

Bodhisattvas Ask for Clarification

At that time, Manjushri Bodhisattva asked Enlightenment Leader Bodhisattva, “Disciple of the Buddha, given that the nature and the mind are one, why then are there various distinctions perceived, such as rebirth in wholesome paths and rebirth in evil paths; perfect faculties and deficient faculties; different modes of birth; handsomeness and ugliness; and, differing experiences of suffering and happiness?

“Why is karma unaware of the mind and the mind unaware of karma? Why is the experience (of karma) unaware of retribution and the retribution unaware of the experience; why is the mind unaware of the experience (of karma) and the experience unaware of the mind? Why are causes unaware of conditions and conditions unaware of causes? Why is wisdom unaware of states of being and why are states of being unaware of wisdom?”

Then Enlightenment Leader Bodhisattva answered in verse.

The Humane One asks about these principles,
In order to awaken the dull multitudes.
I will now answer according to their nature;
Would that the Humane One attentively listen.

All dharmas have no function,
Nor do they have any substance.
Thus every one of them
Knows not all the others.

As with the water in a river
Which forms torrents and rapids
That are mutually unaware,
So, too, is it with all dharmas.

Or, as when a tremendous blaze
Flares into raging flames all at once,
Each flame is unaware of the others.
So, too, is it with all dharmas.

And as with continuous gusts of wind
That buffet every object they encounter,

While each gust unaware of all the others:
So, too, is it with all dharmas.

It is also like the planets of a solar system,
Sustained by their mutual gravitational forces,
Yet each unaware of the others:
So, too, is it with all dharmas.

The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, the body,
And the thinking mind—the sensory organs all—
Constantly turn and flow in samsara,
Yet there is no one making them turn.

The Dharma nature, basically unproduced,
Still manifests coming into being.
Yet there is nothing making it manifest,
Nor anything that is manifested.

The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, the body,
And the thinking mind—the sensory organs all—
Are empty and without a nature.
But the false mind discerns them as existent.

Thus, in accord with principle, observe
That absolutely everything is without a nature.
The Dharma eye is inconceivable,
Its seeing without distortion.

Whether we name it real or unreal,
False or not false,
Mundane or world transcending,
These are merely false words.

At that time, Manjushri Bodhisattva asked Wealthy Leader Bodhisattva, “Disciple of the Buddha, all sentient beings are nonentities. And so, why does the Thus Come One accord with their opportunities; why does he accord with their lives; why does he accord with their bodies?”

“Why does he accord with their practices; why does he accord with their understandings; why does he accord with their languages; why does he accord with their fondnesses; why does he accord with their expedencies; why does he accord with their thoughts; and why does he accord with their considerations, appearing among them in bodies like theirs, in order to teach and transform, tame and subdue them?”

Then Wealthy Leader Bodhisattva answered in verse.

The bliss of still quiescence,
The state of One of Much Learning,
I, for the Humane One, will now expound.
Would that the Humane One be attentively receptive.

Observe the body in detail throughout.
What of it is actually “me”?
One who understands in this way
Comprehends there is no self to be found.

This body is falsely established,
Without a place to which it belongs.
By closely examining the body, one fathoms,
That nothing about it can be held on to.

Skillfully observe the body,
Clearly viewing each part.
Realize all dharmas are empty illusions,
And you will not give rise to mental distinctions.

Who causes this life to arise?
And what causes its decline and demise?
Like a whirling wheel of fire,
Its beginning and end cannot be known.

Wise ones are able to observe
The impermanence of all that exists,
And how all dharmas are empty, devoid of a self,
Forever detached from all characteristics.

Karma produced, the myriad retributions follow.
Like a dream, none of it is true or real.
Thought after thought, constant decay brings cessation.
As with the previous and subsequent pattern.

The dharmas perceived in this world,
Solely rely on the mind, their host, which
Following its notions, grasps at marks:
This is inversion and not True Suchness.

Worldly theories and languages
Are all based on discriminations.

Not a single phenomenon among them
Gains entry to the Dharma nature.

The force of conditions and that which pursues them
Brings myriad phenomena into being.
Ephemeral, they soon vanish without pausing for an instant.
This continues in thought after thought.

At that time, Manjushri Bodhisattva asked Jeweled Leader Bodhisattva, “Disciple of the Buddha, all sentient beings alike are composed of the four elements. They are devoid of a self or anything pertaining to a self. Why then do some undergo suffering and some enjoy bliss; why are some respectable and others unseemly; why are some good within and others good without; why do some receive little while others receive much, sometimes receiving a direct retribution, sometimes receiving a delayed retribution, while within the Dharma Realm, there actually is no beauty or ugliness?”

Then Jeweled Leader Bodhisattva answered in verse.

According to what is done,
Appropriate consequences are borne.
The doer is without any being:
That is what all Buddhas say.

As a clear, bright mirror,
According with what confronts it,
Reflects each exact image:
Such is the nature of karma.

Or, as seeds sown in a field,
Are mutually unaware,
Yet are able to simultaneously sprout:
Such is the nature of karma.

Or, as a skilled illusionist,
Who stands at the crossroads
Displaying a multitude of disguises:
Such is the nature of karma.

As a mechanical man,
Which can emit many different sounds,
Yet possesses neither a self nor a non-self:
Such is the nature of karma.

And as the myriad kinds of birds,
Although all hatched from eggs,
Are each endowed with distinct sound:
Such is the nature of karma.

Just as in the womb,
All faculties are formed,
Yet these physical features have no source:
Thus, too, is the nature of karma.

And it follows that throughout the hells,
All the various experiences suffered there,
Are without a place of origin.
And the nature of karma is also that way.

Although a wheel-turning king
Possesses the seven splendid jewels,
No source of their origin can be found:
Just so is the nature of karma.

And were all the worlds
Consumed by a massive conflagration,
That fire would have no source:
Thus, again, is the nature of karma.

At that time, Manjushri Bodhisattva asked Virtuous Leader Bodhisattva, “Disciple of the Buddha, all the Thus Come Ones enlighten to only one Dharma. Why then do they explain innumerable Dharmas; why do they appear in innumerable Buddhalands; why do they transform innumerable sentient beings; why do they expound with innumerable different sounds; why do they manifest innumerable bodies; how do they know the innumerable minds; why do they demonstrate innumerable spiritual penetrations; how can they universally cause innumerable worlds to quake; how can they display innumerable exquisite adornments; and, how can they manifest an infinite variety of states of being, while within the Dharma nature, these distinctive marks all cannot be obtained?”

Then Virtuous Leader Bodhisattva answered in verse.

Disciple of the Buddha, what you ask about
Is profound and difficult to fathom.
Wise Ones are able to know
And find constant joy in the Buddhas’ virtues.

As the Earth is of a single nature
That allows sentient beings upon it their individuality,
Yet the Earth has no thoughts of difference:
Thus, too, is all Buddhas' Dharma.

As fire is of a single nature
That enables it to consume things,
Yet the flames do not discriminate;
Thus, too, is all Buddhas' Dharma.

As the sea is of one nature
That forms myriad different waves,
Yet the water does not distinguish the variations;
Thus, too, is all Buddhas' Dharma.

And as the wind is of one nature
That enables it to blow upon anything,
Yet the wind makes no differentiations;
Thus, too, is all Buddhas' Dharma.

And as huge thunderclouds
Universally shed rain over the earth,
Yet their raindrops do not discriminate:
Thus, too, is all Buddhas' Dharma.

Or, as the singular locale of earth,
Is able to sprout all kinds of plants,
Yet, the earth makes no differentiations:
Thus, too, is all Buddhas' Dharma.

Also, as the sun, when not obscured by clouds,
Universally shines throughout the ten directions,
Yet, the nature of its light is without differentiation:
Thus, too, is all Buddhas' Dharma.

And, as the moon in space
Can be seen everywhere in the world
Yet the moon itself does not go to those places:
Thus, too, is all Buddhas' Dharma.

And as the Great Brahma Lord,
Appears in response throughout the trichiliocosm,
Yet his body is not of several different sorts:
Thus, too, is all Buddhas' Dharma.

At that time, Manjushri Bodhisattva asked Vision Leader Bodhisattva, “Disciple of the Buddha, given that the field of blessings of the Thus Come Ones is impartial and without disparity, how then is it that sentient beings can be seen with different rewards for having given? That is to say, their complexions, physical builds, homes, faculties, wealth, domains of rulership, retinues, offices, meritorious virtues, and wisdom all differ. Given that, how can the Buddhas’ attitude toward them be impartial and non-differentiating?”

Then Vision Leader Bodhisattva answered in verse.

Just as the Great Earth in its oneness,
Corresponding to each seed, nurtures a sprout,
Without thoughts of like or dislike,
Thus, too, is the Buddhas’ field of blessings.

Just as water is of a single flavor,
Yet differs as to the vessel which contains it,
Thus, too, is the Buddhas’ field of blessings:
Differences are only due to beings’ minds.

Or, as a master magician,
Is able to delight an audience,
Thus, too, does the Buddhas’ field of blessings,
Inspire reverence and joy in sentient beings.

As a talented and wise king,
Can make the populace happy,
So, too, can the Buddhas’ field of blessings,
Make the multitudes peaceful and happy.

As a clean, bright mirror
Reflects exact images of what appears before it.
So, too, does the Buddhas’ field of blessings,
According to beings’ minds, effect myriad rewards.

Just as the herb agada,
Can cure one of every poison,
So, too, the Buddhas’ field of blessings
Does relieve the distress of every affliction.

Just as the sun at dawn
Spreads illumination throughout the world.
So, too, the Buddhas’ field of blessings
Does dispel all darkness.

Just as the clear, full moon
Universally sheds light o'er the vast earth,
Thus, too, the Buddhas' field of blessings
Does extend to all places equally.

Just as a vairambha tempest
Can cause the entire Earth to shudder,
So, too, the Buddhas' field of blessings,
Moves the Three Realms' sentient beings.

Just as a conflagration,
Can burn up every kind of thing,
So, too, the Buddhas' field of blessings,
Can burn up all that which is conditioned.

At that time, Manjushri Bodhisattva asked Diligence Leader Bodhisattva,
“Disciple of the Buddha, given that the Buddhas' teaching is one teaching, why is it that when beings see and hear it, they do not all sever the bonds of afflictions and free themselves? Why is it that, although there is no distinction in their form skandhas, feeling skandhas, cognition skandhas, formations skandhas, and consciousness skandhas—throughout the desire, form, and formless realms—nor in their ignorance, greed, and passion, yet some derive benefit from the Buddhas' teaching, while others do not?”

Then Diligence Leader Bodhisattva answered in verse.

Disciple of the Buddha, listen well,
And I will now answer truthfully.
Why is it some soon gain liberation,
While others have trouble getting free?

In seeking to expel and eliminate
Limitless past evil deeds,
One must in the Buddhadharma be,
Courageous and constantly vigorous.

Suppose there were only a tiny flame;
Wet sticks would cause it to quickly die out.
Within the Dharma taught by the Buddhas,
So, too, is it for one who is lax.

Or, suppose to make fire, one rubbed wood together,
But stopped to rest before it was produced.

The potential for fire with the stopping would die.
So, too, is it for one who is lax.

Or, if one held a crystal under the sun,
But failed to use tinder to catch the reflection.
Consequently no fire could be obtained.
So, too, is it for one who is lax.

Or, suppose out in the bright sunshine,
A young child shut his eyes,
And then asked absurdly, “Why can’t I see?”
So, too, is it for one who is lax.

Or, suppose one without hands or feet,
Wished to use a blade of grass
To pierce and break the great earth asunder.
So, too, is it for one who is lax.

Or, suppose one used the tip of a hair,
To dip out water from the ocean,
Wishing to render it completely dry.
So, too, is it for one who is lax.

Or, suppose the kalpic fire ignited,
And one hoped to put it out with a little water.
Within the Dharma taught by the Buddhas,
So, too, is it for one who is lax.

Or, as when someone gazes into space,
And physically does not move,
Yet says that he can soar through the air.
So, too, is it for one who is lax.

At that time, Manjushri Bodhisattva asked Dharma Leader Bodhisattva, “Disciple of the Buddha, as the Buddha has said, any sentient being who receives and upholds the Proper Dharma, can be rid of all affliction. Why, then, is it that some receive and uphold the Proper Dharma, but still fail to sever themselves from them? Instead, they succumb to greed, hatred, delusion, arrogance, covering, indignation, animosity, jealousy, stinginess, deceit, and obsequiousness. Compelled by the intensity of such afflictions, they have no thought to separate from them. How is it that one can receive and uphold the Dharma and still within the activity of one’s mind, give rise to all those afflictions?”

Then Dharma Leader Bodhisattva answered in verse.

Disciple of the Buddha, listen well
To the true meaning of that which you ask.
But not merely by means of much learning,
May one enter the Thus Come One's Dharma.

As a person floating on water,
Who, for fear of drowning, dies of thirst,
So is one who does not practice the Dharma,
But only amasses much learning.

As one who prepares a lavish feast,
Is hungry himself and yet does not eat,
So is one who does not practice the Dharma,
But only amasses much learning.

As one who is skilled at dispensing medicine,
But is unable to cure his own illness,
So is one who does not practice the Dharma,
But only amasses much learning.

As one who counts others' riches,
But himself owns not half a cent,
So is one who does not practice the Dharma,
But only amasses much learning.

As someone born in a king's palace
Nonetheless suffers from hunger and cold,
So is one who does not practice the Dharma,
But only amasses much learning.

As a deaf musician
Delights others with what he cannot hear
So is one who does not practice the Dharma,
But only amasses much learning.

As someone blind who paints pictures,
Cannot see what he depicts for others,
So is one who does not practice the Dharma,
But only amasses much learning.

As a master pilot of a ship
Still ends up dying in the sea,
So is one who does not practice the Dharma,
But only amasses much learning.

As someone who stands at a crossroads
Vastly proclaims a host of good deeds,
But possesses no true virtue himself:
So is one who does not practice.

At that time, Manjushri Bodhisattva asked Wisdom Leader Bodhisattva, “Disciple of the Buddha, given that within the Buddhadharma wisdom is foremost, why then does the Thus Come One, for the sake of sentient beings, sometimes praise giving, sometimes praise upholding precepts, sometimes praise patience, sometimes praise vigor, sometimes praise dhyana-samadhi, and sometimes praise wisdom? Why did he sometimes praise kindness, compassion, joy, and giving? And why is there never anyone who, by means of only one single dharma, gains transcendence and realizes anuttara-samyaksambodhi?”

Then Wisdom Leader Bodhisattva answered in verse.

Disciple of the Buddha, how rare you are!
You know what is on sentient beings’ minds.
As to the principle of which the Humane One asks,
Listen well as I now explain.

In ages past and times to come,
As well as in the present, no guiding master
Speaks only a single dharma
To help beings attain the Way.

The Buddha knows sentient beings’ minds
Are uniquely different in nature.
Based on what they need to be saved,
He speaks Dharma for them accordingly.

To those who are stingy, he praises giving.
To those who transgress rules, he praises morality.
To those with much anger, he praises tolerance.
To those who like to be lazy, he praises vigor.

To the scattered, he praises dhyana concentration.
To the foolish, he praises wisdom.
To the inhumane, he praises sympathetic kindness.
To the angry and malicious, he praises great compassion.

To the sorrowful, he praises sympathetic joy.
To the crooked-minded he praises renunciation.

One should cultivate successively in this way,
Gradually perfecting all the Buddhas' Dharmas.

As one first must set the foundation,
In order to build a palace,
So, too, giving and precepts are
Basic for all Bodhisattva practices.

As a city wall is built
In order to protect the populace,
So, too, do patience and vigor
Guard and protect all Bodhisattvas.

As a great and powerful king,
Is honored by the entire country,
So, too, samadhi and wisdom are
What all Bodhisattvas rely on.

Just as a wheel-turning king
Can bestow happiness upon his subjects,
So, too, the Four Unlimited Aspects of Mind
Can bring joy to all Bodhisattvas.

At that time, Manjushri Bodhisattva asked Worthy Leader Bodhisattva, "Disciple of the Buddha, all Buddhas, World Honored Ones, were liberated by means of a single path. Why, then, do we perceive that the Buddhas' lands, and their multitudes of deeds, are all different, with none the same? That is to say: their worlds, the sentient beings in them, the Dharma that they speak to tame and regulate beings, their life spans, the light they emit, their spiritual powers, their assemblies, the ways in which they teach, and the durations of their Dharma are all different. And yet, not one has failed to perfect all of the Buddhadharma and to realize anuttarasamyaksambodhi."

Then Worthy Leader Bodhisattva answered in verse.

Manjushri, the Dharma is always like this:
The Dharma Kings transcended with only one Dharma.
Everyone who unburdens himself
Can escape birth and death on this One Path.

Each and every Buddha's body
Is the one Dharma body;
They are of one mind and one wisdom.
Their powers and fearlessnesses are also thus.

Based upon their original wish to seek bodhi
And all their dedications of merit,
They attain a corresponding kind of Buddhaland,
With its assemblies and Dharma proclamations.

The lands of all Buddhas
Are adorned to perfection.
According to beings' different practices,
Their perceptions are likewise different.

The Buddhas' lands together with the Buddhas' body,
Their assemblies, including what they speak,
As well as all Buddhas' Dharmas,
Cannot be seen by sentient beings.

But, once their minds are made pure,
And all their vows perfected,
They reach complete understanding
And are thereby able to see.

According with what makes them happy,
As well as their karmic retributions,
Sentient beings perceive things differently.
This is due to the Buddhas' awesome spiritual power.

The Buddhlands are devoid of distinctions,
Of dislikes and of fondnesses.
It is only due to the sentient beings' minds
That differences are perceived.

Within the mundane world,
What each one perceives is different.
All the Thus Comes Ones,
The Great Immortals, are not to blame for this.

Within each and every world,
Those who are ready to be transformed
Constantly see the hero among men.
Thus is the Dharma of all Buddhas.

At that time, all those Bodhisattvas said to Manjushri Bodhisattva, "Disciple of the Buddha, we have each finished speaking about what we understand. We only hope that the Humane One, using wonderful eloquence, will extensively elucidate all the states of the Thus Come Ones.

“What is the state of being of a Buddha like? What are the causes of the states of a Buddha like? What are the states of a Buddha’s rescuing like? What is the entry into the state of a Buddha like? What is the wisdom of the state of a Buddha like? What are the dharmas of the state of a Buddha like? What are the words of the state of a Buddha like? What is the knowledge of the states of a Buddha like? What is the realization of the state of a Buddha like? What are the manifestations of the state of a Buddha like? What is the vastness of the state of a Buddha like?”

Then Manjushri Bodhisattva answered in verse.

The Thus Come Ones’ profound state
Is equal in measure to empty space.
All sentient beings enter within it,
Yet actually nothing is entered.

The Thus Come Ones’ profound state,
Results from sublimely wonderful causes.
Describing them ceaselessly for a million eons
Would still not elucidate them all.

Attuned to sentient beings’ wisdom, the Buddhas
Induce them to advance, to gain good benefit;
In that way they rescue sentient beings.
Such is the state of all the Buddhas.

Into every land in all the worlds,
The Buddhas enter in accord with beings there.
Yet those beings are unable to perceive
The Buddhas’ formless wisdom body.

The Buddhas’ wisdom is free and at ease,
Unimpeded in the Triple Realm.
This state of their wisdom
Is equal and impartial, just like space.

The Dharma Realm and the realms of sentient beings
Are ultimately undifferentiated,
And yet are fully understood.
Thus is the Thus Come Ones’ state.

All the different sounds
Throughout the various worlds,
The Buddhas, in their wisdom, constantly discern,
Without making any distinctions.

Imperceptible to our subjective consciousness,
This state cannot be cognized by the mind.
It is from the clarity of the pure, inherent nature
That instructions to benefit beings well forth.

Without karma, without afflictions,
With nothing whatsoever, and no place to dwell,
Without reflection or any activity,
They travel impartially through all worlds.

The minds of all sentient beings,
Exist throughout the three periods of time.
The Thus Come Ones, in a single thought,
Comprehends them one and all.

At that time, in this Saha world, all sentient beings' distinct dharmas, distinct karma, distinct worlds, distinct bodies, distinct dispositions, distinct births, distinct results from maintaining precepts, distinct results from violating precepts, and distinct results of lands, were clearly manifested by the Buddhas' spiritual power.

Just as to the east, in hundreds of thousands of millions of nayutas of numberless, measureless, boundless, incomparable, innumerable, inestimable, inconceivable, immeasurable, ineffable worlds pervading space throughout the Dharma Realm, all sentient beings' distinct dharmas, up to and including their distinct results of lands, were clearly manifested by the Buddhas' spiritual power, so, too, was this the case in the south, west, north, the four intermediate directions, above, and below.