**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 8**

**CHAPTER 7**

**Concluding Instructions**

G3 Concluding instructions.  
H1 First instructs to transcend and certify.  
I1 All Buddhas' former certification.  
 **Sutra:  
  
It is by relying on this dharma-door that the Tathagatas of the past, as many as fine motes of dust in eons as many as the Ganges' sands, have enlightened their minds and attained the Unsurpassed Way.  
  
Commentary:**  
It is by relying on this dharma-door of the Shurangama Sutra that the Tathagatas of the past, as many as fine motes of dust in eons as many as the Ganges' sands, have enlightened their minds and attained the Unsurpassed Way. By following this dharma-door of the great Shurangama Samadhi, their minds became enlightened and they realized the fruition of the Unsurpassed Way. This is the path they traveled. Now we also want to investigate this path. Only by cultivating this Way to perfection can we become Buddhas. It's not the case that we can reach Buddhahood without even taking the first step. Not to mention Buddhahood, even in the world, how many years of effort does it take to get a Bachelor's, a Master's, or a doctoral degree? How much more must you work to attain a transcendental Buddhahood! If you were to claim to be a Buddha without even having taken the first step, that would be even more incredible than a dream! Even in a dream, you wouldn't say such an outrageous thing. Becoming a Buddha is not that simple.  
  
I2 The end of consciousness is transcendence.  
 **Sutra:  
  
When the consciousness skandha ends, your present sense faculties will function interchangeably. Within that interchangeable functioning, you will be able to enter the Bodhisattvas, vajra dry wisdom. In your perfect, bright, pure mind, there will be a transformation.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
When the consciousness skandha ends. When the formations skandha came to an end, you were in the consciousness skandha. If you had reached the position of the eighth consciousness, at that point you would be able to see the worlds of the ten directions as clearly as crystal. Nothing would obstruct your vision. However, before the consciousness skandha completely become the eighth consciousness, and the very subtle process of production and destruction is still going on in the seventh consciousness. Once those subtle movements of the seventh consciousness are gone and only the eighth consciousness remains, you will see everything in the universe as clearly as crystal. At that time, the eighth consciousness is transformed into the Buddhas' great perfect mirror wisdom. That state cannot be obtained, however, before you completely smash through the seventh consciousness. That is what it means to put an end to the consciousness skandha.  
  
If the subtle movements of the seventh consciousness I are gone, your present six sense faculties will function interchangeably. The interchangeable functioning of the Six sense faculties was discussed above. Each faculty has the functions of all six. For example, the eyes, which could only see things before, can now hear, smell, taste, eat, touch, and think as well. One opens and unites the faculties so they can function interchangeably. Within that interchangeable functioning, you will be able to enter the Bodhisattva's vajra dry wisdom. "Vajra" means indestructible,which means non-retreating. You attain the three kinds of non-retreat: non-retreating position, non-retreating thought, and non-retreating practice. "Dry wisdom" refers to the stage of dry wisdom. In your perfect, bright, pure mind, there will be a transformation.  
 **Sutra:  
  
It will be like pure vaidurya that contains a precious moon, and in that way you will transcend the ten faiths, the ten dwellings, the ten practices, the ten transferences, the four additional practices, the vajra-like ten grounds of a Bodhisattva's practice, and the perfect brightness of equal enlightenment.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
What will the transformation be like? It will be like a pure, undefiled piece of vaidurya that contains a precious moon, and in that way you will transcend the positions of the ten faiths, the ten dwellings, the ten practices, the ten transferences, and the four additional practices, Which were discussed earlier. The four additional practices are heat, summit, patience, and foremost in the world. You will also transcend the states and levels of skill represented by the vajra-like ten grounds of a Bodhisattva's practice and the perfect brightness of equal enlightenment.  
  
I3 Perfect realization of the ultimate fruition.  
 **Sutra:  
  
You will enter the Tathagata's sea of wondrous adornments, perfect the cultivation of Bodhi, and return to the state of non-attainment.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
In this state, you will enter the Tathagata's sea of wondrous adornments, perfect the cultivation of Bodhi, and return to the state of non-attainment. Ultimately, there is nothing to be attained. Why? Because Bodhi is inherent in you and is not obtained from outside. The treasury of the Tathagata is not something obtained externally. Rather, it is inherently yours. Thus, you "return to the state of non-attainment."  
  
H2 He then instructs us to protect and uphold it.  
I1 He first explains how it accords with the honored ones of the past.  
 **Sutra:  
  
These are subtle demonic states that all Buddhas, World Honored Ones, of the past, discerned with their enlightened clarity while in the state of shamatha and vipashyana.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
These ten states discussed above, which occur in the consciousness skandha, are subtle demonic states that all Buddhas, World Honored Ones, of the past, discerned with their enlightened clarity while in the state of shamatha and vipashyana. Shamatha is a kind of samadhi, in this case the wonderful Shurangama Samadhi.  
  
Vipashyana refers to the skill of subtle and refined contemplation. Because of their enlightened understanding, they could discern those demonic states, which are extremely subtle and very difficult to detect.  
  
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Disciple: Here the wonderful Shurangama Samadhi is explained as shamatha, but earlier shamatha referred to the three stoppings and three contemplations.  
  
Venerable Master: The three stoppings and three contemplations are just an analogy. The principle is about the same.  
  
Disciple: But it still isn't the wonderful Shurangama Samadhi.   
  
Venerable Master: He may realize and enter the wonderful Shurangama Samadhi later on. This is explained differently in different places; it depends on the context. It's explained at a deeper level here. It is as when a child grows up, he does things differently, even though he has the same name and is the same person. There are changes, but it's pretty much the same thing. It's explained one way here, and another way there. If you insist on clinging to one way, then you don't understand.  
  
Disciple: But only someone with the Venerable Master's wisdom can do this.  
  
Venerable Master: For example, let me ask you about a quote from the Chan school, "With empty hands grasping a hoe, I walk and ride an ox. I walk across a bridge; the bridge flows, but not the water." What does this mean? Have you heard me say this before? There's nothing special about it! Of course your hands have to be empty to grasp a hoe. If your hands are holding something, how can they grasp the hoe? Most people ask, "How can empty hands grasp a hoe?" They don't understand, because they can't turn it around. That's how the Chan school is.  
  
Disciple: Chan masters usually talk in such a bizarre way, so even when they say something logical, people still can't figure out what they're saying.  
  
Venerable Master: They were speaking to the conditions of the time, so if you talk about their words now, it's like trying to sketch something that changes over time, it will be off the mark. The Chan masters deliberately spoke that way so you wouldn't understand and you wouldn't know what their real meaning was.

Disciple: Their words were aimed at a specific person or event, and not directed at other people.  
  
Venerable Master: When those of later generations quote their words, they are simply "talking about food instead of eating it, and counting others' wealth instead of their own", not getting any real benefit.  
  
Disciple: For example, if a person is on the brink of enlightenment, then a Chan master may hit him and cause him to be enlightened. Yet if those of later generations casually hit people, they won't get any results.  
  
Venerable Master: As soon as you hit them, they get mad. When your cultivation has reached maturity, you can bump into something or touch something and get enlightened. When the time hasn't come, then even if you want to get enlightened, it won't happen. The more you want to, the less you'll be able to get enlightened, because your wishes are only false thoughts. You don't recognize your false thoughts, and so you follow along with your human mind, thinking, thinking, thinking, you can think to the end of the world and you still won't get anywhere.  
  
I2 Orders him to recognize the demonic states, and to protect and uphold the samadhi.  
 **Sutra:  
  
If you can recognize a demonic state when it appears and wash away the filth in your mind, you will not develop wrong views.  
  
Commentary:**  
If you can recognize a demonic state when it appears before you and be able to tell whether it is a demon or a Buddha, and you can wash away the filth in your mind, you will not develop wrong views. Some states come from demons external to you and some come from your own mind. The external demons are easy to subdue. The internal demons of the mind are very difficult to subdue, because once you have wrong knowledge and views, it's very difficult to free yourself from them. After you have recognized the external demons, you have to cleanse away the filth of your own mind. What filth? The most important kind of filth in the mind is greed. We keep talking around it, and it always comes back to that. Greed, to be more specific, is lust If you don't have any thoughts of lust, you have washed away the filth of the mind, and you will not develop wrong views. If you do not cleanse the mind of lust, then a lot of problems will come your way. All these problems arise because of greed. All kinds of trouble, afflictions, and ignorance then arise; and when they do, you get caught up in wrong views. If you can wash away these faults, you will also be rid of wrong views.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The demons of the skandhas will melt away, and the demons from the heavens will be destroyed. The mighty ghosts and spirits will lose their wits and flee. And the li, mei, and wang liang will not dare to show themselves again.  
  
Commentary:**  
The demons of the five skandhas, which have been discussed, will melt away, and the demons from the heavens will be destroyed. If you have genuine wisdom and don't get caught up in wrong views, the demons of the heavens will be obliterated. You will strike fear into their hearts. The mighty ghosts and spirits will lose their wits and flee. These beings are so strong that they can knock over Mount Sumeru single-handedly. But if you have proper knowledge and views and you have the great Shurangama Samadhi, these powerful ghosts and spirits will lose their wits and flee in terror when they see you. And the li, mei, and wang liang will not dare to show themselves again. Li, mei, and wang liang are types of ghosts that were discussed earlier. They will also be gone for good.  
 **Sutra:  
  
You will directly arrive at Bodhi without the slightest weariness, progressing from lower positions to great nirvana without becoming confused or discouraged.  
  
Commentary:**  
You will directly arrive at Bodhi, the state of the Buddha, without the slightest weariness. You won't have any difficulty or trouble progressing from lower positions to great nirvana without becoming confused or discouraged. Even those with inferior roots will be able to progress. You will head straight for the wonderful fruition of nirvana, and your mind will not experience those earlier kinds of confusion and ignorance.  
 **Sutra:  
  
If there are beings in the Dharma-ending Age who delight in cultivating samadhi, but who are stupid and dull, who fail to recognize the importance of dhyana, or who have not heard the dharma spoken, you should be concerned lest they get caught up in deviant ways. You should single-mindedly exhort them to uphold the Dharani Mantra of the Buddha's Summit. If they cannot recite it from memory, they should have it written out and place it in the meditation hall or wear it on their person. Then none of the demons will be able to disturb them.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
If there are beings in the Dharma-ending Age who delight in cultivating samadhi, but who are stupid and dull. No matter how much you teach living beings about being good, they still insist on going down bad roads. You dont teach them how to be bad, but they go down bad roads all by themselves. Learning to be good is as difficult as ascending to the heavens. Learning to be bad is as easy as sliding downhill. Why? The habits of living beings are very strong, and they have too much greed and desire. Those old habits, old problems, old karmic hindrances, and debts from offenses created in past lives are so numerous that they drag one down when one wants to go up. Learning to be good is as hard as climbing to the heavens, but learning to be bad is as easy as going downhill. Why? Because living beings have no wisdom and are stupid and dull.  
  
They are ones who fail to recognize the importance of dhyana. They do not realize the vital importance of cultivating the Way. They do not know how necessary the practice of still contemplation is. Or they are those who have not heard the dharma spoken. They don't know about the dharma. Although they have not heard dharma lectures and they don't know how to meditate and practice still contemplation, they nonetheless delight in cultivating samadhi. Those who wish to cultivate samadhi have to understand the Way and be clear about the dharma. So you should be concerned lest they get caught up in deviant ways. If you fear that such people will come to have wrong knowledge and views, then you must warn them.  
  
You should single-mindedly exhort them to uphold the Dharani Mantra of the Buddha's Summit. Urge them to recite the most supreme dharani, the Shurangama Mantra. If they cannot recite it from memory, they should have it written out and place it in the meditation hall. If they keep reciting the Mantra but cannot memorize it and have to look at the book, you can tell them to write it out and place it in the room where they sit in meditation. That's because, "Wherever the sutra is kept the Buddha is present." How much the more is this the case for the Mantra. Wherever this Mantra is found, there will be Vajra Treasury Bodhisattvas and their retinues, and all the dharma-protecting good spirits. Or you can tell these cultivators to wear it on their person. Then none of the demons will be able to disturb them. If you wear the Mantra on your body, the demons cannot get to you.  
  
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If a person who has been possessed by a demon recites the Shurangama Mantra, will the demon leave? If you recite the Shurangama Mantra, whatever demon you have will leave, provided you recite with single-minded concentration. If you recite with a concentrated mind, without any extraneous false thoughts or any greed, then the demon will go far away. It's only to be feared that you'll recite the mantra on the one hand, but entertain false thoughts on the other, and that you won't be able to get rid of thoughts of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants. If that's the case, then no mantra that you recite will be efficacious.  
  
I3 Advises him to revere this teaching as an example from the past.  
 **Sutra:  
  
You should revere this final paradigm of ultimate cultivation and progress of the Tathagatas of the ten directions.  
  
Commentary:**  
With utmost sincerity and concern, Shakyamuni Buddha makes a final entreaty. He says to Ananda, "You should revere this final paradigm of ultimate cultivation and progress of the Tathagatas of the ten directions." You should respect and honor the wonderful Shurangama Samadhi, the dharma-door of the "perfect penetration of the ear through directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature," and also the dharma-door of the spiritual Shurangama Mantra, the Supreme Honored Dharani Mantra of the Buddha's Summit which unites all dharmas and holds limitless meanings. This is the mind and nature of all the Tathagatas of the ten directions. It is the mother of all Tathagatas. It is the most ultimate, most thorough, and most subtly wonderful dharma-door of cultivation and progress. It is the final paradigm of all the Tathagatas of the ten directions. It is the most important dharmadoor, which has been explained at the very end. It is the most important paradigm, method, and instruction concerning the road you should take to attain the Buddhas' knowledge and understanding.