**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 8**

**CHAPTER 1**

**The Origin of Demonic States**

D2 Identifying the five demons so cultivators can recognize them and avoid failing.
E1 The demonic states of the five skandhas are spoken without request.
F1 Everyone should recognize these demonic states.
G1 Final true and unending compassion.
 **Sutra:

At that time, the Tathagata was preparing to leave the Dharma seat. From the lion throne, he extended his hand and placed it on a small table wrought of the seven precious things. But then he turned his body, which was the color of purple golden mountains, and leaned back, saying to everyone in the assembly and to Ananda: "Those of you with more to learn, those enlightened by conditions, and those who are soundhearers have now turned your minds to pursue the attainment of supreme Bodhi the unsurpassed, wonderful enlightenment. I have already taught you the true method of cultivation."

Commentary:**

At that time, the Tathagata was preparing to leave the Dharma seat, since he had almost finished speaking the Shurangama Sutra. From the lion throne, he reached his hand out and placed it on a small table wrought of the seven precious things. The Buddha was on his Dharma seat, the lion throne. The Buddha's speaking of the Dharma is like a lion's roar. When a lion roars, all the animals are frightened. That's why the Buddha's Dharma seat is called the lion throne. The small table in front of the Buddha was made of and adorned with the seven precious things.

But then he turned his body, which was the color of purple golden mountains, and leaned back. The Buddha's body is like a purple golden mountain; its brightness shines everywhere. He leaned on the small table again to speak the dharma, saying to everyone in the assembly and to Ananda: Those of you with more to learn. Before certifying to the fourth stage of Arhatship, one is in the position of having more to learn. Those enlightened by conditions and those who are sound-hearers, those who become enlightened through cultivating the twelve links of conditioned causation and those sound-hearers who become enlightened through cultivating the dharma of the four noble truths have now turned your minds to pursue the attainment of supreme Bodhi, the unsurpassed, wonderful enlightenment.

You have now turned from the small to go towards the great. You of the two vehicles have brought forth the great vehicle resolve and seek to attain great enlightenment; there is no enlightenment higher than this. I have already taught you the true method of cultivation. I have already explained the real method of cultivation for you.

G2 Specific indication of the subtle demonic events.
 **Sutra:

You are still not aware of the subtle demonic events that can occur when you cultivate shamatha and vipashyana. If you cannot recognize a demonic state when it appears, it is because the cleansing of your mind has not been proper. You will then be engulfed by deviant views.

Commentary:**

You are still not aware. Earlier, Ananda asked the Buddha how to cultivate. He had requested the Dharma on behalf of living beings of the future. But, although he now understands the principle of cultivation, he doesn't have any actual experience. He understands the theory, but since he lacks experience, he doesn't know what can occur in cultivation. So the Buddha said, "You are still not aware of the subtle demonic events that can occur when you cultivate shamatha and vipashyana." In cultivating shamatha, which refers to the great Shurangama Samadhi, and in cultivating vipashyana, a method of subtle contemplation, subtle demonic states can arise. In the process of cultivation, many demonic states can arise which are not very obvious, but, rather, extremely obscure.

If you cannot recognize a demonic state when it appears. When you are cultivating the Way and practicing the skill of "directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature," a demonic state may appear. If you do not recognize the demon and do not know what demons are, it is because the cleansing of your mind has not been proper. You have been cleansing your mind, but what you have done is slightly incorrect not in accord with proper knowledge and views. For that reason, you will then be engulfed by deviant views. If your knowledge and views are the slightest bit improper, you will be caught up in deviant views.
 **Sutra:

You may be troubled by a demon from your own skandhas or a demon from the heavens. Or you may be possessed by a ghost or spirit, or you may encounter a li ghost or a mei ghost. If your mind is not clear, you will mistake a thief for your own son.

Commentary:**

You may be troubled by a demon from your own skandhas; that is, a demon produced from your own mind, or one of the ten kinds of demons produced from the form skandha, which is also of your own making. Or it may be a demon from the heavens. Why should a demon from the heavens come to disturb you? It's because you have cultivated to the point that you have some samadhi. Having samadhi is no problem in itself, but what happens is that the demon king's palace starts to shake. It seems just like an earthquake. Since the demon king has spiritual powers, as soon as the shaking starts, he investigates, "Why is my palace shaking for no apparent reason? Why is it breaking apart? Aha!" He discovers that someone in the world is about to accomplish the Way and that the strength of that person's samadhi is shattering his palace. The demon king thinks, "So you want to destroy me? Well, I'm going to destroy your samadhi first!" Then he comes to wipe out your samadhi power.

Or you may be possessed by a ghost or spirit. When the ghosts and spirits see that you are about to realize the fruition in your cultivation, they become jealous. They think, "Oh, so you are going to realize the fruition? We're going to destroy your cultivation first!" Then they enter your mind or possess your body, making it impossible for you to perfect your samadhi power. They cause you to "catch on fire" and become possessed. Didn't the preceding passage of text talk about being possessed by a demon? This is very important. Why do you become possessed by a demon? Because "the cleansing of your mind has not been proper," and because your motivation is improper. With even the slightest deviant thought, you get caught by a demon. This is known as "catching on fire and entering a demonic state."

Or you may encounter a li ghost or a mei ghost or a wang liang. Those are types of ghosts and goblins. If your mind is not clear, you will mistake a thief for your own son. If you encounter such a state and fail to recognize or understand it, you will end up "mistaking a thief for your son." Think about it: How can they not rob or steal your possessions? If you invite a thief into your home, then all the priceless treasures in your house will be stolen. What are your priceless treasures? I will tell you frankly, and be sure to remember this! You should believe what I say. Whatever you do, don't fail to believe what I say. Why? Because it is important to your future and to your life. What are your treasures? They are your very own treasury of the Tathagata. Can your treasury of the Tathagata be stolen? Didn't I mention essence, energy and spirit before? If you want to regain your treasury of the Tathagata, you first have to protect your essence, energy, and spirit. If you fail to guard these three, you are allowing your wealth to be robbed from you. So be careful!

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All people like money. They think, "What Heaven has conferred is called money; accordance with nature is called money. Money may not be left for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be money." Ordinary worldly people have this problem. That is, they cannot see through the matter of money, so they can't put it down. It wouldn't be so bad if you were the only one poisoned by money. But you also want to poison your children and grandchildren, so you leave money for your sons and daughters. Your children then leave money for their children, and they in turn leave money for their children. Passing the money back and forth, people are so poisoned by this toxic substance that they can't even catch their breath. This is really frightening. Therefore, here we tell everyone that money has poison on it. You still don't believe it though, and you always want to be very close to money. You've been poisoned by it, and the harmful effects will poison your children and grandchildren as well in all the generations to come. In the past I've said this many times: people think saving up money is a good thing. But people who cultivate the Way should not take money so seriously; they need not save money. We don't need to think "Money may not be left for an instant." We should change the phrase around to say, "What heaven has conferred is called the dharma; accordance with nature is called the dharma. The dharma may not be left for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be the dharma." What is meant by "the dharma"? You say, "I know. It's the dharma of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha." You don't really understand yet. If you really understood, you wouldn't lose your dharma.

Ultimately, what is the dharma? It is just our energy, our vital energy which penetrates heaven and earth to the point that all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are of the same substance as us because our energy is connected. This energy is like our breath; it can be detected. That which is within the energy and controls it is the dharma. Therefore, it is essential that we nurture our energy; we should not lose our temper. You should cultivate your energy, as in the saying, "Foster the ground of your mind, and nurture the sky of your nature." This is nurturing your energy. If you want to nurture your energy, then don't lose your dharma. I will tell you a most important and essential dharma-door. If you listen, fine. If you don't listen, that's okay, too, but I'll tell you anyway. What is it? If you want to nurture your energy, then don't talk so much.

Don't talk so much in the kitchen. Today it's a little better. But in the last two days, when I went to the kitchen and dining hall, it sounded like a marketplace. Everyone was shouting. One person was selling carrots, another was selling cabbage, another was selling potatoes, and someone else was selling sweet potatoes. What did they think they were doing, shouting and yelling like that? They'd forgotten completely about the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. There's no need to make such a racket in the kitchen. That is not how cultivators should behave. Later I found out that the dormitory was also like a marketplace. People were quarreling, chattering, and making noise everywhere. No one knows what they were talking about.

A person who cannot limit his speech will not be able to cultivate. If you cannot nurture your energy, then you do not have the dharma. Therefore, "The dharma may not be left for an instant." You can very easily and carelessly squander this dharma by talking all the time. I do not like to interfere in other people's business, but this is really too much! If this continues, these people who argue all day long will be the villains of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. No wonder the Buddhas don't want to stay here anymore, and the Bodhisattvas also stay far away; they don't want to listen to these people who do nothing but gossip and chatter. I don't mean to say that people shouldn't talk to each other at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. People should certainly discuss important matters, but they should not be chatting idly all the time.

You say, "Oh, nothing's happening around here. I'm so lonely, I've gotta find someone to talk to."

That might be all right, but after you've had your chat, you will have lost all dharma whatsoever. If you lose the dharma, how can you cultivate the Way?
 **Sutra:

It is also possible to feel satisfied after a small accomplishment, like the unlearned bhikshu who reached the fourth dhyana and claimed that he had realized sagehood. When his celestial reward ended and the signs of decay appeared, he slandered Arhatship as being subject to birth and death, and thus he fell into the Avichi Hell.

Commentary:**

It is also possible to feel satisfied after a small accomplishment. In cultivation, even if you do not become possessed by a demon, you must still have genuine wisdom and dharma-selecting vision. If you recognize the Buddhadharma, you yourself should know what level you have reached. Don't obtain only a little bit and feel satisfied, like the unlearned bhikshu who reached the fourth dhyana and claimed that he had realized sagehood. He was called the unlearned bhikshu because he didn't have much sense. He knew little about the principles of Buddhism. In what way was he unlearned? Basically, the four fruitions of Arhatship are all beyond the four dhyana heavens. The Buddha explained that one who has realized the fourth fruition of Arhatship no longer undergoes birth and death. A sage who has realized the second fruition is called a "once returner". He is born once in the heavens and once in the human realm; he has one more round of birth and death to undergo. A sage of the first fruition has seven more rounds of birth and death to undergo. All of these states surpass the four dhyana heavens. The unlearned bhikshu had only reached the level of the fourth dhyana heaven in his cultivation, but he thought he had already realized the fourth fruition of Arhatship. In fact, at the level of the fourth dhyana heaven, one has not realized any fruition and is still an ordinary person.

But the unlearned bhikshu claimed that he had attained the fourth fruition of Arhatship. Now, however, people think that the level of a fourth stage Arhat is still too low for them, and they brazenly claim that they themselves are Buddhas. But a Buddha has three bodies, four wisdoms, five eyes, and six spiritual powers. You can ask those people who claim to be Buddhas how many spiritual powers they have. Ghosts have five of the six spiritual powers; they lack the spiritual power of freedom from outflows. At the fruition of Buddhahood, one has all six spiritual powers. I believe that anyone who claimed to be a Buddha would not have even one spiritual power, let alone five or six. Only someone lacking spiritual powers would claim to be a Buddha. Anyone with even one spiritual power wouldn't tell such a great lie.

When his celestial reward ended, when his life in the heavens came to an end and the signs of decay appeared. Do you remember the five signs of decay1? When the life of a heavenly being comes to an end and he is about to die, these five signs appear.

He slandered Arhatship as being subject to birth and death, and thus he fell into the Avichi Hell. When his blessings in the heavens ran out, the five signs of decay appeared and his life in the heavens came to an end, the unlearned bhikshu got angry. What was he angry about? He said, "I've been deceived by the Buddha! The Buddha is a charlatan. He said that when you realize the fourth fruition of Arhatship, you don't have to undergo birth and death ever again. Why is my life coming to an end now? Why do I have to be reborn? Why do I have to undergo transmigration again? The five signs of decay are:

i) The flowers on the gods' crowns wilt;
ii) their clothes become dirty;
iii) their armpits sweat;
iv) their bodies become smelly and filthy; and
v) they cannot sit still.

Buddha is a liar!" Guess what happened when he slandered the Buddha like that. He fell into the Avichi Hell.

The Avichi Hell is also called the Relentless Hell. Basically he had not realized the fourth fruition of Arhatship at all, but he claimed that he had. When he used up his celestial blessings and reached the end of his life, he fell into the lower realms. He did not realize his mistake and said that the Buddha had spoken the dharma incorrectly. In fact the Buddha had said, "You have not realized the fourth fruition of Arhatship. If you had, naturally there would be no more birth and death for you. How could the Five Signs of Decay appear?" Upon slandering the Buddha, the unlearned bhikshu immediately fell into the Relentless Hell the Avichi Hell. Where do you suppose those people who claim to be Buddhas go? I don't know where they end up.

G3 Exhortation to pay attention and promise to speak.
 **Sutra:

You should pay attention. I will now explain this for you in detail.

Commentary:**
You should pay attention. Ananda, you should pay special attention. Listen carefully. I will now explain this for you, Ananda, and for everyone else, in great detail, so don't disappoint me.

F2 The members of the assembly bow and listen respectfully.
 **Sutra:

Ananda stood up and, with the others in the assembly who had more to learn, bowed joyfully. They quieted themselves in order to listen to the compassionate instruction.

Commentary:**

Ananda stood up immediately and, with the others in the assembly the great Bodhisattvas, the great Arhats, the great bhikshus, and those who had more to learn, people at the first, second, and third fruitions bowed joyfully. Since the Buddha was about to explain the matter in detail, everyone was happy, and together they joyfully paid homage and bowed to the Buddha. They quieted themselves in order to listen to the compassionate instruction. They subdued their minds and had no more extraneous thoughts, so they could listen with full attention to the dharma the Buddha was about to speak.

F3 Detailed explanation of the demons' deeds.
G1 Telling where they come from.
H1 Samadhi is the reason for the demons' agitation.
I1 Emphasizing the significance of the dual aspects of true and false, production and destruction.
J1 First, explaining that our fundamental enlightenment is the same as the Buddha's.
 **Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda and the whole assembly, "You should know that the twelve categories of beings in this world of outflows are endowed with a wonderfully bright, fundamental enlightenment, the enlightened, perfect substance of the mind which is not different from that of the Buddhas of the ten directions."

Commentary:**

The Buddha told Ananda and everyone in the whole assembly: All of you people who are now present should know that the twelve categories of beings in this world of outflows are endowed with a wonderfully bright, fundamental enlightenment, an inherent, enlightened nature, the wonderfully bright, true mind, the enlightened, perfect substance of the mind, which is not different from that of the Buddhas of the ten directions. It is the same. There is no difference. The Buddhas of the ten directions are endowed with it, and the twelve categories of beings are also endowed with this enlightened nature, which is also called the treasury of the Tathagata.

J2 Next, explaining how emptiness comes from falseness.
 **Sutra:

Due to the fault of false thinking and confusion about the truth, infatuation arises and makes your confusion all pervasive. Consequently, an emptiness appears. Worlds come into being as that confusion is ceaselessly transformed. Therefore, the lands that are not without outflows, as numerous as motes of dust throughout the ten directions, are all created as a result of confusion, dullness, and false thinking.

Commentary:**

Due to the fault of false thinking and confusion about the truth. Hey, Ananda! Your inherent nature and the inherent nature of the twelve categories of beings are not different from the Buddhas'; they are one and the same. However, because you create falseness out of the truth and then become confused about what is the genuine truth, faults arise and errors are made.

Infatuation arises. What is the biggest fault? Infatuation (literally, "obsessed love"). You could say obsession and love are two things; you can also explain them as one: infatuation. Your ignorance prevents you from understanding, and love is all you know about. You think about love, from morning to night. You can't put down love and lust for a moment. If you investigated the Buddhadharma as attentively as you pursue lust and love, you would become a Buddha very soon. What a pity you cannot transform your fondness for the opposite sex into fondness for the Buddhadharma instead! The more you study the Buddhadharma, the more boring you think it is. You say, "I have many faults, and the Buddhadharma points them all out to me. I don't want to study it anymore. The Buddhadharma wants me to change my habits, and how can I do that?" That's one example of obsession about love. Above, the text said, "Due to the fault of false thinking and confusion about the truth..." Now, I could say that mistakes are made due to obsession about love.

You make mistakes based on infatuation. Infatuation arises and makes your confusion all pervasive. Your infatuation produces an all-pervading confusion. You become confused about everything. It all starts with infatuation. Once you become infatuated, you don't understand anything. Nothing matters to you. You figure, "If I fall into the hells, so be it! Why should I worry?" You no longer care about anything.

Consequently, an emptiness appears. Because you make mistakes based on infatuation because men think about women from morning to night, and women think about men all day long, a false emptiness arises. Worlds come into being as that confusion is ceaselessly transformed. The confusion multiplies so that one confusion becomes two confusions, and two confusions turn into three confusions. The confusion evolves without end. Intelligent people should take note of this! You should pay attention to this passage of sutra text. Its message really penetrates to the bone. It points out all of your faults!

Then the world comes into being. Therefore, the lands that are not without outflows, as numerous as motes of dust throughout the ten directions, are all created as a result of confusion, dullness, and false thinking. The worlds throughout the ten directions are not indestructible; they are not without outflows, because they have no basic substance of their own. They are all mere creations of false thinking. Confusion refers to lack of understanding; dullness refers to being obstinate and unyielding. The world is created by your false thinking. Did you know that?

J3 For the sake of comparison, describing the minuteness of the realm of space.
 **Sutra:

You should know that the space created in your mind is like a wisp of cloud that dots the vast sky. How much smaller must all the worlds within that space be!

Commentary:**

"Ananda, don't sleep! You should know that when I say don't sleep, that means don't be confused. Don't be infatuated anymore. Don't be confused about the truth anymore." The Buddha told Ananda not to sleep, and now I'm telling you all not to sleep! Right now, what's important is that you should know that the space created in your mind is like a wisp of cloud that dots the vast sky. All of space, which is created from your mind, is like a wisp of cloud in the sky when compared to your mind. A wisp of cloud in the sky is tiny, and the sky, representing your mind, is vast. Earlier the sutra said:

The space created within great enlightenment
Is like a single bubble in all the sea.

And now it says, "The space created in your mind is like a wisp of cloud that dots the vast sky." All of space being that small, how vast your mind must be! And how much smaller must all the worlds within that space be! All the worlds within that empty space must be minute. If they were in your mind, they would be even smaller. So this describes how our enlightened nature pervades all places.

J4 Returning to the source obliterates space.
 **Sutra:

If even one person among you finds the truth and returns to the source, then all of space in the ten directions is obliterated. How could the worlds within that space fail to be destroyed as well?

Commentary:**

If even one person among you finds the truth and returns to the source. Finding the truth and returning to the source means becoming a Buddha. Realizing the fourth fruition of Arhatship can also be called finding the truth and returning to the source. Ananda, if one person among you becomes a Buddha, then all of space in the ten directions is obliterated. How could the worlds within that space fail to be destroyed as well? Even space is gone, so how can the worlds still exist? The worlds are all gone, too.

Someone says, "If so many Buddhas have accomplished Buddhahood and becoming a Buddha is supposed to obliterate space, then why hasn't space disappeared yet?"

From the point of view of living beings, space exists; but from the point of view of the Buddhas, there is nothing at all. There are different points of view, and so you can't make generalizations. For instance, people who have opened the five eyes can see what is happening in this country and in other countries that are tens of thousands of miles away. Can you who haven't opened the Buddha eye see such things? No. By the same token, one cannot say, "I can see it, therefore it must exist." You may see it as existing, but from the Buddhas' perspective, there is nothing at all, not even space.

I2 Explaining that great samadhi causes demons to manifest.
J1 One's mind tallies with the minds of the sages.
 **Sutra:

When you cultivate dhyana and attain samadhi, your mind tallies with the minds of the Bodhisattvas and the great Arhats of the ten directions who are free of outflows, and you abide in a state of profound purity.

Commentary:**

When you cultivate dhyana concentration and attain samadhi, the essence of your mind tallies and unites with the minds of all the Bodhisattvas and all the great Arhats of the ten directions who are free of outflows, and you abide in a state of profound purity. You don't have to seek elsewhere for this pure, fundamental tranquillity. It is right where you are. Right here is the pure, inherently tranquil treasury of the Tathagata, which pervades the dharma-realm.

Why do the minds of the Bodhisattvas, the great Arhats, and the cultivators of samadhi tally in this way? Because they cultivate the same samadhi. They direct the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature, until the inherent nature accomplishes the Unsurpassed Way. They all cultivate the great Shurangama Samadhi, and so they are all the same; they become unified. Their minds are connected as if there were an electric current running between them.

This connection, however, doesn't occur only at the level of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Arhats. It also occurs among ordinary people. For example, when you think about a person, your thought will reach his mind, just like a telegram. "Does the other person know?" you ask. His inherent nature knows, even though his conscious mind may be unaware of it. At the level of that nature, we all know one another.

"Well, if I think about someone from morning to night, then that person will also think about me, right?"

You could think till you die, and it still wouldn't be any use. It is like the infatuation we talked about before. If a person is infatuated, he will think about the object of his affection all day long, unable to put the thought down. He is always thinking and thinking, until he thinks himself to death! How does he die? He thinks about her until they come together and get married. Once married, he becomes muddled. After being muddled for a time, he dies. Being married is equivalent to being muddled not knowing anything at all. In Chinese, you can deduce that meaning from the character for "marriage" hun, which contains the word for "muddled" hun; I don't know if this interpretation exists in English.

J2 The demons come en masse to cause disturbance.
 **Sutra:

All the kings of demons, the ghosts and spirits, and the ordinary gods see their palaces collapse for no apparent reason. The earth quakes, and all the creatures in the water, on the land, and in the air, without exception, are frightened. Yet ordinary people who are sunk in dim confusion remain unaware of these changes.

Commentary:**

When one obtains the great Shurangama Samadhi, the true samadhi, the demon kings shudder. All the kings of demons, the ghosts and spirits, and the ordinary gods of the six desire heavens and four dhyana heavens see their palaces collapse for no apparent reason. The situation is really out of control. For no apparent reason, their palaces start falling apart.

Have I ever told you about a young disciple I had in Manchuria? He was about fourteen years old, and although he was young, his spiritual powers certainly weren't insignificant. He could ascend to the heavens and enter the earth. He had opened the five eyes, but had not obtained the six spiritual powers. He had five of the spiritual powers, but lacked the power of freedom from outflows. When a person attains this power, he becomes an Arhat.

One day he ascended to the heavens to amuse himself. When he got there, the demon king took a liking to him and trapped him in his palace. It was an exquisite palace, made of transparent crystallike material, but he was trapped in it. Since he had opened his five eyes, he could see his dharma body being held captive there by the demon king. So he came and told me, "Teacher, I went to the heavens, and now I can't come back."

"So you're stuck in the heavens, huh?" I said, "Well, who told you to go there in the first place?"

"I thought that it would be lots of fun, so I went there to take a look. But now that person up in the heavens won't let me come back."

I said, "If you want to have fun, don't go there to play. Those demons in the six desire heavens are always looking for an opportunity to destroy the samadhi power of cultivators." Then I said, "Don't be scared; I'll get you back."

I tried to get him back, but the demon king refused to let him go. At that point he became really frightened and said, "He won't let me come back! What should I do?"

I said, "Don't worry. I'll bring you back now." Then I used the Shurangama Mantra, the section which I've told you destroys demons, the "Mantra of the Five Great Hearts." Ah! The demon palace immediately shattered, and he came back that time. This is a true story.

Now the palaces of the demon kings have fallen apart and collapsed, and the earth quakes and cracks open in many places, and all the creatures in the water, on the land, and in the air, without exception, are frightened. All the creatures in the water and on the land go flying through the air, scared out of their wits and frightened beyond control. Yet ordinary people who are sunk in dim confusion remain unaware of these changes. Ordinary people do not have such sharp perception, and they do not realize the earth is undergoing all these changes. They are not sensitive enough to perceive the six kinds of quaking occurring in the earth.
 **Sutra:

All these beings have five kinds of spiritual powers; they lack only freedom from outflows, because they are still attached to worldly passions. How could they allow you to destroy their palaces? That is why the ghosts, spirits, celestial demons, sprites, and goblins come to disturb you when you are in samadhi.

Commentary:**

Now do you understand? Why do the demons come? It is just because all these celestial beings, ghosts, and spirits have five kinds of spiritual powers, which are the celestial eye, the celestial ear, the knowledge of others' thoughts, the knowledge of previous lives, and the complete spirit. But they don't have the power of freedom from outflows. If they obtained that power, they wouldn't trouble you anymore. But since they haven't obtained it, they still want to be evil and come to destroy you.

They lack only freedom from outflows. It is not easy to attain the power of freedom from outflows. What does this mean? I will be very frank about it. What we call "outflows" are the daily, random thoughts that men and women have about one another. If you have not put an end to such thoughts, then you have not rid yourself of outflows.

Now I'll discuss this more in depth, and I'll be very frank with you. If I didn't tell you the truth, then you would never know what is really being referred to. Being rid of outflows simply means retaining your essence. If your essence escapes, that's an outflow. Now I have told you the secret of heaven and earth. If you retain your essence, then you won't have outflows. Furthermore, if you cannot only prevent your essence from escaping, but can also be without lustful thoughts, even on the subtlest level, then you have truly rid yourself of outflows. Now do you understand? Why haven't the celestial demons achieved freedom from outflows? Because they still have thoughts of lust, as do ghosts and spirits. Because they are still attached to worldly passions. Worldly passions are simply a form of lust. That's what they indulge in. How could they allow you to destroy their palaces? Since they are attached to lust, they do not want to see you renounce it. They want you to be greedy for it, too. "The two of us are good friends,"they will say. "I haven't put this down, so you can't just run away and renounce it." That's why they come. They cannot bear to see you transcend the world. That is why the ghosts, spirits, celestial demons, sprites, and goblins come to disturb you when you are in samadhi. When I mentioned goblins in the past, you didn't know what they were, so now I will explain. Do you see how the Chinese character for "goblin"
(yao) is written? It is the character for "woman" (nu) beside the character for a short life for death before thirty years of age ( hun). You can figure out the meaning from there; I don't have to say too much. In general, people who die young will become goblins.

When you are in samadhi, they all come en masse to bother you. Their aim, as it's said, is "to devour the flesh of the monk from Tang." The monk from Tang was Great Master Xuan Zang. Many goblins would have liked to eat his flesh; that is, they wanted to disturb his samadhi. If you cultivate to the point that you have samadhi, the goblins, ghosts, and monsters will want to devour your flesh as well. Actually, they do not really eat your flesh. I will be more honest with you. I will bring it all out into the open and not hold anything back. What is really happening? When your essence, energy, and spirit are all full, because you have no thoughts of lust, these demons and ghosts want to steal your treasures. That's why they come to disturb you. If you have a girlfriend or boyfriend, she or he is also stealing your treasures. What else did you think was happening?

"The Buddhadharma teaches us to practice giving, so I'm giving away my treasures to others," you say.

Well then, you're going to end up as a poor ghost who falls into the hells. When that happens, the person who stole your treasures isn't going to say, "Here, I'll give you back some of your treasures so that you can get out of there." No one will help you then. You think it over.

H2 The demons can succeed in their destructiveness through the cultivator's confusion.
I1 Explanation by analogy of how "the guests" cannot bring harm.
 **Sutra:

Although these demons possess tremendous enmity, they are in the grip of their worldly passions, while you are within wonderful enlightenment. They cannot affect you any more than a blowing wind can affect light or a knife can cut through water. You are like boiling water, while the demons are like solid ice which, in the presence of heat, soon melts away. Since they rely exclusively on spiritual powers, they are like mere guests.

Commentary:**

When you achieve some samadhi power in your cultivation, the demon kings will be afraid and so they come to destroy it. They do not want you to have samadhi. Although these demons come to give you trouble, and although they possess tremendous enmity, much wrath, they are in the grip of their worldly passions. They are controlled by their deified sense experiences, while you are within wonderful enlightenment. They cannot affect you any more than a blowing wind can affect light or a knife can cut through water. They cannot do anything to you, just as, blowing wind could not make light move; and just as a knife, however many times it is slashed through water, could not harm the water.

You are like boiling water. In this analogy, the samadhi power from your cultivation is compared to hot water, while the demons are like solid ice. The demon kings can be compared to the solid ice of winter, which, in the presence of heat, soon melts away. As hard as the ice is, the heat of boiling water gradually causes it to melt. Since they rely exclusively on spiritual powers, they are like mere guests. All they have going for themselves is their spiritual powers, so they can never be the "host" or "master." They are merely "guests" [they cannot stay long], and they cannot succeed in their efforts to disturb you.

I2 Conclusion that the confusion is on the part of the cultivator.
 **Sutra:

They can succeed in their destructiveness through your mind, which is the host of the five skandhas. If the host becomes confused, the guests will be able to do as they please.

Commentary:**
They can succeed in their destructiveness through your mind, which is the host of the five skandhas. Basically, they cannot succeed in their destructiveness. However, if the host becomes confused, if your mind, which is the master of the five skandhas, is deluded, the guests will be able to do as they please. The guests will be able to take advantage of you. As long as you, the host, are not confused, they cannot do anything to you. Who is the host? It is your inherent nature. If your inherent nature is confused, then the demons can have their way with you. But if your inherent nature is not confused, then they are powerless to do anything.

I3 Once enlightened, one surely will transcend their disturbance.
 **Sutra:

When you are in dhyana, awakened, aware, and free of delusion, their demonic deeds can do nothing to you. As the skandhas dissolve, you enter the light. All those deviant hordes depend upon dark energy. Since light can destroy darkness, they would be destroyed if they drew near you. How could they dare linger and try to disrupt your dhyana-samadhi?

Commentary:**

When you are in dhyana, when you have stilled your thoughts and attained the proper concentration of samadhi, you are awakened, aware, and free of delusion. Their demonic deeds can do nothing to you. The demons won't be able to trouble you with their tactics. As the skandhas dissolve, you enter the light. Demons belong to the darkness (yin), and the darkness can be dispelled. It is as if the demons were ice and you were hot water. The darkness is dispelled like ice dissolving in hot water. The fire of your wisdom is bright, so you enter the light.

All those deviant hordes of demons, externalists, goblins, ghosts, and monsters depend upon dark energy. All their tactics depend on a dark, dismal energy. Since light can destroy darkness, if you have true samadhi and wisdom, your wisdom light will shine forth and dispel the darkness.

They would be destroyed if they drew near you. How could they dare linger and try to disrupt your dhyana-samadhi? If they came near you, they would do themselves in, so they dare not disturb you.

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Skandha-demons are not limited to fifty kinds; there may be five hundred, five thousand, fifty thousand, or even five hundred thousand kinds. Each kind can further be divided into ten kinds. If analyzed in detail, there are thousands upon tens of thousands of kinds. In general, what is a skandha-demon? Basically it's nothing but a mass of yin energy, which comes from our yin thoughts. Yin thoughts include thoughts of greed, anger, and stupidity. They give rise to the skandhas of form, feeling, thought, formations, and consciousness; and in each of these skandhas, all kinds of yin phenomena are produced. These yin phenomena naturally appear when your skill reaches a certain level. If your skill hasn't reached that level, then you won't encounter these skandha-demons, even if you want to. They manifest only when your skill has reached that level. Don't worry when they appear. There's no need to fear being possessed by demons.

When these yin phenomena appear, you should remain calm, as if they didn't exist. See them as if not seeing them; hear them as if not hearing them; and smell them without perceiving their smell. If you don't enter into sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and dharmas, then the skandha-demons will not be able to do anything to you. If you are without greed, anger, and stupidity, then you will subdue these skandha-demons. If you do not have the faults of being selfish, wanting personal profit, seeking, being greedy, or contending, then no demon will be able to do anything to you.

Now as we are investigating the skandha-demons, we should not be afraid of demons. There's no need for fear. What is this mass of energy like? There's a rough analogy: When water boils and gives off steam, the rising of the steam indicates that the water is boiling.

The demons that you encounter in cultivation are illusory transformations produced from the yin thoughts and yin energy in your own nature. If you can remain unmoved by these illusory transformations, then there's no problem. For example, there's nothing strange about boiling water and letting the steam rise. After the steam has risen, you can drink the water.

When a person manifests demonic energy, it's like gold being smelted. All the dross is smelted away, leaving only pure gold. Cultivation is like smelting gold. It is said, "True gold does not fear the fire of the furnace." You must smelt the pure gold and forge your Vajra-indestructible body. To obtain the Vajra-indestructible body, you must apply effort in cultivation at all times, in thought after thought. No matter what level you reach in your cultivation, do not become happy or afraid. This is a most essential and basic way for cultivators to resolve demonic obstacles.

I4 Confusion will certainly bring a fall.
 **Sutra:

If you were not clear and aware, but were confused by the skandhas, then you, Ananda, would surely become one of the demons; you would turn into a demonic being.

Commentary:**

If you were not clear and aware, if you did not understand and wake up, but were confused by the demons of the five skandhas, then you, Ananda, would surely become one of the demons; you would turn into a demonic being. You would join the retinue of demons.

I5 The prior incident in the house of prostitution brought only slight harm.
 **Sutra:

Your encounter with Matangi's daughter was a minor incident. She cast a spell on you to make you break the Buddha's moral precepts. Still, among the eighty thousand modes of conduct, you violated only one precept. Because your mind was pure, all was not lost.

Commentary:**

Your encounter with Matangi's daughter was a minor incident. It was a relatively insignificant, commonplace demonic event. She cast a spell on you to make you break the Buddha's moral precepts. She used a mantra of the ancient Brahma Heaven to confuse you and tried to make you break the Buddha's rules. Still, among the eighty thousand modes of conduct, you violated only one precept. Because your mind was pure, all was not lost. Because you had already attained the first stage of Arhatship, you were not totally confused by her, and you did not fall.

I6 Joining the ranks of demons would bring great harm.
 **Sutra:

This would be an attempt to completely destroy your precious enlightenment. Were it to succeed, you would become like the family of a senior government official who is suddenly exiled; his family wanders, bereft and alone, with no one to pity or rescue them.

Commentary:**
This would be an attempt to completely destroy your precious enlightenment. That kind of behavior was an attempt to make you fall. Were it to succeed, you would become like the family of a senior government official who is suddenly exiled. A high official is banished, and his family's property is abruptly confiscated by the emperor, so his family wanders, bereft and alone, with no one to pity or rescue them. You would be standing all alone, with no place to seek for help, no one to turn to for sympathy or aid.