

Commentary on
the Treatise on the Sutra of
the Buddha of Immeasurable Life with
the Verses of Aspiration for Birth in the Pure Land

Composed by Bodhisattva Vasubandhu

Annotated by Master Tanluan

Part Two

44 Now I will discuss [the significance of the verses of aspiration].

The above statement opens the commentary section and in it there are ten themes:

1. The general meaning of the verses of aspiration for birth.
2. Practicing contemplation and producing a settled mind.
3. The objects of the contemplation practice.
4. The pure adornments originating in the Vow-mind.
5. The skillful means to guide sentient beings.
6. Removing the obstacles to enlightenment.
7. Upholding the mind for attaining enlightenment.
8. The mutual inherence of the names and their essence.
9. The fulfillment of the practice undertaken for the aspiration for birth.
10. Accomplishing the practice for the benefit of oneself and the benefit of others.

‘I will discuss’ signifies Vasubandhu’s interpretation, that is to say, he intends to deliberate on the meaning of the verses. It also means the expression of the words that make up the sentences below. It is to discuss the meaning of the verses. Hence, he says, ‘I will discuss ...’.

45 Regarding the general meaning of the virtues of aspiration for birth:

What is the significance of the verses of aspiration for birth? It is to reveal the contemplation of the Land of peace and Happiness, thereby seeing Amida Tathagata, out of an aspiration for birth in that land.

46 Regarding the chapter on practicing contemplation and producing a settled mind, this is further divided into two: first, to show the power of the five mindful practices, and second, to present the five gates of mindfulness.

47 Regarding ‘to show the power of the five mindful practices’:

How should one contemplate that land and awaken the entrusting heart? If a good man or woman accomplishes the practices of the five gates of mindfulness, he or she will eventually be born in the Land of Peace and Happiness and see Amida Buddha.

48 Regarding 'to present the five gates of mindfulness':

What are the five gates of mindfulness? They are: first, the gate of worship, second, the gate of praise, third, the gate of aspiration, fourth, the gate of contemplation, and fifth, the gate of directing virtue.

A 'gate' is that through which one enters and leaves. Thus through a gate one goes in and out without hindrance. The practices of the first four gates of mindfulness are the gates of entrance to the Pure Land of Peace and Happiness, and the last gate of mindfulness is that through which one goes out to convert people with compassion.

49 How does one worship? One worships by one's bodily acts Amida the Tathagata, Arhat, and Perfectly Enlightened One.

All Buddha-tathagatas have immeasurable virtues. Since they have immeasurable virtues, their virtuous epithets are immeasurable. If one wishes to enumerate them all, no amount of pen and paper would suffice. Therefore, the sutras sometimes set forth only ten epithets for them, and at other times mention only three epithets. They represent only the essential virtues of the Buddha, and so how could all of them be expressed fully?

The so-called three epithets are Tathagata, Arhat, and Perfectly Enlightened One. A Tathagata is one who comprehends reality as it is and preaches it as it is. Like all the other Buddhas, this Buddha too has come from ultimate peace and tranquility and will never to into future state of delusory existence. This is why Amida Buddha is called Tathagata, 'the one who has come from Thusness'.

An Arhat is one who is 'worthy of offerings'. Since the Buddha has rid himself completely of evil passions and has obtained omniscient wisdom, he is one who is worthy of receiving offerings by all sentient beings in the world.

A Perfectly Enlightened One is one who realizes that all dharmas are, in reality, indestructible, nonarising, and nondecaying. What is meant by 'indestructible'? It means that they are beyond the reach of our mental activities and transcend the ways and means of language. Since all dharmas are immovable like nirvana, the one who realizes it is called Perfectly Enlightened One.

The meaning of 'Unhindered Light' was already explained in the comment on verse above.

50 One worships Amida by one's bodily acts ... out of an aspiration for birth.

Why does the *Treatise* say this? Although it is the principle of bodhisattvas to constantly worship all the Buddhas in the ten directions three times during the day and three times during the night, it is not always an expression of their wish to be born in those Buddha-lands. In this case, however, because we are constantly expressing our desire for birth, we worship Amida Tathagata.

51 How does one praise and extol? One praises and extols by one's verbal acts.

To praise 讚 is to laud, and to extol 嘆 is to sing in praise. Praising and extolling have to be done by means of oral activity, hence, 'verbal acts'.

52 One says the Name of the Tathagata in accord with the Tathagata's light, which is the embodiment of wisdom. One wishes to be in correspondence with the significance of the Name by practicing in accord with reality.

'One says the Name of the Tathagata' means to say the Name of the Tathagata of Unhindered Light. Concerning 'in accord with the Tathagata's light, which is the embodiment of wisdom', the Buddha's light is the manifestation of wisdom. This light is completely unimpeded in shining throughout the worlds of the ten quarters, and it dispels the darkness of ignorance of the sentient beings there. It is not like the light of the sun, the moon, or a gem, which dispels only the darkness of an enclosure.

Concerning 'in accord with the significance of the Name, as I wish to be in correspondence with it by practicing in accord with reality', the Name of the Tathagata of Unhindered Light dispels all the ignorance of sentient beings and fulfills all their aspirations. But there are some whose ignorance still remains and their aspirations are not fulfilled even though they say the Name and are mindful of Amida. It is because they do not practice in accord with reality and are not in correspondence with the significance of the Name. Why is their practice not in accord with reality and not in correspondence with the significance of the Name? Because they do not know that the Tathagata is the body of true reality and further, the body for the sake of beings.

Further, there are three aspects where they are lacking correspondence [with the significance of the Name]. In the first, their entrusting heart is not genuine, for at times it appears to exist and at other times not to exist. In the second, their entrusting heart is not single, for it lacks decisiveness. In the third, their entrusting heart is not enduring, for it is disrupted by other thoughts. These three aspects act reciprocally among themselves and mutually give rise to each other. Because their entrusting heart is not genuine, it lacks decisiveness. Because it lacks decisiveness, it is not enduring. Further, because it is not enduring, they do not realize the entrusting heart that is decisive. Because they do not realize the entrusting heart that is decisive, it is not genuine. The opposite of this is expressed as 'to be in correspondence [with the significance of the Name] by practicing in accord with reality'. For this reason, the author of the *Treatise* states at the outset, 'I, with the mind that is single'.

Question: A name is like a finger pointing at something. Suppose the finger is pointing at the moon. If saying the Name of the Buddha can indeed fulfill one's aspiration, a finger pointing to the moon should be able to dispel the darkness. But if a finger pointing to the moon cannot dispel the darkness, how then can saying the Name of the Buddha fulfill one's aspiration?

Answer: Things have myriad differences and cannot be lumped together. There are cases where the name corresponds to the thing it expresses, and there are cases where the name is at variance with the thing it expresses.

Among the cases where the name corresponds to the thing it expresses, there are the names of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the reciting of *prajñāpāramitā*, as well as other dharani verses, spells, and chants. For example, it is like the incantation, *Ri chu dong fang zha chi zha huang*, for curing a swelling. It will cure the swelling even if one says this between five in the evening and eleven at night, not just at the time of sunrise. Again, when one confronts an enemy in battle, if he says, *Lin bing dou zhe jie zhen lie qian xing*, once with clenched teeth, he will not be hit by any of the five weapons due to this nine-character incantation. The *Baopuzi* regards it as the essential way of martial arts. When one who is suffering from cramps receives treatment with quince, it will relieve them. Then there is a person who simply says the name, 'flowering quince', and it will relieve them.

as well. I have experienced it myself. Such things are familiar to us and well-known to everyone. How much more so the name of the realm of the inconceivable! The above-stated metaphor of the drum to which the dispelling elixir is applied is one example of this. Here I will not repeat it because it was already mentioned.

Among the cases where the name is at variance with the thing it expresses are those where the name is like the finger pointing at the moon.

53 How does one aspire? One aspires constantly in one's heart. With the mind that is single, one wishes ultimately to be born in the Land of Peace and Happiness. One desires to practice samatha in accordance with reality.

Samatha is often translated 'stopping'. Here, 'stopping' means 'stopping the mind' on a single point and not letting it do evil.

Though this translation is not contrary to the general sense of the original word, it does not sufficiently convey the specific sense of it. Why does it not? For instance, we use it when we say 'stopping' the mind at the tip of one's nose. We also use it when we mean 'stopping' greed in the meditation on impurity, when we mean 'stopping' anger in the meditation on compassion, and when we mean 'stopping' ignorance in the meditation on cause-and-condition—these are all called 'stopping'. We even use 'stopping' when a person is about to go somewhere and does not. Therefore, we know that the use of the word 'stopping' is ambiguous and so does not fit the true sense of samatha. Camellias, mulberries, elms, and willows are all called 'trees', but if we only use the word 'tree', how can we tell elms from willows?

In this way, when samatha is meant by 'stopping', it has three connotations. Firstly, if one exclusively thinks of Amida Tathagata through single-hearted aspiration for being born in that land, the names of the Tathagata and his land 'stop' all evils. Secondly, the Land of Peace and Bliss surpasses the three delusory worlds, and so when one is born in that land, one's evil acts in body, speech, and mind naturally 'stop'. Thirdly, Amida Tathagata's power sustained by his enlightenment naturally 'stop' one's aspiration for attaining the stages of sravaka and pratyekabuddha. These three kinds of 'stopping' are produced out of the Tathagata's virtues that accord with reality. Hence, "One desires to practice samatha in accordance with reality".

54 How does one contemplate? One contemplates that land out of wisdom and right-mindedness. One wishes to practice vipasyana in accordance with reality.

Vipaśyanā is translated as 'contemplation', but again, as stated above, simply defining it as 'contemplation' is not sufficient to convey its true sense. Why is it not? Because 'contemplation' is also used for the meditation on impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and non-self, as well as on the nine aspects, and so on. As stated above, if we use only the word 'trees', how can we tell camellias from mulberries?

Further, vipasyana as 'contemplation' has two implications. Firstly, in the contemplation of the virtues of the three kinds of adornments, since these virtues are in accord with reality, the practitioner gains true and real virtue. The true and real virtue is what definitely determines one's birth in that land. Secondly, when one is born in the Pure Land, one spontaneously sees Amida Buddha. Now as a bodhisattva who has yet to realize the pure mind, but who will ultimately attain the

dharma-body of equality, one will ultimately realize the tranquility and equality of nirvana like the bodhisattvas of pure mind and the bodhisattvas of higher states. Hence, “One wishes to practice vipasyana in accordance with reality”.

55 The contemplation is of three kinds: the first is to contemplate the virtues that adorn the Buddha-land; the second is to contemplate the virtues that adorn Amida Buddha; and the third is to contemplate the virtues that adorn the bodhisattvas in that land.

To contemplate 觀 is to let the mind focus on something, and to visualize 察 is to see the object of contemplation clearly.

56 How does one direct virtue? While constantly aspiring in the heart never to abandon any sentient being in suffering, one takes the directing of virtue to them as foremost. This is because one wishes to fulfill the mind of great compassion.

The directing of virtue is of two kinds: the aspect for going forth to the Pure Land and the aspect for return to this world. ‘The directing of virtue in the aspect for going forth’ means that, upon giving one’s virtues to all sentient beings, one aspires to bring them all to go forth and be born in Amida Tathagata’s Pure Land of Peace and Happiness. ‘The directing of virtue in the aspect for return to this world’ means that after being born in that land, upon fulfilling samatha and vipasyana and gaining the power of compassionate means, one returns and enters the thick forests of birth-and-death, where one teaches and guides all sentient beings and brings all to enter the Buddha-way together. Whether with regard to the aspect for going forth or the aspect for return, all is entirely for the sake of pulling up sentient beings and delivering them across the ocean of birth-and-death. Thus, “one takes the directing of virtue as foremost. This is because one wishes to fulfill the mind of great compassion”.

57 The objects of the contemplation practice are of two kinds: one is the Land, and the other is the beings in that Land. Concerning the Land, it has again three components: first, the Land itself, second, its manifestation of self-benefit and benefiting others, and third, the assimilation into the ultimate reality.

58 Concerning the Land itself:

How does one contemplate the virtues that adorn the Buddha-land? Since the virtues that adorn the Buddha-land have been fulfilled by the inconceivable power, their nature is to be compared and contrasted to the wish-fulfilling mani-jewel.

‘Inconceivable power’ indicates the inconceivability of the power of the virtues possessed by the Buddha-land’s seventeen kinds of adornment. The sutras teach that there are five kinds of inconceivabilities: first, the inconceivable number of sentient beings; second, the inconceivable karmic power; third, the inconceivable power of dragons; fourth, the inconceivable power of meditation; fifth, the inconceivable power of Buddha Dharma.

Concerning the Buddha-land’s inconceivability in the *Treatise*, there are two kinds of power. The first is the karmic power of Dharmākara Bodhisattva, the Pure Land as the fruition of his supramundane roots of good and the effective power of his great Vow. The second is the sustaining

power of Amida, the perfectly enlightened Dharma-king, by which the Pure Land is embraced. This inconceivability is described as the seventeen kinds of adornments of Amida's Land, each of which is inconceivable, and will be explained in their respective passages later.

"Their nature is to be compared and contrasted to the wish-fulfilling mani-jewel", describes the inconceivable nature of the Buddha-land of Peace and Happiness, which is likened to the nature of the jewel. When Buddhas enter nirvana, they continue to benefit sentient beings out of the residual power of skillful means remaining in their relics. When the benefit of the relics to sentient beings is exhausted, the relics turn into wish-fulfilling mani-jewels. Usually these jewels are found in the great ocean and used for the necklaces of great dragon kings. When a Cakravartin king appears in this world, out of his power of compassionate means he obtains this jewel and widely benefits the beings in Jambudvīpa. When he wishes to provide them with things such as clothing, food and drink, lamps, and musical instruments, the king practices abstinence, and mounts the jewel on the tip of a long pole, vowing that "If you indeed see me to be a true Cakravartin king, O Jewel, then grant me my wish and let all these things rain down from the sky as widely around as one *li*, ten *li*, or a hundred *li*". At that instant, these myriad things fall from the sky and fulfill the wishes of all people in the world. This is due to the power of the jewel. The Buddha-land of Peace and Happiness is exactly like this, because all the characteristics of the nature of Peace and Happiness are fulfilled in various ways.

'To be compared and contrasted to' indicates that the power of the jewel rains down clothes, food and so on according to the desires of those who want them. There is nothing that they get without first wishing for it. However, this is not the way the Buddha-land works. Because its nature is perfectly complete and fulfilled, there is nothing lacking. Since the nature of the jewel is lacking, I used the expression 'to be compared and contrasted to'. In addition, although the jewel can grant people's wishes for clothes, food and so on, it can never provide them with their aspiration for the supreme enlightenment. Again, although the jewel can grant people's wishes for one's self only, it can never grant this aspiration for the supreme enlightenment to innumerable people. Because of these countless differences, I used the expression 'to be compared to'.

59 Concerning the contemplation of the virtues that adorn the Buddha-land, there are seventeen kinds of fulfillment. What are the seventeen? They are:

1. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of purity.
2. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the immeasurable.
3. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of nature.
4. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of appearance.
5. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of diversity.
6. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of magnificent illumination.
7. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of softness.
8. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the three elements.
9. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of rain.
10. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of light.
11. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of wondrous sound.
12. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the lord.
13. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the fellow beings.
14. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of enjoyment.
15. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of being free from all afflictions.
16. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the gate of the great principles.
17. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of all aspirations being fulfilled.

Each of the fulfillments described above will be explained below.

60 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of purity, the gatha states:

Contemplating that world in light of its features
I see that it transcends the say things are in the three worlds.

Why is this inconceivable? When foolish beings possessed of blind passions attain birth in the Pure Land, they are no longer bound by the karmic fetters of the three worlds. That is, without severing their blind passions, they realize nirvana itself. Is there any way this can be conceived?

61 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the immeasurable, the gatha states:

It is infinite, like space,
Vast and boundless.

Why is this inconceivable? If humans and devas in that land wish to have palaces or pavilions, whether these edifices extend one yojana or a hundred yojanas or a thousand yojanas, and whether there are a thousand or ten thousand chambers to them, they can have them as they wish. Everyone's wishes are thus fulfilled. Again, there are sentient beings in the worlds of the ten quarters who wish to be born in that Land, who have been born already, who are now being born, or who will be born there. Even if one were to spend some hours or days calculating, one will never be able to determine the number of those who are born in that Land. And yet this world, being always like space, has no feeling of being cramped or congested. The beings in that Land, living in such a spacious environment, have aspirations that are as vast and without bounds as space itself. The vastness of that Land perfects the vastness of scale of the minds of the beings there. Is there any way this can be conceived?

62 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of nature, the gatha states:

The great compassion of true enlightenment
Is born from supramundane roots of good.

Why is this inconceivable? It is like the *karagura* bug. Although it is usually very small, when it takes in the power of the wind, its body swells up as huge as a mountain. How large or small its body grows depends on the power of the wind. It is the same for sentient beings born in the Land of Peace and Happiness. Those born in the world of true enlightenment perfect the supramundane roots of good and enter the stage of the truly settled. It is like the wind of that Land that gives shape to the body without being the body itself. Is there any way this can be conceived?

63 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of appearance, the gatha states:

It is filled all over with pure light
Like a mirror or the sun and the moon.

Why is this inconceivable? Beauty of form is attained through patience—such external beauty being a reflection of the mind. However, once one is born in that Land, the mind no longer projects such differences as anger or patience. That is why the features and figures of beings there are equally exquisite. This is due to the working of the pure light of that Land. The light of that Land is not the result of the working of the mind, and yet it functions as if it were the mind. Is there any way this can be conceived?

64 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of diversity, the gatha states:

It is composed of all kinds of precious treasures
And is adorned with wondrous ornaments.

Why is this inconceivable? The diverse adornments in that Land, whether they be of one kind of treasure, ten kinds of treasures, or a hundred thousand kinds of treasures, are not out of accord to the wishes of one's mind. If one wishes them to disappear, they vanish immediately. One can do it freely as one wishes in one's mind, which at times exceeds divine power. Is there any way this can be conceived?

65 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of magnificent illumination, the gatha states:

The pure light, blazing fiercely,
Shines brilliantly all over the world.

Why is this inconceivable? When the light illumines things, it penetrates both sides, front and back. When it illumines one's mind, it dispels ignorance at once. This means that the light is performing the Buddha's work. Is there any way this can be conceived?

66 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of softness, the gatha states:

The jewel ornaments are soft and pliant
Like grasses bending to the right and left.
The pleasant sensation produced by touching them
Surpasses that when one touches *Kācilindika* grass.

Why is this inconceivable? Gemstones are usually solid and hard, but the jewels in the Pure Land are soft and pliant. The jewels of that Land are pleasant to touch. Moreover, these jewel ornaments of the Pure Land increase our aspiration for the Way. This is like the Buddha's work performed by Priyankara. Is there any way this can be conceived?

Once there was a bodhisattva named Priyankara, whose outward appearance was so wonderful and dignified that it caused people to be filled with admiration and attachment to him. Even so, a sutra states that those who were attached to him would be born in the heavenly realms and awaken the mind aspiring for enlightenment.

67 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the three elements, you should know that there are three elements. What are the three? They are water, earth, and space.

The reason why these three are treated together is that they are in the same categories. Why is this so? Firstly, they belong to the same category of the six great elements, that is, space, consciousness, earth, water, fire, and wind. Secondly, they belong to the category of the five great elements of non-consciousness, that is, earth, water, fire, wind, and space. However, the reason why only three elements are mentioned above is that the element of consciousness belongs to the realm of sentient beings, the element of fire does not exist in the Pure Land, and the element of wind is not mentioned because it can neither be seen nor does it rest anywhere. Therefore, only these three elements that are to adorn the Pure Land are treated together as a set selected from among the categories of the six elements and the five elements.

68 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of water, the gatha states:

Myriad varieties of jeweled flowers
Are scattered over the ponds, streams, and fountains.
When a soft breeze stirs the flowers and leaves,
The lights emitted are intricately blended.

Why is this inconceivable? Because the humans and heavenly beings in the Pure Land do not live on water and grain, and so why do they need water? In addition, the Pure Land is perfected with purity, so they do not need water to wash anything. The four seasons do not exist there, and since they are never bothered by the heat, why would they need water to cool themselves? There is no need for water and yet there is water in the Pure Land. There must be a reason for this. It is stated in the *Larger Sutra*:

If the bodhisattvas and sravakas in that land enter these jeweled pools and wish the water to cover their feet, the water will cover their feet at once. If they wish it to reach their knees, it will reach their knees. If they wish the water to reach their waists, it will reach their waists. If they wish the water to bathe their bodies, it will spontaneously bathe their bodies. If they wish the water to recede, it will recede accordingly. The temperature of the water is cool or warm just as they wish.

The water refreshes the mind and comforts the body, washing away the grime of one's heart. It is so clear, pure, and serene that it appears invisible. The jeweled sands on the bed are so bright that they shine through the water no matter how deep the water may be. Rippling streams of water gently meander, flowing into each other. Their movement is quiet and peaceful, neither too slow nor too fast.

Innumerable ripples arise, producing spontaneously wondrous sounds, which one can hear in accordance with one's wishes. One will hear sounds praising 'Buddha', sounds praising 'Dharma', and sounds praising 'Sangha'. One will hear sounds praising 'tranquility', 'emptiness and no substance', 'great compassion', 'paramitas', and 'Buddha's ten powers, fearlessness, and special qualities'. One will again hear sounds praising 'supernatural powers and wisdom', 'nonactivity', 'neither arising nor perishing', 'nonorigination of all existence', and so forth, until one hears sounds praising 'the sprinkling of nectar on the head' and other sounds of the wonderful Dharma. Hearing these sounds as one wishes, one rejoices without bound.

One who hears these voices comes in accord with the principles of purity, nondesire, tranquility, and truth and reality. Likewise, one comes in accord with the Three Treasures, Buddha's ten powers, fearlessness, and special qualities. One also comes in accord with the supernatural powers and

wisdom, and with the practices that bodhisattvas and sravakas perform. Even the names of the three evil realms of suffering do not exist there; only delightful sounds are heard naturally. This is why the land is called Peace and Happiness.

In this way, the water performs the Buddha's work. How can this be conceived?

69 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of earth, the gatha states:

The palaces and pavilions command a view of
The worlds of the ten quarters without obstruction;
Various kinds of trees radiate different colors
And jeweled balustrades surround the entire land.

Why is this inconceivable? It is because the various features in that land are perfectly adorned with one, ten, one hundred, or innumerable sorts of treasures according to the wishes of one's mind. These adornments are like clear mirrors completely reflecting the pure and defiled features of the Buddha-lands of the ten quarters, as well as their good and bad karmic conditions. Since the humans and devas there witness these facts, the resolution of doing only good and not committing evil is spontaneously cultivated in them. Again, these adornments are like the treasure-crowns of the great bodhisattvas which illumine the Dharma-nature of all things. The great bodhisattvas see all the Buddhas in their crowns and at once become awakened to the true nature of all things.

Further, it is like the time when the Buddha expounded the *Lotus Sutra*. He emitted a ray of light from between his eyebrows that illumined the eighteen thousand lands in the eastern direction in a golden color. It revealed all the consequences of the life of beings in the six realms from Avīci hell to Highest Heaven, the conditions for their receiving good or bad karma, and the results, good or bad. The present case of the earth in the Pure Land is exactly like this. All that is reflected in such a way performs the Buddha's work. How can this be conceived?

70 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of space, the gatha states:

Nets interwoven with countless treasures
Are spread in the sky.
All kinds of bells ring out,
Producing the sound of the wondrous Dharma.

Why is this inconceivable? It is stated in the *Larger Sutra*:

The Buddha-land is overspread by countless jeweled nets entirely decorated with gold lace, pearls, and a hundred thousand kinds of rare and precious treasure. Extending everywhere in the four directions of the land, the nets are hung with jeweled bells that shine brilliantly with utmost splendor. Virtuous breezes arise spontaneously and blow gently. They are mild and moderate, neither too cold nor too hot; they are soft and refreshing, neither too slow nor too fast. When the breezes waft through the nets and among the jeweled trees, they produce countless wondrous sounds of the Dharma and spread thousands of elegant and sublime fragrances all around. In all those who smell them, the impurities and defilements of blind passions spontaneously cease to arise. When the

breezes touch their bodies, they all attain the same pleasure [as a bhikṣu who has entered the samādhi of total extinction].

Thus the sounds perform the Buddha's work. How can this be conceived?

71 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of rain, the gatha states:

Adorned with falling flowers and robes raining down from above,
The land is filled with numerous varieties of fragrance.

Why is this inconceivable? It is stated in the *Larger Sutra*:

Further, when the breezes blow, flowers are scattered all over the Buddha-land. They naturally group themselves according to color and do not become mixed up. Soft and lustrous, they emit a rich fragrance. When one steps on them, one's foot sinks four inches, and when the foot is lifted, the flowers become restored to their former state. When the flowers have served their purpose, the ground opens up and they disappear, leaving no trace on the clean ground. In due time, the breezes blow again, scattering flowers in the same way. This is repeated six times a day. Moreover, lotus flowers made of all kinds of jewels are strewn everywhere in that world. Each jeweled flower has a hundred thousand kotis of petals, sending out rays of light of countless kinds of colors. Those of blue color emit blue radiance; those of white color emit white radiance. Likewise, the black, yellow, red, and purple ones each emit their own color of light. The brightness of those lights is so magnificent that it outshines the sun and the moon.

From within each flower, thirty-six hundred thousand kotis of rays of light shine. From within each ray of light, thirty-six hundred thousand kotis of Buddhas appear. They have bodies of purple-gold and superb physical characteristics and marks. Each Buddha releases a hundred thousand rays of light and expounds the exquisite, wonderful Dharma for all sentient beings in the ten quarters. Each of those Buddhas securely establishes countless beings on the right Buddha-way.

Thus the rain of flowers performs the Buddha's work. How can this be conceived?

72 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of light, the gatha states:

The Buddha's wisdom is bright and pure like the sun,
Dispersing the darkness of ignorance in the world.

Why is this inconceivable? The light of Amida's Pure Land arises from the Tathagata's wisdom. When touched by the light, the darkness of one's ignorance is necessarily dispelled. Though the light is not wisdom itself, it does the working of wisdom. How can this be conceived?

73 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of wondrous sound, the gatha states:

Is pure sound deeply enlightens beings far and wide;
Subtle and wondrous, it is heard throughout the ten quarters.

Why is this inconceivable? It is stated in a sutra: "If one only hears of the purity and happiness of that land and earnestly desires to be born there, one will attain birth in the Pure Land and immediately enter the stage of the truly settled". This shows that the land's very name performs the Buddha's work of saving others. How can this be conceived?

74 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the lord, the gatha states:

Amida, the perfectly enlightened,
Who is its Dharma-king, abide and sustains it with his good.

Why is this inconceivable? Amida, the perfectly enlightened, surpasses conceivability. The Pure Land of Peace and Happiness is sustained by the power of the good of Amida, the perfectly enlightened. How can this be conceived?

'Abide' means not to change or perish, and 'sustain' means to keep from being scattered or lost. If a salve that prevents spoilage is applied to seeds, they will neither rot though laced in water, nor burn though placed in fire, and later, under proper conditions, they will sprout immediately. Why? Because of the salve's power. People, once born in the Pure Land of Peace and Happiness, later conceive in their hearts the wish to be born in the three worlds to teach and guide sentient beings. They then abandon their life in the Pure Land and receive birth in accord with their aspiration. Though they are born into the [water or] flames of various births in the three worlds, the seed of supreme enlightenment will never rot. Why? Because they are sustained by the good of Amida, the perfectly enlightened.

75 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the fellow beings, the gatha states:

The beings of the Tathagata's pure lotus
Are born transformed from the lotus of perfect enlightenment.

Why is this inconceivable? In this world of miscellaneous modes of birth, whether one is born from womb, egg, or moisture or by sudden metamorphosis, such beings are not few in number. These beings experience pain and pleasure in myriad variation because of their diverse karmas. In the Land of Peace and Happiness, every single being is born transformed from the pure lotus of Amida Tathagata's perfect enlightenment, for they are the same in practicing the nembutsu and follow no other way. This extends even to this world, such that all nembutsu practitioners within the four seas are brothers and sisters. The fellow beings are innumerable. How can this be conceived?

76 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of enjoyment, the gatha states:

Enjoying the taste of the Buddha Dharma,
They partake of meditation and samadhi as their food.

Why is this inconceivable? They do not eat, and yet their lives are sustained. There should be a reason their lives are being sustained in this way. It is not because the Tathagata fulfilled the Primal Vow in that way? Their lives are being sustained by riding on the Buddha's Vow. How can this be conceived?

77 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of being free from all afflictions, the gatha states:

Forever free from physical and mental afflictions,
They constantly enjoy pleasure without interruption.

Why is this inconceivable? A sutra states that the body is the vessel of pain, and the mind is the receptor of agony. In that land, however, the body and mind experience only continuous pleasure. How can this be conceived?

78 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the gate of great principle, the gatha states:

In the world of the good of Mahayana, all beings are equal,
And not even the words of disparagement exist.
Nor is anyone born there as
A woman, or disabled, or one having the seeds of two vehicles.

We should know that the reward of the Pure Land is free from the defect of the two kinds of disparagement: one is the beings, and the other is their names. The three kinds of beings who do not exist there are: 1. those of the two vehicles. 2. women, and 3. the disabled. Since these three kinds of beings do not exist there, it is said to be free of disparagement. There are also the three kinds of disparaging terms. Since the three kinds of beings do not exist, likewise even those disparaging terms do not exist. Furthermore, the three kinds of terms, such as those of the two vehicles, women, and the disabled, are unknown. This is why the land is said to be free of disparaging words. 'Equal' means being equal in appearance.

Why is this inconceivable? Though heavenly beings use the same kind of plate, the food they are served is different in its color according to the merits they have accumulated. Once Śākyamuni touched the ground with his toe to show us that what may appear as rubble to some is actually made of gold. In this way, although there are initially nine grades among those aspiring for birth, once in the Pure Land, there are no distinctions among them whatever. It is like the waters of the Tzu and Sheng becoming one in taste upon entering the sea. How can this be conceived?

79 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of all aspirations being fulfilled, the gatha states:

All that sentient beings desire
Are perfectly fulfilled in that land.

Why is this inconceivable? If humans and devas in that land desire to visit innumerable Buddha-lands in other worlds and make offerings to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas there, there is nothing that they wish for that will not be granted. All their wishes will be fulfilled even if they wish to leave their lives in the Pure Land to be born in other lands and wish to control the length of their

lives there freely. Suppose they have not reached the bodhisattva stage of unrestricted freedom, even so they can still similarly manifest it freely. How can this be conceived?

80 Concerning manifesting the self-benefit and benefiting others:

So far I have briefly explained the fulfillment of the seventeen kinds of adornments of the Land of Amida Buddha, which reveals the perfection the virtuous power of the Tathagata's benefiting himself and benefiting others.

'Briefly' implies that the innumerable virtues of the Pure Land cannot be limited to these seventeen kinds. If Mount Sumeru were to enter into a mustard-seed, or a pore of the skin were to contain an ocean, is this because of the miraculous power of Mount Sumeru or of the pore? It is solely because of the miraculous power of the omnipotent Tathagata. Hence, although the seventeen adornments may be regarded as those for benefiting others, they are clearly the result of self-benefit.

81 Concerning assimilation into the ultimate reality is:

The adornments of the Land of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life are the wondrous manifestations of the ultimate reality. I have explained the sixteen aspects following the one aspect. This should be known.

While ultimate reality is the principle governing the existence of the Buddha, reality here indicates the objects of contemplation. Therefore, Vasubandhu describes sixteen objects of contemplation as the wondrous manifestations of ultimate reality. Concerning this, I will later explain the meaning of entering into the phrase 'one-dharma'. 'Following the one aspect' reveals the contemplation on the pure nature and other aspects of the Land. The seventeen objects which are comprised of the first comprehensive and the other sixteen individual practices, are in due order of their practice of contemplation. How does one start the contemplation?

It is stated in the opening verses of aspiration for birth in the Pure Land:

I take refuge in the Tathagata of Unhindered Light
And aspire to be born in the Land of Peace and Happiness.

Concerning this, there is one question that arises:

Birth is the source of one's existence, and therefore the origin of various forms of bondage. How can one terminate it if one were to discard it and aspire for another birth?

In order to clarify this, one should contemplate the fulfillment of the virtuous adornments of the Pure Land. The Pure Land is the place where the 'birthless birth' is realized through the working of Amida Tathagata's pure Primal Vow. It is unlike the tree worlds where delusory births occur.

Why is this so? It is because the Dharma-nature is purity itself that it is ultimately no-birth. When we speak of birth in the Pure Land, the word 'birth' is used in the conventional way of speaking of those who aspire to it. If birth is really no-birth, how can such birth ever be exhausted?

And if 'birth' were to be exhausted, one would forfeit the bodhisattva body of saving others while remaining in the state of non-activity and would be stricken by the disease of Hinayana view of the threefold emptiness or the negation of emptiness. Because the root of enlightenment is lost forever, it causes people to cry out so loudly as to shake the triple-thousand great thousand worlds. Since they cannot turn around and come back to Mahayana, it brings shame to them. Thus, the Pure Land was established for making us realize the true significance of 'birth'.

The structural features of the Pure Land is clarified by the above seventeen objects of contemplation. They are classified into two categories, general and specific. The first category represents the general aspect of the Land. It reveals that the Buddha-land of Purity surpasses the three worlds. What are the distinguishing features of the Land which reveal that it surpasses the three worlds? They are the sixteen specific aspects of the fulfillment of the virtuous adornments following the first general one. The first of these is it is infinite like space because the Pure Land is vast and boundless. Once we become aware of its immeasurability, the question arises as to what it is based on. For this reason, we should contemplate its nature. At that point we realize that its nature lies in its essence. In other words, the Pure Land has arisen from the great compassion of the right path that is the supramundane root of good. Since we have mentioned the supramundane root of good, a question arises as to what appearance it assumes. Therefore, next we should contemplate the adornment of appearance. Once we have come to know its appearance, we should know everything it entails. Therefore, next we should contemplate the adornment of the virtue of diversity. Once we have come to know the Pure Land in all its diversity, we should come to know its magnificent illumination. On this basis, let us next contemplate the magnificent illumination. Once we have contemplated the magnificent illumination, we should come to know what sensations this illumination evokes. On this basis, let us next contemplate the sensation of softness. Once we have contemplated the tactile sensations of softness, we should come to know the visual sensation. On this basis, let us next contemplate the three elements of the adornments of water, earth, and space. Once we have contemplated the visual sensation, we should come to know the olfactory sensation. On this basis, let us next contemplate the fragrance of the robes and flowers. Once we have contemplated the visual and olfactory sensations, we should come to know that they are free of defilement. On this basis, let us next contemplate the brilliant light of the Buddha's wisdom shining on them. Once we have contemplated the purifying power of the wisdom light, we should come to know how far the Buddha's Name reaches. On this basis, let us next contemplate its far-reaching and pure sound. Once we have contemplated the sound of the Name, we should come to know whom we should depend on. On this basis, let us next contemplate who is the central Buddha. Once we have contemplated who is the central Buddha, we should come to know who are the Buddha's fellow beings. On this basis, let us next contemplate those fellow beings. Once we have contemplated those fellow beings, we should come to know how they enjoy the virtues. On this basis, let us next contemplate the virtue of enjoyment. Once we have contemplated the virtue of enjoyment, we should come to know whether or not they are freed of afflictions. On this basis, let us next contemplate the absence of any affliction. Once we have contemplated the absence of affliction, we should come to know why it is so. On this basis, let us next contemplate the gate of the great principle. Once we have contemplated the gate of the great principle, we should come to know whether or not it fulfills our aspirations. On this basis, let us next contemplate the virtue of all aspirations being fulfilled.

Further, these seventeen kinds of contemplation are not merely to dispel our doubts. Through contemplating the fulfillment of the seventeen kinds of adornments, it serves to awaken true and pure belief, and enables us to unfailingly attain birth in that Buddha-land of Peace and Happiness.

82 Question: When we discussed above that birth in the Pure Land is 'birthless birth', only those in the highest rank can comprehend this. However, when it comes to those of the lowest grade of the lowest rank who attain birth through saying the nembutsu ten times, will they not regard it as an actual birth? If so, they will surely fall into two kinds of hindrances whereby, first, they will probably not attain birth in the Pure Land, and second, even if they should attain birth, they will entertain a deluded view of it.

Answer: It is like placing a pure mani-jewel in muddy water and the water instantly becomes clean. Even if a person were amidst the evils and defilements that would cause innumerable births-and-deaths, when one hears Amida Tathagata's Name of no-birth, which is like the supreme and pure mani-jewel, and throws it in the defiled mind, one's evil will be destroyed and the mind purified, and one will surely attain birth in the Pure Land. It is also like a mani-jewel wrapped in black or yellow cloth and cast into water, and then the water instantly turns into black or yellow in accordance with the cloth. Now in that pure Buddha-land, there is the most peerless jewel of Amida Tathagata. If it is wrapped in the cloth of immeasurable glorious adornments fulfilled with Amida's virtues and thrown into the waters of the mind of those who have attained birth in the Pure Land, is it not possible for the person's deluded view of actual birth to change into the wisdom of birthless birth? It is also like making fire on ice. The ferocity of the fire will melt the ice, and the ice will extinguish the fire. In the same way, if a person of the lowest rank cherishes aspiration for birth in the Pure Land through pronouncing the Buddha's Name, even though he does not know that Dharma-nature is of no-birth, the fire of false view of actual birth will be spontaneously extinguished because that land is the land of no-birth.

83 The section on the beings in the Pure Land is divided into two: first, contemplation of the Buddha, and second, contemplation of bodhisattvas.

84 The contemplation of the Buddha is:

How does one contemplate the fulfillment of the virtues that adorn the Buddha? Concerning the contemplation of the fulfillment of the virtues of the Buddha, there are eight aspects.

The significance of this contemplation is clarified in the aforementioned verses.

85 What are the eight?

1. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the seat.
2. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the bodily acts.
3. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the verbal acts.
4. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the mental acts.
5. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the great assembly.
6. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the leader.
7. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the lordship.
8. The fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of sustaining without any futility.

86 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the seat, the gatha states:

Innumerable great kings of jewels
Comprise the wondrous, pure lotus throne of Amida.

If one wishes to contemplate the seat, consult the *Contemplation Sutra*.

87 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the bodily acts, the gatha states:

As soon as his aureole extends one fathom from his body
His figure transcends that of all other beings.

If one wishes to contemplate the seat, consult the *Contemplation Sutra*.

Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the verbal acts, the gatha states:

The Tathagata's voice is exquisite,
Its august tones resounding throughout the ten quarters.

Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the mental acts, the gatha states:

Just like earth, water, fire, wind, and space,
He has no thought of discrimination.

'No thought of discrimination' means that the Buddha has no mind of discrimination.

Ordinary beings produce karma through the three acts of body, speech, and mind, and so much sentient beings transmigrate throughout the three worlds without end. For this reason, Buddhas and bodhisattvas adorn their own three acts with virtue and, by doing so, they cure the falsehood and delusions of the three acts of sentient beings. How do they cure those three acts?

Out of distorted views of the body, sentient beings receive a body of the three evil realms, a body of lowly status, a body mean and ugly, a body with eight hindered existences, or a body that transmigrates endlessly. When such sentient beings contemplate the light emanating from Amida Tathagata's body with excellent features, all of them are liberated from the above-stated various kinds of karmic bodies. They then enter the home of the Tathagata and ultimately attain the activity of body that is virtually equal to the Tathagata.

Out of arrogance, sentient beings slander the right Dharma, defame the character of sages, and scorn their elders. As a result, such people will suffer the pain of having their tongues pulled out, the pain of loss of speech, the pain of not having their opinions accepted by others, and the pain of not having their names recognized. When such sentient beings who have suffered such pain hear Amida Tathagata's Name of transcendent virtues and the voice of the Dharma, all of them are liberated from the above-stated various kinds of karmic speech. They then enter the home of the Tathagata and ultimately attain the activity of speech that is virtually equal to the Tathagata.

Out of distorted views, sentient beings produce the mind thinking in discriminative categories. This consists of such categories as arising or nonarising, negation or affirmation, beautiful or ugly, good or bad, and this or that. Through discriminative thinking, such people will always be drifting through the three worlds of existence where they suffer from such discrimination and undergo various kinds of pain. It is as if they are slumbering through the long night of ignorance with no chance of leaving it behind. When such sentient beings encounter Amida Tathagata's light of equality or hear of the activity of the Tathagata's mind of equality, all of them are liberated from the above-stated various kinds of karmic mind. They then enter the home of the Tathagata and ultimately attain the activity of mind that is virtually equal to the Tathagata.

Question: Since the mind has a function to perceive, how can it not give rise to perception just as earth, water, fire, and wind do not?

Answer: Although the mind has a function to perceive, when it enters the true reality, it conforms itself to non-knowing. It is like a snake: although it is crooked by nature, when it enters a bamboo tube, it becomes straight. It is also like the human skin: when it is pricked with a pin or stung by a bee, it perceives pain, but if it is bled with a leech, or cut by a razor-sharp sword, it does not perceive pain. As such, whether the mind perceives or not depends on how it is causally conditioned by outside factors. Thus, since perception conforms itself to external causal conditions, there is neither knowing nor non-knowing in one's mind.

Question: If the mind can enter the true reality, it should conform itself to non-knowing. Then why does non-knowing mean all-knowing wisdom?

Answer: The ordinary mind has the function to perceive, and yet there are things it does not perceive. But since the sacred mind conforms itself to non-knowing, there is nothing it does not know. Thus, what the mind knows when it dwells in the state of non-knowing—that is precisely non-knowing.

Question: You just said that in the wisdom of non-knowing, there is nothing that the mind does not know. Then if there is nothing that the mind does not know, then is it not a case of knowing all things rather than non-knowing? And if the mind knows all things, how can you say that it does not make distinctions?

Answer: The varied appearance of all things is like an illusion magically created. Though a magically-created elephant and horse are not without differences, as far as their long necks, noses, and legs are concerned, would a wise man who sees them make the distinction and say this is an elephant and this is a horse?

88 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the great assembly, the gatha states:

Devas and humans, the immovable ones,
Are born from the ocean of pure wisdom.

Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the leader, the gatha states:

Like Sumeru, the king of mountains,
The Tathagata is supreme, wondrous, and unequalled.

Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the lordship, the gatha states:

Devas and humans, the valiant ones,
Worship, circumambulate, and adore the Buddha.

89 Concerning the fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of sustaining without any futility, the gatha states:

Contemplating the power of the Buddha's Primal Vow,
I see that no one who encounters it passes it by in vain;
It quickly brings to fullness and perfection
The great treasure ocean of virtues.

The fulfillment of the virtue of sustaining without any futility refers to the power of Amida Tathagata's Primal Vow. The meaning of 'sustaining without any futility' will be revealed by briefly illustrating with examples that sentient beings' activities are futile and cannot be sustained.

There was a man who scrimped on his meals for the sustenance of a warrior, but was betrayed by him on a boat. There was another man who filled his storehouse with piles of gold, but there was no way for him to avoid starving to death. Everything that we see in the world is like this. Even if we were to obtain something, it is as if we had obtained nothing. Whatever we may have, we are unable to keep. Everything is a product of our futile efforts and so there is nothing that we can sustain.

Sustaining without any futility is based on the Forty-eight Vows that Dharmākara Bodhisattva made in the past in the causal stage and on Amida Tathagata's transcendent powers freely working in the present. The Vow has not been made in vain; the power has not been actualized in futility. The Power and the Vow gives rise to the power; the power has not been actualized in futility. The Power and the Vow accord with each other and are never in conflict, hence, the 'fulfillment' of this virtue.

90 When they see the Buddha, the bodhisattvas who have yet to realize pure mind will ultimately attain dharma-body of equality. They will ultimately realize tranquility and equality like the bodhisattvas of pure mind or the bodhisattvas of higher stages.

'Dharma-body of equality' refers to bodhisattvas of the eighth stage or above, who have bodies arising from dharma-nature. The 'tranquility and equality' is the dharma of tranquility and equality. Because they realize this dharma of tranquility and equality, they are termed 'dharma-body of equality'. Because bodhisattvas of dharma-body of equality attain it, it is called 'dharma of tranquility and equality'. These bodhisattvas attain the samadhi called 'arising as the fruit of dharma-body'. With the transcendent powers of this samadhi, they are able, while remaining in one place, to be everywhere throughout the worlds of the ten quarters in one instant, at the same time, and to make offerings in various ways to all the Buddhas and the ocean of beings in the Buddha's great assemblies. They can, in places throughout the innumerable worlds where there is no Buddha, no dharma, and no sangha, manifest themselves in various forms to teach, guide, and bring all sentient beings to emancipation, thus ever performing Buddha's work. From the very beginning, however,

they have no thought of going and coming, no thought of making offerings, no thought of emancipating. For this reason this body is called dharma-body of equality. This dharma is called dharma of tranquility and equality.

Bodhisattvas who have yet to realize pure mind are the bodhisattvas of the first to the seventh stages. These bodhisattvas are, again, able to manifest bodies, in a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million, or a hundred thousand million lands where there is no Buddha, and to perform Buddha's work. However, it is necessary for them to enter into samadhi through exertion of mind; they are not without such exertion. Because of this exertion of mind, they are said to be 'bodhisattvas who have yet to realize pure mind'. If such bodhisattvas aspire to be born in the Pure Land of Peace and Happiness, and are born there, instantaneously they can see Amida Buddha there. When they see Amida Buddha, they become ultimately equal in body and equal in dharma to all bodhisattvas of the higher stages. It is precisely for this reason that Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna and Bodhisattva Vasubandhu aspired for birth there.

Question: In reflecting on the *Sutra of the Ten Stages*, I find that the bodhisattvas' advance through stages is attained only after gradually acquiring immeasurable merit over numerous kalpas. How is it that, if they see Amida Buddha, they become ultimately equal in body and equal in dharma to bodhisattvas of the higher stages?

Answer: Ultimately does not mean 'immediately equal'. Ultimately, without fail, they will be equal and, for this reason, they are said to be equal.

Question: If they are not immediately equal, how can they be called the bodhisattvas of the higher stages? When bodhisattvas attain the first stage, then by gradually advancing they will naturally become equal to the Buddhas. How can it be provisionally said that they are equal to the bodhisattvas of the higher stages?

Answer: Within the seventh stage, bodhisattvas attain great tranquility. Above, they see no Buddhahood that must be attained; below, they see no sentient beings who must be saved. They abandon the Buddha-way and wish to realize reality-limit immediately. At that time, if they do not receive encouragement through the transcendent powers of the Buddhas of the ten quarters, they fall into the nirvana that is not different from that of the two vehicles. When bodhisattvas are born in the Land of Peace and Happiness and see Amida Buddha, they do not have this problem. Hence, they are 'ultimately equal'.

Further, among Amida Tathagata's Primal Vows in the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life* is the following:

When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas of other Buddha-lands who come to be born in my land will ultimately and unfailingly attain the stage of succession to Buddhahood after one lifetime. Excepted are those who, in accordance with their original vows to guide others freely to enlightenment, don the armor of universal vows for the sake of sentient beings, accumulate roots of virtue, emancipate all beings, travel to Buddha-lands to perform bodhisattva practices, make offerings to all the Buddha-tathagatas throughout the ten quarters, awaken sentient beings countless as the sands of the Ganges, and bring them to abide firmly in supreme, true enlightenment. Such bodhisattvas surpass those in the ordinary bodhisattva stages in carrying out practices. In reality, they cultivate the virtue of Samantabhadra. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

Reflecting on this sutra passage, we may infer that the bodhisattvas of that land do not advance from stage to stage. What is spoken of as the process of the ten stages is merely an accommodated method of guidance that Śākyamuni Tathagata used in this Jambudvīpa continent; what necessity is there that it be thus in the pure lands of other quarters? Among the five inconceivabilities, the Buddha-dharma is the most inconceivable. If one says that bodhisattvas must necessarily advance from stage to stage, and that there is no principle of advancing by leaps, then one still lacks understanding.

There is a tree called 'great firmness'. It takes one hundred years for this tree to send forth a shoot from the ground, but when it does it grows one hundred yards a day. It grows thus day by day. How can its height after a hundred years even be compared to tall pines? Since pine trees grow no more than an inch a day, people hearing of this 'great firmness' tree surely doubt it can grow thus in a single day. Likewise, a person hearing that Śākyamuni Tathagata brought a man to realization of arhatship with but one sermon, or brought another to insight into the nonorigination of all existence even before they sat down to breakfast, will take this as words of inducement and not a presentation of fact. Hearing the above exposition of the *Treatise*, one will surely not believe it. Extraordinary words do not find entrance into the ears of the ordinary, since they think it cannot be so. That cannot be helped.

91 I have briefly explained eight passages, showing that the Tathagata's virtues and adornments for self-benefit and benefiting others have been fulfilled in due order. Reflect on this.

What is the due order? The previous seventeen passages were on the fulfillment of the adornments of the virtues of the land. Since we already know the features of the land, we must know who the master of that land is. For this reason let us next contemplate the virtues of the Buddha's adornments. What are the adornments of this Buddha and where does he sit? On that basis, first let us contemplate his seat. Once we have come to know the seat, then we must know more about the master who sits there. On that basis, let us contemplate the Buddha's adornment of bodily acts. Once we have come to know the bodily acts, we must know what name to say. On that basis, let us contemplate the Buddha's adornment of verbal acts. Once we have come to know the Name that is heard, we must know how the Name was acquired. On that basis, let us contemplate the Buddha's adornment of mental acts. Once we have come to know that the Buddha, who possesses these three acts, is the great teacher of human beings and devas, we must know who should be able to receive his guidance. On that basis, let us contemplate the virtue of the great assembly. Once we have come to know the countless virtues possessed by the great assembly, we must know more about who the leader is. On that basis, let us contemplate the leader. Once we have come to know the leader, we must note that it is not a matter of seniority. On that basis, let us contemplate the master. Once we have come to know the master, we must know more precisely what supreme virtue the master possesses. On that basis, let us contemplate his adornment of sustaining without any futility. This concludes the due order in which the eight passages are established.

92 Concerning the contemplation on the bodhisattvas:

How does one contemplate the fulfillment of the virtues that adorn the bodhisattvas? Concerning the contemplation of the fulfillment of the virtues that adorn the bodhisattvas, when contemplating those bodhisattvas, you should reflect on the fact that they possess the fulfillment of virtues resulting from the performance of four kinds of right practice.

Suchness is the true essence of all existence. When the bodhisattvas perform practice based on suchness, it is non-practice. Practicing while not practicing is termed 'practicing in accord with reality'. Suchness in essence is simply one, but when this oneness is applied based on its significance, it is divided into four. On this basis, the four practices are unified as one true essence.

93 What are these four? First, without moving themselves bodily from one Buddha-land, the bodhisattvas go throughout the ten quarters, assuming various transformed bodies and practicing in accord with reality, and thus constantly performing the Buddha's work.

As the gatha states:

The Land of Peace and Happiness, pure and immaculate,
Is where the undefiled wheel is turning constantly.
The transformed Buddhas and bodhisattvas there are like suns.
And abide immovable like Mount Sumeru.

This is to make the lotus flowers from the muddy ponds of sentient beings blossom.

Bodhisattvas of the eighth stage and above abide constantly in samadhi, and with the power of samadhi, they go throughout the ten quarters without moving their bodies from their original place, making offerings to the Buddhas and teaching and converting sentient beings. The undefiled wheel is the virtue of the stage of Buddhahood. The virtue of the stage of Buddhahood is undefiled neither by blind passions nor by their residue. For the sake of all bodhisattvas, Amida Buddha constantly turns this wheel of Dharma. And with this wheel of Dharma the great bodhisattvas awaken and guide all beings to enlightenment without even brief rest. Hence it is said that the wheel is turning constantly. The dharma-body is like the sun, and the light of its transformed bodies pervades all the worlds. Since the sun is inadequate for expressing immovability, it is further said to abide immovable like Mount Sumeru.

Concerning lotus flowers from the muddy ponds, the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* states, "The lotus does not grow in the solid ground of highlands, but in the muddy ponds of the lowland marshes". This is an analogy meaning that when foolish beings who live in the mud of blind passions are awakened and guided by bodhisattvas, they are able to put forth the lotus flowers of the Buddha's perfect enlightenment. Truly they make the Three Treasures flourish and keep them ever from decline.

94 Second, their transformed bodies, at every moment, neither before nor after, radiate in one moment with one mind a great light that reaches everywhere throughout the worlds of the ten quarters, where they teach and guide sentient beings. They perform practices and acts with a variety of skillful means and eradicate the pain of all sentient beings.

As the gatha states:

The undefiled adornment of light,
In one thought-moment and at the same time,
Illuminates the assemblies of the Buddhas everywhere
And benefits all sentient beings.

Earlier it was stated that the bodhisattvas reach everywhere without moving. This might be taken to mean that in going about, there is a succession of before and after. Therefore it is said here, in one moment and at the same time, as well as without before or after.

95 Third, in all worlds, without exception, they illumine the great number of the Buddhas and their great assemblies. Without exception, vastly and incalculably, the bodhisattvas make offerings and pay homage to the Buddha-tathagatas and praise their virtues.

As the gatha states:

Showering them with heavenly music, flowers, robes, and excellent fragrances,
They make offerings to the Buddhas
And praise their virtues
Without any discriminative thought among them.

Without exception means that they go to all worlds and all the assemblies of the Buddhas everywhere, and that there is not one world or assembly they do not reach.

Sengchao states:

The dharma-body, being formless, takes on all forms. Further, it conforms with the ultimate expression. It being without words, profound writings spread more and more widely. Deep and subtle means, being without calculation, work to bring about the benefiting of beings.

It is precisely this that is meant here.

96 Fourth, in whatever places throughout the worlds of the ten quarters where the Three Treasures do not exist, they sustain and adorn the great ocean of virtue of the treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and manifesting themselves everywhere, they lead beings to the realization of practice in accord with reality.

As the gatha states:

In whatever world
Where the treasure of virtue of the Buddha Dharma does not exist,
My wish is for all to attain birth in the Pure Land,
And so I will deliver the Buddha Dharma to them like the Buddha.

The preceding three passages speak of 'reaching everywhere', but they all refer to lands where there are Buddhas. If the virtue expressed in this passage were lacking, the dharma-body would not wholly be dharma, and the supreme good would not wholly be good. This concludes the section on practice of contemplation on the features.

97 Next is the fourth section of the explanation of the meaning of the gatha titled 'The pure adornments originating in the Vow-mind'. Concerning the phrase, 'The pure adornments originating in the Vow-mind', the *Treatise* states:

Previously I have explained the act of observing the fulfilled virtue of the Buddha-land's adornments, the fulfilled virtue of the Buddha's adornments, and the fulfilled virtue of the bodhisattvas' adornments. These three kinds of fulfillment are adornments produced by the Vow-mind. Reflect on this.

Concerning the phrase, 'Reflect on this', we should reflect that these three types of fulfilled adornments were originally accomplished by the adorning activity of the pure Vow-mind expressed as the Forty-eight Vows. Hence, because the cause is pure, the fruition is also pure. It is not that there is no cause or that there is some other cause.

98 It is because, in brief, they enter into the phrase 'one-dharma'.

The preceding seventeen phrases on the land's adornments, eight phrases on the Tathagata's adornments, and four phrases on the bodhisattvas' adornments are termed 'the extensive'. That they enter into the phrase 'one-dharma' is termed 'the brief'. Why is it explained that the extensive and the brief interpenetrate? Because all Buddhas and bodhisattvas have dharma-bodies of two dimensions: dharma-body as suchness and dharma-body as compassionate means. Dharma-body as compassionate means arises from dharma-body as suchness, and dharma-body as suchness emerges out of dharma-body as compassionate means. These two dimensions of dharma-body differ but are not separable; they are one but cannot be regarded as identical. Thus, The extensive and the brief interpenetrate, and together are termed 'dharma'. If bodhisattvas do not realize that the extensive and the brief interpenetrate, they are incapable of both self-benefit and benefiting others.

99 The phrase 'one-dharma' is the phrase 'purity'. The phrase 'purity' is 'true and real wisdom, or uncreated dharma-body'.

These three phrases mutually interpenetrate one another in turn. For what reason is the phrase 'one-dharma' termed 'dharma'? Because it is pure. For what reason is the phrase 'purity' so termed? Because it is true and real wisdom, or uncreated dharma-body. True and real wisdom is the wisdom of reality. Since reality is formless, true wisdom is non-knowing, or absolute wisdom. The uncreated dharma-body is the body of dharma-nature. Because dharma-nature is tranquility, dharma-body is formless. Since it is formless, it never fails to manifest itself in every kind of form. For this reason, the adornments of the Buddha's features and marks are themselves the dharma-body itself. Because it is non-knowing, or absolute wisdom, it never fails to know all things. Therefore, all-knowing wisdom is itself true and real wisdom. The fact that the true and real is termed wisdom shows that wisdom is neither not-active nor is it not, non-active. The fact that dharma-body is described as uncreated shows that dharma-body is neither not-form nor is it not, not-form. When negation is negated, how can the negation of negation be an affirmation? Indeed, it is only non-negation, or absolute negation, that is affirmation. It is affirmation in and of itself, without anticipation of negation of affirmation. It is neither relative affirmation nor relative negation: one hundred negations cannot disclose it. This is what is expressed in the phrase 'purity'. The phrase 'purity' refers to the true and real wisdom or uncreated dharma-body.

100 This purity has two aspects. Reflect on this.

In the mutual interpenetration of phrases discussed before, we saw that through one-dharma, purity is entered. Through purity, dharma-body is entered. Now, purity is divided and two aspects are set forth, hence, 'Reflect on this'.

101 What are the two aspects? The first is the purity of the land, and the second is the purity of the beings. The purity of the land refers to the seventeen kinds of fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the Buddha-land explained earlier. These are called the purity of the land. The purity of the beings refers to the eight kinds of fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the Buddha and the four kinds of fulfillment of adornment of the virtue of the bodhisattvas. These are called the purity of the beings. Thus the phrase 'one-dharma' holds the significance of these two kinds of purity. Reflect on this.

'Beings' are bodies that are individual recompense; the land is enjoyment that is shared recompense. Body and enjoyment are not one, hence, 'Reflect on this'. All dharmas, however, are produced from the mind; there is no other realm. Thus, beings and land are neither different nor identical. They are not identical, for they are distinct in meaning; they are not different, for they are the same purity. 'Vessel' refers to enjoyment. Because the Pure Land is what is enjoyed by those pure beings, it is termed 'vessel'. If an impure vessel is used for pure food, because the vessel is impure, the food becomes impure. If a pure vessel is used for impure food, because the food is impure, the vessel becomes impure. The two must both be clean in order to be called pure. In this way, one term 'purity' invariably embraces two aspects.

Question: The 'purity of the world as sentient beings' refers to the Buddha and bodhisattvas. Is it possible for human beings and devas there to be included in the purity?

Answer: They may be termed pure, but they are not actually pure. Consider, for example, that sages who have renounced homelife are called 'bhiksu' because they have slain the villainous blind passions, but those renouncing homelife who are yet foolish beings are also called 'bhiksu'. It is like this. Further, a prince who is to be anointed possesses at birth the thirty-two characteristics of excellence of a cakravartin king and the seven treasures belong to him. Although he cannot yet perform the kingly offices, still he is called 'cakravartin king', for he is certain to become king. So it is with all those human beings and devas of the Pure Land. They join the truly settled of the Mahayana and ultimately realize dharma-body of purity. Because they are bound to realize it, they may be called 'pure'.

102 Concerning 'grasping and guiding by skillful means', the *Treatise* states:

Such bodhisattvas, by practicing samatha and vipasyana, whether extensively or briefly, attain the mind that is soft and gentle.

The mind that is soft and gentle: by harmoniously performing the practices of calming the mind and discerning the real, by which they observe the extensive and the brief, they realize the mind of nonduality. It is like water holding a reflection; purity and stillness help each other in bringing it about.

103 They know all things, extensively and briefly, as they truly are.

They know all things as they truly are: they know all things in their true reality. Of the twenty-nine phrases of the extensive and the one phrase of the brief there is none that is not true reality.

104 In this way, they fulfill the directing of virtue through skillful means.

In this way: in such a way that the extensive, discussed first, and the brief, discussed after, are all true reality. Because they know true reality, they know the characteristics of the false state of sentient beings of the three worlds. Because they know the false state of sentient beings, they awaken true and real compassion. Because they know the true and real dharma-body, they give rise to the true and real taking of refuge. Compassion, taking refuge, and skillful means are discussed below.

105 What is the bodhisattvas' directing of virtue through skillful means? With all the virtues and roots of good that they accumulate through the five kinds of practice, such as worship and so on, they do not seek to dwell in bliss for their own sake, but think only of freeing all sentient beings from pain. Hence, they aspire to take up all sentient beings so as to be born together with them in the Buddha-land of Peace and Happiness. This is termed the fulfillment of the bodhisattvas' directing of virtue through skillful means.

In reflecting on the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life* taught at Rājagṛha, it is clear that although among the three levels of those who are born some are superior in practice and some inferior, not one has failed to awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment. This mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment is the mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood. The mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood is the mind to save all sentient beings. The mind to save all sentient beings is the mind to take up sentient beings and bring them to birth in the land where the Buddha is. Thus, the person who aspires to be born in the Pure Land of Peace and Happiness must unfailingly awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment. Suppose there is a person who, without awakening the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment, simply hears that bliss is enjoyed in that land without interruption and desires to be born there for the sake of the bliss—such a person will not be able to attain birth. Thus it is said, "They do not seek to dwell in bliss for their own sake, but think only of freeing all sentient beings from pain". To dwell in bliss means that the Pure Land of Happiness is sustained by the power of Amida Tathagata's Primal Vow, and that the enjoyment of bliss is without interruption.

In general, the term the directing of virtue may be interpreted as meaning that the bodhisattvas give all the virtues they have gathered to sentient beings and bring them to enter the Buddha-way together. 'Skillful means' is that the bodhisattva vows, "With the fire of wisdom, I shall consume the grasses and shrubs of all sentient beings' blind passions. If there is even one sentient being who does not attain Buddhahood, may I not become a Buddha". It is not until there are no sentient beings left to become Buddha that a bodhisattva becomes Buddha himself. He could be likened to a flaming torch that, though it may desire to completely burn away the grasses and shrubs, is itself burned out before all the grasses and shrubs are consumed. 'Skillful means' here refers to awakening aspiration, taking up all sentient beings, and bringing them all together to birth in the Buddha-land of Happiness. That Buddha-land is the path to the ultimate attainment of Buddhahood and is the unexcelled skillful means.

106 Concerning ‘obstruction to the gate of enlightenment’, it is stated in the *Treatise*:

Knowing fully what the directing of virtue is, the bodhisattvas fulfill it and thus become free of the three kinds of divergence from the gate of enlightenment. What are the three? First, by adopting the gate of wisdom, they refrain from seeking their won pleasure and thus become free of egocentric attachment to their own self.

Concerning wisdom, one aspect is to know how to advance and guard against regression, and the other is to realize emptiness and non-self. Through the first aspect, the bodhisattvas do not seek personal pleasure. Through the second aspect, the bodhisattvas become free of egocentric attachment to self.

107 Second, by adopting the gate of compassion, they eliminate the pain of all sentient beings and thus become free of thoughts that do not bring peace to other beings.

Concerning compassion, one aspect is to eliminate pain, and the other is to give happiness. Through the first aspect, the bodhisattvas eliminate the pain of all sentient beings. Through the second aspect, the bodhisattvas become free of thoughts that do not bring them peace.

108 Third, by adopting the gate of skillful means, they acquire the heart that compassionately looks upon all sentient beings. Thus they become free of thoughts of self-worship and self-veneration.

Concerning skillful means, one aspect is to be right and straightforward, and the other is to cast oneself aside. Through the first aspect, the bodhisattvas look compassionately upon all sentient beings. Through the second aspect, the bodhisattvas become free of thoughts of self-worship and self-veneration. Hence, the *Treatise* states:

This is called ‘becoming free of the three kinds of divergences from the gate to enlightenment’.

109 Concerning ‘accord with the gate of enlightenment’, it is stated in the *Treatise*:

Once the bodhisattvas have become free of the three kinds of divergences from the gate of enlightenment, they are able to fulfill the three kinds of dharma that accord with the gate of enlightenment. What are the three? The first is the undefiled pure mind. It is so called because the bodhisattvas do not seek various pleasures for themselves.

Enlightenment is the realm of undefiled purity. If the bodhisattvas were to seek pleasure for their own sake, they would diverge from enlightenment. For this reason, the undefiled pure mind is accord with the gate of enlightenment.

110 The second is the peace-bestowing pure mind. It is so called because the bodhisattvas seek to eliminate the pain of all sentient beings.

Enlightenment is the realm of purity and brings peace to all sentient beings. If the bodhisattvas did not have the mind to free all sentient beings from the pain of birth-and-death, they would diverge from enlightenment. For this reason, to eliminate the pain of all sentient beings is to be in accord with the gate of enlightenment.

111 The third is the blissful pure mind. It is so called because the bodhisattvas enable all sentient beings to realize great enlightenment. Thus they take up sentient beings and bring them to birth in that land.

Enlightenment is the realm of ultimate, eternal bliss. If the bodhisattvas did not bring all sentient beings to realize ultimate, eternal bliss, they would diverge from enlightenment. What do they follow to realize this ultimate, eternal bliss? They follow the gate of the Mahayana. The Mahayana gate is the Buddha-land of Happiness. For that reason it is stated, “Thus they take up sentient beings and bring them to birth in that land”. Hence, the *Treatise* states:

This is called ‘fulfilling the means that accords with the three gates of enlightenment’. Reflect on this.

112 Concerning the ‘inclusiveness and correspondence of terms and meanings’, it is stated:

The three kinds of gates stated above, namely, wisdom, compassion, and skillful means, are embraced in prajna, and prajna embraces upaya. Reflect on this.

Prajna is a term for wisdom that realizes suchness; upaya is a term for insight that thoroughly knows the provisional and temporary. As the bodhisattvas realize suchness, their mental activity becomes quiescent. Since they know the provisional and temporary, they see beings in their full particularity, while the insight into beings that adapts itself fully to them is non-knowing. The wisdom of quiescence is also non-knowing and yet sees beings in their full particularity. Thus, wisdom and skillful means, through their mutual dependence, are active and tranquil at the same time. Because of the working of wisdom, activity does not lose tranquility, and because of the power of skillful means, tranquility does not abolish activity. Hence, wisdom, compassion, and skillful means embrace prajna, and prajna embraces upaya.

What is meant by ‘reflect on this’? It should be known that wisdom and skillful means are the father and mother of bodhisattvas. If the bodhisattvas do not depend on wisdom and skillful means, the bodhisattva way cannot be fulfilled. Why? Because if they lacked wisdom when performing acts for the sake of sentient beings, they would fall into inverted views. If they lacked skillful means when contemplating dharma-nature, they would grow complacent with attaining reality-limit immediately for themselves. On that basis, the *Treatise* states, “reflect on this”.

113 In the above, becoming free of egocentric attachment to one’s own self, becoming free of thoughts that do not bring peace to other beings, and becoming free of thoughts of self-worship and self-veneration have been taught. These three kinds of teaching signify becoming free of thoughts that are obstructions to enlightenment. Reflect on this.

Everything is a form of obstruction in its own way. The wind obstructs the quiet. The earth obstructs water. Dampness obstructs fire. The five evil acts and the ten transgressions obstruct birth as a human being or deva. The four kinds of inverted views obstruct the sravaka’s attainment of the fruit. The three obstructions in the quotation above signify not becoming free of thoughts that obstruct

enlightenment. What is meant by “reflect on this”? If the bodhisattvas seek to attain the state of nonobstructedness, they should strive to become free of these three kinds of obstruction.

114 In the above, the undefiled pure mind, the peace-bestowing pure mind, and the blissful pure mind have been taught. When these three kinds of minds are condensed into one, it is the fulfillment of the wondrous, blissful, and excellent true mind. Reflect on this.

There are three kinds of joy. First is the external joy, which is produced by the five senses. Second is the internal joy, which is produced by the consciousness in the first, second, and third stages of meditation. Third is the joy of dharma music, which is produced by wisdom. The joy produced by wisdom arises from love of Buddha’s virtue. The three minds—becoming free of egocentric attachments, becoming free of thoughts that do not bring peace to others, and becoming free of thoughts of self-worship—are pure and ever-developing. Taken in brief, they form the wondrous, blissful, and excellent true mind. The term wondrous means good. This joy is such because it arises from perceiving Buddha. The term excellent means that it surpasses the joys within the three worlds. The term true means not empty or false, not inverted.

115 Concerning ‘the fulfillment of aspiration for birth’, the *Treatise* states:

Thus, the bodhisattvas, with the mind of wisdom, the mind of skillful means, the unobstructed mind, and the excellent true mind, attain birth in the Buddha-land of purity. Reflect on this.

What is meant by “reflect on this”? Know that these four kinds of pure virtue bring about attainment of birth in that Buddha-land of purity, and that they do not attain birth through other causes.

116 This means that the bodhisattva-mahasattvas, having become in accord with the five dharma-gates, freely fulfill those acts as they desire. These bodily acts, verbal acts, mental acts, acts of wisdom, and acts of the wisdom of skillful means, as alluded to above, are in accord with the dharma-gates.

‘Freely fulfill those acts as they desire’ refers to the power of the virtue resulting from the five dharma-gates brings about birth in the Buddha-land of purity, and enables them to freely enter and emerge from that land. ‘Bodily acts’ refers to worship, ‘verbal acts’ to praise, ‘mental acts’ to aspiration, ‘acts of wisdom’ to discernment, and ‘acts of the wisdom of skillful means’ to directing virtue. When these five kinds of acts are harmoniously united, they are in accord with the dharma-gate of birth in the Pure Land, and thus bring about the fulfillment of free activity.

117 Concerning ‘perfect fulfillment of the practice of benefiting’:

Again, there are five gates. The bodhisattvas have fulfilled these five kinds of virtue in order. Reflect on this. What are these five gates? The first is the gate of the approach. The second is the gate of the great assembly, The third is the gate of the grounds. The fourth is the gate of the residence. The fifth is the gate of the state of sporting in the gardens and forests.

These five show the order in entering and emerging. In the aspect of entrance, the first attainment of the Pure Land is the aspect of approach. This means that to join the truly settled of the Mahayana is to approach the highest, perfect enlightenment. After they have entered the Pure Land, they immediately join the Tathagata's great assembly. After they have joined the assembly, they reach the grounds where they attain the settled mind of practice. After they have entered the grounds, they reach the residence of abiding in practice. After their practice has been fulfilled, they attain the state of teaching and guiding others. The state of teaching and guiding others is the state of the bodhisattvas' own play and delight. Hence, the gate of emergence is called the gate of the state of sorting in the gardens and forests.

118 Concerning these five gates, the first four gates are the fulfillment of the virtue of entrance and the fifth gate is the fulfillment of the virtue of emergence.

What are the virtues of entrance and of emergence? They are stated:

In the first gate of the virtue of entrance, they worship Amida Buddha with the desire to be born in the Pure Land. They are thereby enabled to attain birth in the World of Peace and Happiness. This is called the first gate of entrance.

To worship the Buddha and aspire for birth in the Buddha's land is the first aspect of virtue.

119 In the second gate of the virtue of entrance, they praise Amida Buddha by saying the Name in accord with the significance of the Tathagata's Name and practicing in correspondence with the Tathagata's light, which is the embodiment of wisdom. They are thereby enabled to join the great assembly. This is called the second gate of entrance.

To offer praise in accord with the significance of the Tathagata's Name is the second aspect of virtue.

120 In the third gate of the virtue of entrance, they think solely on Amida with singleness of heart and aspire to be born in the Pure Land, and once born there, they perform the practice of samatha, the samadhi of tranquility. They are thereby enabled to enter the lotus-held world. This is called the third gate of entrance.

Because they practice tranquility, the calming of the mind, they aspire single-heartedly to be born in the Pure Land; this is the third aspect of virtue.

121 Concerning the fourth gate of the virtue of entrance: contemplating solely on the wondrous adornments of that Land, they practice vipasyana. They are thereby enabled to reach that place and enjoy the various tastes of Dharma. This is called the fourth gate of entrance.

What is meant by 'to enjoy the various tastes of Dharma'? In vipasyana there is the taste of contemplation on the Buddha-land's purity, the taste of the Mahayana that takes in and receives all sentient beings, the taste of ultimate sustenance of beings without any futility, and the taste of performing practice by accommodating themselves to beings and vowing to establish a

Buddha-land. There are countless such tastes of adornments of the Buddha-way, hence, the word 'various'. This is the fourth aspect of virtue.

122 Concerning the fifth gate of the virtue of emergence: with great compassion, they observe all sentient beings in pain and affliction, and assuming various transformed bodies to guide them, enter and sport about in the gardens of birth-and-death and the forests of blind passions. With transcendent powers, they attain the state of teaching and guiding sentient beings. This is brought about by the effects of the original vows that the bodhisattvas had established. This is called the fifth gate of emergence.

What is meant by 'assuming various transformed bodies to guide sentient beings'? This is like Avalokiteśvara's manifestation in various forms presented in the *Lotus Sutra*. 'Sport about' has two meanings. First, it means being free and unrestricted. The way the bodhisattvas go about saving sentient beings is like a lion taking down a deer. It is performed as if in play without the slightest difficulty. Second, it means saving with no intent of saving. The bodhisattvas, in observing sentient beings, see that in the final analysis they are nonsubstantial. Although they save countless sentient beings, in reality they have no sense of having led a single sentient being to attain nirvana. Their manifesting the act of saving sentient beings is thus like play.

What is meant by 'effects of the original vow'? The great bodhisattvas, having realized dharma-body, always dwell in samadhi and thus manifest various bodies, transcendent powers, and ways of teaching the dharma. All of these arise from the effects of their original vows. It may be likened to Asura's harp which spontaneously plays music even though no one strokes it. This is the fifth aspect of virtue called the state of teaching and guiding.

123 Know that the bodhisattvas fulfill the practice of self-benefit with the first four gates of entrance.

'To fulfill' means that self-benefit has been completed. What is meant by 'know that'? By fulfilling self-benefit, the bodhisattvas perform the benefiting of others. They should know that it is not possible to benefit others without benefiting themselves.

124 Know that they fulfill the practice of benefiting others with the fifth gate of emergence as the directing of virtue.

'To fulfill' means to reach the fruition, the state of teaching and guiding others, through the directing of virtue, which acts as the cause. Whether with regard to the cause or to the fruition, there is nothing whatever that does not work to benefit others. What is meant by 'know that'? By fulfilling the benefiting of others, they are performing self-benefit. We should know that self-benefit cannot be performed without consummating the benefiting of others.

125 By performing the practices of the five gates of mindfulness in this way, the bodhisattvas accomplish both self-benefit and benefiting others, and thus they swiftly attain the supreme, perfect enlightenment.

The dharma that a Buddha realizes is called *annutara-samyak-sambodhi*, that is, supreme, perfect enlightenment. Those who have realized this enlightenment are called Buddhas. The bodhisattvas swiftly attain *annutara-samyak-sambodhi* means that they quickly realize Buddhahood. *An* means 'un-', and *uttara* means 'excelled'. *Samyak* means 'right'. *Sam* means 'all-pervading', and *bodhi* means 'the Way'. Taken together, the term means 'the unexcelled, right, all-pervading Way'.

'Unexcelled' means that this way thoroughly penetrates true reality and reaches the ultimate nature of things, and nothing surpasses it. Why? Because it is perfect. 'Right' refers to the wisdom of the enlightened. Because they know things just as they are, it is called right wisdom. Because dharma-nature is formless, the wisdom of the enlightened is non-knowing. 'All-pervading' has two meanings: first, the enlightened mind knows all things everywhere; second, the dharma-body universally fills the dharma-realm. Whether as dharma-body or enlightened mind, there is nowhere it is not present. 'The Way' refers to the unhindered way. A sutra states, "It is because of the one way that those unhindered throughout the ten quarters have gone beyond birth-and-death". The 'one way' is the one way of unhindered enlightenment. To be 'unhindered' means to know that birth-and-death is itself nirvana. The aforementioned entrance into the dharma-gate of nonduality reveals the aspect of unhinderedness.

126 Question: What is the reason for saying, "The bodhisattvas swiftly realize *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*"?

Answer: The *Treatise* states, "It is because they perform the practices of the five gates of mindfulness and accomplish both self-benefit and benefiting others". Further, when we seek the basis for this swift realization, truly Amida tathagata is to be considered the decisive condition, which can be described as 'the Other working to benefit us' and 'working to benefit others'. These descriptions are two aspects of the same thing. If we are speaking from the standpoint of the Buddha, we should use the term 'working to benefit others'. If we are speaking from the standpoint of sentient beings, we should use the term 'the Other working to benefit us'. Specifically, when it is the Buddha's power that is being discussed, the term 'working to benefit others' applies. One must understand the significance of this. Generally stated, it is because birth in the Pure Land, as well as the practices performed by the bodhisattvas, humans, and devas there, are all dependent on the power of the Primal Vow of Amida Tathagata. Why? Because if it were not for the Buddha's power, the Forty-eight Vows would have been made in vain.

Here, let us verify this by taking up the three relevant Vows. The Buddha vowed, "If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters who, with sincere and entrusting heart, aspire to be born in my land and say my name even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right Dharma". Through the power of the Buddha's Vow, one says the Name ten times and accordingly attains birth in the Pure Land. Because one attains birth, one escapes from transmigration in the three worlds. Because one is released from transmigration, it is said one 'swiftly' realizes enlightenment. This is the first proof.

The Buddha vowed, "If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should not dwell in the stage of the truly settled and necessarily attain nirvana, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment". Through the power of the Buddha's Vow, one comes to dwell in the stage of the truly settled. Because one dwells in the stage of the truly settled, one attains nirvana without fail. One is released from all of the hardships of wandering in birth-and-death, and for this reason, it is said one 'swiftly' realizes enlightenment. This is the second proof.

The Buddha vowed, "When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas of other Buddha-lands who come and are born in my land will ultimately and unfailingly attain the stage of succession to Buddhahood after one lifetime. Excepted are those who, in accordance with their original vows to guide others freely to enlightenment, don the armor of universal vows for the sake of sentient beings, accumulate

roots of virtue, emancipate all beings, travel to Buddha-lands to perform bodhisattva practices, make offerings to all the Buddha-tathagatas throughout the ten quarters, awaken sentient beings countless as the sands of the Ganges, and bring them to abide firmly in supreme, true enlightenment. Such bodhisattvas surpass those in the ordinary bodhisattvas stages in carrying out practices; in reality, they cultivate the virtue of Samantabhadra. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment”. Through the power of the Buddha’s Vow they surpass ordinary bodhisattvas, manifest the practices of all the bodhisattva stages, and discipline themselves in the virtue. Because they surpass ordinary bodhisattvas and manifest the practices of all the stages, it is said that they ‘swiftly’ realize enlightenment. This is the third proof. From these proofs we can see that Other Power is to be taken as the decisive condition. How could it be otherwise?

Further, the following illustration will point out the characteristics of self-power and of Other Power. Out of fear of falling into the three evil realms, people undertake the observance of precepts. Because of their observance of precepts, they are able to perform meditation. Because they perform meditation, they acquire transcendent powers. Because they have transcendent powers, they are able to wander freely throughout the four continents. Such is termed ‘self-power’. Again, an inferior man riding on a donkey cannot rise off the ground. However, when he follows an entourage of a cakravartin king, he is able to ride in the air and wander freely throughout the four continents unobstructed. Such is termed ‘Other Power’. Oh, foolish scholars of these latter times! Hear the call to ride upon Other Power and awaken an entrusting heart. Do not confine yourself to your own powers.

127 I have briefly explained the *Treatise on the Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life with the Verses of Aspiration for Birth in the Pure Land*.

“Thus I have heard”, which is at the beginning of sutras, clarifies that belief in the Buddha’s words enables entrance into the Pure Land way. ‘Practice that is in accordance with the teaching’, which is at the conclusion of sutras, indicates that one has accepted the way. ‘Taking refuge in and worshipping Amida’, which is at the beginning of the *Treatise on the Pure Land*, clarifies that the teaching is trustworthy. “I have briefly explained”, which is at the end of the *Treatise*, explicates in full what is to be clarified. The authors of the *Sutra* and the *Treatise* are different, however, their intention is consistent through what has been explained here.

Commentary on
the Treatise on the Sutra of
the Buddha of Immeasurable Life with
the Verses of Aspiration for Birth in the Pure Land

Part Two