

The Sutra on the Buddha of

Immeasurable Life

Delivered by Śākyamuni Buddha

Translated during the Ts'ao-Wei Dynasty

by the Tripiṭaka Master Saṃghavarman from India

1 Thus I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying on Vulture Peak in Rājagṛha together with a great multitude of twelve thousand bhiksus.

They were all great sages who had already attained supernatural powers. They included the Venerable Ājñāta-kauṇḍinya, the Venerable Aśvajit, the Venerable Vāṣpa, the Venerable Mahānāman, the Venerable Bhadrājī, the Venerable Vimāla, the Venerable Yaśodeva, the Venerable Subāhu, the Venerable Pūrṇaka, the Venerable Gavāṃpati, the Venerable Uruvilvā-kāśyapa, the Venerable Gayā-kāśyapa, the Venerable Nadī-kāśyapa, the Venerable Mahākāśyapa, the Venerable Śāriputra, the Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, the Venerable Kapphina, the Venerable Mahākauṣṭhīlya, the Venerable Mahākātyāyana, the Venerable Mahācunda, the Venerable Pūrṇa-maitrāyaṇīputra, the Venerable Aniruddha, the Venerable Revata, the Venerable Kimpila, the Venerable Amogharāja, the Venerable Pārāyaṇika, the Venerable Vakkula, the Venerable Nanda, the Venerable Svāgata, the Venerable Rāhula, and the Venerable Ānanda. They were all exalted leaders.

There were also many Mahayana bodhisattvas accompanying the Buddha, including all those of this Auspicious Kalpa, such as the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, and the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Further, there were the sixteen lay bodhisattvas, such as Bhadrāpāla. In addition, there were the Bodhisattva Profound Thought, the Bodhisattva Wisdom of Faith, the Bodhisattva Voidness, the Bodhisattva Blossom of Supernatural Power, the Bodhisattva Hero of Light, the Bodhisattva Superior Wisdom, the Bodhisattva Banner of Wisdom, the Bodhisattva Tranquil Ability, the Bodhisattva Wisdom of Vows, the Bodhisattva Fragrant Elephant, the Bodhisattva Hero of Treasures, the Bodhisattva Dwelling in the Middle, the Bodhisattva Practice of Restraint, and the Bodhisattva Emancipation.

2 Following the virtues of the Mahāsattva Samantabhadra, they were all endowed with the countless practices and vows of the bodhisattvas, and firmly abided in the fulfillment of all meritorious deeds. Traveling freely in all the ten quarters, they employed skillful means in awakening others and gained access to the treasury of the Buddha Dharma, thereby reaching the other shore. Appearing in countless worlds, they manifested the attainment of perfect enlightenment.

These bodhisattvas, while dwelling in Tuṣita Heaven, expounded the true Dharma. Then, after leaving the heavenly palaces, each of them descended into his mother's womb. Immediately after his birth from her right side, he walked seven steps. A brilliant light shone from his body, illuminating all the ten quarters, and countless Buddha-lands shook with six kinds of tremors. He then said, "I shall become the supremely honored one in the world." Śakra and Brahmā reverently paid homage to him, and devas and human beings took refuge in him.

He demonstrated his aptitude in mathematics, the literary arts, archery, and horsemanship. He was proficient in the divine arts and was well versed in traditional literature. He enjoyed practicing the martial arts and testing his ability in the rear gardens, and appeared to exhibit his indulgence in the pleasure of the senses in the palace. Having seen into old age, sickness, and death, he realized the impermanence of the world.

Thus, each bodhisattva renounced his kingdom, wealth, and status, and went into the mountains to seek the Way. After sending back the white horse that he had been riding, together with the jeweled crown and ornaments he had been wearing, he removed his exquisite garments and put on a Dharma robe. Then he shaved his beard and the hair on his head and sat upright under a tree, striving to carry out ascetic practices for six years in the prescribed manner.

Since he had come forth into the world of the five defilements, he behaved like one of the masses. Appearing to be covered with dirt and grime, he bathed in a golden river. Then a deva bent a branch of a tree so that he could climb up the bank. Divine birds fluttered about, following him to the location where he would attain awakening. A man named Auspicious perceived a favorable sign and glorified the merit and virtue of the bodhisattva. In appreciation of this gesture, the bodhisattva accepted the grass that the man offered, spread it under the bodhi-tree, and sat upon it with his legs crossed. Then he emitted a great radiant light, by which Māra became aware of what was happening. Māra came with an assembly of kinsmen to attack and thwart him. However, the bodhisattva brought them under control through the power of wisdom and forced them to surrender. He then realized the exquisite Dharma and attained the highest, perfect enlightenment.

Śakra and Brahmā then entreated and requested him to set the wheel of the Dharma in motion. Traveling freely, he roared with the thunderous voice of a Buddha. Beating the Dharma-drum, blowing the Dharma-conch, wielding the Dharma-sword, hoisting the Dharma-banner, rolling the Dharma-thunder, flashing the Dharma-lightning, pouring down the Dharma-rain, and extolling the Dharma-gift, he continuously awakened the people of the world with the sounds of the Dharma.

The light he emitted illuminated countless Buddha-lands and shook the entire world with six kinds of tremors. The light entirely encompassed Māra's realm and made his palace shake. Māra and his assembly, trembling with terror, all surrendered without exception. He tore to shreds the net of falsehood, extinguished all wrong views, swept away the dust of affliction, and destroyed the moat of desire. He firmly protected the Dharma-castle, and opened widely the Dharma-gates. Washing away the grime of passions, he revealed his original purity. He elucidated the Buddha Dharma, guiding people to the right teaching.

He entered a town to beg and receive alms of savory food, thus indicating to others that he was a field of virtue so as to enable them to accumulate merit. Whenever he wanted to expound the Dharma, he displayed a congenial smile. Using the various teachings as medicine, he cured the three kinds of suffering. He revealed the immeasurable merit of the mind aspiring for enlightenment, and endowed the bodhisattvas with a prediction that they would attain equal, perfect enlightenment.

Finally, he manifested passing into nirvana, and yet limitlessly brought people to emancipation, leading them to eradicate their blind passions, plant many roots of virtue, and acquire merit. His working was thus excellent and beyond measure.

Furthermore, traveling freely to the various Buddha-lands, he spread the teaching of the Way. His practices were pure and untainted. Just as a magician could at will create various illusions, such as the forms of a man or woman, by employing his perfected knowledge and clear understanding, so were the works of each of these bodhisattvas.

Having thoroughly studied and mastered all the teachings, each bodhisattva dwelt peacefully in clear understanding of reality and freely guided all beings. Each manifested himself in the innumerable

Buddha-lands and was compassionate toward all sentient beings without becoming indolent and complacent. Consequently, each attained mastery of all the methods of saving others.

These bodhisattvas exhaustively mastered the essentials of the sutras for bodhisattvas. Thus, their names were known everywhere, providing guidance throughout the ten quarters. Countless Buddhas all protected them. All these bodhisattvas had already abided where all Buddhas abided; they had already stood by what all Great Sages established. They widely spread the teachings of the Tathagatas, each acting as a great teacher for all other bodhisattvas. Through deep meditation and wisdom, each guided multitudes of people. Discerning the true nature of all things, each understood the realities of sentient beings. With clear perception of all the Buddha-lands, they manifested their bodies in those lands as quickly as a lightening flash to make offerings to the Buddhas.

They fully attained the all-pervasive wisdom of fearlessness and clearly realized the illusory nature of all things. Tearing down Māra's nets, they sever all knots and bonds of attachment. Surpassing the stages of sravakas and pratyekabuddhas, they attained the samadhis of emptiness, formlessness, and nondesire. They effectively used skillful means to demonstrate the teachings of the three vehicles. Then, for the sake of sravakas and pratyekabuddhas, the bodhisattvas manifested their own passing into nirvana. In reality, however, they were nonactive and nonacquisitive. With the awareness that all existence neither arises nor perishes, they realized that all things are equal and nondifferentiated. They were in possession of countless dharanis and hundred thousand samadhis. Having the wisdom of knowing the various faculties of sentient beings, they were in the samadhi of vast and universal tranquility. Deeply entering the Dharma-treasury of bodhisattvas, they attained the Buddha-garland Samadhi, through which they expounded and proclaimed all the sutras.

As they dwelt in deep samadhi, they beheld all the countless Buddhas of the present, and in an instant they visited them all. Saving those in the state of extreme affliction whether or not they had time to practice the Way, they discerned and revealed to them the ultimate truth. Having acquired all the Tathagatas' wisdom of eloquence, they were in full command of all languages, through which they enlightened all beings. Going beyond all worldly affairs, their minds were always serene and were settled on the path to emancipation. All things were in accordance with their will. They became friends of all beings without being asked, ready to carry the heavy burden of the multitude of beings.

Holding the most profound Dharma-treasury of the Tathagatas, they protected the seeds of Buddhahood to keep them from perishing. Having awakened great compassion, they took pity on sentient beings, uttered kind words, and endowed them with the Dharma-eye. They blocked the paths to the three evil realms and opened the gate to the good realms. Without being asked, they gave the Dharma to the multitude of beings, just as dutiful children love and respect their parents. They looked upon all sentient beings as their own selves.

With all the roots of good, they brought all sentient beings to the other shore, enabling them to attain the immeasurable virtue of all Buddhas. Their sacred and pure wisdom was beyond comprehension. Countless numbers of bodhisattva-mahāsattvas, such as those described here, joined the Buddha's assembly at once.

3 At that time the sense organs of the World-honored One were filled with gladness and serenity. His complexion was pure. His radiant countenance was majestic. The Venerable Ānanda, having perceived the Buddha's holy intention, rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt down, put his palms together, and said to the Buddha, "Today, World-honored One, your sense organs are filled with gladness and serenity. Your complexion is pure. Your radiant countenance is majestic, like a luminous mirror in which

clear reflections pass unobstructed. Your lofty features are resplendent, surpassing all words or measure. Never before have I beheld your countenance as sublime as it is now.

“Indeed, Great Sage, I have thought to myself: Today, the World-honored One abides in the most rare and wondrous Dharma. Today, the World Hero abides where all Buddhas abide. Today, the World’s Eye abides in the activity of guide and teacher. Today, the Preeminent One of the World abides in supreme enlightenment. Today, the Heaven-honored One puts into practice the virtue of all the Tathagatas. The Buddhas of the past, future, and present all think on one another. Is it not also the case that you, the present Buddha, think on all the other Buddhas now? Why does your commanding radiance shine forth with such brilliance?”

Then the World-honored One said to Ānanda, “Did devas so instruct you, Ānanda, that you ask this, or did you inquire of my noble countenance out of your own wisdom?”

Ānanda replied to the Buddha, “No deva came to teach me; I asked this myself, simply from what I observed.”

The Buddha said, “Well spoken, Ānanda! Your question is excellent. You ask this insightful question having summoned up deep wisdom and true and subtle powers of expression, and having turned tender thoughts toward all sentient beings. In his boundless great compassion, the Tathagata is filled with pity for the beings of the three worlds. I have appeared in this world and expounded the teaching of the Way, seeking to save the multitudes of living beings by bestowing upon them the benefit that is true and real. Rare is it to encounter and rare to behold a Tathagata, even in countless kotis of kalpas. It is like the blossoming of an udumbara flower, which seldom occurs. This question you now ask will bring immense benefit; it will enlighten the minds of all devas and human beings.

“Know, Ānanda, that the perfect enlightenment of the Tathagata is immeasurable in its wisdom and vast in its guidance of beings to awakening. His insight knows no impediment; nothing can obstruct it. With only one meal, he can maintain his life for a hundred thousand kotis of kalpas, innumerable and countless kalpas, or beyond. Even after that, his sense organs will be filled with gladness and serenity without suffering any deterioration. His complexion will remain unaltered and his radiant countenance will not change. Why is this so? This is because the Tathagata has attained unlimited and boundless samadhi and wisdom. All things are in accordance with his will. Ānanda, listen well. I will now explain the Dharma to you.”

Ānanda said in response, “Yes, I would be delighted to listen to you.”

4 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “In the distant past, countless, inconceivable, and innumerable kalpas ago, Dīpaṅkara Tathagata appeared in the world. Having guided countless sentient beings toward emancipation and enabled them to attain the Way, he passed into nirvana.

“Next appeared a Tathagata named Far-reaching Light, After him came Moonlight, and then Sandalwood-incense, King of Mount Sumeru, Crown of Mount Sumeru, Sumeru-like Brilliance, Color of the Moon, Right Mindfulness, Free of Defilement, Nonattachment, Dragon-deva, Nocturnal Light, Peaceful and Brilliant Peak, Immovable Ground, Exquisite Flower of Lapis Lazuli, Golden Luster of Lapis Lazuli, Gold-storage, Flaming Light, Root of Flame, Earth-shaking, Image of the Moon, Sound of the Sun, Flower of Emancipation, Light of Glorious Adornments, Supernatural Power of Ocean-like Enlightenment, Water-light, Great Fragrance, Free of Dust and Defilement, Abandoning Enmity, Flame of Jewels, Splendid Peak, Standing Hero, Virtue-possessing Wisdom, Outshining the Sun and Moon, Lapis Lazuli Light of the Sun and Moon, Supreme Lapis Lazuli Light, Highest Peak, Flower of Enlightenment, Brightness of the

Moon, Sunlight, King of the Colors of Flowers, Moonlight on the Water, Removing the Darkness of Ignorance, Practice of Removing Hindrances, Pure Faith, Wonderful Constellation, Majestic Glory, Wisdom of the Dharma, Voice of the Phoenix, Roar of the Lion, Cry of the Dragon, and Reigning over the World. All these Buddhas have already passed into nirvana.

5 “Then, the next Buddha appeared. His name was Lokeśvararāja, the Tathagata, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One, One Possessed of Perfect Knowledge and Practice, Well-gone, One Having Good Knowledge of the World, Unsurpassed One, Tamer of People, Teacher of Devas and Humans, Buddha, and World-honored One.

“At that time there was a king who, having heard the Buddha’s exposition of the Dharma, rejoiced in his heart and awakened the aspiration for supreme, true enlightenment. He renounced his kingdom and throne, and undertook practice as a monk named Dharmākara. Possessed of superior intelligence, courage, and wisdom, he surpassed other people of the world. He went to see Lokeśvararāja Tathāgata, bowed at his feet, circumambulated him three times to the right, knelt down on the ground, and, putting his palms together in reverence, praised the Buddha with the following verses:

Your radiant countenance is majestic,
And your dignity is boundless.
Radiant splendor such as yours
Has no equal.

Even the blazing light of
The sun, moon, and mani-jewels
Is completely hidden and obscured,
And looks like a mass of black ink-sticks.

The countenance of the Tathagata
Is unequalled in the world;
The great voice of the Perfectly Enlightened One
Resounds throughout the ten quarters.

Your observance of precepts, learning, diligence,
Meditation, and wisdom —
The magnificence of these virtues is peerless,
Excellent and unsurpassed.

Deeply and clearly mindful
Of the ocean of the Dharma of all Buddhas,
You know its depth and breadth,
And reach its farthest end.

Ignorance, greed, and anger
Are completely absent in the World-honored One;
You are a lion, the most courageous of all humans,
Having immeasurable majestic virtues.

Your meritorious accomplishment is vast,

And your wisdom is deep and supreme;
 The majestic glory of your light
 Shakes the great thousand worlds.

I vow to become a Buddha,
 Equal to you, the most honored King of the Dharma,
 And to bring sentient beings from birth-and-death
 To the final attainment of emancipation.

My practice of giving, self-discipline,
 Observance of precepts, forbearance, diligence,
 And also meditation and wisdom
 Shall be unsurpassed.

I resolve that, when I become a Buddha,
 I will fulfill this vow in every possible way,
 And to all beings who live in fear
 I will give great peace.

Even though there are Buddhas
 As many as a thousand million kotis,
 Or countless great sages
 As many as the sands of the Ganges,

I will make offerings
 To all these Buddhas;
 Nothing surpasses my determination
 To seek the Way steadfastly and untiringly.

Even though there are Buddha-worlds
 As many as the sands of the Ganges,
 And also innumerable lands
 Beyond calculation,

My light shall illumine
 All of these lands;
 I will make such efforts
 That my divine power may be boundless.

When I become a Buddha,
 My land shall be the most exquisite;
 People there shall be unrivaled and excellent
 And my seat of enlightenment shall be beyond compare.

My land shall be like nirvana,
 Being supreme and unequaled.
 Out of compassion and pity,
 I will bring all to emancipation.

Those who come from the ten quarters
 Shall rejoice with pure hearts;
 Once they reach my land,
 They shall dwell in peace and happiness.

May you, the Buddha, be my witness
 And attest to the truthfulness of my resolution.
 I have thus made my aspiration;
 I will endeavor to fulfill it.

The World-honored Ones in the ten quarters
 Have unimpeded wisdom;
 May these honored ones
 Always know my intentions.

Even if I should be subjected to
 All kinds of suffering and torment,
 Continuing my practice undeterred,
 I would endure it and never have any regrets.”

6 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Bhikṣu Dharmākara, having spoken these verses, said to the Buddha Lokeśvararāja, “In just this way, World-honored One, I have awakened the aspiration for supreme, perfect enlightenment. May I ask you, the Buddha, to expound fully the Dharma for my sake? I will perform the practice in order to establish a Buddha-land adorned with countless, pure and excellent qualities chosen from among Buddha-lands. I wish to attain perfect enlightenment in this world quickly so that I can remove the roots of suffering and affliction in birth-and-death.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “At that time the Buddha Lokeśvararāja told Bhikṣu Dharmākara, ‘You yourself should know what needs to be done in order to adorn your Buddha-land.’ The Bhikṣu replied to the Buddha, ‘The meaning of what you have just said is so vast and profound that it is beyond my range of comprehension. Therefore, World-honored One, I beseech you to explain in detail the practices by which all Buddha-tathagatas establish their pure lands. After I have heard it, I will practice as taught and fulfill all my aspirations.’

“At that time, the Buddha Lokeśvararāja realized that the noble aspirations of Bhikṣu Dharmākara were profound and vast, and so conveyed to him the following teaching: ‘It is as if a person were to bail out the great ocean using a pail and eventually to reach the bottom after many kalpas. Such a person would then obtain the precious treasures to be found there. Likewise, if one seeks the Way sincerely and diligently, one should be able to reach one’s goal. What vow could not be fulfilled?’

“Then Buddha Lokeśvararāja taught fully the good and bad qualities of the heavenly and human beings in two hundred and ten kotis of Buddha-lands, as well as the coarse and exquisite aspects of those lands, and revealed them all in accordance with Dharmākara’s request.

Then the Bhikṣu, having heard the Buddha’s exposition and having seen all the glorious and pure adornments of those lands, made the supreme and incomparable vows. His mind was calm and tranquil, free of all attachments, and unequalled in all the world. After contemplating the vows for five kalpas, he adopted the pure practices for the establishment of the glorious Buddha-land.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “How long was the life of the Buddha of that land?” The Buddha replied, “The Buddha’s life spanned forty-two kalpas. At that time, Bhikṣu Dharmākara, having thus adopted the pure practices from among those for establishing two-hundred and ten kotis of wonderful Buddha-lands, went to the Buddha, bowed at his feet in worship, circumambulated him three times, put his palms together, and took his seat. Then he said to the Buddha, ‘World-honored One, I have already adopted the pure practices for establishing my own Buddha-land.’

“The Buddha said to the Bhikṣu, ‘Now proclaim them. You should know that this is the time. Arouse joy in all the assembly. The bodhisattvas, upon hearing them, will follow this method and thereby obtain the conditions to fulfill their countless great vows.’ The Bhikṣu replied to the Buddha, ‘Now, please listen to me. I will fully expound what I vow to do.’”

7 (1) ““ If, when I attain Buddhahood, there should be hell, the realm of hungry spirits, or the realm of animals in my land, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(2) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land, should, after their death, return once more to the three evil realms, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(3) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should not all be the color of genuine gold, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(4) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should not all be of the same appearance and should be either beautiful or ugly, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(5) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should not remember all their former lives, and thus be unable to know at least the events of the previous hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of kalpas, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(6) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should not possess divine eyes, and thus be unable to see at least a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of Buddha-lands, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(7) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should not possess divine ears, and thus be unable to hear the teachings being expounded by at least a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of Buddhas or remember them all, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(8) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should not possess the wisdom to see into the minds of others, and thus be unable to know the thoughts of the sentient beings of at least a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of Buddha-lands, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(9) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should not possess divine feet, and thus be unable to go beyond at least a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of Buddha-lands in a thought-moment, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(10) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should give rise to any thoughts of attachment to their body, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

- (11) 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.
- (12) If, when I attain Buddhahood, my light should be finite, not illuminating even a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of Buddha-lands, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.
- (13) If, when I attain Buddhahood, my life should be finite, limited even to a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of kalpas, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.
- (14) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the number of sravakas in my land could be counted and known, even if all the sravakas and pratyekabuddhas in the triple-thousand great thousand worlds should spend at least a hundred thousand kalpas counting them, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.
- (15) When I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land will not have a limited life span, except when they wish to shorten it freely according to their original vows. Should this not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.
- (16) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should even hear that there are names of evil acts, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.
- (17) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the countless Buddhas throughout the worlds in the ten quarters should not all glorify and praise my name, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.
- (18) 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.
- (19) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, while awakening the mind aspiring for enlightenment and performing meritorious acts, should desire to be born in my land with sincere aspiration, and yet should I not appear before them at the moment of death surrounded by a host of sages, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.
- (20) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, upon hearing my name, should place their thoughts on my land, cultivate the roots of virtue, and direct their merit with sincere mind desiring to be born in my land, and yet not ultimately attain birth, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.
- (21) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should not all have the thirty-two major physical characteristics of a great person, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.
- (22) 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 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.

(23) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in my land who, upon receiving my transcendental power and making offerings to Buddhas, should not be able to reach all the innumerable and countless nayutas of Buddha-lands in the brief period of a single meal, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(24) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in my land, in accumulating roots of virtue in the presence of Buddhas, should not be able to obtain whatever they wish in order to make offerings to these Buddhas, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(25) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in my land should not be able to expound the Dharma with all-knowing wisdom, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(26) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in my land should not possess the diamond-like body of Nārāyaṇa, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(27) When I attain Buddhahood, all the myriad features enjoyed by the humans and devas in my land will be glorious and resplendent with superb, wonderful, and exquisite forms and colors that are beyond description. If, even with the divine eye that they acquire, they should be able to clearly distinguish and enumerate these features, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(28) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in my land, even those of little virtue, are unable to perceive the bodhi-tree of immeasurable light and countless colors, which is four million *li* in height, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(29) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in my land should not possess wisdom and eloquence when comprehending, reciting, and expounding sutras, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(30) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in my land should possess limited wisdom and eloquence, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(31) When I attain Buddhahood, my land will be pure and brilliant, completely illuminating and reflecting all the countless, innumerable, and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters, as if one were looking at one's own face in a clear mirror. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(32) When I attain Buddhahood, all the myriad features in my land, from the ground to the sky, such as palaces, pavilions, ponds, streams, flowers, and trees, will comprise countless precious substances and a hundred thousand kinds of fragrance, which splendidly adorn the land, surpassing anything in the realms of humans and devas. Those fragrances will pervade the worlds in the ten quarters, bringing bodhisattvas who sense them to perform the practices of the Buddha-way. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(33) When I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings throughout the countless and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters, having received my light and having been touched by it, will become soft and gentle in body and mind, surpassing humans and devas in those qualities. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(34) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings throughout the countless and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters, having heard my name, should not attain the bodhisattva's insight into the nonorigination of all existence and all the profound dharanis, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(35) When I attain Buddhahood, the women throughout the countless and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters, having heard my name, will rejoice in entrusting heart, awaken the mind aspiring for enlightenment, and wish to renounce the state of being women. If, after the end of their lives, they should be reborn as women, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(36) When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas throughout the countless and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters, having heard my name, will, after the end of their lives, always perform the sacred practices and fulfill the Buddha-way. Should it not be so, I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(37) When I attain Buddhahood, the devas and humans throughout the countless and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters who, having heard my name, prostrate themselves on the ground and bow to me in reverence, rejoice in entrusting heart, and perform the bodhisattva practices, will be revered by devas and people of the world. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(38) When I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land will acquire garments as soon as such a desire arises in their minds, and they will naturally be clothed in fine robes as commended and prescribed by the Buddhas. If they should need sewing, bleaching, dyeing or washing, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(39) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the humans and devas in my land should not attain happiness and delight comparable to those of a bhikṣu whose blind passions have all been exhausted, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(40) When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in my land who wish to see innumerable glorious Buddha-lands in the ten quarters, whenever they please, will be able to see them all reflected in the jeweled trees as if one were looking at one's own face in a clear mirror. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(41) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in other lands, having heard my name, should have any disabilities in their physical faculties until they become Buddhas, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(42) When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in other lands, having heard my name, will all attain the samadhi of pure emancipation. While dwelling in that samadhi, they will make offerings in an instant of thought to the countless and inconceivable number of Buddhas, World-honored Ones, without losing their concentration of mind. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(43) When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in other lands, having heard my name, will be reborn into noble families after the end of their lives. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(44) When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in other lands, having heard my name, will leap and dance with joy and perform the bodhisattva practices, thereby acquiring the roots of virtue. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(45) When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in other lands, having heard my name, will all attain the samadhi of universal sameness. While dwelling in that samadhi, they will continually behold all the countless and inconceivable numbers of Buddhas until they become Buddhas themselves. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(46) When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in my land will spontaneously be able to hear, as they wish, the Dharma that they desire to hear. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(47) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in other lands, upon hearing my name, should not be able to reach the stage of nonretrogression, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

(48) If, when I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas in other lands, upon hearing my name, should not be able to attain the first, second, and third dharma-insights and should they fall back from the pursuit of the teachings of the Buddhas, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.

8 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Bhikṣu Dharmākara, having finished proclaiming those vows, spoke the following verses.

‘I have established the all-surpassing vows
And will unfailingly attain supreme enlightenment.
If these vows should not be fulfilled,
May I not attain perfect enlightenment.

If, for countless kalpas to come,
I should not become a great benefactor
And save all the destitute and afflicted everywhere,
May I not attain perfect enlightenment.

When I have fulfilled the Buddha-way,
My name shall pervade the ten quarters;
Should there be any place it is not heard,
May I not attain perfect enlightenment.

Freed from greed and with deep right-mindedness
And pure wisdom, I will perform the sacred practices
In pursuit of supreme enlightenment,
And become the teacher of devas and humans.

Emitting a great light with my majestic power,
I will completely illuminate the boundless worlds;
Dispelling, thereby, the darkness of the three defilements,
I will deliver all beings from suffering and affliction.

Having acquired the eye of wisdom,
I will remove the darkness of blind passions;
Blocking the path to the evil realms,
I will open the gate to the good realms.

When my practice and merits are fulfilled,
My majestic brilliance shall reach everywhere in the ten quarters,
Outshining both the sun and the moon;
Even the heavenly lights shall be hidden and obscured.

For the sake of all beings I will open forth the Dharma-store
 And universally bestow its treasure of virtue upon them.
 Among the multitudes of beings
 I will always preach the Dharma with a lion's roar.

Making offerings to all the Buddhas,
 I will acquire all the roots of virtue;
 With my vows fulfilled and wisdom perfected,
 I will be the hero of the three worlds.

Like your unimpeded wisdom, O Buddha Lokeśvararāja,
 My wisdom shall reach everywhere and illuminate all;
 May the power of my virtue and wisdom
 Be equal to that of yours, O Most Honored One.

If these vows are to be fulfilled,
 The great thousand worlds will shake in accord,
 And, from the sky, all the devas
 Will rain down rare and wondrous flowers.”

9 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “As soon as Bhikṣu Dharmākara finished speaking these verses, the entire earth shook with six kinds of tremors. The heavens rained down wondrous flowers upon it. There was spontaneous music in the sky, which praised him, saying, ‘You will unfailingly attain supreme, perfect enlightenment.’

“Hereupon, Bhikṣu Dharmākara, fully possessed of these great vows and his mind being sincere and not false, made a supramundane aspiration and earnestly sought to attain nirvana.

“O Ānanda, the Bhikṣu Dharmākara, in the presence of the assembly of beings, devas, maras, Brahmā, and the eight kinds of supernatural beings including dragon-gods, thus made these universal vows before the Buddha. After establishing these vows, he wholeheartedly devoted himself to adorning a wonderful land. The Buddha-land he sought to produce was far-reaching in extent, unexcelled by anything in the world, and unique and exquisite. It would be constructed so as to be everlasting, without decay or change.

“For inconceivable and uncountable kalpas, he cultivated countless meritorious acts of bodhisattvas. No thought of greed, anger, or harmfulness arose in his mind. He cherished no impulse of greed, anger, or harmfulness. He did not cling to any form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or object. Abounding in perseverance, he gave no thought to the suffering to be endured. Having few desires, he knew contentment and was devoid of greed, anger, and ignorance. Always tranquil in a state of samadhi, he possessed wisdom that knew no impediment. He was free of all thoughts of falsity and deception.

“Gentle in countenance and loving in speech, he perceived people's intentions and was attentive to them. He was full of courage and vigor, and being resolute in his acts, knew no fatigue. Seeking solely that which was pure and undefiled, he brought benefit to all beings. He revered the Three Treasures and served his teachers and elders. He fulfilled all the various kinds of practices, embellishing himself with great adornments, and brought all sentient beings to the attainment of virtues.

“Dwelling in the reality of emptiness, formlessness, and nondesire, he did not harbor or give rise to any concept. Thus he observed that all things are like illusions. Abstaining from using abusive language that would harm himself, harm others, or harm both, he cultivated the use of good speech that would benefit himself, benefit others, and benefit both.

“Abandoning his kingdom and renouncing the throne, he completely gave up wealth and the pleasures of the senses. He himself practiced the six paramitas and taught others to do so. For innumerable kalpas he accumulated merit and collected virtue. Wherever he was born, immeasurable treasures appeared spontaneously as he wished. He guided innumerable sentient beings and firmly placed them in supreme, true enlightenment.

“At times, he was born as a wealthy man or a lay practitioner, or a member of the highest caste or of a noble family. At other times, he became a ksatriya king or a cakravartin king. Still at other times, he became a lord of one of the six heavens of the world of desire, or even a Brahmā king. By making the four kinds of offerings, he constantly worshipped and revered all the Buddhas. The merit he thus accumulated was beyond description.

“His breath was fragrant like a blue lotus flower. From every pore of his body issued the scent of sandalwood, which perfumed innumerable worlds. His countenance was dignified and wonderful, and his physical characteristics and marks were exquisite. Inexhaustible treasures, clothes, food and drink, as well as such ornaments as rare and wondrous flowers, incense, canopies, and banners were produced from his hands. These things surpassed those of all devas. He thus acquired the command of all things at will.”

10 Ānanda asked the Buddha, “Has Bodhisattva Dharmākara already become a Buddha and entered nirvana? Or has he not yet become a Buddha? Or is he a Buddha at present?”

The Buddha replied to Ānanda, “Bodhisattva Dharmākara has already become a Buddha and is now dwelling in the western quarter, one hundred thousand kotis of Buddha-lands away from here. The world of the Buddha is called ‘Peace and Happiness.’”

Ānanda asked again, “How much time has passed since that Buddha realized enlightenment?”

The Buddha replied, “About ten kalpas have passed since he became a Buddha. The ground of his Buddha-land is composed of the seven kinds of naturally produced jewels: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, coral, amber, sapphire, and carnelian. The land is so vast and extensive that it is impossible to know its limit.

“The brilliance of the jewels intermingles, creating exquisite and beautiful illuminations. The pure adornments surpass those in all the worlds of the ten quarters. Those jewels are the finest of all treasures and are like those of the Sixth Heaven.

“In addition, in that land there is no Mount Sumeru, no Encircling Adamantine-Iron Mountains, nor are there any other mountains. There are neither great oceans nor small seas, neither gorges nor valleys. Through the majestic power of the Buddha, however, any of them will appear if one so wishes. Furthermore, there are no hells, no realms of hungry ghosts, no realm of animals, and no other states of affliction. In addition, the four seasons — spring, autumn, winter, and summer — do not exist; it is neither cold nor hot, but instead it is always moderate and comfortable.”

At that time Ānanda said to the Buddha, “O World-honored One, if there is no Mount Sumeru in that land, what is it that sustains the Heaven of the Four Kings and Trāyastriṃśa Heaven?”

The Buddha replied to Ānanda, “And further, what is it that sustains Yāma, which is the Third Heaven, and other heavens up to the Highest Heaven of the realm of form?”

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “It is that karmic recompense is indeed inconceivable.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Just as karmic recompense is inconceivable, so it is that the worlds of the Buddhas are inconceivable. Sentient beings come to dwell in the land of karmic reward as the result of their meritorious acts. This is why there is no Mount Sumeru in that land.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “I myself have no doubt about this fact, but I ask this question solely for the sake of removing the doubts of the sentient beings in the future.”

11 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The majestic radiance of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life is exalted and supreme; the radiance of other Buddhas cannot compare with it. Some Buddhas’ light shines upon a hundred Buddha-lands, and other Buddhas’ light shines upon a thousand Buddha-lands. Briefly stated, the light of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life illuminates all the Buddha-lands in the eastern quarter, which are as many as the sands of the Ganges. In like manner, it reaches those in the southern, western, northern, and four intermediate quarters, as well as above and below.

“Some Buddhas’ light reaches only seven feet, while that of others reaches one, two, three, four, or five yojanas. In this way their light increases incrementally until it illuminates one Buddha-land.

“For this reason, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life is called Buddha of Immeasurable Light, Buddha of Boundless Light, Buddha of Unhindered Light, Buddha of Incomparable Light, Buddha of Light that is Lord of Blazing Light, Buddha of the Light of Purity, Buddha of the Light of Joy, Buddha of the Light of Wisdom, Buddha of Uninterrupted Light, Buddha of Inconceivable Light, Buddha of Inexpressible Light, and Buddha of Light Surpassing the Sun and Moon.

“Sentient beings who encounter this light have the three defilements swept away, and they become soft and gentle in body and mind. They leap and dance with joy, and the good mind arises in them. When those suffering pain and travail in the three evil realms see this light, they all find respite and become free of afflictions. After their lives have ended, they will all gain emancipation.

“The light of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life is resplendent and brilliantly illuminates the lands of the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters; there is no place where it is not heard. It is not I alone who praise this light now; all Buddhas, sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas together praise it just as I do.

“When sentient beings hear of this light’s majestic virtues and praise it day and night with wholeness of heart and without interruption, they will attain birth in that land in accord with the aspiration they hold in their hearts, and all the bodhisattvas and sravakas will extol and praise their virtues. Later, upon attaining the enlightenment of Buddha, their light will be praised by all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the ten quarters just as I now praise that Buddha’s light.”

The Buddha said, “Even if I were to expound the magnificence, splendor, and wondrousness of the light of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life day and night for a kalpa, still I could never describe it completely.

12 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The life of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life is everlasting and beyond reckoning. How could you know it? Imagine that the countless sentient beings throughout the worlds of the ten quarters were made to acquire human existence, and all were caused to attain the state of sravaka or pratyekabuddha. Even if all of them gathered in a single place and, with focused thoughts and concentrated

minds, employing the utmost power of their wisdom, pondered together for a thousand million kalpas in an attempt to determine the length of that life, they still would not be able to conclusively know its limit.

“So is it in the case of the life span of the sravakas, bodhisattvas, devas, and humans in that land. It cannot be known by reckoning or by using metaphors.

“In addition, the number of the sravakas and bodhisattvas in that land is incalculable and beyond description. They are perfected with transcendental wisdom and freely exercise their majestic power. They can hold all the worlds in the palms of their hands.”

13 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The number of sravakas in the first assembly of that Buddha is beyond reckoning. So is it with the number of bodhisattvas. Even if a thousand million kotis of countless and innumerable people equal to Mahāmaudgalyāyana were to count together the number of sravakas and bodhisattvas for uncountable nayutas of kalpas even until they pass into extinction, they would ultimately never be able to know that number.

“Suppose that there were someone who splits a hair into a hundred strands and, using one of them, picks up one drop of water out of a great ocean infinitely deep and broad. What would you think? How could you compare that drop of water with the ocean?”

Ānanda replied to the Buddha, “If the drop of water were to be compared with the ocean, it would be impossible to know the proportion by any astronomical means, mathematical calculation, verbal description, or metaphorical expression.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Even if people like Mahāmaudgalyāyana should count the number of sravakas and bodhisattvas at the first assembly of the Buddha for a thousand million kotis of nayutas of kalpas, the number they gain would be comparable to a drop of water. The portion yet to be known is comparable to the great ocean.”

14 “Moreover, the land is entirely covered with trees made of the seven kinds of jewels: trees made of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, coral, carnelian, or sapphire. There are other trees made of two, three, or up to seven kinds of jewels.

“There are also trees made of gold with silver leaves, flowers, and fruits; trees made of silver with gold leaves, flowers, and fruits; trees made of lapis lazuli with crystal leaves, flowers, and fruits; trees made of crystal with lapis lazuli leaves, flowers, and fruits; trees made of coral with carnelian leaves, flowers, and fruits; and trees made of carnelian with lapis lazuli leaves, flowers, and fruits. Or there are trees made of sapphire with leaves, flowers, and fruits composed of all kinds of jewels.

“There are also jeweled trees with roots made of purple gold, trunks made of white silver, branches made of lapis lazuli, twigs made of crystal, leaves made of coral, flowers made of carnelian, and fruit made of sapphire.

“There are also jeweled trees with roots made of white silver, trunks made of lapis lazuli, branches made of crystal, twigs made of coral, leaves made of carnelian, flowers made of sapphire, and fruits made of purple gold.

“There are also jeweled trees with roots made of lapis lazuli, trunks made of crystal, branches made of coral, twigs made of carnelian, leaves made of sapphire, flowers made of purple gold, and fruits made of white silver.

“There are also jeweled trees with roots made of crystal, trunks made of coral, branches made of carnelian, twigs made of sapphire, leaves made of purple gold, flowers made of white silver, and fruits made of lapis lazuli.

“There are also jeweled trees with roots made of coral, trunks made of carnelian, branches made of sapphire, twigs made of purple gold, leaves made of white silver, flowers made of lapis lazuli, and fruits made of crystal.

“There are also jeweled trees with roots made of carnelian, trunks made of sapphire, branches made of purple gold, twigs made of white silver, leaves made of lapis lazuli, flowers made of crystal, and fruits made of coral.

“There are also jeweled trees with roots made of sapphire, trunks made of purple gold, branches made of white silver, twigs made of lapis lazuli, leaves made of crystal, flowers made of coral, and fruits made of carnelian.

“As for these jeweled trees, their trunks stand in orderly lines. Their boughs are symmetrical, their branches grow harmoniously, their leaves face each other, their flowers bloom in an orderly fashion, and their fruits are well balanced. Their splendor is so brilliant that they cannot even be seen clearly. At times refreshing breezes blow, producing the exquisite sounds of the five notes of the scale, in which *kung* and *shang* spontaneously harmonize with each other.”

15 “Further, the bodhi-tree of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life is four million *li* in height, with a girth, at its base, of fifty yojanas. Its branches and leaves spread two hundred thousand *li* in the four directions. It is formed naturally of a composite of all kinds of gems. The kings of gems — the moon-radiant mani-jewel and the ocean-supporting-wheel gem — adorn it.

“Everywhere amid its branches hang jeweled adornments. There are a thousand million colors that change in various ways. Immeasurable light illuminates everything without bound. Nets of rare and wondrous jewels cover it. All the ornaments appear in response to one’s wishes.

“When a soft wind gently blows through its branches and leaves, there arise innumerable sounds preaching the wondrous Dharma. The sounds resonate and pervade all the Buddha-lands. All those who hear the sounds attain profound insight into existence and dwell in the stage of nonretrogression. Until they attain the enlightenment of Buddha, their auditory organ remains clear and penetrating, and they are free of all affliction and sickness.

“With eyes to see its colors, with ears to hear its sounds, with noses to smell its fragrance, with tongues to taste its flavor, with bodies to touch its light, and with minds to conceive of the tree, all attain profound insight into existence and dwell in the stage of nonretrogression. Until they attain the enlightenment of Buddha, their six sense organs are clear and penetrating, and they are free of all affliction and sickness.

“Ānanda, humans and devas of that land who see this tree realize the three dharma-insights: first, insight attained through its sounds; second, insight attained in accordance with the truth; and third, insight into the nonorigination of all existence. These all come about through the majestic, transcendent power of the

Buddha of Immeasurable Life — through the power of the Primal Vow, namely, the complete and perfect Vow, the clear Vow, the firm and steadfast Vow, and the ultimate Vow.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “Emperors of the world enjoy a hundred thousand varieties of music. From the musical tunes enjoyed by cakravartin kings, up to those enjoyed in the Sixth Heaven, each surpasses the preceding by ten million kotis of times. Even the music in all its myriad forms in the Sixth Heaven is surpassed thousands of kotis of times by any one of the varieties of tunes produced by these trees made of the seven kinds of jewels in this Land of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life.

“Again, music spontaneously arises there in all its myriad forms, the sounds of which are without exception those of the Dharma. Being clear and serene, they are exquisite and harmonious. They are the most excellent in all the worlds of the ten quarters.”

16 “Further, the halls, living quarters, palaces and storied pavilions, all adorned with the seven kinds of jewels, appear miraculously of themselves. Covering them is a jeweled canopy composed of pearls, moon-radiant mani-jewels, and various other gems.

“Everywhere about the buildings, both inside and out, there are pools for bathing. They are ten yojanas, or twenty or thirty, up to one hundred thousand yojanas across. Each is of dimensions — in length, breadth, and depth — of perfect symmetry. They are brimming with pure and fragrant water with the eight excellent qualities and the taste of nectar.

“There are golden pools with beds of white silver sand, white silver pools with beds of golden sand, crystal pools with beds of lapis lazuli sand, lapis lazuli pools with beds of crystal sand, coral pools with beds of amber sand, amber pools with beds of coral sand, sapphire pools with beds of carnelian sand, carnelian pools with beds of sapphire sand, white jade pools with beds of purple gold sand, and purple gold pools with beds of white jade sand. There are other pools composed of two, three, or up to seven kinds of jewels. “On the banks of these pools grow sandalwood trees, whose leaves and flowers grow in abundance and spread perfume all around. Celestial lotus flowers of blue, red, yellow, and white are in bloom, shining in their various colors, and completely cover the water.

“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 reach their necks, it will reach their necks. 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 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.'

17 "Ānanda, all those born in that Buddha-land are possessed of pure bodies, various kinds of beautiful voices, and virtues of supernatural powers. Palaces to dwell in, clothes, food and drink, many kinds of beautiful flowers and incense, and other ornaments that are provided to them arise out of spontaneity as in the Sixth Heaven.

"When they wish to eat, bowls and plates made of the seven kinds of jewels spontaneously appear in front of them. Vessels made of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, sapphire, carnelian, coral, and amber, or made of moon-radiant pearl appear as they wish, and they are spontaneously filled with food and drink of a hundred flavors.

"Although the food is served in this way, nobody actually eats it. By merely seeing and smelling it, one feels as if one had eaten. One is naturally satisfied with the food and, both body and mind being relaxed, one never becomes attached to its taste. When the meal is over, everything disappears, and in due time it reappears.

"That Buddha-land is pure and tranquil, wondrous and delightful. It is not apart from the enlightenment of uncreated nirvana. The sravakas, bodhisattvas, devas, and humans there are all possessed of lofty and brilliant wisdom, and their supernatural powers are thoroughly realized.

"They are all of a single kind, with no distinction in appearance. The words 'humans' and 'devas' are used simply in accordance with the forms of existence in other worlds. Their countenances are dignified and wonderful, rare and unsurpassed in the world. Their features, subtle and delicate, are not those of humans or devas; all receive the body of naturalness, of emptiness, and of boundlessness."

18 The Buddha said to Ānanda, "If, in this world, a beggar who is completely destitute were to stand beside a king, how could you compare their form and appearance?"

Ānanda replied, "If such a beggar were to stand beside the king, his mean and ugly appearance could never be compared with that of the king. The beggar is inferior to the king by a thousand million kotis of times or even an incalculable number of times. The reason is that the beggar in complete poverty is at the lowest rung of society with clothes barely covering his body and with food scarcely sustaining his life. Being tormented with hunger and cold, he looks almost nonhuman.

"This is because in his previous life he did not cultivate the root of virtue, but only accumulated wealth without giving it to others. As his wealth multiplied, he became more and more miserly. Thus he only sought to acquire more wealth, always craving to gain whatever he could. Never giving a thought to doing good, he just piled up a mountain of evil.

“At the end of his life, however, his wealth and treasures were all gone. What he had accumulated through physical strain and mental anguish brought him no merit, and in the end it all became the property of others. Having no merit to depend on and no virtue on which to rely, he fell into the evil realms after his death and suffered from torments for a long time. After the retributions of his evil deeds ended, he could escape from such realms and was reborn into a low class. Being extremely stupid, base, and degenerate, he appears to be barely human.

“The reason why the kings of the world are the most honored among people is that they accumulated merit in their previous lives. They were compassionate and generous to many people, saving them with kindness and benevolence. They practiced good with sincerity and avoided disputing with others.

“At the end of their lives, by virtue of their merit, they ascend to the good realms, attaining rebirth in the heavens where they enjoy happiness and pleasures. With the merit that still remains, they are reborn as humans into a royal family as a matter of course, and are naturally adored and respected. Since their demeanors are dignified and wonderful, all people revere them. Fine clothes and delicious food are provided as they wish. This is all due to the good they pursued in their previous lives.”

19 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “What you say is correct. Even though a king is the noblest among people and has the most dignified and wonderful appearance, suppose he were compared with a cakravartin king, he would look ever so much baser and meaner, like a beggar standing beside a king. It is true that a cakravartin king is incomparably majestic and splendid in the world, but if he were compared with the king of Trāyāstrimśa Heaven, he would likewise appear to be uglier and even more inferior by ten thousand kotis of times.

“If this heavenly king were compared with the king of the Sixth Heaven, he could not stand comparison, being inferior by as much as a hundred thousand kotis of times. In like manner, if the king of the Sixth Heaven were compared with the bodhisattvas and sravakas in the Land of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, his countenance and appearance would be inferior to them by a thousand million kotis of times or even as incalculable number of times.”

20 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Concerning the devas and humans in the Land of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, the clothes, food and drink, flowers and incense, ornaments, silken canopies, banners, exquisite sounds, as well as the houses, palaces, and pavilions they dwell in, are high or low, large or small, in accordance with the size of their bodies. They are all made of one, two, or countless jewels, according to their wishes; they appear as soon as they so desire.

“Again the ground is covered with wonderful cloth made of all kinds of treasure, on which all the devas and humans walk. 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 samadhi of total extinction.”

21 “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 sentient beings on the right Buddha-way.”

22 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The sentient beings born in that land all dwell among the truly settled, for in that Buddha-land there is not even one who is falsely settled or not settled.

“The Buddha-tathagatas throughout the ten quarters, countless as the sands of the Ganges, are one in praising the majestic power and the virtues, inconceivably profound, of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life.

“When sentient beings, upon hearing the Buddha’s name, realize an entrusting heart in joy with even a single thought of the Buddha, direct their merits with sincere mind, and aspire to be born in that land, they then all attain birth in that land and dwell in the stage of nonretrogression. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right Dharma.”

23 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “There are devas and humans throughout the ten quarters who, with sincere mind, aspire to be born in that land. They consist of three levels.

“Those of the highest level, abandoning their homes and discarding desires, become monks. Awakening the mind aspiring for enlightenment, they wholeheartedly think solely on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, perform various virtuous acts, and aspire to be born in that land. When these sentient beings are about to die, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, together with a host of sages, appears before them.

“Then they follow the Buddha and are born in that land. They naturally attain transformative birth from within seven-jeweled lotus flowers and dwell in the stage of nonretrogression. Acquiring invincible wisdom, they exercise supernatural powers at will.

“Therefore, Ānanda, there are sentient beings who, while in this world, desire to behold the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. They awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment and practice virtuous acts in aspiration for birth in that land.”

24 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Those of the middle level are devas and humans of the worlds throughout the ten quarters who, with sincere mind, aspire to be born in that land. Although they are incapable of performing practices, becoming monks, and accomplishing great virtue, they still awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment and wholeheartedly think solely on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life.

“They perform some good, observe precepts of abstinence, erect stupas and statues, offer food to monks, hang temple banners, light lamps, scatter flowers, and burn incense. Directing the merit of these acts, they aspire to be born in that land.

“At the moment of their death, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life manifests himself in his transformed body. Its light and physical characteristics and marks are exactly like those of a real Buddha. Accompanied by a large assembly of sages, the Buddha appears before them. Then, following the transformed Buddha, they are born in that land and dwell in the stage of nonretrogression. Their virtue and wisdom are next to those of the highest level.

25 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Those of the lowest level are devas and humans of the worlds throughout the ten quarters who, with sincere mind, desire to be born in that land. Even though they may not be able to do various virtuous acts, they awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment, think on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life wholeheartedly and with singleness of mind even ten times, and aspire to be born in that land.

“When they hear the profound Dharma, they rejoice and entrust themselves to it without giving rise to any doubt, and thinking of the Buddha even once, with sincere mind they aspire to be born in that land. When these people are about to die, they, seeing the Buddha as in a dream, also attain birth. In virtue and wisdom, they are next to those of the middle level.”

26 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Boundless is the majestic power of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. This Buddha is praised by every one of the Buddha-tathagatas throughout the worlds in the ten quarters, whose number is countless, limitless, and inconceivable.

“Innumerable and countless bodhisattvas in the Buddha-lands of the eastern quarter, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, all go to visit the Buddha of Immeasurable Life in order to pay homage and make offerings to the Buddha as well as to the great assembly of bodhisattvas and sravakas. Listening to and accepting the teaching, they spread it in order to guide people to enlightenment. Bodhisattvas in the southern, western, northern, and four intermediate quarters, as well as above and below, all do the same.”

27 Then the World-honored One spoke the following verses:

“The Buddha-lands in the eastern quarter
 Are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges.
 The bodhisattvas in those Buddha-lands
 Go to pay reverence to the Infinitely Enlightened One.

The Buddha-lands in the southern, western, northern, and four intermediate quarters,
 As well as above and below, are also like this.
 The bodhisattvas in those Buddha-lands

Go to pay reverence to the Infinitely Enlightened One.

All those bodhisattvas,
Each bringing exquisite celestial flowers,
Precious incense, and priceless cloth,
Make offerings to the Infinitely Enlightened One.

Playing celestial music in concert
And producing harmonious, elegant sounds,
They praise the most excellent one with verses
And make offerings to the Infinitely Enlightened One:

‘You have fully acquired supernatural powers and wisdom,
Freely entered the gates of the profound Dharma,
And perfected the treasury of virtues;
Peerless indeed is your excellent wisdom.

Your wisdom like the sun illuminates the world
And disperses the clouds of birth-and-death.’
Walking around him three times in reverence,
They pay homage to the Supremely Honored One.

Having seen that land of glorious purity,
Most wondrous and beyond conception,
They thereby awaken the supreme mind
And wish their land to be like this.

Then the Immeasurably Honored One
Changes his expression and smiles with delight;
From his mouth are emitted countless rays of light,
Illuminating all the lands in the ten quarters.

These rays of light circle around him
Three times and enter the crown of his head.
All devas and humans
Leap and dance with joy.

The Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara,
Rearranging his robes and bowing his head,
Asks the Buddha, ‘For what reason are you smiling?
I humbly beseech you explain your intention.’

Then his august voice resonates like thunder;
The eight kinds of exquisite tone resound, proclaiming,
‘I am now going to give predictions to the bodhisattvas.
I will now explain. Listen closely!

The mahasattvas coming from the ten quarters,
 Made vows of which I am fully aware.
 They seek to establish lands adorned with purity;
 Receiving my predictions, they will surely become Buddhas.

While realizing that all things are
 Like dreams, illusions, or echoes,
 They will fulfill their excellent vows
 And without fail establish lands such as mine.

While knowing that things are like lightning flashes and mirages,
 They pursue the bodhisattva path to the utmost.
 Possessing all roots of virtue,
 Just as I predict, they will surely become Buddhas.

Although they thoroughly know the true nature of all things,
 That all is empty and has no substance,
 They will solely seek such pure Buddha-lands
 And without fail establish lands such as mine.'

The Buddhas tell the bodhisattvas
 To go to pay homage to the Buddha of Peace and Sustenance:
 'Listen to his teaching, joyfully accept it, and practice it
 So that you may swiftly reach the realm of purity.

Upon reaching the land adorned with purity,
 You will quickly acquire supernatural powers.
 Without fail, from the Immeasurably Honored One
 You will receive predictions and realize perfect enlightenment.

The Power of the Buddha's Primal Vow is such that
 Those who, hearing the name, aspire for birth,
 All reach that land,
 And their attainment of nonretrogression comes about of itself.

The bodhisattvas make their excellent vows,
 Each wishing, "My land as well will not be different from this."
 They aspire to emancipate all beings everywhere
 And have their names known throughout the ten quarters.

In order to serve the millions of Tathagatas,
 They employ their miraculous powers to fly to all lands;
 After paying homage to them with joy, they take their leave
 And return to the Land of Peace.

People who lack roots of good
 Are not able to hear this sutra,
 But those who observe the precepts without fault

Are able to hear the right Dharma.

Those who encountered the World-honored One in the past
Are able to accept this teaching;
Humbly receiving it and holding fast to it,
They dance with great joy.

For those of arrogance, wrong views, and indolence,
It is hard to accept this teaching.
Those who have encountered Buddhas in their previous lives
Will rejoice in hearing this teaching.

Sravakas and even bodhisattvas
Are unable to know thoroughly the enlightened mind;
They are like persons born without sight
Desiring to guide others.

The ocean of the Tathagata's wisdom
Is deep, vast, and without limit or bottom.
It cannot be fathomed by those of the two vehicles;
Only Buddhas alone can fully comprehend it.

Even if all human beings,
Without exception, fully attained the Way,
Realized ultimate emptiness with pure wisdom,
And pondered the Buddha's wisdom for myriads of kalpas,

And even if they expounded it with the greatest effort
Throughout their lives, they still would not know it.
The Buddha's wisdom thus has no bound,
And it is pure to the utmost.

Hard it is to obtain human life
And difficult it is to encounter a Buddha in this world.
Even more difficult it is for one to attain faith and wisdom.
Once you have heard the Dharma, endeavor to seek the Way.

The one who hears and never forgets the Dharma,
Sees and reveres it and greatly rejoices in attaining it —
That person is my true friend;
Therefore, awaken aspiration for enlightenment.

Even if the whole world were filled with fire,
Resolutely pass through it in your quest to hear the Dharma.
You will unfailingly attain the enlightenment of Buddha
And bring beings everywhere across the stream of birth-and-death.”

28 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The bodhisattvas of that land all fulfill the attainment of Buddhahood after one lifetime, except those who, for the sake of sentient beings, have established their own original vows and, thus adorning themselves with the virtues of universal vows, seek to bring all to emancipation.

“Ānanda, while the sravakas in that Buddha-land have bodies that emit light for one fathom, the light of the bodhisattvas shines as far as a hundred yojanas. There are two bodhisattvas, however, who are the most revered ones, and have a majestic light that illuminates all the triple-thousand great thousand worlds.”

Ānanda asked the Buddha, “What are the names of the two bodhisattvas?”

The Buddha answered, “One is called Avalokiteśvara and the other, Mahāsthāmaprāpta. These two bodhisattvas once carried out the bodhisattva practices here in this world and, at the end of their lives, were born transformed in that Buddha-land.

“Ānanda, the sentient beings born in that land all possess the thirty-two major physical characteristics. Their wisdom having been completely perfected, they penetrate deeply into the reality of all things and profoundly know their essence and subtlety. Their supernatural powers are unhindered and their physical faculties are sharp and clear. Those with lesser abilities attain the two kinds of insight. Those with superior abilities attain boundless insight into the nonorigination of all existence.

“Those bodhisattvas will not be reborn in the evil realms until they become Buddhas. With their unlimited supernatural powers, they will always remember their former lives. Excepted, however, are those who wish to be born in the worlds of the five defilements, manifesting the same forms as the people dwelling there just as I did in this world of mine.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Bodhisattvas in that land, supported by the Buddha’s majestic powers, in as short a time as it takes to eat one meal, go to countless worlds in the ten quarters in order to pay homage and make offerings to the Buddhas, the World-honored Ones. In accordance with their thoughts, innumerable and countless offerings including flowers, incense, music, silken canopies, and banners, spontaneously appear just as they wish.

“They are rare, exquisite, excellent, and unlike those of this world. They are always offered to the great assembly of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sravakas. The flowers in the sky turn into floral canopies. They emit brilliant colorful light like blazing fire and carry their fragrance everywhere. Some of the canopies are four hundred *li* in circumference. Others are larger, some even to the extent that they cover the triple-thousand great thousand worlds. They appear one after another and disappear in turn.

“The bodhisattvas rejoice together, play celestial music in the air, and sing songs with wondrous voices praising the virtues of the Buddhas. They hear and accept the teaching with great joy. After paying homage to the Buddhas in this way, they instantly return to their own land before their mealtime.”

29 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “When the Buddha of Immeasurable Life expounds the Dharma to all in the great assembly of sravakas and bodhisattvas, they gather in a hall of the seven kinds of jewels. As he extensively proclaims the teaching of the Way and presents the wondrous Dharma, without exception they all rejoice, comprehend, and attain enlightenment.

“At that time a breeze spontaneously arises from each of the four directions and wafts over the jeweled trees, producing the five notes of the scale and causing countless exquisite flowers to rain down. As it blows, the blowers scatter everywhere as natural offerings. This is repeated without cessation.

“All the devas make offerings of a hundred thousand kinds of heavenly flowers and incense and of ten thousand varieties of music to the Buddha and the assembly of bodhisattvas and sravakas. Spreading flowers and incense all around and playing various types of music, they come and go one after another, each giving way to the next. The delight and pleasure of the assembly at that time are beyond expression.”

30 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The bodhisattvas born in that Buddha-land always proclaim the right Dharma whenever appropriate. Since their expositions are in accordance with the wisdom of enlightenment, they have neither distortion nor error.

“With respect to the myriad things in that land, they harbor neither a sense of ‘mine’ nor any sense of attachment. Free and unrestricted, their minds are unattached in going and coming, proceeding and staying. They do not discriminate between those with whom they are close and those with whom they are not. They have no thought of self and other, nor of competition and dispute. For the sake of sentient beings, they have attained the benevolent mind of great compassion.

“They have the pliant and well-tempered mind free of anger, as well as the unhindered and pure mind free of indolence. They have the equal, excellent, deep, and tranquil mind, and also the mind cherishing, appreciating, and rejoicing in the Dharma. Having extinguished all blind passions, they are free from the mind causing them to fall into the evil realms.

“They have accomplished all the practices that bodhisattvas should perform and reached the perfection of immeasurable virtues. Having attained the deep concentration of mind, the supernatural powers, and transcendental wisdom, they let their minds sport in the seven practices leading to enlightenment, and are deeply devoted to the Buddha Dharma.

“Their physical eyes are clear and penetrating, unflinchingly distinguishing one thing from another. Their divine eye sees limitlessly and boundlessly. Their Dharma-eye enables them to observe and ultimately realize the paths leading to enlightenment. Their wisdom eye beholds truth and enables them to reach the other shore. Their Buddha-eye enables them to completely realize the true nature of all things. With unhindered wisdom, they expound the teachings for the sake of all people.

“Observing with a sense of equality that the three worlds are empty and have no real substance, they seek the Buddha Dharma. Employing wisdom and skillful eloquence, they rid sentient beings of the afflictions of blind passions. Coming from suchness, they understand things as they really are and know well the skillful means of speech to make people cultivate good and eliminate evil. They do not relish worldly talk, seeking only right speech. They plant roots of good and aspire for the enlightenment of Buddha. They realize that all things are, without exception, tranquil and nonexistent. Their samsaric bodies and blind passions have been extinguished together with any of their karmic residue.

“As they hear the profound Dharma, their mind is free of doubt and fear, and they are always devoted to bodhisattva practices. Since their great compassion is deep and subtle, they embrace all without discrimination. They pursue the teachings of the One Vehicle to the utmost and lead people to the other shore. Having torn apart the net of doubt, they induce wisdom to arise in the minds of people. They comprehend all the Buddha’s teachings exhaustively.

“Their wisdom is like a great ocean, and their samadhi is like the king of mountains. The light of their wisdom, being brilliant and pure, exceeds that of the sun and the moon. The pure and undefiled Dharma is perfectly accomplished in them. Their wisdom is like the Himalayas, because it reflects all kinds of virtue

evenly and clearly. It is like the great earth, because those bodhisattvas have no mind discriminating between pure and impure, favorable and unfavorable.

“It is like pure water, because it washes away the dust and grime of blind passions. It is like the king of fire, because it consumes the firewood of all such passions. It is like a great wind, because it goes anywhere in all the worlds without hindrance. It is like empty space, because it has no attachment to any existing thing.

“It is like a lotus flower, because it is not defiled anywhere in all the worlds. It is like a great vehicle, because it carries the multitude of beings out of birth-and-death. It is like a thick cloud, because it roars with the great Dharma-thunder to awaken unenlightened beings. It is like a heavy rain, because it showers the nectar of Dharma to nourish sentient beings.

“It is like the Adamantine Mountains, because it cannot be moved by maras and those opposed to the Buddha’s teachings. It is like the king of Brahmā Heaven, because it is foremost in accomplishing the good. It is like a nyagrodha tree, because it offers a shelter for all. It is like an udumbara flower, because it rarely appears and is difficult to encounter.

“It is like a garuda, because it subdues those who oppose Buddhism. It is like playing birds, because it store nothing. It is like the king of bulls, because it is invincible. It is like the king of elephants, because it brings others under its control. It is like the king of lions, because it fears nothing. It is vast like empty sky, because its great compassion extends equally to all.

“The bodhisattvas have vanquished jealousy from their minds, for they are free of envy toward those who are superior to them. Solely seeking the Dharma, their minds know no fatigue. Always desiring to expound the teachings, their will never grows weary. Beating the drum of Dharma and raising the banners of Dharma, they cause the sun of wisdom to shine forth and dispel the darkness of ignorance. Cultivating the six acts of accord and respect, they always engage in bestowing the gift of Dharma. Being steadfast and diligent, their resolution never falters.

“They become lanterns of light for the world and excellent fields of merit. They always become leaders and treat others equally without aversion or attachment. Seeking only the right path, they find no joy or sorrow in other matters. Extracting the thorns of passion, they bring peace to the multitudes of beings. Since their virtue and wisdom are superb, there is no one who does not revere them.

“Having destroyed the hindrance of the three defilements, they revel in using their supernatural abilities. They possess all the powers of cause, condition, will, vow, skilful means, continuity, good, meditation, intelligence, and attentive hearing; the powers of generosity, precepts, patience, effort, concentration, and wisdom; the powers of right-mindedness, right-contemplation, and supernatural faculties; and the powers to train and guide beings in accordance with the Dharma.

“Being perfectly adorned with glorious features of the body, excellent physical characteristics and marks, virtues, and the wisdom of eloquence, they have no equal. They revere and give offerings to countless Buddhas and are, in turn, always praised by them. They have pursued the bodhisattva’s paramitas to the utmost and gone far beyond the stages of sravakas and pratyekabuddhas through practicing various samadhi-gates including the samadhis of emptiness, formlessness, and nondesire as well as the samadhi of nonarising and nonceasing.

“Ānanda, the bodhisattvas in that land have accomplished countless virtues such as these. I have only briefly explained them for your sake. If I were to expound them in full detail, I would not be able to describe them all even in hundreds of millions kalpas.”

31 The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya, the devas, humans, and others, “The virtue and wisdom of sravakas and bodhisattvas in the Land of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life are beyond verbal expression. Thus, that land is exquisite, blissful, and pure. Why do you not strive to practice the good, be mindful of the spontaneous working of the Way, and realize that all beings in that land attain without discrimination the boundless virtue of enlightenment? Each of you should be diligent and make every effort to seek it for yourself.

“Assuredly you will transcend and leave this world and attain birth in the Land of Peace. The bondage to the five evil courses is severed crosswise, and the evil courses close naturally. You ascend the path without limit. To go there is easy and yet no one is born there. The land not being at variance with the Way, you are drawn there by its spontaneous working. Why then do you not abandon worldly matters and make efforts to seek the virtue of the Way? You will thus be able to attain an infinitely long life and enjoy the life of limitless bliss.

“However, people in the world are so shallow and vulgar as to quarrel among themselves over matters of no urgency. In the midst of grave wickedness and extreme afflictions of the world, they busy themselves in leading their lives. Noble or base, poor or rich, young or old, and male or female, all they worry about is wealth and property. Whether or not they are possessed of fortune, they are all the same in having anxieties. They wander here and there in misery, accumulating worries and troubles. Driven by their own desire, they run about aimlessly and thus do not have a moment’s peace.

“If they have a field, they worry about the field. If they have a house, they worry about the house. In the same way, they worry about their six kinds of domestic animals such as cows and horses, their menservants and maidservants, their money and wealth, clothes and food, and furnishings. Accumulating worries and compounding sighs, they live in constant anxiety and fear.

“Then without warning, a sudden flood or fire, robbers, adversaries, or creditors will deprive them of all their possessions by washing them away, burning them, or plundering them. When their possessions have thus disappeared, extreme torment keeps them in utter confusion and never leaves them. Their minds congeal with anger and they cannot free themselves from agitation. When their hearts and minds become hardened, it becomes impossible to free themselves.

“Furthermore, when their bodies perish and their lives end in the midst of these agonies, they are forced to discard all they have and leave this world with no one to accompany them. Even the noble and the wealthy have these worries; they are afflicted in this way by myriad anxieties and fears. They suffer chills and fevers, leading their lives with pain.

“The poor and the lowly are destitute and in constant want. If they have no fields, they become anxious and wish to possess them. If they have no house, they become anxious and wish to possess one. If they have none of the six kinds of domestic animals such as cows and horses, no menservants or maidservants, no money or wealth, no clothes or food or furnishings, they become anxious and wish to possess them.

“If they happen to have one thing, they feel that something else is lacking. If they have this, they feel they do not have that, and thus they wish they had as much as others. Even if, by chance, they come to possess everything they want, they will soon lose it. Then they again anxiously pursue it, but will not be able to reacquire it. Fretting over their losses in vain, they become exhausted in mind and body, and are restless whether sitting or standing. Anxieties following on their heels, they are afflicted in this way. Suffering chills and fevers, they lead their lives in pain.

“At times, this exhausts their bodies and shortens their lives. Since they have not done any good in particular, nor practiced the Way, nor performed virtuous deeds, when their lives come to an end and their bodies perish, they will depart this world alone and go far away. Although some destination awaits them, no one knows if they are bound for a good or evil realm.

“People in the world — parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, other family members, or paternal and maternal relatives — should truly respect and love each other, refraining from hatred and envy. They should share things with others, refraining from greed and miserliness. They should always be friendly in speech and expression, refraining from quarrel and dispute.

“At times, people harbor a contentious mind and become angry. This enmity, however insignificant, may give rise to hatred and envy in this life, and in the coming life it will be gradually aggravated and finally develop into a mass of hostility. The reason is this: people harm one another while engaged in worldly affairs; if such harm does not result in their immediate mutual destruction, they harbor hostility and accumulate anger that congeals and naturally imprints itself upon their minds, and they are unable to leave it behind. As a result, after being born in the next life, they are forced to be in conflict and take revenge on each other.

“In the midst of worldly desires and attachments, people are born alone and die alone, come alone and go alone. In accordance with their deeds, they go to a place of either pain or pleasure. They themselves receive their due consequences and no one can take their place. Their good or evil deeds bring them to places of happiness or suffering. A realm resulting from their previous lives inevitably awaits them, and thus they must definitely enter it by themselves. When they have gone to faraway realms, they will not see each other again.

“Their good and evil deeds inevitably bring them to be born in different realms which are dim and obscure, separating them from each other forever. Since the path each one takes is different, they cannot expect to meet again. How difficult it is indeed to come across each other again!

“Why do they not abandon all worldly matters? While they each are strong and healthy, they should strive to practice the good, as well as exercise diligence in aspiring to go beyond this world and attain an extremely long life. Why do they not seek the Way? What are they expecting in this world? What kind of pleasure are they seeking?

“Such people in the world do not believe that performing good deeds brings good results, or that seeking the Way leads them to attaining it. Neither do they believe that death is followed by rebirth, nor that by giving gifts to others they obtain merit. They do not believe in all these matters of good and evil, and saying that these are not the case, to the end they refuse to recognize them.

“Accordingly, people look upon themselves in the same way. Generation after generation, they share the same view. From one generation to the next, they hold on to these ideas inherited from their fathers. From the very beginning, their fathers and grandfathers neither performed good deeds nor were aware of the virtue of the Way. Thus they are filled with foolish desires and delusions. With their hearts oppressed and their minds closed, they cannot see for themselves the courses of birth-and-death, or the paths of good and evil, nor does anyone tell them about it. Although good luck and bad luck, fortune and misfortune, arise in succession, none of them wonders why this is so.

“The unchanging reality is that living and dying follow one after another without cease. At times, parents mourn the death of their children, and in turn, children mourn the death of their parents. Brothers and

sisters, husbands and wives, cry over each other's death. That death may occur in reverse order is the principle of impermanence. All things are subject to change and nothing remains the same. Even if someone were to teach them this principle, very few would believe it. Consequently, they transmigrate within the realms of birth-and-death without cease.

“Such people, stricken with darkness and ignorance, do not believe the teaching of the sutras. With minds lacking any forethought, they only wish to gratify themselves. Deluded by lust and craving, they do not recognize the virtue of the Way. Lost and sinking in anger and rage, they pursue material wealth and carnal satisfaction like hungry wolves. Because of this, unable to attain the Way, they return to the suffering of the evil realms and repeat the cycle of birth-and-death endlessly. How pitiful and wretched they are!

“At times, when a family member, such as a parent, child, brother, sister, husband, or wife, dies and the other lives on, the one surviving mourns the other. Longing for the deceased, the other members of the family are overcome by grief at the loss. With heart and mind racked with pain, they mournfully recollect the deceased. Though days pass and years go by, they cannot be freed from this torment.

“Even if someone were to teach them the virtue of the Way, their minds would not become awakened. They think only of the favors they received from the deceased and cannot be freed from their feelings of attachment. Imprisoned in darkness and wrapped in ignorance and doubt, they are unable to think deeply and discern matters properly. Unable to maintain their composure, they can neither exclusively practice the Way with diligence, nor can they resolutely cut themselves off from worldly affairs. While wandering thus in this world, they meet their end. Their life will expire without attaining the Way, and there is nothing they can do about it.

“Invariably vile and corrupt, people are greedy for sensual pleasures. Many are confused about the Way and few can find it. People in the world rush about aimlessly with nothing to rely on. Whether well-born or not, high or low, rich or poor, noble or base, all toil ceaselessly at their work. Each of them harbors murderous and poisonous thoughts. With these malicious inner intents, they act recklessly. Acting contrary to the way of the world, they disregard the wishes of others.

“Their injustice and violation of the natural order result from their past acts, and they arbitrarily do what they desire until such evils are carried to their fullest extent. Instead of meeting their end naturally, their lives are suddenly snatched away and they fall into the evil realms where they undergo many cycles of suffering. Transmigrating through one life after another, they have no chance to escape for many thousands of kotis of kalpas. The pain they suffer is indescribable. How pitiful this is!”

32 The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya, the devas, humans, and others. “I have now told you about the way of the world. Such being the case, people remain in the world and do not attain the Way. You should think deeply on this, refrain from committing any evil, choose the good, and diligently perform it. Neither a life of lust and craving nor that of prosperity lasts forever. All these must pass and nothing can give real delight. Since you live in the world where a Buddha is, you should be all the more diligent.

“The person who aspires with a sincere mind to be born in the Land of Happiness shall reach the full illumination of wisdom and acquire excellent virtues. Do not give in to your desires or disobey my admonitions; be careful not to lag behind others in practicing the Way. If you have any doubt about the teaching or do not understand it, you may ask me, the Buddha, about anything, and I will explain it to you.”

Bodhisattva Maitreya knelt down and said, “O Buddha, most majestic and venerable, what you have now expounded fills me with delight. Having heard your teaching, which penetrates my mind, I realize that

people of the world are really as you have said. Now that, with your compassion, you have shown us the great Way, you have fully opened our ears and eyes and emancipated us once and for all.

“Having heard the Buddha’s exposition, we all rejoice. Having received your compassion, devas, humans, and all other beings down to crawling creatures are liberated from suffering and affliction.

“The Buddha’s teaching is most profound and excellent. With your wisdom you clearly observe all things in the eight quarters, the zenith and the nadir, as well as those in the past, future, and present, leaving nothing unseen.

“We have now attained emancipation because you devoted yourself to selfless efforts when you sought the Way in your former lives. The benevolence of your virtue encompasses all beings and your merit is majestic like a lofty mountain. Your light shines pervasively, penetrating to the boundless reaches of space. Opening the way for people to enter nirvana, you instruct them in the essentials of the scriptures and destroy wrong views by means of your majestic power, thus boundlessly inspiring all beings in the ten quarters.

“The Buddha is the Dharma-king whose virtue surpasses that of all other sages. As you are the teacher of all devas and humans, you enable them all to attain the Way in accordance with their aspirations. O Buddha, today we are able to meet you, and we all rejoice in hearing the voice of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. Thus we have attained clarity of mind.”

33 The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya, “What you have said is true. If you revere and adore a Buddha, you will attain great merit. A Buddha appears in this world after an exceedingly long time. I have now become a Buddha in this world. Expounding the Dharma, I spread the teaching of the Way, thereby severing all nets of doubt, pulling out the roots of lust and craving, and sealing off the sources of all evils. Nothing hinders me from traveling throughout the three worlds.

“The wisdom of the scriptures is essential for the various paths to enlightenment. It contains the fundamental principles of the teaching. It is clearly articulated and disclosed for beings in the five realms in order to emancipate those who are not yet emancipated, and clearly distinguishes between birth-and-death and the path to nirvana.

“Maitreya, you should know that you have performed the bodhisattva practices since innumerable kalpas ago, wishing for an eternally long time to emancipate sentient beings. The number of those who have followed you, attained the Way, and reached nirvana is beyond calculation.

“You, as well as all the devas and humans in the ten quarters and the four kinds of followers, have been transmigrating within the five realms for eternal kalpas, undergoing indescribable grief, fear, and afflictions. Birth-and-death has continued unceasingly until this present life. Now you have met the Buddha and heard his teaching. Furthermore, you have been able to hear about the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. How delightful and wonderful this is! It is my pleasure to share this joy with you.

“Now you should seek to abandon the pains of birth, death, aging, and sickness. Depravity as well as impurity being pervasive in this world, there is nothing that you can truly enjoy. You should resolutely maintain your composure, conduct yourself appropriately, strive to do more good, discipline yourself to keep your body pure, and wash away the filth of your heart. You should also be sincere in speech and conduct, and be inwardly and outwardly consistent. You should emancipate yourself, and in turn, save others. Sincerely seeking to fulfill your aspiration, accumulate roots of virtue for that purpose.

“No matter how much you may strive and suffer in this life, it will be only for a short time. After being born in the Land of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, you will enjoy limitless bliss. There you will be forever in accord with the virtue of the Way and have the roots of birth-and-death removed once and for all. There you will no longer be worried about the afflictions of greed, anger, and ignorance. If you wish your life to last for one kalpa, a hundred kalpas, or ten million kotis of kalpas, it will last just as long as you wish.

“The Buddha-land being uncreated, spontaneously manifested, and not apart from the enlightenment of nirvana, you should each be diligent in seeking to realize your aspiration. Do not entertain any doubt and do not give up your endeavor. If you commit offenses such as these, you will be born in the borderland, confined in a palace made of the seven kinds of jewels, where you will suffer all forms of adversity for five hundred years.”

Maitreya said to the Buddha, “Having received your sincere admonition, we will exclusively study and follow the teaching just as you have taught us. We will never entertain any doubt.”

34 The Buddha said to Maitreya, “If, here in this world, you maintain your composure, correctly control your mind, and refrain from doing evil, you will acquire the supreme virtue which is incomparable in all the worlds throughout the ten quarters. What is the reason? Since devas and humans in the Buddha-lands naturally do good and commit few evils, it is easy to teach and guide them.

“However, I have now become a Buddha in this world. It is extremely painful for me to live in this place of the five evils, the five pains, and the five burnings. I teach multitudes of beings, making them discard the five evils, leave behind the five pains, and avoid the five burnings. I subdue and cultivate their minds, making them practice the five good deeds and enabling them to gain merit and virtue, go beyond this world, acquire long life, and reach the enlightenment of nirvana.”

The Buddha said, “What are the five evils, the five pains, and the five burnings? What are the ways to extinguish the five evils and to make people practice the five good deeds, enabling them to gain merit and virtue, go beyond this world, acquire long life, and reach the enlightenment of nirvana?”

35 The Buddha said, “The first evil is as follows. Devas, humans, and all other beings down to crawling creatures are intent on committing evil, and there is none who is not so. The strong vanquish the weak, who in turn do injury to others. They harm and kill each other, like snakes and beasts swallowing and devouring their prey. Not knowing how to practice good deeds, they commit atrocious evils and immoral acts. They will later suffer retribution and be inevitably destined to the realm they deserve.

“The deities keep record and no offender goes unpunished. For that reason, some are born poor and destitute, base, beggarly, lonely, deaf, blind, mute, stupid, wicked, even humpbacked, insane, or abnormal. However, others are noble, prosperous, talented, or bright because in their previous lives they performed good and accumulated virtues with benevolence and filial piety.

“The reality of this world is that there are prisons established by the king’s law, but there are many who are unafraid of them and act without restraint. They commit evils and, having been found guilty, receive punishment. Even if they seek release, it is very hard to obtain. This is what we witness in this world. However, the retribution in the lives to come will be even more serious and severe. When they enter the dismal and dark realms, each receiving yet another samsaric body, they will undergo pains and afflictions as if the most extreme penalty of the king’s law were inflicted upon them.

“Thus, the countless afflictions of the three evil realms inevitably await them. While continuously transmigrating, they will receive different bodies and forms, and be subject to different realms. The life span they receive is sometimes long and sometimes short. Their soul or spirit goes to its appropriate destination. Although they go there alone, there are others who follow them and are reborn in the same realm, and so there is no end to their vengeance on each other. Since the karmic relationship caused by their evil deeds has yet to expire, they cannot keep away from each other. Endlessly transmigrating within these realms, they have no chance of escape. It is impossible for them to attain release. Their pain is beyond words.

“Between heaven and earth, this is how things naturally are. Though their deeds, whether good or evil, may not immediately give rise to their results, they are inevitably subject to this karmic principle. This is the first great evil, the first pain, and the first burning. Suffering is like this — it is as if a great fire were burning a person alive.

“However, if in the midst of it, you control your mind intently, discipline and conduct yourself properly, exclusively do good, and do not commit evil deeds, then you yourself will gain liberation, acquire merit and virtue, go beyond this world, be reborn in a heavenly realm, and reach the enlightenment of nirvana. This is the first great good.

36 The Buddha said, “The second evil is as follows. People in the world, whether parents and children, brothers and sisters, other family members, or husbands and wives, all lack moral principles and disobey the laws. Being extravagant, lustful, arrogant, and self-indulgent, they each want to pursue their own desires. Giving themselves over to their whims, they deceive each other. What they think and what they say are different; their words and thoughts are insincere. Flattering and disloyal, they fawn over others with cunning words. Envy the wise, they slander the right-minded and cause others to fall into perversity.

“If an unwise ruler appoints ministers, some may freely take advantage of every chance to engage in trickery and deceit, while others will uphold the law and understand what takes place in society. When the ruler is not appropriate for the position, he is likely to be deceived and to recklessly ruin the loyal and virtuous. This is contrary to cosmic principles.

“Ministers betray their rulers, and sons betray their fathers. Brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, paternal and maternal relatives, and friends deceive each other. They each harbor greed, anger, and ignorance, and seek only to promote their own interests, craving to possess more than they already have. Whether they are well-born or not, high or low, they are all the same at heart. They ruin their homes and destroy themselves. They do not reflect on the past nor do they ponder the future. Consequently, their close and distant relatives are also brought to ruin.

“At times, when family members, friends, villagers, townsfolk, and uneducated and vulgar people happen to work together, they are each so preoccupied with their own losses and gains that they consequently invite anger and enmity amongst themselves.

“Even if they are wealthy, they are stingy and not willing to give anything to others. Attached to their wealth and extremely greedy, they worry and suffer over it. Living in this way, when their lives come to an end, they find that they have nothing on which to rely. Each comes alone and goes alone, and there is nothing they can take with them. Good or evil, fortune or misfortune, follows them wherever they may go. Some abide in delightful realms while others enter those of suffering and torment. Later, even if they feel regret, there is nothing they can do.

“People in the world are ignorant and lacking in wisdom. When they see others doing good, they despise and abuse them, and are unwilling to respect and emulate them. Only thinking of doing evil, they recklessly commit unlawful acts. Always intent on stealing, they covet the profit others make. When they have dissipated and squandered everything, they again seek to recover it. Since they have wicked and crooked minds, they fear the reactions on the faces of others. Since they never think ahead, they regret what they have done when something goes wrong.

“In this world there are prisons established by the king’s law where, in accordance with their offenses, they receive punishment. Since, in their previous lives, they did not believe in the virtue of the Way and did not practice the roots of good, they commit evil yet again in this world. Then heavenly deities, becoming aware of this, keep record of it. When their life ends and their spirit departs, they fall into the evil realms.

“Thus, the countless afflictions of the three evil realms inevitably await them. Endlessly transmigrating within these realms, life after life for many kalpas, they have no chance of escape. It is impossible for them to attain release. Their pain is beyond words. This is the second great evil, the second pain, and the second burning. Suffering is like this — it is as if a great fire were burning a person alive.

“However, if in the midst of it, you control your mind intently, discipline and conduct yourself properly, exclusively do good, and do not commit evil deeds, then you yourself will gain liberation, acquire merit and virtue, go beyond this world, be reborn in a heavenly realm, and reach the enlightenment of nirvana. This is the second great good.

37 The Buddha said, “The third evil is as follows. People in the world come together to live off of each other between heaven and earth. Their life span is limited. Above, there are people who are wise, rich, noble, and prosperous. Below, there are people who are poor, destitute, weak, and foolish. Among all of them, there are those that are evil who always harbor wicked thoughts.

“With their minds filled with worries, they only seek to gratify their lust; agitated with carnal desires, they are restless whether sitting or standing. Greedy and miserly, they are bent on acquiring what they want. Leering at beautiful ladies, they freely indulge in indecent behavior. Despising and detesting their own wives, they frequently visit other women in secret. As a result, they squander all their wealth and eventually come to engage in criminal activities.

“They gather into bands, arm themselves, and fight with each other. Robbing and plundering, they viciously attack and kill people. They have evil schemes on the property of others and do not carry out their duties. When they obtain something by stealing, greed seizes them and makes them seek to acquire more. Fear-ridden, they intimidate and rob people in order to support their wives and children. Given to wanton desires, they go to the extreme in indulging sensual pleasures. Further, they disregard seniority among family members and relatives. All of their kin, both paternal and maternal, worry and suffer because of such behavior.

“Again, they do not fear the prohibitions of the king’s law. Such evils as these become known by other people and spirits. The sun and the moon bring them to light and deities keep record of them.

“Thus, the countless afflictions of the three evil realms inevitably await them. Endlessly transmigrating within these realms, life after life for many kalpas, they have no chance of escape. It is impossible for them to attain release. Their pain is beyond words. This is the third great evil, the third pain, and the third burning. Suffering is like this — it is as if a great fire were burning a person alive.

“However, if in the midst of it, you control your mind intently, discipline and conduct yourself properly, exclusively do good, and do not commit evil deeds, then you yourself will gain liberation, acquire merit and

virtue, go beyond this world, be reborn in a heavenly realm, and reach the enlightenment of nirvana. This is the third great good.”

38 The Buddha said, “The fourth evil is as follows. People in the world, never thinking of doing good, urge each other to commit various evil deeds. They slander and harm others and cause quarrels by deceitful and harsh words, lies, and flattery. Hating and envying good people, they entrap and ruin the bright and clever. They take delight in watching this happen from behind the scenes. Being undutiful to their parents, they despise their teachers and elders. Lacking the trust of their friends, they cannot expect them to be sincere.

“Being conceited and haughty, they think they are on the right path. Acting heedlessly in an overbearing manner, they treat others with contempt. Unable to know what they are doing, even when they commit evils, they feel no shame. Counting on their physical prowess, they force others to respect and fear them. Unafraid of the deities of heaven and earth as well as the sun and the moon, they refuse to do good, and so it is difficult to subdue and guide them. They are so self-indulgent that they think they can always remain as they are. There is nothing they fear, so they persist in their arrogance.

“Heavenly deities keep record of such evils as these. In their previous lives, they performed a few meritorious and virtuous deeds, and so the small good effects will assist, guard, and help them. However, since they commit evil deeds in this life, the effects of those meritorious and virtuous deeds are soon exhausted, and various good deities forsake them. Thus they stand alone without anything to rely on. As their lives come to an end, the results of their evil deeds inevitably send them to the destinations they deserve.

“Again, since their names are recorded and kept by the deities, their offenses and misdeeds lead them to their due destinations. As the retribution for their offenses takes an inevitable course, they can neither throw it off nor escape from it. They have no choice but to go forward and enter the fiery cauldron, where their bodies and minds are broken into pieces and their spirits are made to suffer. Even if they, at this very moment, repent what they have done, nothing can help them. The cosmic principles proceed naturally and never stray from their courses.

“Thus, the countless afflictions of the three evil realms inevitably await them. Endlessly transmigrating within these realms, life after life for many kalpas, they have no chance of escape. It is impossible for them to attain release. Their pain is beyond words. This is the fourth great evil, the fourth pain, and the fourth burning. Suffering is like this — it is as if a great fire were burning a person alive.

“However, if in the midst of it, you control your mind intently, discipline and conduct yourself properly, exclusively do good, and do not commit evil deeds, then you yourself will gain liberation, acquire merit and virtue, go beyond this world, be reborn in a heavenly realm, and reach the enlightenment of nirvana. This is the fourth great good.

39 The Buddha said, “The fifth evil is as follows. People in the world are frivolous and idle. They are unwilling to do good deeds, to discipline themselves, or to work hard at their occupations. Consequently, their family members and relatives suffer from privations and the afflictions of hunger and cold. When their parents scold them, they retort with angry looks and disobey their parents’ admonitions. They rebel against them as if they were enemies. Thus, this makes their parents wish that they never had children.

“They lack moderation in their dealings with others, and so everyone worries over the troubles they cause. Ignoring their indebtedness to their parents and disregarding their obligations to others, they are unwilling to give anything in return. They become poorer and more destitute and cannot recover from it. Whatever profit

they may make, they want to keep for themselves. Plundering the property of others, they squander it as they desire. While floundering between loss and gain, they live extravagantly. Indulging in drinking and feasting on delicacies, they never practice temperance. Led by their own desires and failing to reflect on their own foolishness, they come into conflict with others.

“Without giving any consideration to the feelings of others, they force their views upon them. When they see others doing good, they hate and envy them. Lacking righteousness and propriety, they have neither self-reflection nor modesty. They are so self-righteous that no one can advise or admonish them. They are unconcerned whether or not their six kinds of relatives and dependents have enough to live on. They neither acknowledge their indebtedness to their parents nor fulfill their moral obligations to their teachers and friends. In their minds they always think evil thoughts, in their speech they always utter evil words, and with their bodies they always commit evil deeds. Never have they done even a single good deed.

“They do not believe the teachings of ancient sages or those of Buddhas, nor do they believe that they will be able to go beyond this world through practicing the Way. Further, they do not believe that after death their spirit will be reborn into another world, that performing good deeds will bring good results, or that committing evil deeds will bring evil results. They harbor the intent to kill the true ones, to disrupt the Sangha, and to harm their father and mother, brothers and sisters, and dependents. Thus, their six kinds of relatives hate them so much that they wish them dead.

“In this way, such people in the world are all the same at heart. They are ignorant and foolish, and yet they think themselves wise. They do not know from where life comes or to where death leads. Neither merciful nor tolerant toward others, they act against the way of the world. However, in the midst of all this, they still yearn for sudden fortune. Although they desire a long life, the time will come when they must die.

“Even if someone compassionately admonishes them, guides them to think of good deeds, and explains to them that we are going through birth-and-death in the good and evil realms according to the natural law of karma, they will not believe this truth. No matter how painstakingly one may try to convince them, it is of no use. With their minds closed, they refuse even to try to understand. However, when their lives are about to end, remorse and fear arise in turn. Not having done any good deed before, at the very end of life they become filled with regret. What is the use of regretting this afterwards?

“Within the universe, there are five distinct realms. They are vast and deep, endless and boundless. A good or evil deed brings about its corresponding result, and accordingly one receives either fortune or misfortune. No one else can take one’s place. This is the consequence of the natural law of karma. In accordance with one’s evil deeds, retribution follows wherever one may go and no one can escape it.

“Good people do good deeds, moving from happiness to greater happiness, from light to brighter light. Evil people do evil deeds, moving from pain to greater pain, from darkness to deeper darkness. Who knows this? Only I, the Buddha, know. Even though I teach and reveal this to people, few believe it. Therefore, the cycles of birth-and-death never stop and transmigration through the evil realms continues without cease. It is hard to describe in detail such people in the world.

“Thus, the countless afflictions of the three evil realms inevitably await them. Endlessly transmigrating within these realms, life after life for many kalpas, they have no chance of escape. It is impossible for them to attain release. Their pain is beyond words. This is the fifth great evil, the fifth pain, and the fifth burning. Suffering is like this — it is as if a great fire were burning a person alive.

“However, if in the midst of it, you control your mind intently, discipline and conduct yourself properly, keep your speech and actions in accord, are sincere in your conduct, use words appropriately, harbor no contradiction between your mind and speech, exclusively do good, and do not commit evil deeds, then you yourself will gain liberation, acquire merit and virtue, go beyond this world, be reborn in a heavenly realm, and reach the enlightenment of nirvana. This is the fifth great good.”

40 The Buddha said to Maitreya, “As I have told you, the five evils in this world give rise to afflictions in this way, and the five pains and the five burnings arise one after another. Since people only commit evil deeds and do not cultivate the roots of good, they all inevitably enter the evil realms.

“Now in this world, even if those who suffer from incurable diseases want to die, they cannot, and even if they want to live, they cannot. Whatever their evil deeds have brought about is held up for others to see. After they die, in accordance with their deeds, they enter the three evil realms, where the suffering and torment they undergo is beyond measure. They burn themselves with the fire they have created.

“Reaching this world after a long period of time, they invite enmity among themselves, which arises at first as something insignificant, but eventually develops into a great evil. This is simply because they are so attached to wealth and sensual pleasures that they can never bring benefit to others. Driven by foolish covetousness, they selfishly think as they please and are bound by blind passions, which never dissolve and never cease.

“They scramble shamelessly for their own profit, never reflecting on their own conduct. Even if they become wealthy and prosperous, they do nothing but indulge themselves. They are unable to exercise restraint and are unwilling to do good deeds. Consequently, their powerful influence diminishes quickly and is exhausted. They remain in the midst of suffering, which becomes ever more harsh as time passes.

“The cosmic principles are like a net stretching everywhere, and unfailingly catch all offenders. This net of karmic law, made up of both coarse and fine mesh, operates consistently from top to bottom. Those caught in the net are helpless, filled with desolation and fear. This is the way it has been from the past up to the present day. How sad and heart-wrenching it is!”

The Buddha said to Maitreya, “People of the world are like this. All the Buddhas have pity on them and, using majestic and transcendent powers to extinguish all evil, guide them to do good deeds. If they abandon the thoughts they now possess, observe the precepts, and accept and practice the teachings unerringly, then they will finally be able to go beyond this world and reach the enlightenment of nirvana.”

The Buddha said, “You as well as the devas and humans of the present and the future, having received the teaching of the Buddha, should reflect on it, and discipline and conduct yourselves properly in the midst of this world. A sovereign ruler should perform good deeds and edify those under him. His edicts should be passed down from one to the other, so that they all may discipline themselves, revere the sages, respect good persons, and have compassion and benevolence toward others. You should not go against the instructions and admonitions of the Buddha. You should seek to go beyond this world and extract and sever the roots of evil binding you to birth-and-death. You must keep away from the path leading to the countless sorrows, fears, and afflictions of the three evil realms.

“You should extensively plant roots of virtue in this world, be kind and generous, and abstain from breaking the precepts. With forbearance, diligence, concentration, and wisdom, you should encourage one another in doing virtuous deeds and performing good. If you strictly observe the precepts of abstinence with right

thought and proper mindfulness even for one day and one night, this will be superior to doing good deeds in the Land of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life for one hundred years.

“What is the reason? Since that Buddha-land is a realm of uncreatedness and spontaneity, all people there accumulate good merit without committing even a hair’s breadth of evil. If you perform good deeds for ten days and ten nights in this world, this will be superior to performing them for one thousand years in other Buddha-lands. Why is this so? It is because in other Buddha-lands many perform good deeds and few commit evils. Those lands, being full of merit and virtue by nature, are not the place for committing evils.

“However, in this realm of ours, evil abounds and there is no spontaneous arising of good. Striving to satisfy their desires, beings in this world deceive each other. With minds distressed and bodies exhausted, they swallow afflictions and consume poison. Toiling their lives away, they never have even a moment’s rest.

“Out of pity for all of you, devas and humans, I have taken pains in urging you to do good deeds. I have guided you in accordance with your capacities and have bestowed you with the teaching, and you have never failed to comply with it. You will all attain the Way as you wish.

“Wherever the Buddha travels, be it country, province, town, or village, there is no place which does not benefit from his virtue. Peace and harmony reign throughout the land. The sun and the moon shine brightly, the wind and rain are timely, and no disaster or disease ever occurs. The land is prosperous and the people live in peace, so there is no need to use soldiers and weapons. People respect virtue, cultivate benevolence, and diligently observe propriety and humility.”

The Buddha said, “The pity I have for all of you, devas and humans, is much greater than the concern that fathers and mothers have for their children. Having become a Buddha in this world, I have subdued the five evils, eliminated the five pains, and extinguished the five burnings. With good I have vanquished evil and uprooted the suffering of birth-and-death, enabling people to attain the five virtues and reach the tranquility of the uncreated.

“However, after I leave this world, the teaching will gradually perish and people, engaging in flattery and deceit, will commit evil deeds again. Eventually they will suffer from the five pains and the five burnings as before. As time goes by, their sufferings will become ever more severe. It is impossible to describe this in detail. For your sake, I have only explained it in brief.”

The Buddha said to Maitreya, “You should each reflect on this and admonish one another to follow the Buddha’s teaching and not to disobey it.”

At this time, Bodhisattva Maitreya put his palms together and said, “How considerate the Buddha’s teaching is! People of the world are really as you have described. The Tathagata, out of compassion and pity for all, emancipates each one of them. Having accepted the Buddha’s sincere admonitions, we will never fail to follow them.”

41 The Buddha said to Ānanda, “Rise up and rearrange your robes. Put your palms together and respectfully pay homage to the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. For all the Buddha-tathagatas in the lands of the ten quarters, always and in one accord, praise that Buddha’s virtue of nonattachment and unhinderedness.”

Then, Ānanda stood up and rearranged his robes. Assuming the proper posture, he faced to the west and put his palms together to pay sincere homage. Prostrating his whole body to the ground, he worshipped the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. Then he said, “O World-honored One, I wish to see that Buddha, the Land of

Peace and Happiness, and the whole assembly of the bodhisattvas and the sravakas therein.” No sooner had he uttered these words than the Buddha of Immeasurable Life emitted a great radiant light, which universally illuminated all the Buddha-worlds. The Encircling Adamantine Mountains, Mount Sumeru which is the king of mountains, all other great and small mountains, and everything else shone with the same golden color.

It was like the flood at the end of a cosmic age covering the whole world, when everything becomes submerged and disappears, leaving nothing but the vast expanse of water to be seen. The light of that Buddha was just like this. All the lights of the sravakas and bodhisattvas were completely outshone and obscured, and only that Buddha’s brilliant and glorious light could be seen.

At that time Ānanda saw the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, whose majesty was outstanding like Mount Sumeru, king of mountains, rising high above all the worlds. There was nothing that was not illuminated by the light radiating from the Buddha’s body. The entire audience, the assembly of the four kinds of followers, saw this at the same time. Similarly, those in that land saw all that happened in this land.

42 At that time, the Buddha said to Ānanda and Bodhisattva Maitreya, “When you observed the land, did you not see that everything there, from the ground up to the Heaven of Pure Abode, is most wondrous, adorned with purity, and that it comes into being spontaneously?”

Ānanda answered, “Yes, we did.”

“Did you not also hear the great voice of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life resounding throughout the whole world and guiding all sentient beings?”

Ānanda answered, “Yes, we did.”

“Did you not also see that the inhabitants in that land, aboard their seven-jeweled flying palaces measuring a hundred thousand yojanas, travel freely in all the directions of the ten quarters to make offerings to all the Buddhas?”

Ānanda replied, “Yes, we did.”

“Did you not also see that some of the inhabitants in that land had attained womb-like birth?”

Ānanda answered, “Yes, we did.”

“Those who attain womb-like birth dwell in palaces a hundred yojanas or five hundred yojanas in extent. Within, they each enjoy pleasures like those of Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, all of which arise naturally.”

43 Then Bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Buddha, “World-honored One, what causes and conditions lead to the distinction between womb-like birth and transformative birth among the inhabitants of that land?”

The Buddha said to Maitreya, “Suppose there are sentient beings who, with minds full of doubt, aspire to be born in that land through the practice of various meritorious acts. Unable to realize the Buddha-wisdom, the inconceivable wisdom, the ineffable wisdom, the all-encompassing wisdom of the Mahayana, and the unequalled, peerless, and supremely excellent wisdom, they doubt these kinds of wisdom and do not believe in them. Yet, believing in the recompense of evil and good, they aspire to be born in that land through cultivating the roots of good.

“Such sentient beings will be born in those palaces, where for five hundred years they will never see the Buddha, hear the teaching, or see the sacred host of bodhisattvas and sravakas. Hence, in that land this is known as womb-like birth.

“However, if there are sentient beings who resolutely believe in these kinds of wisdom, from the Buddha-wisdom to the supremely excellent wisdom, and perform meritorious acts, directing their merit with firm belief, then they will spontaneously attain the transformative birth within the seven-jeweled lotus flower, seated with their legs crossed. In an instant they will acquire the same physical features, radiant light, enlightened wisdom, and virtues as those of bodhisattvas.”

44 “Moreover, Maitreya, if great bodhisattvas in the Buddha-lands of other directions aspire to see the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, and revere and make offerings to the Buddha as well as the assembly of bodhisattvas and sravakas, then when their lives come to an end, they will attain birth in the Land of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, where they spontaneously receive transformative birth within the seven-jeweled lotus flower.

“Know, Maitreya, that this is because those of transformative birth are superior in wisdom. Those of womb-like birth lack wisdom, and for five hundred years, never seeing the Buddha, hearing the teaching, or seeing the sacred host of bodhisattvas and sravakas, they have no way of making offerings to the Buddha. Neither do they know the rules of conduct of bodhisattvas, nor can they perform meritorious acts. You should know that this is brought about by a lack of wisdom and the harboring of doubts in their former lives.”

45 The Buddha said to Maitreya, “Consider the case of a cakravartin king, who possesses a palace chamber made of the seven kinds of jewels. It is adorned in manifold ways, furnished with canopied beds, and hung with many silken banners. If young princes were to commit offenses against the king, they would be imprisoned there and fettered with gold chains.

“They would be provided with food and drink, clothes, bedding, flowers and incense, and music, no less than the cakravartin king is. What do you think of this? Would these princes enjoy being in such a state or not?”

Maitreya replied, “No. They would only try to use various means to seek out someone of great power in order to escape from there.”

The Buddha said to Maitreya, “These sentient beings are precisely like that. Since they doubt the Buddha’s wisdom, they will be born in those palaces. There they do not receive any punishment of experience even a moment of discomfort. However, for five hundred years, they will neither be able to see the Three Treasures, nor cultivate various roots of good through making offerings to Buddhas — this is distressing to them. Though all other pleasures are available to them, they do not enjoy staying there.

“If these sentient beings become aware of their past offenses and deeply repent with a desire to leave that place, then immediately as they wish, they will be able to go to the place of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, where they can worship and make offerings to the Buddha. In addition, they will be able to visit all the other countless and innumerable Buddhas and cultivate various meritorious acts.

“Know, Maitreya, that if there are bodhisattvas who give rise to doubt, they will lose the great benefit. Therefore, you should definitely believe in the supreme wisdom of all the Buddhas.”

46 Bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Buddha, “World-honored One, how many bodhisattvas are there in this world who have attained the stage of nonretrogression and will be born in that Buddha-land?”

The Buddha said to Maitreya, “In this world there are sixty-seven kotis of bodhisattvas at the stage of nonretrogression, and they will all be born in that land. Every one of those bodhisattvas has already in the past made offerings to innumerable Buddhas as you, Maitreya, have done. Bodhisattvas of slight practice and practitioners of small virtues are numerous beyond calculation, but they will all be born in that land.”

The Buddha said to Maitreya, “Not only are the bodhisattvas in this world born in that land, but also those in other Buddha-lands are born there.

First, in the land of the Buddha called Far-reaching Light, there are one hundred and eighty kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Second, in the land of the Buddha called Treasure Storehouse, there are ninety kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Third, in the land of the Buddha called Immeasurable Sound, there are two hundred and twenty kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Fourth, in the land of the Buddha called Taste of Nectar, there are two hundred and fifty kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Fifth, in the land of the Buddha called Dragon Subduer, there are fourteen kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Sixth, in the land of the Buddha called Superior Power, there are fourteen thousand kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Seventh, in the land of the Buddha called Lion, there are five hundred kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Eighth, in the land of the Buddha called Light Free of Defilement, there are eighty kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Ninth, in the land of the Buddha called Peak of Virtue, there are sixty kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Tenth, in the land of the Buddha called Mountain of Wondrous Virtue, there are sixty kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Eleventh, in the land of the Buddha called King of Humans, there are ten kotis of bodhisattvas, all of whom will be born there.

Twelfth, in the land of the Buddha called Supreme Flower, there are innumerable and incalculable bodhisattvas, all of whom will dwell in the stage of nonretrogression and are possessed of invincible wisdom. Having already made offerings to countless Buddhas, they can master within seven days the most steadfast Dharma that would require mahasattvas a hundred thousand kotis of kalpas to realize. These bodhisattvas will all be born there.

Thirteenth, in the land of the Buddha called No-Fear, there are seven hundred and ninety kotis of great bodhisattvas and incalculable minor bodhisattvas and bhiksus, all of whom will be born there.”

The Buddha said to Maitreya, “Not only will the bodhisattvas from these fourteen Buddha-lands be born there, but also those from innumerable Buddha-lands in the ten quarters will attain birth in the same way. Their number is so huge and countless that if I were try to name those Buddhas in the ten quarters and count the bodhisattvas and bhiksus who will be born there, it would be impossible even if I were to do so day and night for a kalpa. I have only briefly explained this for your sake.”

47 The Buddha said to Maitreya, “If there are persons who, having heard the name of that Buddha, leap and dance with joy and are mindful of the Buddha even once, know that they receive the great benefit; that is, they acquire the unexcelled virtues.

“For this reason, Maitreya, even if the triple-thousand great thousand worlds were filled with great flames, you must pass through them to hear the teaching of this sutra. Rejoicing in it with an entrusting heart, you should retain and recite it, and practice as prescribed. What is the reason? It is because there are many bodhisattvas who wish to hear this teaching but are unable to do so.

“If there are sentient beings who hear the teaching of this sutra, they will never retrogress on their way to supreme enlightenment. Therefore, you should wholeheartedly accept, retain, recite, expound, and put this sutra into practice.”

The Buddha said, “Now I have expounded this sutra for all sentient beings, and have enabled you to see the Buddha of Immeasurable Life and everything in his land. If you have questions about what to do, you should ask me now, so that you may not give rise to further doubt after I have entered nirvana.

“In the future, all the sutras will become extinct. However, out of compassion and pity, I will ensure that this sutra alone remains for a further one hundred years. Those sentient beings who encounter this sutra will attain emancipation in accordance with their aspiration.”

The Buddha said to Maitreya, “It is difficult to encounter and difficult to behold a Tathagata who has appeared in this world. It is difficult to meet and difficult to hear the teachings of the Buddhas. It is difficult to hear the excellent teachings of the bodhisattvas — the paramitas. It is also difficult to meet a true teacher, hear the teaching, and put it into practice.

“However, the most difficult of all difficulties is to hear this sutra and accept it with the entrusting heart: nothing surpasses this difficulty. Therefore, I have thus presented the Dharma, thus preached it, and thus taught it. You should accept it in trust and practice in accord with it.”

48 At that time, when the Buddha expounded this sutra, countless sentient beings awakened the mind of supreme, perfect enlightenment. Twelve thousand nayutas of people attained the pure Dharma-eye, twenty-two kotis of devas and humans obtained the fruit of nonreturner, eight hundred thousand bhiksus extinguished their defiled passions and liberated their minds, and forty kotis of bodhisattvas attained the stage of nonretrogression. Adorning themselves with the virtue of the universal vows, they will all surely realize the perfect enlightenment in the future.

At that time, the triple-thousand great thousand worlds shook with six kinds of tremors, and a great light universally illuminated the lands in the ten quarters. A hundred thousand kinds of music arose spontaneously, and countless wondrous flowers rained down profusely from the sky.

When the Buddha finished expounding this sutra, Bodhisattva Maitreya, the bodhisattvas from the ten quarters, the Elder Ānanda, all the great sravakas, and all those who were in the assembly, without exception, rejoiced upon hearing what the Buddha had taught.

