**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 8**

**CHAPTER 6**

**The Consciousness Skandha**

H5 The characteristics of the demons of the consciousness skandha.
I1 Overview of the beginning and the end.
J1 In the beginning, one cultivates but has not yet broken through this region.
K1 Review of the ending of the previous formations skandha.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, when that good person, in cultivating samadhi, has put an end to the formations skandha, the subtle, fleeting fluctuation, the deep, imperceptible, pivotal source and the common foundation from which all life in the world springs, are suddenly obliterated. In the submerged network of the retributive karma of the pudgala, the karmic resonances are interrupted.

Commentary:**

Ananda, when that good person who is cultivating in the formations skandha, in cultivating samadhi, has put an end to the formations skandha, the subtle, fleeting fluctuations, the deep, imperceptible, pivotal source and the common foundation from which all life in the world springs, are suddenly obliterated. Those imperceptible, subtle movements, which characterize all the twelve categories of beings in the world and are the common source of their births, are suddenly wiped out. In Chinese, the characters for "pivotal source" literally mean the large rope that forms the border of a net, or they can mean buttons and fastenings in clothing. They can also refer to the central point or axis.

Pudgala is a Sanskrit word translated as "that which goes on to repeated reincarnations," that which is born over and over again. It is also called "body while in a state of existence," and also "sentient being." Every sentient being is endowed with a "body while in a state of existence." When we die, we will have what is called "the body that exists while in between skandhas."

In the submerged network of the retributive karma of the pudgala, the bodies while in a state of existence, the karmic resonances are interrupted. In this interactive process of the mutual repayment of karma which runs very deep, cause and effect are suspended. "Karmic resonances" refers to cause and effect. Since the formations skandha has ceased, and birth and death have come to an end, cause and effect have been arrested. This is describing the end of the formations skandha and the beginning of the consciousness skandha.

K2 Introduction to the region of the consciousness skandha.
 **Sutra:

There is about to be a great illumination in the sky of nirvana. It is like gazing east at the cock's final crow to see the light of dawn. The six sense faculties are empty and still; there is no further racing about. Inside and outside there is a profound brightness. He enters without entering. Fathoming the source of life of the twelve categories of beings throughout the ten directions, he can contemplate that source without being drawn into any of the categories. He has become identical with the realms of the ten directions. The light does not fade, and what was hidden before is now revealed. This is the region of the consciousness skandha.

Commentary:**

There is about to be a great illumination in the sky of nirvana of the inherent nature. He's on the verge of a great awakening. He is about to get enlightened. By analogy, it is like gazing east at the cock's final crow to see the light of dawn. When the cock crows for the first and second time to announce the dawn, there is still no light in the east. The sky is still dark. But if you gaze eastward when the cock crows for the third and final time, you will see the first light of the day.

The six sense faculties are empty and still. The feeling skandha has ended, so the sense faculties no longer perceive. They are "empty." The thinking skandha has ended, so there is no more false thinking. Thus it is "still." At this point, there is no more feeling and no more false thoughts causing the mind to run about. There is no further racing about. That means the shifting and flowing of the formations skandha have also ceased. The fluctuations of the formations skandha had been like ceaseless ripples, but now they have subsided, and there is no more running about. Inside and outside there is a profound brightness. At this point when only the consciousness skandha remains to be broken through, there is a brilliant light both inside and out. He enters without entering, because the functions of the sense faculties and sense objects have been severed. The six sense faculties and six objects have united, and there are no longer any faculties or any objects. There is no further pairing between faculty and object. They are non-dual. The six faculties and six objects are no longer differentiated, so there is no flow for him to enter.

Fathoming the source of life of the twelve categories of beings throughout the ten directions, he can contemplate that source without being drawn into any of the categories. He penetrates deeply to the primal life-source of the twelve categories of beings. He can reflect upon this source without being attracted to any of the twelve categories of beings. They have no sway over him. He has no further involvement with the twelve categories of beings. He has become identical with the realms of the ten directions. He is experiencing identity in substance with all realms everywhere. The light does not fade. This bright wisdom does not disappear, and what was hidden before is now revealed. The most secret and imperceptible states now become manifest. This state is the region of the consciousness skandha. It falls within the scope of the consciousness skandha.

J2 Ultimately it breaks up and reveals its false source.
 **Sutra:

If he has become identical with the beckoning masses, he may obliterate the individuality of the six gates and succeed in uniting and opening them. Seeing and hearing become linked so
that they function interchangeably and purely. The worlds of the ten directions and his own body and mind are as bright and transparent as Vaidurya. This is the end of the consciousness skandha. This person can then transcend the turbidity of life spans. Contemplating the cause of the consciousness skandha, one sees that the negation of existence and the negation of nonexistence are both unreal, and that upside-down false thoughts are its source.

Commentary:**
If he has become identical with the beckoning masses. Having severed connections of cause and effect with the twelve categories of living beings, he has become identical with them. However, he is not influenced by them. Since he has cut off all interaction with them, he is no longer reborn among them. He may obliterate the individuality of the six gates. At this point, the entrances of the six sense faculties no longer function. They have been smelted. In what way do they no longer function?

This does not mean that the eyes cannot see, the ears cannot hear, the nose cannot smell, or the tongue cannot taste. Rather, what happens is that the six faculties function interchangeably. If you break through the formations skandha, then you will experience this state. The eyes can still see, but they can also speak and eat. The ear, which could only hear before, can now see as well. You can also see with your nose and your mouth. Each sense faculty is capable of all six functions. That's what obliterating the individuality of the six gates means. The former signs of defilement are now gone.

And he may succeed in uniting and opening them. "Uniting" means the six sense faculties unite to become one. "Opening" means each faculty has the functions of all six. Seeing and hearing become linked. There is communication between them. They can help each other out just like neighbors who show mutual concern for each other. The six faculties are linked so that they function interchangeably and purely. Isn't that wonderful? This state is really sublime.

The worlds of the ten directions and his own body and mind are as bright and transparent as Vaidurya. They are like that exquisite blue gem, which is so clear as to be transparent. This is the end of the consciousness skandha. When you reach this level you have put an end to the consciousness skandha, and so all five skandhas are gone. But before you reach this level, the consciousness skandha has not ended.

This person can then transcend the turbidity of life spans. Contemplating the cause of the consciousness skandha, one sees that the negation of existence and the negation of nonexistence are both unreal, and that upside-down false thoughts are its source. Questions of existence and nonexistence are elusive and intangible. Such upside-down false thoughts are the basis of the states that he attains.

I2 Ten attachments within this.
J1 Attachment to causes and that which is caused.
K1 When formations are gone, consciousness appears.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, you should know that the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty, and he must return consciousness to the source. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:**

Ananda, you should know that the good person who cultivates samadhi has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. Although he encountered so many demonic states, whether they were caused by demons from the heavens, demons of his own mind, or other kinds of demons, they did not sway his samadhi. Or it could have been that when he was cultivating samadhi, he didn't experience any demonic states at all. Or maybe when he encountered demonic states, he recognized them and did not become confused by them. Once he pierced through the confusion, the formations skandha was destroyed. Now he is at the beginning of the consciousness skandha. He has already fathomed the formations skandha and seen it as empty, and he must return consciousness to the source. Now he has to break through the consciousness skandha, and when he does, he will return to the source, to the treasury of the Tathagata. He has already ended the states of production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity. He has yet to perfectly realize the nature of ultimate serenity.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.
 **Sutra:

He can cause the individual sense faculties of his body to unite and open. He also has a pervasive awareness of all the categories of beings in the ten directions. Since his awareness is pervasive, he can enter the perfect source. But if he regards what he is returning to as the cause of true permanence and interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of holding to that cause. Kapila the Sankhyan, with his theory of returning to the Truth of the Unmanifest, will become his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:**

He can cause the individual sense faculties of his body to unite and open. Now in the consciousness skandha, he has a false mental attachment. He is at the point where he "has not yet perfected the subtle wonders of ultimate serenity," but he can make his six sense faculties function inter-changeably. Each sense faculty has the abilities of all six. His eyes can talk and hear. His ears can eat and smell. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind can function interchangeably to perceive sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch.

You may think that ears cannot eat but when one attains the interchangeable functioning of the six faculties, they can. "Where are their teeth?" you wonder. Ask your ears. They don't eat things the way we do, anyway. When they start to eat they may just naturally grow teeth, and their teeth, will not fall out. Perhaps they don't even use teeth. Or perhaps the teeth appear when they need them. This is the true ability of science. Each faculty has six functions.

"Unite" refers to how the six faculties join to become one faculty. "Open" refers to how one faculty opens up to have the functions of all six. Would you say these are spiritual powers? Is this science? No matter how much research scientists do, even if they can transplant human hearts, livers and other parts of the body, they cannot enable each sense faculty to have the functions of all six. That's something science cannot achieve. No matter how advanced science becomes, I don't think it will ever have that capability. If you develop science in your own nature, then you can have this kind of function.

He also has a pervasive awareness of all the categories of beings in the ten directions. Not only does he have the ability to unite and open his six sense faculties to function interchangeably, he also knows what is going on with all twelve categories of beings throughout the ten directions. He and other beings share a mutual awareness. Since his awareness is pervasive, he can know the dispositions of all beings in the ten directions, and he can enter the perfect source, the perfection of the original nature.

But if he regards what he is returning to as a cause of true permanence. Suppose he becomes wrongly attached to the place of his return. What is his attachment? He says that it is true permanence and interprets this as a supreme state. Since he believes it to be true permanence, he interprets this as a kind of supreme liberation and supreme view. If he didn't hold such a view, there would be no problem. But as soon as he holds this view, he will fall into the error of holding to that cause. He takes true permanence as the cause, but this is completely wrong. He thinks that place is characterized by true permanence. Actually he is still within consciousness, which is not true permanence. He becomes attached to a cause and what that cause pertains to. In fact this is not the cause, but he regards it as the cause. By attaching to it, he joins an external sect. He does business with them. He puts his investments there and forms a company. With what external sect does he get involved?

Kapila the Sankhyan, with his theory of returning to the Truth of the Unmanifest, will become his companion. Kapila founded the "religion of the yellow-haired.' Earlier, we mentioned that the teacher of Matangi used a mantra of the Kapila religion, a mantra which came from the Brahma Heaven. The Truth of the Unmanifest postulates that there is nothing at all, that everything is transformed from the current state of the eighth consciousness. Thisreligion teaches that all things are born from the Truth of the Unmanifest. Once this cultivator becomes attached to this cause, he becomes friends with those of the "yellow-haired external sect." He incorporates with them, and it is not known when that corporation will ever end. Is it limited or unlimited?

Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, the Way of Enlightenment, he will lose his knowledge and understanding. He takes what is not a cause to be a cause. He shouldn't have set up this cause, but he did. Because he wrongly established that cause and what it pertains to, he no longer has true wisdom. He has lost it. Where did it go? If you want to help him look for it you will lose yours, too.

K3 Giving the name and instructions to awaken.
 **Sutra:

This is the first state, in which he concludes that there is a place to which to return, based on the idea that there is something to attain. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of externalism.

Commentary:**

This is the first state, in which he concludes that there is a place to which to return, based on the idea that there is something to attain. His principle is wrong. In what way? He strays far from perfect penetration. What he does is completely opposed to "cultivating the perfect penetration of the ear organ by directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature, thereby entering the flow and forgetting the source." Why? Because he has developed an attachment. And he turns his back on the City of Nirvana. What is this great City of Nirvana? It's where the four virtues of nirvana, permanence, bliss, true self, and purity, are found. Thus he is sowing the seeds of externalism. By postulating a nonexistent cause, he becomes attached to an external teaching. Since his premise is like the Truth of the Unmanifest of the Kapila religion, he makes friends with its adherents and joins their ranks.

J2 Attachment to an ability that is not actually an ability.
K1 When formations are gone, consciousness appears.
 **Sutra:

Further, Ananda, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:**

Further, Ananda, the good person who is cultivating samadhi has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has thoroughly investigated and put an end to the formations skandha; it is empty for him. He has already ended the states of production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity. He has not completely attained the bliss of ultimate serenity, because consciousness has not been ended yet. Consciousness and true suchness differ by only a little bit.

Consciousness is subject to production and destruction, whereas true suchness is not. Right now, the eighth consciousness, which still has tiny traces of production and destruction, joins with true suchness, which is without production and destruction, and becomes what is called "the joined consciousness." Since the consciousness is in extremely close proximity to true suchness, they merge to form the joined consciousness. Since it is still a "joined" consciousness, the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity has not been perfected.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.
 **Sutra:

He may regard that to which he is returning as his own body and may see all beings in the twelve categories throughout space as flowing forth from his body. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of maintaining that he has an ability which he does not really have. Maheshvara, who manifests his boundless body, will become his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:**

He, the cultivator, may regard that to which he is returning as his own body. The place he is headed for is still within the production and destruction of the eighth consciousness. It is not actually his own body, but he thinks it is. And he has another false attachment which is that he may see all beings in the twelve categories, from egg-born beings to beings not entirely lacking thought, throughout space as flowing forth from his body. "Do you know where living beings come from?" he asks. "They all come from my own body. I gave birth to them all."

It is like an earlier state in which the cultivator said, "All beings are my children, even the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Arhats, I created them all. I can create Buddhas; I can create Bodhisattvas; and I can create Arhats." See what an egomaniac he is.

If he interprets this as a supreme state. He thinks it's supreme, but it really isn't. It's based on wrong knowledge and views and can hardly be called supreme. If it were truly supreme, it would accord with the Buddhadharma. So as you cultivate the Way and read the sutras, make sure you understand them clearly. He will fall into the error of maintaining that he has an ability which he does not really have. He says he is able to create all living beings, but in fact he has no such ability. That's just a speculation he makes with his false consciousness. He doesn't really have the ability, but he becomes attached to the idea that he does.

Who has this kind of attachment? It's the God Maheshvara, the Lord of the Heaven of Great Sovereignty, which is the highest heaven in the form realm. Maheshvara is also called the Great Sovereign God. He has three flesh eyes which he was born with, and he also has the Buddha eye in the middle of his forehead How many hands does he have? He has eight hands, four in front and four in back. The ones in front are good for picking things up, and the ones in back are handy for stealing things. Since one hand isn't enough, and two hands still aren't that powerful for picking up or stealing things, he has eight hands. He can pick up a lot of things, too. If he went into a department store, I'm sure the security officers who watch for shoplifters would have a hard time keeping an eye on him, because he has so many hands. He rides upon a magnificent white ox and carries a white whisk in one hand. He travels around with the greatest freedom. He says, "Take a look at me. I'm utterly at ease. You're nothing by comparison. I have total self-mastery." That is why he's called the Great Sovereign God.

The Great Sovereign God, who manifests his boundless body, will become his companion. This god is attached to the idea that he can manifest a boundless body, and he claims that all living beings are manifested by him. Now this person is cultivating the same dharma-door. He has the same attachment. He says that all living beings are manifested by him. Tell me, how can someone who has not accomplished Buddhahood create living beings? This is a false attachment; he thinks he has an ability that he doesn't really have. He makes friends with the Great Sovereign God and goes off to the Heaven of Great Sovereignty.

Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding. He fails to recognize the genuine enlightenment. He doesn't have any genuine wisdom, and so he joins the demons of the heavens and the external sects.

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.
 **Sutra:

This is the second state, in which he draws conclusions about the workings of an ability based on idea that he has such an ability. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for being born in the Heaven of Great Pride where the self is considered all-pervading and perfect.

Commentary:**

This is the second state, in which he draws conclusions about the workings of an ability based on the idea that he has such an ability. Based on the idea that he is able to create living beings, he attains a fruition that seems all-pervasive and perfect. He strays far from perfect penetration. What he has done goes against the dharma-door of cultivating perfect penetration through the ear, of directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature.

And he turns his back on the City of Nirvana. He also goes against the truth of the unproduced and undestroyed, thus sowing the seeds for being born in the Heaven of Great Pride where the self is considered all-pervading and perfect. He will eventually be reborn in the Heaven of Great Pride, which is the Heaven of Great Sovereignty.

Great pride means he looks down on everyone else. He is always up on his white ox, with his three eyes and eight arms, thinking he is quite marvelous. Riding freely about on his white ox, he feels smug and satisfied. Because he feels his lifestyle is so superb, he becomes arrogant. He claims, "I completely pervade everything, and I can accomplish everything."

J3 Attachment to a wrong idea of permanence.
K1 When formations are gone, consciousness appears.
 **Sutra:

Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:**

Further, the good person, who in his cultivation of samadhi has destroyed the formations skandha, has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has already ended the mind of production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity. He has not yet truly attained the bliss of ultimate serenity.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.
 **Sutra:

If he regards what he is returning to as a refuge, he will suspect that his body and mind come forth from there, and that all things throughout space in the ten directions arise from there as well. He will explain that place from which all things issue forth is the truly permanent body, which is not subject to production and destruction. While still within production and destruction, he prematurely reckons that he abides in permanence. Since he is deluded about non-production, he is also confused about production and destruction. He is sunk in confusion. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not permanent to be permanent. He will speculate that the Sovereign God (Ishvaradeva) is his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:**

If he regards what he is returning to as a refuge, there will be doubts in his mind and he will suspect that his body and mind come forth from there. The previous false conjecture was that he himself produced all living beings. Now he thinks that he came forth from the place to which he is returning, and that all things throughout space in the ten directions arise from there as well. He will explain that that place from which all things issue forth is the truly permanent body, which is not subject to production and destruction. "That place" refers to the refuge to which he is returning. He claims that it is not caught up in production and destruction. Why does he say that? Because he is mistaken in his basic assumption.

While still within the consciousness that is subject to production and destruction, he prematurely reckons that he abides in permanence. He speculates that it is eternal and unchanging. Since he is deluded about non-production, he is also confused about production and destruction. Since he doesn't understand the principle of non-production, he isn't dear about the principle of production and destruction, either. He is sunk in confusion. He becomes attached to the state and refuses to let go of it. He works on his cultivation right at that spot.

If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not permanent to be permanent. If he considers it supreme, he is just adding attachments on top of attachments.

He becomes attached to that permanence, but it is not true permanence. He will speculate that the Sovereign God (Ishvaradeva) is his companion. Confused about the nature of Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding and no longer have true wisdom.

K3 He gives it a name and warns us to be aware of it.
 **Sutra:

This is the third state, in which he makes a false speculation based on the idea that there is a refuge. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana thus sowing the seeds of an distorted view of perfection.

Commentary:**

This is the third state, in which he makes a false speculation based on the idea that there is a refuge. He establishes the idea that there is a refuge, and then makes false speculations about a false fruition. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of an distorted view of perfection. He turns away from the principle of perfect penetration and leaves it far behind, and he comes to hold a wrong view of perfection.

J4 Attachment to an awareness that is not actually awareness.
K1 When formations are gone, consciousness appears.
 **Sutra:

Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:**

Further, the good person has thoroughly investigated and seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction. He has destroyed the nature that is subject to production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of the bliss of ultimate serenity.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.
 **Sutra:

Based on his idea that there is universal awareness, he formulates a theory that all the plants in the ten directions are sentient, not different from human beings. He claims that plants can become people, and that when people die they again become plants in the ten directions. If he considers this idea of unrestricted, universal awareness to be supreme, he will fall into the error of maintaining that what is not aware has awareness. Vasishtha and Sainika, who maintained the idea of comprehensive awareness, will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:**

Based on his idea that there is universal awareness, he formulates a theory. He deduces, from what he knows, that there is a universal awareness, and then formulates a view about it. What is his view? You'd never guess, and neither would I. He says that all the plants in the ten directions are sentient. In China, there is a saying,

"People are not plants; who can be without emotion?"

That statement implies that plants are insentient. But here the cultivator has decided that all plants are sentient not different from human beings. They are the same as people in that they also have life. He claims that plants can become people, and that when people die they again become plants in the ten directions. After death, humans turn back into plants.

If he considers this idea of unrestricted, universal awareness to be supreme. He doesn't have the wisdom to selectively apply this theory of universal awareness. He tries to be special and mistakenly thinks his idea is a supreme one. He will fall into the error of maintaining that what is not aware has awareness. He claims to understand this principle, but actually he is ignorant. He does not understand, but insists that he does.

He is similar to two followers of external sects, Vasishtha and Sainika. "Vasishtha" is a Sanskrit name which means "avoid going near." How did he get such a name? He was a shepherd boy. One day the prince of Vaishali was outside playing. Happening upon the shepherd boy, the prince made him act as his bed and lay down and took a nap on top of the boy. This upset the shepherd boy, who went home and told his mother, "The prince of Vaishali used me as a bed and took a nap on top of me." Knowing that the prince would one day become the king and have a lot of power, the mother instructed her son, "From now on, don't hang around him. Avoid going near him. Keep your distance." That's how he got the name "avoid going near."

"Sainika" is also a Sanskrit name which means "endowed with an army." Judging from his name, he was probably someone who enjoyed serving in the military and had the air of a military man. These two people, who maintained the idea of comprehensive awareness, will become his companions. They believed they knew everything, and now they become this cultivator's companions. Confused about the Bodhi the Buddhas, he will lose his proper knowledge and understanding.

K3 He gives it a name and warns us to be aware of it.
 **Sutra:

This is the fourth state, in which he draws an erroneous conclusion based on the idea that there is a universal awareness. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of a distorted view of awareness.

Commentary:**

This is the fourth state, in which he draws an erroneous conclusion based on the idea that there is a universal awareness. In this fourth kind of attachment, he claims to know everything and thinks there's nothing he does not know. However, that's just his attachment. He really doesn't know anything at all. He realizes a false result. "Erroneous" means that there's no such thing. He strays far from perfect penetration. He is way off track, going against the dharma-door of cultivating perfect penetration through the ear. And he turns his back on the City of Nirvana, on the principle of non-production and non-destruction. Thus he is sowing the seeds of a distorted view of awareness, an upside-down understanding. Take plants, nobody would regard them as sentient beings, yet he does just that. He says that people are just plants, and that plants can also become people. Someone suggests, "But there are trees endowed with souls. Doesn't that mean they have awareness?"

No. In such cases, there is a spirit inhabiting the tree. It's not that the tree itself has awareness and is a sentient being.

J5 Attachment to birth that is not actually birth.
K1 When formations are gone, consciousness appears.
 **Sutra:

Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:**
Further, the good person who is cultivating samadhi has investigated to the point that he has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of the state of ultimate serenity. He still carries the tiny seeds of production and destruction within him.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.
 **Sutra:

If he has attained versatility in the perfect fusion and interchangeable functioning of the sense faculties, he may speculate that all things arise from these perfect transformations. He then seeks the light of fire, delights in the purity of water, loves the wind's circuitous flow, and contemplates the accomplishments of the earth. He reveres and serves them all. He takes these mundane elements to be a fundamental cause and considers them to be everlasting. He will then fall into the error of taking what is not production to be production. Kashyapa and the brahmans who seek to transcend birth and death by diligently serving fire and worshipping water will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:**

If he has attained versatility in the state of perfect fusion and interchangeable functioning of the six sense faculties, if he can follow his inclinations and do as he wishes, he may speculate that all things arise from these perfect transformations. Becoming attached to the perfect transformations from which everything comes forth, he then seeks the light of fire and worships fire with extreme devotion. He also delights in the purity of water, sincerely revering the pure nature of water, and loves the wind's circuitous flow, being inspired by the nature of wind with its continuous movement.

And he contemplates the accomplishments of the earth. He reveres and serves them all, the various aspects of earth, water, fire and wind. He bows to fire, prostrates himself before water, worships the wind, and makes obeisance to the earth. He says, "It is truly inconceivable. How is fire able to emit light? Water is so pure. I really ought to worship it."

From morning to night he bows to water, fire, wind, and earth, worshipping the four elements. He serves them by making offerings to them. Each spirit has spirits connected with it, and soon he is treating the earth spirits, water spirits, fire spirits, and wind spirits as his own ancestors. Mahakashyapa was originally a member of the fire-worshipping religion, and he used to bow in homage to fire. He takes these mundane elements, earth, water, fire and wind, to be a fundamental cause of himself, and he considers them to be everlasting. He says they abide forever. Well, it's true that earth, water, fire and wind are just the treasury of the Tathagata. However, you should pay reverence to the treasury of the Tathagata, and not to earth, water, fire, and wind. Otherwise you are putting a head on top of a head. Instead of working on the fundamentals of venerating the treasury of the Tathagata and respecting the Buddha, he is busy worshipping the superficial aspect. He will then fall into the error of taking what is not production to be production. He wants to end birth and death, but being unable to do so, he forms such an attachment.

Kashyapa and the brahmans who seek to transcend birth and death by diligently serving fire and worshipping water will become his companions. Kashyapa belongs to the "great turtle clan." The brahmans are those who cultivate pure practices. They exert themselves physically and mentally by engaging in various unbeneficial ascetic practices. They make offerings to fire and bow to water, hoping that by serving the four elements they can end birth and death. The cultivator becomes the friend and comrade of such people. Confused about the true nature of Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding. He loses his genuine wisdom.

K3 He gives it a name and warns us to be aware of it.
 **Sutra:

This is the fifth state, in which he confusedly pursues the elements, setting up a false cause that leads to false aspirations based on speculations about his attachment to worship. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of a distorted view of transformation.

Commentary:**
This is the fifth state, in which he confusedly pursues the elements, setting up a false cause that leads to false aspirations based on speculations about his attachment to worship. This is the fifth upside-down theory. His speculations about his attachment lead him to worship and make offerings to the four elements. He becomes confused about his own everlasting true mind, the treasury of the Tathagata, and goes running out after the material elements instead. He bases himself on fallacious knowledge and views in his quest to escape birth and death. This is the "false cause." With this wrong cause, he vainly hopes to transcend birth and death. He strays far from the dharma door of perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of a distorted and wrong view of transformation.

J6 Attachment to a refuge that is not actually a refuge.
K1 After formations are ended, consciousness manifests.
 **Sutra:

Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:**

Further, the good person, who is cultivating perfect penetration through the ear by directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature, has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has investigated the formations skandha, seen it as empty, and broken through it. He has already ended the path of production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the bliss of the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.
 **Sutra:

He may speculate that there is an emptiness within the perfect brightness, and based on that he denies the myriad transformations, taking their eternal cessation as his refuge. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not a refuge to be a refuge. Those abiding in the shunyata of the Heaven of [Neither Thought nor] Non- Thought will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:**

He may speculate that there is an emptiness within the perfect brightness, and based on that he denies the myriad transformations, taking their eternal cessation as his refuge. He speculates that there is an emptiness within the brightness, but that is not the case. Isn't that to deny the existence of all the myriad things? Therefore, it is not a refuge of eternal cessation. However, he makes it his refuge.

If he interprets this as a supreme state, if he has such a crazy understanding, he will fall into the error of taking what is not a refuge to be a refuge. He wants to rely on a refuge, but there is no such refuge. It is not eternal production or eternal cessation, so it cannot be a refuge, which is what he takes it to be. There is no refuge.

Those abiding in the shunyata of the Heaven of [Neither Thought nor] Non-Thought become his companions. His attachment is not to the Heaven of Non-Thought among the heavens of the fourth dhyana, but rather the Heaven of Neither Thought Nor Non-Thought. The spirits of emptiness (shunyata) there become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he loses his proper knowledge and understanding.

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.
 **Sutra:

This is the sixth state, in which he realizes a state of voidness based on the idea of emptiness within the perfect brightness. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of annihilationism.

Commentary:**

This is the sixth state of crazy understanding, in which he realizes a state of voidness based on the idea of emptiness within the perfect brightness. The state he attains doesn't really exist. He strays far from perfect penetration. He goes against the practice of that dharma-door. He turns his back on the City of Nirvana. What he does is contrary to the wonderful fruition of nirvana, and he sows the seeds of annihilationism.

J7 Attachment to an unattainable craving.
K1 After formations are ended, consciousness manifests.
 **Sutra:

Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:**

Further, the good person who is cultivating samadhi has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. For him, the formations skandha is already empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity. He has yet to perfect the wonderful bliss of nirvana.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.
 **Sutra:

In the state of what seems to be perfect permanence, he may bolster his body, hoping to live for a long time in that subtle and perfect condition without dying. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of being greedy for something unattainable. Asita and those who seek long life will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:**

In the state of what seems to be perfect permanence, he may bolster his body, hoping to live for a long time in that subtle and perfect condition without dying. He may try to make his body durable because he wishes to dwell in the world forever. He seeks immortality and a life of essential clarity and perfection. If he interprets this as a supreme state, if he has such a crazy understanding, he Will fall into the error of being greedy for something unattainable. He craves immortality but cannot attain it.

Asita and those who seek long life will become his companions. "Asita" is a Sanskrit name that translates as "incomparable," meaning "no one can compare with him." He and his followers are an external sect; they dwell in the heavens and crave immortality. The cultivator joins ranks with them. Confused about the dharma-door of the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his proper knowledge and understanding.

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.
 **Sutra:

This is the seventh state, in which he sets up the false cause of bolstering and aspires to permanent worldly existence, based on his attachment to the life-source. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for false thoughts of lengthening life.

Commentary:**
This is the seventh state, in which he sets up the false cause of bolstering and aspires to permanent worldly existence, based on his attachment to the life-source. He clings to the source of his own life and bolsters his body in the hope of attaining long life. He strays far from perfect penetration. He goes against the dharma-door of cultivating the perfect penetration of the ear by directing the hearing inward to listen to his own nature. And not only that, he turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for false thoughts of lengthening life.

J8 Attachment to truth that is not actually truth.
K1 After formations are ended, consciousness manifests.
 **Sutra:

Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:**

Further, the good person who is cultivating samadhi has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty; he has broken through the formations skandha. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder and wonderful bliss of ultimate serenity.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.
 **Sutra:

As he contemplates the interconnection of all lives, he wants to hang on to worldly enjoyments and is afraid they will come to an end. Caught up in this thought, he will, by the power of transformation, seat himself in a lotus flower palace, conjure up an abundance of the seven precious things, increase his retinue of beautiful women, and indulge his mind. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not the truth to be the truth. Vignakara will become his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:**

As he contemplates the interconnection of all lives, this person sees that his own life is interrelated with the lives of all beings, and he wants to hang on to worldly enjoyments and is afraid they will come to an end. He fears that his worldly existence will come to an end, and he doesn't want it to end. Caught up in this thought, he will, by the power of transformation, seat himself in a lotus flower palace, conjure up an abundance of the seven precious things, increase his retinue of beautiful women, and indulge his mind. Within his lotus flower palace, he conjures up all kinds of gems and enlarges his following of concubines and beautiful women. Then he gives free rein to lust and greed.

If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not the truth to be the truth. At this point, he again considers this to be supreme. He thinks he has attained what is true, but it is not true. It is merely what he maintains.

Vignakara will become his companion. "Vigna" is Sanskrit and translates as "to tie and to bind." This refers to tying and binding living beings with rope. "Kara" is also Sanskrit and translates as "my doing." This means, "The bondage of all living beings, that is, their lack of freedom, is all my doing. It is because of me that they are not free." That's how the members of this external sect think. This cultivator joins ranks with them. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his proper knowledge and understanding and will only have wrong knowledge and understanding.

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.
 **Sutra:

This is the eighth state, in which he decides to indulge in worldly enjoyments, based on his wrong thinking. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for becoming a demon of the heavens.

Commentary:**

This is the eighth state, in which he decides to indulge in worldly enjoyments, based on his wrong thinking. Due to his wrong thoughts, he gets caught up in his burning passion for worldly things. He strays far from perfect penetration. He goes against the dharma-door of cultivating perfect penetration through the ear. And he turns his back on the City of Nirvana and the principle it embodies, thus sowing the seeds for becoming a demon of the heavens. He will be reborn among the demons in the heavens.

J9 Fixed-nature hearers.
K1 After formations are ended, consciousness manifests.
 **Sutra:

Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:**
Further, the good person has investigated and has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has already ended the nature that is subject to production and destruction, but he has not yet fully perfected the subtle and wonder bliss of ultimate serenity.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.
 **Sutra:

In his understanding of life, he distinguishes the subtle and the coarse and determines the true and the false. But he only seeks a response in the mutual repayment of cause and effect, and he turns his back on the way of purity. In the practice of seeing suffering, eliminating accumulation, realizing cessation, and cultivating the Way, he dwells in cessation and stops there, making no further progress. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall and become a fixed-nature hearer. Unlearned Sanghans and those of overweening pride will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:**

In his illusory understanding of life, he distinguishes these subtle and the coarse. He differentiates between what is fine and what is coarse, and determines the true and the false. He judges what is true and what is false. But he only seeks a response in the mutual repayment of cause and effect. He seeks a response through cause and effect. The response also comes from cause and effect. And he turns his back on the way of purity.

In the practice of seeing suffering, eliminating accumulation, realizing cessation, and cultivating the Way. To see suffering means to know suffering. The truth of suffering includes the three sufferings, the eight sufferings, and limitless sufferings. The truth of accumulation refers to all our afflictions. Cessation refers to cultivating the Way and realizing cessation, that is, attaining the wonderful bliss of nirvana. The Way refers to the way of cultivation. That's what is meant by knowing suffering, eliminating accumulation, longing for cessation, and cultivating the Way. He dwells in cessation and stops there, making no further progress. When he reaches cessation, he stops advancing.

If he interprets this as a supreme state, if he comes up with a crazy rationalization which he considers superior, he will fall and become a fixed-nature hearer. What is a fixed-nature hearer? We've talked about this before. He is a person who refuses to turn from the small and go toward the great. He becomes satisfied prematurely and refuses to advance further. Unlearned Sanghans and those of overweening pride will become his companions. He is as ignorant as the unlearned bhikshu who thought the fourth dhyana was the fourth fruition of Arhatship. Such people become his companions. Confused about the Buddha's enlightened Bodhi-nature, he will lose his proper knowledge and understanding.

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.
 **Sutra:

This is the ninth state, in which he aspires toward the fruition of cessation, based on perfecting the mind that seeks responses. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for becoming enmeshed in emptiness.

Commentary:**

This is the ninth state, in which he aspires toward the fruition of cessation, based on perfecting the mind that seeks responses. He strays far from the dharma-door of perfect penetration through the ear. And he turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for becoming enmeshed in emptiness. He gets stuck in emptiness and stillness. He has no desire to progress and no wish to retreat. Emptiness becomes the most important thing in his life. He gets wrapped up in emptiness. Actually, emptiness means there is nothing at all, but he invents an emptiness within emptiness and becomes attached to it.

J10 Fixed-nature pratyekas.
K1 After formations are ended, consciousness manifests.
 **Sutra:

Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:**
Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has thoroughly investigated the states of the formations skandha, and they are empty for him. He has already ended the states of production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder and bliss of ultimate serenity.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.
 **Sutra:

In that perfectly fused, pure, bright enlightenment, as he investigates the profound wonder, he may take it to be nirvana and fail to make further progress. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall and become a fixed-nature pratyeka. Those enlightened by conditions and solitarily enlightened ones who do not turn their minds to the great vehicle will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:**

In that state of perfectly fused, pure, bright enlightenment, as he investigates the principle of profound wonder, he may take it to be nirvana and fail to make further progress in his cultivation, even though he has not yet broken through the consciousness skandha. If he interprets this wild and false understanding as a supreme state, he will fall and become a fixed nature pratyeka who fails to turn from the small and go toward the great.

Those enlightened by conditions and solitarily enlightened ones who do not turn their minds to the great vehicle, the fixednature Arhats, will become his companions. He will join ranks with them. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, the path to enlightenment, he will lose his proper knowledge and understanding.

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.
 **Sutra:

This is the tenth state, in which he realizes a profound brightness based on fusing the mind with perfect enlightenment. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for being unable to surpass his attachment to the brightness of perfect enlightenment.

Commentary:**

This is the tenth state, the last of the gates of the consciousness skandha. If you can pass through this gate, then you won't have to worry anymore. There is no further danger. Unfortunately, this final step is not an easy one to take. At this point he's off by just a tiny bit. It is said, "If you are off by a hairsbreadth at the beginning, you will miss by a thousand miles at the end." If you're just a tiny bit off at the start, you'll be way off at the stage of fruition. This state is one in which he realizes a profound brightness based on fusing the mind with perfect enlightenment. At this time, the doctrine of perfect enlightenment is about to merge with his permanent true mind, and he attains a purity and brightness.

He strays far from perfect penetration. Nevertheless, he has not meshed with the dharma-door of perfect penetration of the ear, because he still has attachments. And he turns his back on the City of Nirvana, going against the wonderful fruition of nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for being unable to surpass his attachment to the brightness of perfect enlightenment. He cannot get past his attachment to that state of perfection. There is still that tiny bit which he does not understand before he breaks through the consciousness skandha.

If at this point he can break through without succumbing to crazy interpretations, then he will have broken through all five skandhas. When the five skandhas have been broken through, he will attain the positions of the ten faiths, the ten dwellings, the ten practices, the ten transferences, and the ten grounds. Then he can rest assured that he will attain Buddhahood.

I3 Conclusion on the harm and command to offer protection.
J1 Show how this happens due to interaction.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, these ten states of dhyana are due to crazy explanations on the path of cultivation. Relying on them, the cultivator becomes confused and claims to have attained complete realization before actually having done so. All these states are the result of interactions between the consciousness skandha and his mental efforts.

Commentary:**

Ananda, you should pay special attention to this point and understand it well. You should recognize the demon states that appear in these ten states of dhyana, these ten dharma-doors of contemplation in stillness. These ten states which appear in the cultivation of dhyana are due to crazy explanations on the path of cultivation.

Relying on them, the cultivator becomes confused and claims to have attained complete realization before actually having done so. At this point, although he has not attained the Way and realized the fruition, he says, "I've realized the fruition." Not having realized the first fruition, he says he has. Not having attained the second, third, or fourth fruitions either, he claims he has. He has not become a Buddha, yet he claims he has. If you ask him how he became a Buddha, he doesn't know. A Buddha who doesn't know how he attained Buddhahood is certainly a muddled Buddha! But Buddhas all have perfect understanding, and there are no muddled Buddhas. If he's muddled, then he is just a ghost, goblin, demon, or weird creature who doesn't understand the truth. All these states are the result of interactions between the consciousness skandha and his mental efforts. These are tricks of the consciousness skandha. When you work hard, the consciousness skandha battles against your skill. If you have the slightest bit of greed, lust or false thinking, you will enter a demonic state. If you become attached to this state, then you will be possessed by a demon.

You will come up with some crazy theory, and once you do, it will be very hard to smash through it. Even if others point out to the cultivator that he is incorrect, he won't believe them. He will think, "What do you know, anyway? I'm already a Buddha! What you're saying is not right." Even if they tell him, he won't believe them. That is why such states occur.

[January 1983]

Just now, Guo Di said most of us have placed the state of breaking through the five skandhas too high, and he's absolutely right. The Heart Sutra says, "When Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara was practicing the profound Prajna Paramita, he illuminated the five skandhas and saw that they are all empty, and he crossed beyond all suffering and difficulty." Avalokiteshvara (the 'one who contemplates at ease') was sitting there meditating, advancing step by step in his cultivation of dhyana, heading towards the stage of wisdom. He was able to understand that the five skandhas are empty. Once a person sees the skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness as empty, he will no longer be obstructed by them. Since they no longer cover him over, his wisdom comes forth.

At this point, he has not by any means realized any fruition or left the triple realm. He has some wisdom, which allows him to leave suffering and attain bliss. Yet he has not really left suffering and attained bliss; he still has a ways to go. He still has to "deeply enter the sutra treasury and have wisdom like the sea," and to not be turned by states. Right now, he is still being turned by the states of the five skandhas. Not only has he not realized the fourth fruition,he hasn't even reached the first fruition. An Arhat of the first fruition can walk without his feet having to touch the ground. His feet are about half a centimeter off the ground, so they never get muddy no matter where he goes. That's because he has eradicated the eighty-eight grades of delusion of views.

The delusion of views involves being confused by the state one is faced with and becoming attached to it. When one realizes the fruition, "The eyes see forms, but inside there is nothing. The ears hear sounds, but the mind doesn't know." One sees everything as empty and one has no attachments, so how could one "catch on fire and become possessed by a demon"? There are no demons to encounter and no fires to catch.

Being confused by principles and engaging in discrimination is called the delusion of thoughts. Sages of the second and third fruition must cut off the delusion of thoughts. If someone had already cut off the delusions of thought while cultivating in the realm of the five skandhas, would he be entertaining all kinds of wild thoughts and speculations? Would he make all kinds of discriminations as he investigates the principle? No way. He would be able to decisively resolve any matter which comes up without having to discriminate and speculate about it. Those false thoughts all come from his consciousness. His consciousness is constantly discriminating the subtlest details. Not only has he not realized any fruition, he can't even ascend to the Heaven of Neither Thought nor Non-thought. Why not? Because he hasn't even seen through and put down his body! He's still going around in circles, expending effort on that stinking skinbag!

Do you think that someone who has broken through the five skandhas has realized some fruition? Breaking through the five skandhas is a path that has to be walked, and he is walking on that path. All of you should clearly recognize this state. Don't be like the unlearned bhikshu, who mistakenly thought that the fourth dhyana heaven was the fourth fruition. A person who has broken through the five skandhas is only at the level of the first or second dhyana. He is still in the very early stages of cultivation. He has only just begun. You shouldn't mistake an elementary school student who has just begun his studies for a college graduate. Child prodigies who advance very quickly in their studies are not that common. In fact, they are extremely rare. You should be very clear about the dharma. I didn't say this earlier, because I wanted to see how much wisdom you all had. If a person hasn't cut off the delusion of views and the delusion of thought, how can he have realized any fruition? It would be impossible.

[January 1983]

He hasn't realized any fruition yet. Those are all false states. Even if he has broken through form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness, he still hasn't realized any fruition. He's just traveling on the path of cultivation, that's all. If he had realized any fruition, he would become irreversible; how could a demon possess him? Even a person who has realized the first fruition cannot be possessed by a demon.

[March 1983]

The Heart Sutra says, "He illuminated the five skandhas and saw that they are all empty, and he crossed beyond all suffering and difficulty." One who has broken through the five skandhas has merely understood the principle of emptiness; he certainly hasn't ended birth and death or attained any fruition. He is still walking on the path (of cultivation) and has not reached his destination yet, so he can't be said to have ended birth and death. He has understood the principle of emptiness, which is a partial view, and at this point he feels that there isn't any suffering and there isn't any happiness. If he were to stop at this point, he would fall into an external path. If he continues to progress, then it will be possible for him to become enlightened and to realize the fruition, but he must be vigorous. Therefore, in cultivation, no matter what level you reach, if you become satisfied with what little you have attained and feel you've gone far enough, then you are simply limiting yourself and quitting when you're only halfway there. That will be as far as your understanding goes, and you will make no further progress.

J2 Confusion will bring harm.
 **Sutra:

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, their minds are confused by their individual likings and past habits, so they stop to rest in what they take to be the ultimate refuge. They claim to have perfected unsurpassed Bodhi, thus uttering a great lie. After their karmic retribution as externalists and deviant demons comes to an end, they will fall into the Relentless Hells. The sound-hearers and those enlightened by conditions cannot make further progress.

Commentary:**

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Living beings are obstinate and intractable in their delusion. They do not stop to consider just what they are. They haven't shed their dog hides and pig skins, yet they claim to be Buddhas. They really overestimate themselves.

Encountering such situations, their minds are confused by their individual likings and past habits. "Individual likings" refers to their personal desires and greedy attachments, which have confused and stupefied their minds in life after life. So they stop to rest in what they take to be the ultimate refuge. They figure they have reached a treasure trove. But in fact, they are abiding in a transformed city. That transformed city is not the treasure trove. These people were on a quest for treasures, but after going halfway, they grew weary and decided to give up. At that point, a person with spiritual powers conjured up a city and told them, "The treasure trove is just up ahead. We can go there and collect all the treasures. We can bring back all sorts of precious and rare jewels." The idea was that after they got there and took a rest, they could continue onwards. But all the people went to the transformed city, and thinking it was the treasure trove, they rested and did not go further. They say this is their final place of refuge, the place they want to go to.

They claim to have perfected unsurpassed Bodhi. They claim they have realized unsurpassed Bodhi and become Buddhas already, thus uttering a great lie. They haven't attained Buddhahood, but they say they have. Would any intelligent person say such a stupid thing? To say you've reached a position that you haven't reached is just being stupid. In a democratic country, we say everyone can become president. True, everyone has the potential to become president, but that doesn't mean everyone is the president. You have to be elected to office before you actually are the president. You can't just say that everyone is a president. Then who is the real president? Who is the vice-president? It's the same principle here. If you've never gone to school or studied anything, and you don't even know how to sign your own name, could you really become the president? It's the same with becoming a Buddha. If you haven't cultivated, and you don't have what it takes to spend six years in the Himalayas or forty-nine days under the Bodhi tree, if you haven't put in even one day of such effort, how could you become a Buddha? That would be too easy. That's crazy.

After their karmic retribution as externalists and deviant demons comes to an end, after the demonic karma they incurred has come to an end, they will fall into the Relentless Hells. Their lives as demons will also come to an end at some point When that happens, they will fall into the Relentless Hells. The soundhearers and those enlightened by conditions cannot make further progress. If fixed-nature sound-hearers or fixed-nature pratyekabuddhas utter a great lie, they will not fall into the hells.

However, they won't be able to advance either. They cannot make further progress.

J3 Command to offer protection.
 **Sutra:

All of you should cherish the resolve to sustain the Way of the Tathagata. After my nirvana, transmit this dharma-door to those in the Dharma-ending Age, universally causing living beings to awaken to its meaning. Do not let the demons of views cause them to create their own grave offenses and fall. Protect, comfort, and compassionately rescue them and dispel evil conditions. Enable them to enter the Buddhas' knowledge and understanding with body and mind so that from the beginning to the final accomplishment they never go astray.

Commentary:**

All of you, Ananda, and all the great Bodhisattvas, great Arhats, great bhikshus, great elders, and others in this assembly, should cherish the resolve to sustain the Way of the Tathagata. You should honor the principles spoken by the Tathagata. After my nirvana, transmit this dharma-door of the Shurangama Sutra, that of "directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature, until the nature attains the Unsurpassed Way." Transmit this dharma-door of perfect penetration to those in the Dharma Ending Age. You should transmit this every day to those in the Dharma-ending Age, universally causing living beings to awaken to its meaning. Let all living beings understand these principles clearly.

Do not let the demons of views cause them to create their own grave offenses and fall. There are demons of views and demons of views and love. When people see states, demons of views cause them to be moved by the states. Sometimes people see things, give rise to love, and get turned by those states. That's the demons of views and the demons of views and love. Don't let them cause people to create offenses and fall. Protect, comfort and compassionately rescue them, all living beings, and dispel evil and improper conditions. Subdue the crazy mind and wild nature. Put an end to wrong knowledge and views. Enable them to enter the Buddhas' knowledge and understanding with body and mind so that from the beginning to the final accomplishmet they never go astray. Do not allow them to be sidetracked a they walk on the proper path.