabilities. He will desire to possess these powers for himself.

“Then a celestial demon, seizing the opportunity it has been waiting for, may descend upon another person and possess him. This other person will not realize that he has been possessed, and so when he is speaking about the sutras, he will claim that he himself has entered the supreme nirvana. He now will seek out that good person who avidly seeks to acquire spiritual powers, and he will arrange a seat and begin to teach his methods.

“This possessed person may take hold of some fire, and holding the fire in his hands, he may place a portion of it on top of the head of each of his listeners among the four assemblies. The flames on top of the listeners’ heads may rise several feet, but they will not be hot, and no one will be burned. Or the possessed person may walk on water as if he were walking on dry land; or he may sit tranquil and unmoving in the middle of the air; or without the slightest difficulty, he may enter into a large jar or bag, or he may pass through closed windows or through walls. Only in the presence of weapons will he feel ill at ease.

“He will say that he is a Buddha, and wearing the clothes of a layperson, he will accept reverential bows from monks. He will vilify the practice of meditation and the keeping of precepts. He will scold his followers and will expose their private affairs such that they cannot escape ridicule and contempt. He will speak often of spiritual powers and mastery of the self. He may cause people to see visions of Buddha-lands, but these visions will not be of anything real. Rather, they will be created by the demon’s power to delude people. He will praise lustful acts, and instead of condemning such coarse behavior, he will use these indecencies to transmit his teachings.

“This is called ‘being troubled by a powerful goblin who has become a demon in its old age.’ It may be a mountain goblin either of the heavens or of the earth, or it may be a goblin of the seas or of the winds, or a river goblin, or an earth goblin, or a forest demon that over a period of eons has absorbed the vital essences of trees and grasses. Or it may be an evil dragon or an ascetic master who at the end of a long life has been reborn as a forest demon. It may be an ascetic master whose toll of years has reached its end and whose death should come, but who lives on with his body unchanged while he is possessed by some other uncanny demon. Any one of these may possess the person, but when it has wearied of troubling and confusing him, it will abandon him. Then he and his followers will run afoul of the laws of the royal domain.

“You should be aware of this in advance so that you will not be reborn among these celestial demons. If you do not recognize what is happening to you, you will become confused, and you will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

[9] “Further, in the wonder that ensues when this good person no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will not give rise to any harmful anxiety. As he perfects his concentration, he will experience light, and within his samādhi he may come to crave a state of mental cessation. He may seek to understand how subtle mental transformations occur, and he will avidly seek the depths of mental vacuity.

“Then a celestial demon, seizing the opportunity it has been waiting for, will descend upon another person and possess him. This other person will not realize that he has been possessed, and so when he is speaking about the sutras, he will claim that he himself has entered the supreme nirvana. He now will seek out that good person who craves mental vacuity. Then the possessed person will arrange a seat and begin to teach his methods.

“Before his audience, the possessed person may suddenly make his body disappear into the air, and then suddenly reappear. He will show that he has such mastery over himself that he can control whether he is visible or invisible. Or he will be able to make his body seem as transparent as crystal. Or it may be that when he shakes his hands or feet, they emit the fragrance of sandalwood. His urine and feces may be as sweet as candy.

“This person will vilify the precepts, and he will be contemptuous of people who have entered the monastic life. He will often deny the existence of cause and effect, saying that there is no life after death — that there is no rebirth into another body. Further, he will make no distinction between sages and ordinary beings. Though he can enter into a state in which he experiences a kind of vacuous stillness, he nevertheless

secretly indulges in acts of desire. People who are the objects of his lusts will also have an experience of vacuous stillness. They too will deny the existence of cause and effect.

“This is called ‘being troubled by a demon that began as a vital energy generated by eclipses of the sun or moon.’ Such energy may have been incubated within a piece of gold or jade, or in a medicinal fungus or herb, or else in a one horned beast, a spirit-raptor, a tortoise, or a crane. Having passed undying through thousands of years, this vital energy will develop its own sentient life and will be reborn into this world. In its old age it will become a demon. It will possess the person just mentioned, and when it has wearied of troubling and confusing that person, it will abandon him. Then the possessed person, together with his followers, will run afoul of the laws of the royal domain.

“You should be aware of this in advance so that you will not be reborn among these celestial demons. If you do not recognize what is happening to you, you will become confused, and you will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

[10] “Moreover, in the wonder that ensues when this good person no longer experiences the aggregate of sense-perception, he will not give rise to any harmful anxiety. As he perfects his concentration, he will experience light, and within his samādhi he may come to crave a long life. Then he will labor to understand the mental process involved in becoming immortal. He will hope for immediate escape not only from the physical death and rebirth of the body but also from the coming into being and perishing of mental hindrances. He wishes to abide forever in a subtle form.

“Then a celestial demon, seizing the opportunity it has been waiting for, will descend upon another person and possess him. This other person will never realize that he has been possessed, and so when he is speaking about the sutras, he will claim that he himself has entered the supreme nirvana. He will seek out that good person who craves immortality, and he will arrange a seat and begin to teach his methods.

“He will like to say that he can travel unhindered to and from other places, or that he can travel a thousand miles and more and then return in the time it takes to blink an eye. He will say that he can bring things back from the places he has traveled to. Or when he is in a dwelling, he may tell someone to walk from the east wall to the west wall of a room — a distance of a few paces — and yet no matter how quickly that person walks, he will not be able to cross the room. He would not be able to do so even over a period of years. For such reasons as these, people will believe in the possessed person and make the mistake of thinking that he is a Buddha who has appeared before them.

“He will often tell them: ‘All beings throughout the ten directions are my children. It is from me that all Buddhas come into being. I created the world and did it effortlessly. I am the original Buddha and always have been; I did not become a Buddha through some spiritual practice.’

“This is called ‘being troubled by the king of the Heaven of Pleasure Derived from What Others Create.’ This king will send down to earth a member of his retinue — perhaps a goddess from his own heaven or a young energy eating demoness from the Heaven of the Four Kings, but not one who has made a resolve to practice in accord with

the Dharma. This being will take advantage of the good person's vacuous clarity, and it will devour his vitality. The possessed person who acted as the practitioner's teacher may not be involved at this point. The demon will appear directly to the practitioner, taking the form of a vajra-wielding spirit. It will tell the practitioner that it has come to grant him immortality. It will appear to him in the form of a beautiful woman, and together they will engage in such a frenzy of lust that before a year has passed, the practitioner's physical vitality will be depleted. To those who can hear him, he seems to be having conversations with himself in the gabbling language of ghosts. They will not understand what is happening to him. He is likely to run afoul of the laws of the royal domain. If he does, his vital energies will have already been so greatly depleted that he will die before his punishment can be meted out to him. Thus by troubling and confusing him, the demon will have brought about his death.

"You should be aware of this in advance, so that you will not be reborn among these celestial demons. If you do not recognize what is happening to you, you will become confused, and you will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

"You should know that in the time of the Dharma's ending, Ānanda, these ten kinds of demons will join communities of monastics who practice in accord with my Dharma. These demons may possess people or may appear in a body that they have created for themselves, but in either case they will make the claim that they have already attained the right and universal awakening of a Buddha. They will praise sexual desire and will violate the Buddha's regulations. These evil and demonic teachers that I have just described will transmit their teachings to their followers by engaging in sexual acts with them. In these ways, depraved demons will take control of practitioners' minds, and for the practitioners' next nine lives, or for as many as a hundred lives, the practitioners will join the retinues of demons, although they may have wished to be true to their former practices. At the end of those lives, they will inevitably become demons themselves. Having failed to realize their claim to right and universal awakening, they will fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

"There is no need for you to seek the nirvana of the Arhats. When you reach the level at which no further instruction is needed, you should still hold fast to your vow to be reborn during the time of the Dharma's ending. Let your great compassion come forth. Rescue beings whose minds are true and whose faith is deep. Make sure that they are not possessed by demons and that their knowledge and viewpoints are correct. The Buddha is rescuing you now from the cycle of death and rebirth. By respectfully carrying out the instructions that the Buddha has given you, you will requite the kindness that he has shown you.

"These ten states, Ānanda, may manifest as these beings practice meditation in stillness while they are engaged in interaction with the aggregate of cognition. They may become dulled and confused by this experience, and they may no longer be able to take a proper measure of themselves. When faced with these circumstances, they may become further confused, and in their failure to know themselves, they will make the claim that they have reached the level of a sage. This egregious falsehood will cause

them to fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

“After my nirvana, you must explain my teachings and transmit them to beings of the time of the Dharma’s ending so that all beings everywhere will understand what I have taught. Do not allow the celestial demons to have their way. Protect these practitioners and lend them support so that they can realize the supreme enlightenment.”

5

Ten Demonic States of Mind Associated with the Aggregate of Mental Formations

“Ānanda, when a good person who has been practicing samādhi has reached the end of the aggregate of cognition, the usual cognitive processes involved in dreaming will disappear from his mind. For him there will no longer be any difference between waking and sleeping. His awareness will be as luminous, as empty, and as still as a cloudless sky. Images of gross external objects will no longer appear before him as objects of cognition. He will view all the phenomena in the world — the mountains, the rivers, and everything else — as mere reflections that briefly appear in a clear mirror, leaving nothing behind, disappearing without a trace, receiving and reflecting, nothing more. He has done away with his habitual and long cherished karmic impressions. Only the true essence of consciousness remains.

“As the source of the coming into being and ceasing to be is exposed to him, he may have a clear vision, which extends throughout the ten directions, of all the kinds of beings in their twelve classes. Although he cannot yet discern the thread of causes that is unique to each individual life, he will be able to perceive the origin that is common to all lives. This origin will appear to him as a subtle, glimmering, vibrating mirage. This is the ultimate point, the pivotal point, at which the faculties and their objects meet. He has reached the region of the aggregate of mental formations. If he is able to see the subtle, glimmering vibrations, which are the origin of beings, revert to the clarity that is their original nature, then his habitual karma will become still, just as clear waters become calm when waves are stilled. He will have reached the end of the aggregate of mental formations. He will be able to transcend the turbidity of individual beings. He

will contemplate how this aggregate arises, and he will see that its basis lies in mental distortions in the deep recesses of the mind.

[1] “Ānanda, you should know that this good person has gained right knowledge and has calmed his mind such that he is firmly settled into the light generated by his correct mental state. None of the ten kinds of celestial demons will have any chance to influence him.

“He may now focus intently on a thorough investigation of the origins of the lives of all the classes of beings. He will observe the subtle movement that is the origin of all beings in each of their twelve classes. As the source of their lives becomes apparent to him, he may begin to speculate about all that he has observed concerning these origins. In so doing, he may fall into the error of adopting either of two theories that deny causation.

“First, this person may not discern any causes for the origin of life. How might this be? This person will have already completely eliminated the means for the arising of cognitive distortions. Employing his eye-faculty, with its eight hundred degrees of efficacy, he will now be able to see all beings caught in the swirling flux of their karma during the previous eighty thousand eons, as they meet their death in one place and are born again in another. But he will not be able to see beyond eighty thousand eons, and therefore he will suppose that eighty thousand eons ago, all beings in the worlds throughout the ten directions came into being of their own accord, independently of any cause. Because of this speculation, he will lose all the ground that he has gained in his quest for right and universal wisdom. In his confusion about the nature of full awakening, he will fall and take a wrong path.

“Or second, this person may not discern any cause for the ending of life. How might this be? This person has already observed the origins of all beings. He has discerned that some humans are reborn as humans, and he has been aware of birds being reborn as birds. He may therefore conclude that black crows are inevitably reborn as black crows, while swans are inevitably reborn as white swans. He may conclude that people and gods are always reborn among beings who walk upright and that animals are always reborn as beasts that walk on four legs, and also that washing is not what makes white swans white, nor dyeing what makes crows black. He will therefore conclude that for the last eighty thousand eons until the present moment, no being has been reborn into a different class. He further concludes, ‘In all this time I have observed no instance of full awakening. How then could a being who is not awake change into a being who has awakened? I can only conclude that to this very day all creatures have existed without any special cause for their being what they are.’

“Because of this speculation, the practitioner will lose all the ground that he has gained in his quest for right and universal wisdom. In his confusion about the nature of full awakening, he will fall and take a wrong path. These two theories that deny causation constitute the first group of wrong paths.

[2] “In his practice of samādhi, Ānanda, this good person’s mind has settled into the light generated by his correct mental state. No demon will have any chance to influence

him. He may now focus on a thorough investigation of the constant and subtle movement at the origin of the lives of all the classes of beings. He may begin to speculate about all that he has observed about the constancy of this movement, and in so doing he may fall into the error of adopting one of four theories concerning universal everlastingness.

“First, as this person fully investigates the nature of his mind and what it experiences, he may conclude that there is no cause either for the mind or for what it perceives. His practices may enable him to discern the deaths and rebirths that all beings throughout the ten directions have suffered during the previous twenty thousand eons. He may observe that throughout that period of time, as these beings have clung to the cycle of death and rebirth, their minds and their minds’ experiences have not been lost. On that basis he may speculate that the mind and its experiences are everlasting.

“Second, as this person fully investigates the origins of the four primary elements, it may seem to him that these primary elements never change. His practices may enable him to discern the cycle of death and rebirth that all beings throughout the ten directions have undergone during the previous forty thousand eons. He may observe that throughout this period of time, there has been no alteration in the nature of the primary elements. On that basis he may speculate that it is the nature of the primary elements to be everlasting.

“Third, as this person fully investigates the perceptual functions of the sixth consciousness, the individuating consciousness, and the storehouse consciousness, it may seem to him that, from their very origins, it has always been the nature of these consciousnesses to be everlasting. His practices may enable him to discern the cycle of death and rebirth undergone by all beings throughout the ten directions during the previous eighty thousand eons. It may seem to him that throughout this period of time, beings’ consciousnesses have maintained their original natures. On that basis he may speculate that the inherent nature of these consciousnesses is everlasting.

“Fourth, as this person comes to the end of the aggregate of cognition, it may seem to him that the source of coming into being and ceasing to be has stopped functioning. Since he has put a stop to the activity of the aggregate of cognition, he may reason that there can be no resumption of that activity. On that basis he concludes that the coming into being and ceasing to be of cognition, with its ebb and flow, have come to a permanent end. He will therefore conclude that this state in which there is neither coming into being nor perishing must be everlasting.

“Because of this speculation, the practitioner will lose all the ground that he has gained in his quest for right and universal wisdom. In his confusion about the nature of full awakening, he will fall and take a wrong path. These four theories about what is everlasting constitute the second group of wrong paths.

[3] “Further, when in his practice of samādhi this good person’s mind is firmly settled in his correct mental state, no demon will have any chance to influence him. He may now focus on a thorough investigation of the constant and subtle movement at the origin of the lives of all the classes of beings. He may begin to speculate about self and other,

and in so doing he may fall into error by adopting one of four deluded theories that consider some entities to be everlasting and others not to be everlasting.

“First, as he observes the above, this good person may speculate that his mind’s wondrous understanding pervades all the worlds throughout the ten directions. He may take his mind in its profound stillness to be the ultimate cosmic self, and he may speculate that this unmoving cosmic self, with its focused understanding, pervades the ten directions. He may suppose that within his cosmic mind, all beings die and are reborn. Therefore he may conclude that his mind, which he takes to be the cosmic self, is everlasting, while the beings that upon their death are reborn within his mind are not everlasting.

“Second, instead of observing his mind, this person may observe the worlds everywhere throughout the ten directions, as many as the sand grains in the River Ganges. He may see worlds that are in the declining eon of their life cycle, and he may conclude that these worlds must ultimately be impermanent. He concludes that worlds that are not in a declining eon must belong to a category of worlds that are everlasting.

“Third, this person may instead focus his observations on the refined, subtle, and hidden aspects of his mind, which may seem to him like the tiny motes of dust that float and swirl about throughout the ten directions, their nature never changing. He may speculate that this subtle aspect of his mind controls the death and rebirth of his body. He may conclude that this subtle aspect of his mind is an indestructible and everlasting self, whereas he as a person who repeatedly dies and is reborn from that permanent self must be impermanent.

“Fourth, as this person becomes aware of the ending of the aggregate of cognition, and as he observes the wave-like flux of the aggregate of mental formations, he may speculate that the constant flux of the aggregate of mental formations is everlasting. Since at that point, the aggregates of form, sense-perception, and cognition have already ceased functioning, he may conclude that these three aggregates are not everlasting.

“Because of these speculations, the practitioner will lose all the ground that he has gained in his quest for right and universal wisdom. In his confusion about the nature of full awakening, he will fall and take a wrong path. These four theories about what is everlasting and what is not everlasting constitute the third group of wrong paths.

[4] “Further, when in his practice of samādhi, this good person’s mind is firmly settled in his correct mental state, no demon will have any chance to influence him. He may then fully investigate the origins of the lives of all the classes of beings. If he speculates about the existence of certain distinctions, he may fall into error by adopting one of four deluded theories concerning what is finite and what is not.

“First, this person may speculate that the wavelike flux that is the source of life continues to function without cease. He may conclude that both past time and future time are finite, while the mind functioning in the present moment continues indefinitely and so is infinite.

“Second, in his samādhi this person may be able to see beings throughout eighty thousand eons of the past. When he attempts to perceive earlier eons, he does not see or

hear anything there. The expanse of time in which he sees and hears nothing he supposes to be infinite, while the expanse of time in which he perceives beings he supposes to be finite.

“Third, this person may speculate that his own awareness is infinite and that all other people appear within his awareness. However, he is not aware of other people’s awarenesses, and therefore he may conclude that their awarenesses are merely finite, not infinite, as he supposes his is.

“Fourth, this person may thoroughly investigate the aggregate of mental formations in his wish to bring this aggregate to an end. Based on what he has observed of the pathways of his mind, he speculates that a portion of the mind of each and every individual being is subject to coming into being and ceasing to be, while another portion is not subject to coming into being and ceasing to be. Thus he concludes that everything in this world is half finite and half infinite.

“Having made these suppositions about what is finite and what is infinite, he will fall and take a wrong path. He has become confused about the nature of full awakening. These theories about what is finite and what is infinite constitute the fourth group of wrong paths.

[5] “Further, when in his practice of samādhi, this good person’s mind is firmly settled in his correct mental state, no demon will have any chance to influence him. He may now focus on a thorough investigation of the constant and subtle movement at the origin of the lives of all the classes of beings. Then he may begin to speculate about his own knowledge and viewpoints, and in so doing he may fall into error by adopting one of four baseless and distorted theories involving conceptualizations of immortality.

“First, this person may observe the source of the fluctuations within the aggregate of mental formations. If he perceives variation in the patterns of the flux, he will call that variation ‘change.’ If he perceives continuity in the patterns, he will call that continuity ‘constancy.’ He will say that what he sees is what has come into being, and if he sees nothing, he will say that whatever had been there has perished. If there is continuity in the patterns of flux, he will say that it is ‘caused by augmentation’; and if at some point the continuity in the patterns of flux is interrupted, he will say that it is ‘caused by diminution.’ All the places in which he has observed things come into being he will call the ‘totality of what exists,’ and all the places in which he has observed nothing he will call the ‘totality of nonexistence.’ In this way, by observing everything in the light of the aggregate of mental formations, he forms various conclusions about what he has seen. If someone seeking to learn his methods should come to ask him about his theories, he will reply: ‘I both come into being and cease to be. I exist and yet do not exist. I both grow and diminish.’ What he says is so confusing that no one can understand what he means.

“Second, this person may look intently into his mind, and he may not see any beings anywhere. On this basis he will draw his conclusions. When people come to him with questions, he will answer with one word: ‘No.’ He will say no more than the single word ‘no.’

“Third, this person may look intently into his mind, and he may see all beings in their various places. On this basis he will draw his conclusions. When people come to him with questions, he will answer with one word. ‘Yes.’ He will say no more than the single word ‘yes.’

“Fourth, this person, when looking into his mind, may sometimes see beings in their various locations, and at other times he may see no beings at all. Because of this inconsistency in his experience, he may become confused. When people come to him with questions, he will answer, ‘Both yes and no. But if it is “no,” then it isn’t “yes.”’ His confused sophistries will not stand up to scrutiny.

“Having made these muddled suppositions about the existence and nonexistence of beings, he will fall and take a wrong path. He has become confused about the nature of full awakening. These four baseless theories concerning muddled ideas about immortality constitute the fifth group of wrong paths.

[6] “Further, when in his practice of samādhi this good person’s mind is firmly settled in his correct mental state, no demon will have any chance to influence him. He may now focus on a thorough investigation of the constant and subtle movement at the origin of the lives of all the classes of beings. He may begin to speculate about the endless flux that he has observed, and in so doing he may make the mistake of committing himself to confused ideas about the attributes of forms that exist after death.

“Perhaps he is strongly attached to his body, and so he will say that his body, which is composed of attributes of form, is his true self. Or perhaps his view is that all worlds are contained within himself, and so he will say that his true self contains the totality of all forms. Or perhaps he concludes that all perceived objects are dependent for their existence on his perceiving them, and so he will say that all the attributes of form belong to his experience. On the other hand, he may conclude that the existence of his true self is dependent on the constant flux of mental formations, and so he will say that he belongs to the attributes of form.

“All four of these speculations propose that the attributes of form continue after death. Cycling through these four speculations, he may apply them to each one of the four aggregates, so that there are sixteen propositions concerning the attributes of form. He also proposes that afflictions will always be afflictions, that full awakening will always be full awakening, and that the two continue to exist together without ever coming into contact.

“Because he has made these suppositions about the existence of attributes of form after death, he will fall and take a wrong path. He has become confused about the nature of full awakening. This belief in wrongheaded theories concerning the existence after death of attributes of all five aggregates is the sixth of these wrong paths.

[7] “Further, when in his practice of samādhi this good person’s mind is firmly settled in his correct mental state, no demon will have any chance to influence him. He may now focus on a thorough investigation of the constant and subtle movement at the origin of the lives of all the classes of beings. He may speculate about the aggregates of form, sense-perception, and cognition — all of which have already ceased to function within

his samādhi — and in so doing, he may make the mistake of adopting confused ideas about the nonexistence of those aggregates after death.

“Having seen that the aggregate of form has ceased to function within his samādhi, it may seem to him that his own body exists without a cause. Since he is aware that the aggregate of cognition has ceased to function within his samādhi, he may suppose that his mind has no connection to anything. Having observed that the aggregate of sense-perception has ceased to function within his samādhi, he may suppose that his cognitive faculty has no connection with objects that he perceives.

“Since these three aggregates have all vanished — even though the fourth aggregate is still functioning — he may suppose that, without sense-perception or cognition, he is the same as a blade of grass or a piece of wood. He may conclude that the attributes of the aggregates do not continue after death. Cycling through these speculations, he will conclude that there are eight instances of their nonexistence. Based on these instances, he may speculate that nirvana and causation ultimately do not exist but are mere names that do not refer to anything real.

“Because he has made these suppositions about nonexistence, he will fall and take a wrong path. He has become confused about the nature of full awakening. This belief in wrongheaded theories concerning the nonexistence after death of the attributes of the five aggregates is the seventh of these wrong paths.

[8] “Further, when in his practice of samādhi this good person’s mind is firmly settled in his correct mental state, no demon will have any chance to influence him. He may now focus on a thorough investigation of the constant and subtle movement at the origin of the lives of all the classes of beings. Within his samādhi, the aggregate of mental formations continues, while the aggregates of form, sense-perception, and cognition have ceased, and so he entertains contradictory notions about whether the aggregates exist or do not exist. Thus he will fall into error by proposing wrongheaded and incorrect theories about existence and nonexistence after death.

“Looking beyond the aggregates of form, sense-perception, and cognition, he sees that although the aggregate of mental formations seems to exist, it does not really exist. As he observes the flux of the aggregate of mental formations, he may see that although the aggregates of form, sense-perception, and cognition seem not to exist, they actually do exist. As he explores the aggregates in depth, he cycles through his speculations and proposes eight instances concerning the existence and non-existence of attributes of the four aggregates after death. Following this line of reasoning, he concludes that the attributes of the four aggregates neither exist nor do not exist after death.

“Further, based on these speculations — that the nature of all mental formations is that they are in flux and that their reality is deceptive — he believes that he has made a breakthrough in his understanding. But although he has concluded that the attributes of the aggregates neither exist nor fail to exist, he is in fact still at a loss as to what is real about them and what is not real. Despite his suppositions that deny both the existence and the nonexistence of attributes of aggregates after death, he cannot in fact see into the future and ought not to speak of it. As a result of these errors, he will fall and take a

wrong path. He has become confused about the nature of full awakening. This belief in wrongheaded theories concerning the existence and nonexistence of the attributes of all five aggregates after death is the eighth of these wrong paths.

[9] “Further, when in his practice of samādhi this good person’s mind is firmly settled in his correct mental state, no demon will have any chance to influence him. He may now focus on a thorough investigation of the constant and subtle movement at the origin of the lives of all the classes of beings. He may then begin to speculate that there is no existence beyond the aggregate of mental formations. He may adopt any of seven wrongheaded theories concerning the cessation of individual existence after death.

“He may speculate about where within the realm of desire the bodies of individual beings might perish; or about where beyond the realm of desire the bodies of individual beings might perish; or about where beyond the reach of suffering the bodies of individual beings might perish; or about where, within the bliss that is beyond joy, the bodies of individual beings might perish; or about where, within the renunciation of cognition, the bodies of individual beings might perish. Cycling through these speculations, he will fully investigate each of these seven locations and conclude that in each, individual beings perish and that, having perished, they will not be reborn.

“Because he has made these suppositions concerning the cessation of individual existence after death, he will fall and take a wrong path. He has become confused about the nature of full awakening. This belief in wrongheaded theories concerning the cessation of individual existence after death within the realm of all five aggregates is the ninth of the wrong paths.

[10] “Further, when in his practice of samādhi this good person’s mind is firmly settled in his correct mental state, no demon will have any chance to influence him. He may now focus on a thorough investigation of the constant and subtle movement at the origin of the lives of all the classes of beings. He may speculate that beyond the aggregate of mental formations, there is existence after death. He may adopt any of five wrongheaded theories concerning nirvana.

“He may in his contemplations observe a radiance that suffuses the heavens of the realm of desire. Longing for this radiance, he may speculate that in those heavens he will be able to transform his future deaths and rebirths into a future entry into nirvana. Or he may speculate it is in the heavens of the first dhyāna that he will be able to enter nirvana, because in the first dhyāna beings have no anxiety. Or he may speculate that it is in the heavens of the second dhyāna that he will be able to enter nirvana, because in the second dhyāna beings do not suffer. Or he may speculate that it is in the heavens of the third dhyāna that he will be able to enter nirvana, because in the third dhyāna beings know the extremes of the bliss that is beyond joy. Or he may speculate that it is within the heavens of the fourth dhyāna that he will be able to enter nirvana, because in the fourth dhyāna both suffering and joy are transcended, and as he supposes, beings there are no longer bound to the cycle of death and rebirth.

“He will make the mistake of supposing that these dhyāna heavens are unconditioned states, although in fact the beings in them are still subject to outflows. Since beings in

these five locations are able to experience an inner serenity, he will suppose that these are places where he will be able to abide in a supreme purity. Cycling through these suppositions, he will conclude that it is in these locations that ultimate nirvana may be found.

“Because he thought that he could enter nirvana if he could manage to abide in these five locations, he will fall and take a wrong path. He has become confused about the nature of full awakening. This belief in wrongheaded theories that, in these five locations, he could enter nirvana within the realm of the five aggregates is the tenth of these wrong paths.

“While they are practicing meditation in stillness, Ānanda, these beings may adopt these ten wildly wrong interpretations of the dhyānas as a result of their interaction with the aggregate of mental formations. They may become dulled and confused by this experience, and they may no longer be able to take a proper measure of themselves. When faced with these circumstances, they may be even more confused, and in their failure to know themselves, they will make the claim that they have reached the level of a sage. This egregious falsehood will cause them to fall into the Unrelenting Hell.

“After my nirvana, you must explain my teachings and transmit them to those who will live during the time of the Dharma’s ending so that all beings everywhere will understand what I have taught. Then they will not allow their own demonic views to lead them into egregious offenses. Protect and support my Dharma so that wrong beliefs are dispelled. Instruct practitioners so that they are thoroughly convinced of the true meaning of my teachings, lest they stray from the supreme path and content themselves with insignificant attainments. You should all become leaders who are greatly enlightened. Become the pure ones who show others the Path.”

Ten Demonic States of Mind Associated
with the Aggregate of Consciousness

“Anānda, when a good person who has been practicing samādhi has reached the end of the aggregate of mental formations, he may observe, within the clear light in the deep recesses of his mind, the vibrations which are the shared foundation of the nature of all beings in the world. Then suddenly the tiny hidden knot that holds together the intricate net of karma of his individual being during his many lifetimes will burst open, and he will lose his connection to the vibrating resonances of that karmic net.

“He will now be on the verge of experiencing a great illumination in the sky of nirvana. It is as if he is gazing at the pale light of dawn in the eastern sky just as the rooster has finished crowing. His six faculties will be quiescent; they will have ceased to hurry outwards toward their objects. His faculties and their objects will merge into a single deep and luminous clarity. The duality of observer and observed will have ceased. He will have a deep understanding of how the twelve classes of beings throughout the ten directions enter into life. However, though he may take an interest in how beings are born into their various classes, in no case will he be drawn in to the process. His consciousness will merge with everything in the worlds throughout the ten directions. The pale light that he observed will not fade, and it will illuminate what has heretofore been hidden. This is the region of the aggregate of consciousness.

“He will attain a state of unified consciousness with the classes of beings, but he does not comply when they call him to follow them into rebirth. He has erased the distinctions among his six faculties, and he has succeeded in enabling each of the six to perform the functions of all of the others. For example, his faculties of seeing and

hearing will become connected to one another and will function both separately and together and with complete clarity. The worlds throughout the ten directions and his own body and mind will be suffused with light, like a crystal. This state is the ending of the aggregate of consciousness. This person will now be able to transcend the turbidity of lifespans. He will contemplate how this aggregate arises, and he will understand that it neither exists nor does not exist — that its existence and nonexistence are both unreal. It is based on the distortions of deluded mental activity.

[1] “You should know, Ānanda, that this good person, having completely eliminated the mental formations aggregate, must now return the aggregate of consciousness to its source. At this point, although he has already done away with the coming into being and perishing of mental formations, he has not yet completed the journey to the wonder of his essential nature, which is nirvana. However, he will be able to merge his perceptual faculties so that they can function as one or function interchangeably.

“Since his consciousness is connected to all the classes of beings in the ten directions, he and they become as if one body. He may assume that he is himself the entire source of all of them. Based on that assumption, he will conclude that he is the true and permanent cause of everything. He will believe that in this he has discovered the ultimate truth. Thus this person will become attached to a mistaken notion concerning what acts as a cause and what is the effect of that cause. He will become an adherent of the doctrines of Kapila, who taught that one should return to what he called the ‘truth of the unmanifested nature.’ The practitioner is confused about the nature of the full awakening of the Buddhas, and as a result, the Buddhas’ right knowledge and correct views are no longer accessible to him.

“This first theory is called ‘concluding that one has fully achieved one’s goal.’ Instead of breaking through to enlightenment, this person proceeds far in the opposite direction. He turns his back on the city of nirvana and plants a seed that will result in his rebirth as a follower of a wrong path.

[2] “Further, Ānanda, although this good person has completely eliminated the aggregate of mental formations — although he has already done away with the coming into being and perishing of mental formations — he has not yet completed the journey to the wonder of his essential nature, which is nirvana. Once he has entered the consciousness aggregate, he may take that consciousness to be his own body, and he may have a vision of his body extending to the ends of space. He may have the experience of seeing all beings in all twelve classes being born from within his own body. He will believe that in this he has discovered the ultimate truth. Thus this person makes the mistake of believing that he has an ability that no one else has. He becomes one of the adherents of the doctrines of Maheśvara, who appears in an infinite body. The practitioner is confused about the nature of the full awakening of the Buddhas, and as a result, the Buddhas’ right knowledge and correct views are no longer accessible to him.

“This second theory is called ‘concluding that one has a special ability and believing that one has succeeded in exercising it.’ Instead of breaking through to enlightenment,

this person proceeds far in the opposite direction. He turns his back on the city of nirvana and plants a seed that will result in his rebirth as a god who, in his great arrogance, considers his self to be all pervading and to include everything within it.

[3] “Further, although this good person has completely eliminated the aggregate of mental formations — although he has already done away with the coming into being and perishing of mental formations — he has not yet completed the journey to the wonder of his essential nature, which is nirvana. Once he has entered the consciousness aggregate, he may become attached to abiding there. Then he may wrongly suppose that his body and mind are born from there and that everything in the ten directions throughout empty space arises from there. Because he supposes that both his body and mind well up from the consciousness aggregate, he may conclude that this supposed source constitutes an immortal body which neither comes into being nor ceases to be. In fact, he is still subject to death and rebirth. He has come to the unjustified conclusion that his consciousness is immortal. Already deluded about what is beyond coming into being and ceasing to be, he is also confused about what is subject to coming into being and ceasing to be. Having sunk into confusion, he is content to abide in that state of mind, considering it to be the ultimate truth.

“Thus this person becomes attached to the mistaken view that the consciousness aggregate is permanent and that everything else is impermanent. He becomes one of the adherents of the doctrines of the god Īśvara. He is confused about the nature of the full awakening of the Buddhas, and as a result, the Buddhas’ right knowledge and correct views are no longer accessible to him.

“This third theory is called ‘concluding that one has an origin and making deluded speculations about what arises from there.’ Instead of breaking through to enlightenment, this person proceeds far in the opposite direction. He turns his back on the city of nirvana and plants a seed that will result in his rebirth in a place that he has wrongly taken to be perfection.

[4] “Further, although this good person has completely eliminated the aggregate of mental formations — although he has already done away with the coming into being and perishing of mental formations — he has not yet completed the journey to the wonder of his essential nature, which is nirvana. If he becomes aware that his consciousness is all-pervading and includes all things, then based on that awareness, he may theorize that all the vegetation throughout the ten directions is no less sentient than people are. He may suppose, further, that a plant can be reborn as a person and that, after death, a person can go anywhere in the ten directions to be reborn as a plant. Believing that awareness is universal in this way, and supposing that this belief is the ultimate truth, this person makes the mistake of ascribing awareness to what in fact is not aware. He becomes one of the adherents of the doctrines of Vaiśiṣṭa and Senika, who were convinced that everything is endowed with awareness. The practitioner is confused about the nature of the full awakening of the Buddhas, and as a result, the Buddhas’ right knowledge and correct views are no longer accessible to him.

“This fourth theory is called ‘supposing that all things are aware and drawing

erroneous conclusions from that supposition.’ Instead of breaking through to enlightenment, this person proceeds far in the opposite direction. He turns his back on the city of nirvana and plants a seed that will result in his rebirth into a state of distorted awareness.

[5] “Further, although this good person has completely eliminated the aggregate of mental formations — although he has already done away with the coming into being and perishing of mental formations — he has not yet completed the journey to the wonder of his essential nature, which is nirvana. When, in the perfect interfusing of his faculties, he has completely mastered their interchangeable functioning, he may theorize that all perceived objects come forth from that perfectly interfused functioning. This supposition will lead him to crave the brilliant light of fire, to delight in the purity of water, to cherish the ubiquitous motion of wind, and to enjoy contemplations of the earth, upon which all things depend. He will hold these primary elements in reverence, supposing that they are fundamental causes and are everlasting. Thus he makes the mistake of believing that the primary elements bring into being what in fact they do not bring into being. He becomes one of the adherents of the doctrines of Kāśyapa and of other Brahmins who, through mental diligence and physical asceticism, seek to escape death and rebirth by reverently making ritual offerings to water and to fire. The practitioner is confused about the nature of the full awakening of the Buddhas, and as a result, the Buddhas’ right knowledge and correct views are no longer accessible to him.

“This fifth theory is called ‘mistaken speculations and misplaced reverence that cause one to be so confused as to worship the primary elements.’ Having come to false conclusions concerning fundamental causes, this person seeks a wrong result. Instead of breaking through to enlightenment, he proceeds far in the opposite direction. He turns his back on the city of nirvana and plants a seed that will result in his rebirth among beings with distorted beliefs.

[6] “Further, although this good person has completely eliminated the aggregate of mental formations — although he has already done away with the coming into being and perishing of mental formations — he has not yet completed the journey to the wonder of his essential nature, which is nirvana. It may seem to him that his consciousness illuminates everything, and he may speculate that within this illumination there is a void. He may wish to negate any of the various forms that arise and to abide forever in permanent cessation. He will believe that his understanding of this place of abiding is the ultimate truth. Thus he makes the mistake of believing that what is not a place of permanent abiding nevertheless is such a place. He adopts the doctrines of the dwellers in the empty void of the Heaven of No Cognition. He is confused about the nature of the full awakening of the Buddhas, and as a result, the Buddhas’ right knowledge and correct views are no longer accessible to him.

“This sixth theory is called ‘making suppositions about a void and drawing various conclusions concerning that void.’ The person speculates that this void is the basis of his consciousness and that the result is permanent cessation. As a result, instead of breaking through to enlightenment, he proceeds far in the opposite direction. He turns

his back on the city of nirvana and plants a seed that will result in his rebirth into a void in which everything has ceased to be.

[7] “Further, although this good person has completely eliminated the aggregate of mental formations — although he has already done away with the coming into being and perishing of mental formations — he has not yet completed the journey to the wonder of his essential nature, which is nirvana. If his consciousness seems to him to be all-pervading and permanent, he may attempt to fortify his body in the hope that it will become immortal — as long-lasting, as refined, and as all-pervading as his consciousness. He will conclude that his quest for immortality of the body is the ultimate truth. Thus this person makes the mistake of craving something that should not be an object of craving. He becomes one of the adherents of the doctrines of Asita and of others who seek a long life. He is confused about the nature of the full awakening of the Buddhas, and as a result, the Buddhas’ right knowledge and correct views are no longer accessible to him.

“This seventh theory is called ‘becoming attached to a belief concern-ing the source of life and drawing the erroneous conclusion that fortify-ing the body will result in a long life.’ Instead of breaking through to enlightenment, this person proceeds far in the opposite direction. He turns his back on the city of nirvana and plants a seed that will result in a long life of delusion.

[8] “Further, although this good person has completely eliminated the aggregate of mental formations — although he has already done away with the coming into being and perishing of mental formations — he has not yet completed the journey to the wonder of his essential nature, which is nirvana. Having contemplated the interconnectedness of the lives of all twelve classes of beings, he will retreat into a re-engagement with his own stressful inner world of perceived objects. In this situation, fearing that this world will come to an end, he will cause himself to be seated in a palace made of lotus flowers and the seven precious things, where he is surrounded by beautiful women. Concluding that this is the ultimate truth, he will abandon himself to luxurious enjoyments. Thus he makes the mistake of believing that what is not genuine is in fact genuine. He becomes one of the adherents of the doctrines of the lord of celestial demons. He is confused about the nature of the full awakening of the Buddhas, and as a result, the Buddhas’ right knowledge and correct views are no longer accessible to him.

“This eighth theory is called ‘perverse thoughts arising and leading to the erroneous conclusion regarding the raging fire of the world of perceived objects.’ Instead of breaking through to enlightenment, this person proceeds far in the opposite direction. He turns his back on the city of nirvana and plants a seed that will result in rebirth as a celestial demon.

[9] “Further, although this good person has completely eliminated the aggregate of mental formations — although he has already done away with the coming into being and perishing of mental formations — he has not yet completed the journey to the wonder of his essential nature, which is nirvana. In his understanding of the source of individual lives, he will distinguish between the fine and the coarse, and he will discern what is true

and what is false, based on the interplay of cause and effect. He seeks an awakening in response to his efforts, thereby turning his back on the path to the highest purity. That is to say, he perceives the unsatisfactoriness of life, eliminates the accumulation of afflictions, and realizes cessation as he practices in accord with the Path. But once he comes to abide in cessation, he stops there and goes no farther in his practice. He considers cessation to be the ultimate meaning of life. In this way he makes the mistake of becoming a Hearer of the Teaching who is restricted to a single lineage. His companions will be ignorant members of the Sangha and supremely arrogant practitioners. He is confused about the nature of the full awakening of the Buddhas, and as a result, the Buddhas' right knowledge and correct views are no longer accessible to him.

“This ninth theory is called ‘perfecting the essence of the mind and so realizing the goal of cessation.’ But instead of breaking through to enlightenment, this person proceeds far in the opposite direction. He turns his back on the city of nirvana and plants a seed that will result in his becoming restricted by emptiness.

[10] “Further, although this good person has completely eliminated the aggregate of mental formations — although he has already done away with the coming into being and perishing of mental formations — he has not yet completed the journey to the wonder of his essential nature, which is nirvana. If he inquires into the deep wonder of the pure and perfectly inter-fused illumination of his awakening, he may come to the conclusion that this deep wonder is the final nirvana. He then may cease to make progress, believing that he has already realized the ultimate meaning of his life. In this way this person will make the mistake of becoming a Solitary Sage who is restricted to a single lineage. His companions will be Solitary Sages — both those who have become enlightened through contemplation of the conditioned world and those who have become en-lightened on their own. These sages do not turn their minds toward the Great Vehicle. Thus this person becomes confused about the nature of the Buddhas' full awakening, and for him the Buddhas' right knowledge and correct views are no longer accessible.

“This tenth theory is called ‘completely merging the mind with a perfected awareness and so realizing the goal of gaining a profound understanding.’ But instead of breaking through to perfect enlightenment, this person proceeds far in the opposite direction. He turns his back on the city of nirvana and plants a seed that will result in his continuing in the all-pervading but still imperfect illumination of a Solitary Sage.

“In these ways, Ānanda, these ten states are experienced while practicing meditation in stillness, and they are caused by confusion that leads to derangement. Because of their confusion, these practitioners will believe that they have completely attained what they have not completely attained. Each of these mental states is the result of the interaction of meditation practice and unwarranted speculation while within the realm of the aggregate of consciousness.

“In their obtuseness and confusion, these beings will not take proper measure of themselves. When they encounter these states — each one according to what he craves,

each one confused by his long cherished habits — they will choose to abide in one of these states, which they will suppose is the final and serene place of refuge. They will make the claim that they have completed a full and supreme awakening. This is an egregious lie, and because of it — once the karma of their present state has been exhausted — those whose karma has led them to be followers of wrong paths, or to be disciples of perverse demons, will fall into the Unrelenting Hell. As for the Hearers of the Teaching and the Solitary Sages, they will make no further progress on the Path.

“You all must devote yourselves to the Path of the Thus-Come Ones. After my nirvana, you must explain my teachings and transmit them to beings of the time of the Dharma’s ending so that all beings everywhere will understand what I have taught. Then they will not allow their own demonic views to lead them into egregious offenses. Protect them, give them comfort, compassionately rescue them, and free them of their perverse tendencies, so that in mind and body they may enter the path to the wisdom and vision of the Buddhas. Then from the beginning to the end of their journey, they will not stray from the Path.

“For as many past eons as there are sand grains in the River Ganges, Thus-Come Ones as many as motes of dust have entered the gateway of this Dharma, have opened their minds, and have traveled along this supreme path.

“Once you have come to the end of the aggregate of consciousness, your faculties will function interchangeably, and then on the basis of that mutual functioning, you will be able to reach the Bodhisattva’s level of vajra-like wisdom. When you experience the full illumination of that refined state of mind, you will undergo a transformation. Your mind will become like a resplendent moon enclosed within a pure crystal, and then you will leap over all the stages of the Bodhisattva’s Path — the Ten Stages of Stabilizing the Mind, the Ten Abodes, the Ten Practices, the Ten Dedications, the Four Additional Practices, the vajra-like Ten Grounds, and Equivalent Enlightenment, in which understanding is finally perfected. You will enter into the wondrous and magnificent multitude of all the Thus-Come Ones, vast as the sea. You will attain the perfection of full awakening, in which there is nothing that is attained.

“All the Buddhas, World-Honored Ones of the past, while calmly abiding in samādhi and while practicing contemplative insight, applied their contemplative insight to all these states. By means of their enlightened understanding, they analyzed these subtle demonic activities. Once you can clearly recognize these demonic states when they occur, you will be able to cleanse your mind of those defilements, and you will not fall prey to wrong views. Then the demonic states associated with the aggregates will be eradicated, and the celestial demons will be utterly defeated. Ghosts and spirits of great power will be frightened out of their wits and will run for their lives. Animal-possessing ghosts and nightmare ghosts will no longer dare to show themselves. You will reach your goal of full awakening without having experienced the slightest weariness, and you will all progress directly to full awakening. Even those whose roots in the Dharma are inferior will be able to make progress toward nirvana without becoming confused or discouraged.

“In the time of the Dharma’s ending, some beings who like to practice samādhi may not have sufficient intelligence to practice meditation in stillness correctly or to explain the Dharma correctly. You should be concerned lest they fall under the influence of the kind of wrong views that I have been describing. Devote yourselves to teaching these beings how to hold in their minds the dhāraṇī-mantra spoken at the crown of the Buddha’s head. If they cannot learn to recite it from memory, teach them to write it out and to place it in their meditation halls or else to wear it close to their bodies. Then no demon will be able to disturb them.

“You should hold in the greatest reverence all the teachings of the Thus-Come Ones of the ten directions. These are my final instructions.”

7

The Five Aggregates Arise from Delusion

Then Ānanda once again stood up amidst the great assembly and bowed reverently, having fully retained in his memory the instructions he had heard the Buddha give. He said respectfully to the Buddha, “The Buddha has said that the five categories of delusion which characterize the five aggregates are the basis of the deluded activity of the mind. We have never before received from the Thus-Come One such a detailed explanation. Now, when these five aggregates disappear, do they do so all at once, or do they disappear in sequence, one after the other? And if they do disappear in sequence, what are the defining characteristics of each of the five aggregates? I only hope that the Thus-Come One, out of his great kindness, will explain this, so that all of us in this great assembly can purify our minds and make our vision clear. In this way we will be able to act as guides for beings in the future time of the Dharma’s ending.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “In the subtle, true, wondrous understanding, in the fundamental, awakened, perfect purity, no death or rebirth remains, nor any defilement, not even space itself. All these arise out of deluded mental activity. From within the true essence which is the fundamental, original, awakened, wondrous understanding, delusion arises and brings about the world of perceived objects. We might compare the situation to Yajñadatta’s confusion about the face he saw in the mirror. His delusion did not arise from any cause. People’s deluded thinking leads them to conclude that what is subject to causes and conditions must have an independent existence. Others, not even understanding about causes and conditions, assert that things come into being on their own. The nature of space itself is that it, too, arises from illusion. The notion that things come into being due to causes and conditions and the notion that they come into being

on their own are mere speculations born of beings' deluded minds.

“Ānanda, one who understands where delusion comes from will say that it comes about due to certain causes and conditions. One who understands that there can be no place of origin for delusion will know that there is no place where causes and conditions can arise. We hardly need to mention the people who know nothing of causes and conditions and who say that all phenomena come into being on their own. Therefore, based on what the Thus-Come One has already shown you, you should understand that the fundamental cause for the coming into being of the five aggregates is the deluded activity of the mind.

“Your body came into being because of mental activity on the part of your parents, but if there were no such activity in your mind as well, you would not have been born. It is through such mental activity that life is perpetuated. I already mentioned to you that thinking about something sour can cause the mouth to water, and that merely thinking about climbing up to the edge of a precipice can cause your feet to ache. In fact, there is no precipice under your feet, nor is there anything sour in your mouth. If there were no connection between your body and deluded thinking, what would cause your mouth to water when there is mention of something sour? From this you should know that the body which you now have is an instance of the illusion of solid matter. This is the first of the delusions of the mind.

“As we have said, merely the thought of approaching a precipice can cause your feet actually to ache. In this way even a sense-perception caused by deluded mental activity can affect your physical body. You now experience what is pleasing and beneficial and what is displeasing and harmful. These two kinds of experience, which affect you in rapid succession, are an instance of the illusion of sense-perception. This is the second of the delusions of the mind.

“Thus your thoughts and concerns exert control over your physical body. Suppose there were no relation between your body and your thoughts; what then would be the agency that exerts control over your body? In fact, your body tries to obtain various things that you have been thinking about. In other words, when the thought of a perceived object arises in the mind, that thought evokes the body's response, which is to seek to obtain or to avoid that object. This is true not only when you are awake and thinking but also when you are asleep and dreaming. These are instances of the activity of cognition creating an illusory understanding. This cooperative functioning of mind and body constitutes the third delusion of the mind.

“Then there are the systematic changes in your body which never stop — such incessant and imperceptible changes as the lengthening of your fingernails, the growth of your hair, the lessening of your vitality, and the wrinkling of your face. Each of these continues as day and night succeed one another. Yet you fail to be aware of them. If these systematic changes are not part of you, Ānanda, then why does your body undergo them? If in fact they are truly a part of you, how is it that you are not aware of them? The uninterrupted succession of thought after thought characterizes the aggregate of mental formations. This subtle and hidden mental activity constitutes the fourth

delusion of the mind.

“Further, if you were to attain a permanent state of refined mental clarity that is pure and unmoving, you would no longer be able to experience seeing, hearing, tactile awareness, and cognition. If your mind were in fact to attain this refined level of reality, it would no longer contain any traces of those habitual distorted mental activities. How then is it that you may have entirely forgotten about some strange sight that you once saw years ago, and yet the memory has not entirely disappeared, because when you suddenly see something very like that same strange sight, you recall perfectly the first time you saw it? This place of refined clarity that you wrongly suppose to be pure and unmoving is in fact permeated with an endless succession of countless mental impressions.

“You should know, Ānanda, that this subtle clarity is not the true mind. It is, rather, like a rapidly flowing stream that seems at first glance to be calm and still. Although you do not see it, there is nevertheless a current. Similarly, if in your consciousness aggregate there were no source of deluded mental activity, what else could be the repository of your deluded mental activities? Until your six faculties merge and become interchangeable, you will never be able to put an end to your deluded mental acts. That is why at present this subtle clarity of mind is still bound up with subtle habits belonging to seeing, hearing, tactile awareness, and mental awareness. In the same way, these false mental impressions lying within what seems to be the clarity of the consciousness aggregate seem to exist and yet not to exist. This extremely subtle and barely discernable activity constitutes the fifth kind of distortion of the mind.

“The five aggregates, Ānanda, are simply the development of these five kinds of deluded mental activity.

“Now you also wish to know what the defining attributes of each of the aggregates are and how coarse or refined they are. Form and emptiness are the defining attributes of the aggregate of form. Contact and separation are the defining attributes of the aggregate of sense-perception. What is recorded and what is not recorded are the defining attributes of the aggregate of cognition. Coming into being and perishing are the defining attributes of the aggregate of mental formations. Entering into the state of deep clarity and being stored in that deep clarity are the defining attributes of the aggregate of consciousness. These five aggregates arise in successive layers, beginning with the coming into being of consciousness. Their perishing begins with the ceasing to be of the aggregate of form. You may suddenly reach an understanding of the principle of the aggregates, and on that basis you may presume the aggregates will all vanish together. But, in fact, they do not all vanish at once; they must be ended in sequence.

“I have already explained this to you with the example of untying my scarf. What is it that you did not understand, so that you ask me about it again? You should thoroughly

understand the source of deluded acts of mind, and then you should transmit this teaching to future practitioners during the time of the Dharma's ending. Lead them to recognize their delusion so that they come to abhor the fact that it arises within themselves. Let them know of nirvana so that they cease to long for further existence in the three realms."

8

The Merit of Teaching the Śūraṅgama Dharma

"Suppose, Ānanda, that someone gathered together as many of the seven precious things as would fill the realm of space to its farthest reaches in all ten directions. Suppose that this person then offered all these precious things to as many Buddhas as there are motes of dust, with his mind intent in every moment on reverently serving these Buddhas. What do you think? By making such an offering to the Buddhas, would this person merit many blessings?"

Ānanda replied, "The reaches of space are infinite, and so these precious things would be beyond counting. Yet someone once gave the Buddha a mere seven coins, and as a result, at the end of his life, he was reborn and became a universal monarch. How much greater must be the reward of blessings that would come to this other person who offers to the Buddhas as many of the seven precious things as would fill the Buddha-lands everywhere to the ends of space. Even if one were to ponder this for countless eons, one could not conceive of the extent of his reward."

The Buddha said to Ānanda, "The Buddhas, the Thus-Come Ones, never speak falsely. Imagine then the situation of some other person who has committed the four grave offenses and the ten offenses that merit expulsion. He deserves to fall immediately into the Unrelenting Hell and then gradually to pass through the Unrelenting Hells of all the other worlds throughout the ten directions. Now, suppose this same person were to explain this Dharma, even for just a moment, to beings who in the time of the Dharma's ending had not learned about this teaching. Then as a consequence of that one moment of explanation, this person's offenses would vanish, and the hells in which he had deserved to suffer would be transformed into lands of

peace and delight. In fact, the blessings merited by such a person would exceed by hundreds of thousands of tens of millions of billions of times the blessings merited by the other person I just mentioned, the one who made those offerings of precious things. The difference would be so great that no calculation or example could express it.

“Ānanda, even in an infinite number of eons I could not fully describe the benefit that beings will gain from reciting this Sutra and from holding this mantra in their minds. By relying on this teaching that I have given you, and by practicing just as I have instructed you, you will go directly to full awakening without creating any more karma that would lead to entanglement in the demonic.”

The Buddha had now finished speaking this Sutra. Monks, nuns, precept-holding laymen, and precept-holding laywomen, as well as gods and asuras from all the worlds, and also Bodhisattvas, Arhats, and Solitary Sages from other worlds, together with sages, ascetic masters, pure young people, and ghosts and spirits of great power who had made the initial resolve to attain full awakening — all who were there felt great joy. They bowed in reverence and departed.