

The Sutra on the Buddha of

Immeasurable Life

Delivered by Śākyamuni Buddha

Part One

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 Mahākauṣṭhilya, 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 unequalled.
 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 unequaled 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 Trāyastriṃśa 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 samādhi 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.”

The Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life

Delivered by Śākyamuni Buddha

Part One