**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 1**

**CHAPTER 4**

**Ananda’s Fall**

C2 The prologue.
D1 The king and officials prepare offerings.

**Sutra:Then King Prasenajit, for the sake of his father, the late king, arranged on the day of mourning a vegetarian feast and invited the Buddha to the side rooms of the palace. He welcomed the Tathagata in person with a vast array of superb delicacies of unsurpassed wonderful flavors and himself invited the great Bodhisattvas.

Commentary: King Prasenajit**, whose name means “moonlight,” was born in India on the same day the Buddha was. When the Buddha entered the world, a light illumined the entire country. King Prasenajit’s father thought the light was connected with the birth of his son, so he named him “Moonlight.” The child later succeeded the father to become the ruler of a country in India.

**For the sake of his father, the late king.** The fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month marked the close of the summer retreat for people who had left the home-life. On the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth days of the month the Pravarana is held, as I explained earlier. The fifteenth marks the Ullambana festival. The fifteenth day of the seventh month was also the day King Prasenajit recognized to be the anniversary of his father’s death. It is referred to indirectly as **the day of mourning**, since one did not speak explicitly of one’s father’s death because of the pain and sorrow involved. Filial people find it very difficult to be reminded of their parents’ deaths; remembering how good their parents were to them and how they have been unable to be sufficiently filial in return, they experience deep regret. Although mention of the anniversary of King Prasenajit’s father’s death was avoided, everyone knew of it, and the king chose that day to make offerings to the Triple Jewel and to do various good deeds. One does good deeds and makes offerings on such a day in order to rescue one’s father and mother from the hells and secure for them rebirth in the heavens.

When Mahamaudgalyayana first obtained the six spiritual penetrations, he went exploring to find out where his mother was and discovered that she had fallen into the hells. Why had his mother fallen into the hells? It was because when she was alive she liked to eat seafood, and most especially enjoyed fish-eggs. How many lives do you suppose there are in a mess of fish-eggs? A vast number. Because she ate quantities of fish-eggs, thereby taking a vast number of lives, and because she did not believe in the Triple Jewel - because she did not believe in the Buddha, did not believe in the dharma, and did not respect the Sangha - she fell into the hells upon her death. And then even Maudgalyayana with his six spiritual penetrations could not save her.

It upset Maudgalyayana to see his mother in the hells enduring so much suffering. His samadhi-power was shaken. And so he used his spiritual penetrations to go to the hells, and he took with him a bowl of rice, which he gave to his mother. When his mother was alive, she had been very stingy. If she was asked to give a little money, her heart and liver began to ache and her very flesh hurt. It is said that parting with money is like cutting off a piece of one’s own flesh. That’s the way it was with her. She couldn’t bear to give it up. As a result of her stingy habits, what do you suppose she did when her son brought her the bowl of food? She grabbed it with her left hand and covered it with her right arm. Why did she cover it? She was afraid someone would steal her food. The place was full of ghosts, but she found a spot where there were none, and she stealthily took a bite of food. Who would have guessed that as soon as she put the food in her mouth it would turn to burning coals so that she couldn’t eat it? Why was this? She was a hungry ghost, and - like all such ghosts - had a stomach as big as a bass drum and a throat as narrow as a needle. As a result, she couldn’t eat. Even when she tried, her karmic obstacles caused the food to turn to fire. Confronted with this situation, Maudgalyayana, despite his spiritual penetrations, was powerless. He had no mantra to recite. And so he returned to his teacher. He used his spiritual penetrations to bring himself before the Buddha; he knelt and said, “My mother has fallen into the hells. I have come seeking the Buddha’s compassion to help me rescue her.”

The Buddha answered, “Your mother has fallen into the hells because she slandered the Triple Jewel, was not respectful toward the Triple Jewel, and did not believe in the Triple Jewel. You can’t save her by yourself, Maudgalyayana. You must rely on the united strength of the Sangha of the ten directions in order to save your mother. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you should make an offering of the finest vegetarian foods and drinks that have not been tasted by anyone before being offered to the Buddha and the Sangha. By making this offering, the Way-karma of the virtuous high Sangha-members of the ten directions will then be able to save your mother. Otherwise there is no way you can save her.”

On the appointed day Mahamaudgalyayana did as the Buddha had instructed; he asked the great virtuous high Sanghans of the ten directions to come and rescue his mother. He prepared a vast array of superb delicacies of unsurpassed wonderful flavors, and made offerings to the Buddha. His mother was reborn in the heavens as a result of the strength of the greatly virtuous ones of the ten directions. Since that time, the Ullambana festival has become an annual celebration, a day upon which anyone can rescue his parents of seven lives past.

Ullambana is a Sanskrit word which means “rescuing those who are hanging upside down.” This refers to the extreme suffering of the ghosts in the hells who are as tormented as one hanging upside down would be. The Ullambana is performed especially for releasing those undergoing the painful suffering of being hungry ghosts and enabling them to be reborn in the heavens.

The fifteenth day of the seventh month is the day of the Buddha’s rejoicing and the Sangha’s pravarana. On that day the merit and virtue derived from making offerings to the Triple Jewel is several million times greater than that derived from offerings made on ordinary days. That was the day King Prasenajit chose to offer **a vegetarian feast** to the Buddha and to make offerings to the Triple Jewel on behalf of his father.

No meat was served, nor any of the five edible members of the allium family - onions, leeks, garlic, chives, or shallots - for all of those foods make people murky and confused.

He **invited the Buddha to the side rooms of the palace**. Why wasn’t the banquet held in the main hall? The main hall was where orders were signed, governmental matters were carried on, and where humane and beneficent policy-making took place. The side rooms were reserved for banquets.

**He welcomed the Tathagata in person with a vast array of superb delicacies of unsurpassed wonderful flavors.** The king himself went out to welcome the Buddha. The banquet consisted of the finest array of foods and drinks - vegetarian dishes that were cooked to perfection - and their flavors were the finest to be had.

**And himself invited the great Bodhisattvas.** The king himself signed the invitation, or perhaps he himself went to invite them, saying, “I wish to request the presence of all the great Bodhisattvas to come and accept my offerings.” He invited all the great Bodhisattvas, as many as the sands in the Ganges River. How much food do you suppose he had to prepare for such a gathering? It must have taken a lot of money, but King Prasenajit was probably not stingy like Maudgalyayana’s mother, so he prepared a great offering.

Sutra:
**In the city were also elders and laypeople who were also prepared to feed the Sangha at the same time, and they stood waiting for the Buddha to come and receive offerings.

Commentary:** The king wasn’t the only one who was prepared to make offerings to the Buddha. There were also elders and laypeople in the city.

These are the ten virtues of an elder:

1. honorable name;
2. lofty position;
3. great wealth;
4. heroic deportment;
5. deep wisdom;
6. maturity in years;
7. pure practice;
8. perfect propriety;
9. the praise of their superiors;
10. the trust of those below them.

They are perhaps of royal blood or of otherwise noble birth. They hold high-ranking positions as officials. They are really rich. Their awesome air is stern and severe; their sanguine energies are powerful and sure. They are courageous, awesome, magnanimous, and forthright. They are decisive and never procrastinate. Their wisdom is great and profound. Elders are usually between fifty and seventy years old. They conduct their affairs in a clean, undefiled, correct, and straightforward manner, and their integrity is impeccable. They are very lofty in their ideals. They are extremely courteous to everyone, never arrogant or condescending. Although their manner is heroic, they do not bully people. When meeting someone they first bow from the waist and then ask after his health. They are never in the least bit crude. They are spoken of highly by their superiors. The people put their trust in the elder. They all wish the best for him - wish him to be a great official, hope he will be wealthy, hope that all good things come his way. Why? He in turn will use his wealth and position for the good of the people. He enjoys giving; the more money he has, the more it pleases everyone. As a great official his every effort is bent on pleasing the people, and the masses look up to him.

**Laypeople** refers to cultivators who are householders. They cultivate in their households.

The elders and laypeople **were also prepared to feed the Sangha at the same time**. The elders and laypeople were also aware of the merit and virtue derived from making offerings to the Triple Jewel on such an important day, the day of the Buddha’s rejoicing, the day of the Sangha’s pravarana. Probably the vegetarian food they prepared in no way compared to the delicacies offered by the king, however, so the text makes no mention of superb or wonderful flavors.

**And they stood waiting for the Buddha to come and receive offerings.** They stood in their doorways waiting for the Buddha to come and receive their offerings, speculating among themselves, “He’ll come to my house today.” “He’s going to receive my offerings.”

Not only did they wait for the Buddha, they also were waiting for the lofty and virtuous members of the Sangha to come and accept their offerings, and so sincere were they that they remained standing during their wait.

Today in Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka, donors kneel to make their offerings to the Sangha. When a member of the Sangha comes along, they add their offering to his bowl and then bow to him. Then he returns to the monastery to eat.

D2 The Buddha and Sangha go to accept the invitation.

**Sutra: The Buddha commanded Manjushri to assign the Bodhisattvas and Arhats to receive offerings from the various vegetarian hosts.

Commentary: The Buddha commanded Manjushri**. Kings can issue commands and so can the King of Dharma. Thus, the text says that the Buddha “commanded” Manjushri Bodhisattva **to assign the Bodhisattvas and Arhats**. How were they assigned? That would depend upon how many Bodhisattvas there were. Perhaps they were assigned to go on the rounds individually or perhaps they were divided into groups of twos and threes.

The great bhikshus and the great Arhats, as well as the Bodhisattvas, were commanded **to receive offerings from the various vegetarian hosts**. This means that they went to the homes of the elders and laypeople and received their offerings. Although the Buddha has millions of transformation bodies, he would never display his spiritual penetrations just for the sake of a meal and go to the various donors’ homes to appear as transformation Buddhas and seek alms at each door. It would never be done that way. If the Buddha were like that then spiritual penetrations would be cheaper than bean curd. And so he said to Manjushri, “You assign the Bodhisattvas and great Arhats so that they can go to each home and receive offerings.”

D3 Ananda’s fall is revealed.
E1 The circumstances leading to his fall.

**Sutra:Only Ananda, who, having accepted a special invitation earlier, had traveled far and had not yet returned, was late for the apportioning of the Sangha. No senior-seated one or acharya was with him, so he was returning alone on the road.**

**Commentary: Only Ananda**. This is the whole reason he got into trouble. He was alone. What had Ananda done? He had **accepted a special invitation earlier**. Perhaps a month or so in advance, someone had made an appointment and said, “On the fourteenth day of the seventh month you certainly should come and receive offerings from us.”

So he went. In fact, he went early. And so on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the day when everyone was receiving offerings, he **had traveled far and had not yet returned**. Basically, bhikshus should not accept special invitations. For instance, if there are ten Sanghans here and you invite only one to go to your home to eat, you are issuing a special invitation. The one who has received the special invitation should not go. Why? The rule in Buddhism is that all the Sanghans of a Way-place should be invited for the offerings together; but sometimes people who like good food ignore the rule and accept the special invitations they are given, thinking, “Why should I look after all of you? What counts is that I get my fill. My special invitation is a response to my blessings and virtue.” They pay no attention to others.

Ananda probably had a bit of fondness for eating good food. Now think about it; during the close of the summer retreat it was absolutely impermissible to travel, and yet Ananda had accepted a special invitation and went out to receive offerings. And so he had already gone against the rules; he had already committed an offense. He was invited for the fourteenth of the month, and so he probably went on the thirteenth. After eating on the fourteenth he stayed the night, planning to return early the next day, and he **was late for the apportioning of the Sangha**. He didn’t make it in time.

**No senior-seated one or acharya was with him, so he was returning alone on the road.** People who have left the home-life should go in twos and threes. The three would perhaps consist of a young bhikshu, a senior bhikshu and an acharya. A “senior” is one who has held the precepts purely for more than twenty years, and therefore is seated in the front of the assembly. “Acharya” is a Sanskrit word, which means “a teacher who exemplifies the rules.” He is a master who follows the rules and understands them. There are five kinds of acharya:

1. an acharya under whom others may leave the home-life;
2. an acharya who transmits the precepts;
3. a karmadana acharya;
4. an acharya upon whom others may rely;
5. an acharya who transmits the teachings.

One person can be all five kinds of acharya. A person who is qualified to lecture the sutras and speak dharma is an acharya who transmits the teachings. He may also have a Way-place where people may draw near him to study and practice, which makes him an acharya upon whom others can rely. He may also teach people the rules and transfer merit to them every day before the Buddhas, asking the Buddhas to wash away their karmic offenses and to cause their good roots to increase. That makes him a karmadana acharya.

He may teach others how to request the precepts, what to say when they receive them, and how to reveal violations of precepts or other offenses before he bestows the precepts upon them. Then he is an acharya who transmits precepts. He may receive people as left-home disciples, in which case he is an acharya under whom others can leave the home-life.

An acharya is one who helps you realize the Way. He aids you in your cultivation of the Way. He stands beside you and admonishes you, “Don’t commit offenses.” That is an acharya. But Ananda didn’t have a senior-seated one or acharya with him in order to help him “guard the mind and be apart from offenses,” and so he walked right into trouble. The worst thing he did was to be out returning alone on the road.

Basically, people who have left the home-life should always travel in pairs. If you truly have samadhi-power, then to do things on your own is not a problem. But if your samadhi-power is not sufficient, then it is very easy to encounter a demonic-obstacle. It is very easy to be affected by external states. These days there are many young monks who travel around by themselves, and that’s very dangerous.

Still we should all thank Ananda. If he hadn’t gone out alone and gotten into trouble, how could he have come to understand the *Shurangama Sutra*? We wouldn’t have any opportunity to understand the sutra ourselves because Shakyamuni Buddha wouldn’t have been presented with the opportunity to speak the *Shurangama Sutra* to teach us how to cultivate samadhi. The fact remains that Ananda benefited us a great deal by his action.

**Sutra: On that day he had received no offerings, and so at the appropriate time Ananda took up his begging bowl and, as he traveled through the city, begged in successive order.

Commentary:**Since he had failed to return in time for the apportioning of the Sangha for that day’s vegetarian offering, **he had received no offerings, and so at the appropriate time Ananda took up his begging bowl**. Bowl is *patra* in Sanskrit, meaning “a vessel of appropriate measure.” It contains enough, but not more than enough, to satisfy one’s needs.

**As he traveled through the city**, he **begged in successive order**. He went from house to house in Shravasti, from door to door. Since some give more and some give less, it is necessary to stop at more than one house, but according to the rules one does not stop at more than seven houses. If after stopping at seven houses one has not received any offerings, one must do without food that day.

**Sutra: As he first began to beg, he thought to himself that down to the very last danapati who would be his vegetarian host he would not question whether they were clean or unclean; whether they were ksatriyas of honorable name or chandalas. While practicing equality and compassion he would not merely select the lowly but was determined to perfect all living beings’ limitless merit and virtue.

Commentary: As he first began to beg, he thought to himself that down to the very last danapati who would be his vegetarian host.** When Ananda took up his bowl and went to receive food offerings, his very first thought was about his donors: “From the very first to the very last *danapati* who becomes my vegetarian host.” “Danapati” is a Sanskrit word which is transliterated into Chinese by two characters which also shed light on its meaning: the first, *tan*, represents the Sanskrit *dana*, and means “to give,” and the second, *yue*, means “to transcend.” The meaning of danapati as based on that transliteration, then, is “one who gives so that he can transcend birth and death.” A layperson who gives offerings to people who have left the home-life is called a danapati, “one who gives in order to transcend.”

By the “very last donor” Ananda meant the one whose offerings would give him the final amount of food necessary for that day.

**He would not question whether they were clean or unclean; whether they were ksatriyas of honorable name or chandalas.** He would not notice if they were poor or rich. Kshatriyas are the noble or royal class of India. Chandalas are butchers, interpreted in Chinese to be “those who kill pigs,” because in India the killing of cattle is forbidden. This caste also included other classes of India, trades such as removing dead bodies, butchering animals, and so forth. And so when chandalas walked down the road, most people would not walk with them. They had to walk on separate roads. In order to identify themselves as being lower than ordinary people, they were required to ring bells and hold banners as they walked down the road.

**While practicing equality and compassion he would not merely select the lowly but was determined to perfect all living beings’ limitless merit and virtue.** He paid no attention to how honorable might be the person from whom he was receiving offerings, nor did he receive offerings exclusively from the lowly. He intended to give all living beings the opportunity to plant blessings.

When donors make offerings, they plant blessings that will grow and ripen in the future. Thus people who have left the home-life are called “fields of blessings.” One who has the reward of many blessings is in all ways content. So if you feel your reward of blessings is not sufficient, you should make offerings to the Triple Jewel and plant more blessings.

Ananda was determined that every wish of every living being be fulfilled. His hope was that the boundless merit and virtue which living beings seek would be completely fulfilled through him.

**Sutra:Ananda already knew that the Tathagata, the World Honored One, had admonished Subhuti and great Kashyapa for being arhats whose hearts were not fair and equal, and he regarded with respect the Tathagata’s instructions on impartiality, to save everyone from doubt and slander.

Commentary:** Why did Ananda want to practice equality and compassion in receiving offerings? Earlier, he had heard Shakyamuni Buddha admonish Subhuti and Mahakashyapa and call them arhats, meaning arhats of the small vehicle, not great Arhats of the great vehicle. Why did he do that? It was Subhuti’s opinion that he should seek alms exclusively from the rich. “Rich people should plant more blessings,” he said. “If they continue to do good deeds, then in their future lives they will continue to be wealthy. If they don’t give now, they won’t be rich in the next life. In order to help the rich, I seek alms from them.”

Subhuti’s method was an example of “avoiding the poor and favoring the rich.” In complete contrast to him, Mahakashyapa sought alms exclusively from the poor. He thought, “Poor people should plant blessings and do good deeds, so that in their future lives they can be wealthy and honored. If I don’t help them out by receiving alms from them, then in the next life and on into the future, they will continue to be poor.” And so they were both small arhats. I believe there was another reason underlying their behavior. It seems fairly certain that Subhuti liked to eat good food, and Great Kashyapa, foremost among the disciples in his practice of asceticism, ate what others couldn’t eat, endured what others couldn’t endure, bore what others couldn’t bear, and yielded where others couldn’t yield. Evidently he was unconcerned about what kind of food he ate, so he sought alms from the poor and gave them the opportunity to plant blessings. The gifts of food and drink offered by poor people are never as fine as those given by the wealthy. The food the rich throw out on the streets is bound to be better than the offerings of the poor.

Shakyamuni Buddha knew that these two disciples did not practice equality and compassion in their alms-rounds. He was aware of the discriminations they made, and so **the Tathagata, the World Honored One, had admonished Subhuti and Great Kashyapa for being arhats whose hearts were not fair and equal**.

Ananda **regarded with respect the Tathagata’s instructions on impartiality, to save everyone from doubt and slander.** He was extremely respectful of this dharma-door of equality, which advised against choosing among donors. Minds that make such discriminations do not belong to the great vehicle dharma but to selfish people. Remembering the reprimand Subhuti and Great Kashyapa had received from Shakyamuni Buddha, Ananda did not want to imitate them, and so he carefully practiced equality and compassion.

Shakyamuni Buddha’s dharma-door was a wide-open expedient free of the slightest obstruction, devoid of any limitation. If one begs exclusively from the rich or from the poor, one can easily arouse people’s doubts and cause them to slander the dharma. Collecting alms impartially makes everyone’s doubts and slander melt away and disappear altogether. Everyone can happily plant blessings and have his wishes fulfilled.

E2 The incident of the actual fall.

Sutra:
**Having crossed the city moat, he walked slowly through the outer gates, his manner stern and proper as he honored with propriety the method of obtaining food.

Commentary:**Shravasti was surrounded by a moat just like those found around some ancient cities in China. Water was kept in the moat at all times to form a protection for the city. Once Ananda had crossed the moat, he arrived within the confines of the great city of Shravasti.

**Having crossed the city moat, he walked slowly through the outer gates, his manner stern and proper** as he strictly respected the rules for obtaining vegetarian food.

Ananda was dignified, with eyes straight ahead, and at the same time extremely respectful. In this way he slowly passed through the outer gates of the city. He exhibited an awesome manner and model deportment; he didn’t look at improper spectacles, nor did he eavesdrop. All the time that he held his bowl, he displayed the utmost propriety and respect for the dharma of receiving, not daring to be the least bit casual or lax as he traveled through the streets.

**Sutra:At that time, because Ananda was begging in sequential order, he passed by a house of prostitution and was waylaid by a powerful artifice. By means of a mantra of the Kapila religion, formerly of the Brahma Heaven, the daughter of Matangi drew him onto an impure mat.

Commentary:At that time** Ananda was being stern and proper, honoring with propriety the method for obtaining food. Because Ananda was **begging in sequential order** - by going door to door, house to house - **he passed by a house of prostitution and was waylaid by a powerful artifice**. It was not real, but was something conjured up. **The daughter of Matangi** had urged her mother to make use of a mantra, which allegedly had come from the gods of the Brahma Heaven and had been brought down to the human realm. But it was phony; it was empty and false, so it is called an “artifice.”

Matangi is a Sanskrit name, interpreted to mean “Vulgar Lineage,” indicating that she was not honorable. Her daughter’s name was Prakriti, which is Sanskrit for “Basic Nature.”

Ananda was snared by **a mantra of the Kapila religion, formerly of the Brahma Heaven**. Matangi had learned her false mantra from members of the tawny-haired religion. In fact, the mantric device was falsely named, because it was not really a transmission from the Brahma Heaven. Its proponents just claimed it was, and in that way got people to believe in them. However, the recitation of the mantra was able to turn Ananda’s spirit and soul upside down and he fell into a stupor as if asleep, dreaming, or drunk. Without realizing what was happening he went into the house of prostitution. The mantra “which came from the Brahma Heaven,” had rendered him totally oblivious and had totally confused his self-nature.

”Basically Ananda was a sage who had been certified as having attained the first fruition. Then why was the mantra purported to have come from the Brahma Heaven able to confuse him?” you wonder.

He became confused because he had concentrated on studying the sutras and had not been attentive to samadhi-power; and so although he had attained the first fruition; his samadhi-power was still insufficient. Therefore when he encountered this kind of demon he was confused by her, and the daughter of Matangi **drew him onto an impure mat**.

Ananda was extremely handsome. His features were almost as perfect as the thirty-two fine marks of the Buddha. Ananda’s skin was snowy white and glistened like silver, sparkled like frost. Most Indians had dark complexions but Ananda’s skin was extremely soft, supple, smooth, and especially fair. That is why Matangi’s daughter was infatuated with Ananda the moment she laid eyes on him and went running to tell her mother that she wanted Ananda.

”He’s a disciple of the Buddha,” her mother said. “How can you want him? He’s a bhikshu and cannot marry. You can’t have him.”

”That doesn’t make any difference to me,” replied her daughter. “Mother, you’re going to have to think of a way to trap Ananda for me. If I can’t marry Ananda I won’t go on living,” she said obstinately.

Her desire was so overpowering that it was a matter of life and death.

”Ah,” thought Matangi, “She loves him so much. I’ll have to think of a way to do what cannot be done.” So she used the mantra, a deviant dharma from the Kapila religion, and recited until Ananda became hypnotized. He followed her in a daze like a drunken beggar, in such a stupor that he couldn’t tell east from west, or north from south. He went right into the house and followed Matangi’s daughter into her room and onto the bed.

**Sutra:With her licentious body she stroked and rubbed him until he was on the verge of destroying the precept-substance.

Commentary:**This was a dangerous spot to be in! **With her licentious body she** caressed him until **he was on the verge of destroying the precept-substance**. He still hadn’t broken it. This is an important point. When one receives the precepts one becomes endowed with a certain substance, which, if destroyed, is as serious as if your very life had been cut off. It is extremely important for people who have left the home-life not to break precepts. If precepts are broken, you might just as well die. As for Ananda, if the text said that his precept-substance was “already” destroyed, it would mean it would be all over for him, Ananda would have fallen, and in the future he would have had a great deal of difficulty in cultivating successfully.

Why did Matangi’s daughter have such a compelling attraction for Ananda? It stemmed from the fact that Ananda and Matangi’s daughter had been married to one another in five hundred former lives. Because they had been a married couple in so many former lives, as soon as she saw Ananda this time, her old habits took over, and she fell madly in love with him. Ananda had been her husband before and she was determined to have him for a husband again. Because of those seeds passed down life after life, she was now willing to sacrifice everything - even her very life - for the sake of her love for Ananda.

D4 The Tathagata compassionately rescues him.
E1 He quickly returns and speaks the mantra.

**Sutra: The Tathagata, knowing Ananda was being taken advantage of by the indecent artifice, finished the meal and immediately began his return journey. The king, great officials, elders, and laypeople followed along after the Buddha, desiring to hear the essentials of dharma.

Commentary:** Whenever the Buddha accepted an offering he always spoke the Dharma after the meal for the sake of the vegetarian host. Only after speaking the dharma would he return to the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove. But this time there were special circumstances. **The Tathagata, knowing Ananda was being taken advantage of by the indecent artifice, finished the meal and immediately began his return journey.** Knowing that Ananda had met with difficulty and was on the verge of destroying the Precept-substance, the Buddha ate quickly, and as soon as he finished he immediately returned to the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove. In fact, I imagine he did not eat very much, since his beloved disciple and cousin and personal attendant was in trouble. The Buddha thought, “Ah, my attendant is being waylaid by demons. He’s been captured by demons. How can this be?”

**The king, great officials, elders, and laypeople followed along after the Buddha, desiring to hear the essentials of the dharma.** Everyone knew that there was some important reason why the Buddha had not spoken dharma for the vegetarian host after the meal. They thought that the reason for the hasty retreat would certainly be announced, so everyone - the king, the officials, the elders, and the laypeople - followed the Buddha back to the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove. Why? Everyone had forgotten everything else but the single-minded desire to understand whatever important principle of dharma was about to be spoken. They didn’t know what had come up that was so unusual. Everyone was anxious to hear what the Buddha would say.

**Sutra:Then the World Honored One emitted a hundred rays of jeweled and fearless light from his crown. Within the light appeared a thousand-petalled precious lotus, upon which was seated a transformation-body Buddha in full-lotus posture, proclaiming a spiritual mantra.

Commentary:**Shakyamuni Buddha, **the World Honored One, emitted a hundred rays of jeweled and fearless light from his crown**. The hundreds of rays can represent the hundred realms. **Within the light appeared a thousand-petalled** jeweled **precious lotus**, which can represent the Thousand Suchnesses. These meanings can be investigated gradually. Now it is enough to understand the passage in general. **From his crown**, the crown of his head, were emitted a hundred rays of jeweled light and from these lights radiated fearless lights. The rays of “fearless lights” showed possession of a great awesome virtue. Fearing nothing, they were able to subdue all heavenly demons and externalists. No mantra whatever could withstand them. Not even one “purported to have come from the Brahma Heaven.”

The hundred rays of jeweled light also brought forth a thousand-petalled jeweled lotus, **upon which was seated a transformation-body Buddha in full-lotus posture**. In “full lotus posture” you sit with your legs crossed over one another, your feet resting on the tops of opposite thighs. There is a great deal of merit and virtue involved in sitting in full lotus.

This transformation-body Buddha was **proclaiming a spiritual mantra**. He pronounced the Shurangama Mantra. For Shakyamuni Buddha to have a transformation-body Buddha speak the mantra represents the secret cause within the secret cause, the king of kings of mantras. The Shurangama Mantra is extremely important. If you who study the Buddhadharma can learn the Shurangama Mantra in this life, you will not have been a human being in vain. If you do not learn the Shurangama Mantra, it will be like climbing a mountain made of the seven jewels - gold, silver, crystal, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, red pearl, and carnelian - and coming back down empty-handed. You arrive at the top of the mountain and you think about picking up some gold or perhaps some pearls, but then wonder if you should take silver instead. In the end you can’t decide which ones it would be best to take and so you come away without any at all. That is the situation of people who can’t memorize the Shurangama Mantra. So I hope that everyone will at the very least study hard enough so that they are able to recite it from memory. Not to speak of several weeks’ effort, it is worth several years’ effort if needed. It is extremely valuable. And this opportunity you have now to encounter it is extremely rare, very hard to come by. It is “the unsurpassed, profound, subtle, wonderful dharma.” There is nothing higher, nothing deeper. The Buddha used the Shurangama Mantra to save Ananda, who had already attained the first fruition of arhatship. Now, if you ordinary people do not rely on the Shurangama Mantra, how can you end birth and death? Therefore each of you should resolve to take my advice in this.

I will tell you a story that illustrates the merit of sitting in full lotus-posture. Once there was a bhikshu who did not cultivate, but concentrated instead on reciting sutras and repentances for the dead for money. Whenever someone died, he would accept requests to take the deceased across the sea of suffering by reciting sutras and performing repentances.

One day he was returning to the monastery after having spent the day reciting sutras for the deceased. He passed a house with a dog in the yard. The dog began to bark at him, and he overheard the wife inside the house say to her husband: “Go see who it is.” Then the bhikshu saw the husband peer out the slit in the curtain and reply, “Oh, it’s just that ghost who peddles sutras and repentances.”

He passed on by, but the words echoed in his ears. Why had that man called him a “ghost who peddles sutras and repentances”? Why hadn’t he called him a “Buddha” who peddles sutras and repentances? Or an “Immortal Sage” who peddles sutras and repentances? As he continued on his way to the monastery, it suddenly began to rain and he took shelter under a bridge. “I guess I’ll sit in meditation,” he thought, and he pulled up his legs in full-lotus posture. After he had sat for a while, two ghosts came by. When they reached the spot where he was sitting they suddenly stopped, and one said to the other, “There’s a golden pagoda! Hurry up! Let’s start bowing. The sharira (relics) of the Buddha are kept in golden pagodas! If we bow to the Buddha’s relics our offenses will soon disappear.” With that the two began to bow. After they had bowed for a while, the legs of the “ghost who peddled sutras and repentances” started to hurt, and in order to be more comfortable, he released the full lotus-posture into half-lotus, that is, with the left leg above, the right leg beneath, and the left foot resting on the right thigh. The next time the two ghosts came up from a bow they noticed something strange. “Hey,” said one to the other. “That golden pagoda just turned into a silver pagoda! Do you see that?”

”So what?” said the other. “Silver pagodas are still something special. We should keep bowing.” So the two of them kept bowing. They bowed for about half an hour or an hour, or maybe it was only twenty minutes; there was no clock, so there’s no way to know. Soon enough the bhikshu’s legs hurt again. He unfolded them and lazily stretched them out, just like some people do when they are tired of sitting in meditation. “I think I’ll lie down,” he thought. But just then the two bowing ghosts caught a glimpse of their pagoda turning into a pile of mud. “Hey! Look at that!” one cried. “Quick! Let’s clobber it.” Realizing the ghosts were about to beat him up, the bhikshu froze in fear and slipped neatly back into full lotus just in the nick of time. “Oh!” the two ghosts cried in unison. “It does have the Buddha’s relics in it! It’s going through all kinds of weird changes. One minute it’s a golden pagoda, the next a silver pagoda, and then it turns into mud. We’d better just keep bowing no matter what happens next,” and they continued non-stop until dawn.

The incident had a lasting effect on the “ghost who peddled sutras and repentances.” He sat there thinking, “If I sit in full lotus there is a golden pagoda, if I sit in half lotus there is a silver pagoda, and if I don’t sit at all there’s nothing but a pile of mud. I had better start to cultivate and stop peddling sutras and repentances.” He buried himself in the task at hand and worked diligently at his cultivation. After he had cultivated, he eventually became enlightened and was given the name Dhyana Master Gui Bi, “Pressured by Ghosts,” because if it hadn’t been for those two ghosts who were threatening to beat him up, he might have continued to procrastinate and never gotten around to cultivating.

E2 The messenger is sent and Ananda is rescued.

**Sutra:He commanded Manjushri to take the mantra and go provide protection, and, when the evil mantra was extinguished, to lend support, and to encourage Ananda and Matangi’s daughter to return to where the Buddha was.

Commentary:**It takes a person with great wisdom to rescue a stupid person. Although Ananda had certified to the first fruition of arhatship, his samadhi-power was not enough to keep him from being confused by Matangi’s false mantra. To save him, the Buddha manifested a hundred rays of jeweled light, and a thousand-petalled lotus, and a transformation-body Buddha who spoke the Shurangama Mantra. Still, Ananda was a long way off, and so the Buddha needed a member of the Sangha to take the mantra and go save Ananda. So Shakyamuni Buddha **commanded Manjushri to take the mantra and go provide protection**. He was to go to the house of prostitution, the home of Matangi, and rescue and protect Ananda. Within the Shurangama Mantra are several phrases that are specifically directed at breaking up externalist dharmas; in this its efficaciousness is unsurpassed. As soon as Manjushri went to Matangi’s house and recited the Shurangama Mantra, the evil mantra was dispelled. The “mantra purported to have come from the Brahma Heaven” was no longer efficacious. Ananda woke up.

The Bodhisattva Manjushri then needed **to lend support, and to encourage Ananda and Matangi’s daughter to return to where the Buddha was**. Ananda had been confused by the mantra-trick and had just “come to,” so he was disoriented and had no idea where he was; it was as if he had just awakened from a dream. So Manjushri Bodhisattva lent him support, took hold of him and pulled him up.

”Why did he encourage Matangi’s daughter?” you ask.

If he had not encouraged her at that time, her own life would have been in danger and perhaps his as well. She was so distraught she might have tried to kill Manjushri Bodhisattva for having taken away the one she loved so much. Had he not reassured her at that point, she would have been beside herself. Who knows what she might have done out of her jealousy?

Manjushri Bodhisattva said, “You are a very beautiful girl. I can see you are a good woman. Come along with me and we will go talk things over with the Buddha and find out if your wishes can be fulfilled. I’ll put in a good word for you. It will all work out, I’m sure.” He chose his words carefully, expediently, being discreet and tactful so as not to arouse her anger or cause her to harm or kill herself. With Manjushri supporting Ananda and encouraging Matangi’s daughter, they returned to where the Buddha was, to the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove.

From “Thus I have heard” to this point in the text is called the “preface.” The preface includes the “testimony of faith,” that is, the section that fulfills the six fulfillments, and certifies that the sutra can be believed.

The entire preface is also called the “postscript,” although it comes at the beginning of the sutra.

”Isn’t that a contradiction?” one may ask. “How can it be both a preface and a postscript?”

When the sutra was first spoken, this initial section of text did not exist. It was written by Ananda at the time the sutras were compiled, and for this reason is called the “postscript.”

The preface is also called the “general preface” because other sutras also have similar prefaces. It is called the “foreword” as well, because it is placed at the beginning of the sutra, even though it was written after the sutra was spoken.

The second part of the preface is called the “prologue.” It explains the causes and conditions involving Ananda and Matangi’s daughter that led to the speaking of this sutra.

It is important for those who study the Buddhadharma to be able to distinguish the various sections of the sutra text. In this way one can come to “deeply enter the sutra treasury.” Boring your way in you will come to have “wisdom like the sea.” In fact you should think like this: “It is I who spoke this sutra. Its principles have come forth from my heart.” If you can be like that, in such a way that the sutra and your basic substance become one, then there will be no deep and no shallow. You will no longer feel that the study of sutras is difficult, but will take it as a matter of course.

The text of the *Shurangama Sutra* is extremely well written. Of all the Chinese classics, such as the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics*, none is a finer piece of literature. I regard the *Shurangama Sutra* as the ultimate in literary texts, wonderful to the extreme. People who wish to study Chinese should not miss the opportunity to penetrate the *Shurangama Sutra* text. Anyone who does so will have a thorough foundation in the Chinese language and will be able to understand all of Chinese literature.

B2 Text proper.
C1 A complete explanation of the wonderful samadhi for accomplishing Buddhahood.
D1 Ananda requests samadhi.
E1 He regrets excessive learning and requests samadhi.

**Sutra:Ananda saw the Buddha, bowed, and wept sorrowfully, regretting that from time without beginning he had been preoccupied with erudition and had not yet perfected his strength in the Way. He respectfully and repeatedly requested an explanation of the very first expedients of the wonderful shamatha, samapatti, and dhyana, by means of which the Tathagatas of the ten directions had realized Bodhi.

Commentary:**Manjushri Bodhisattva had used the Shurangama Mantra to rescue Ananda, and after a time on the road, during which a gentle breeze probably sprang up, brushing softly against their faces and bringing Ananda awake from his dream, they reached the Jeta Grove.

**Ananda saw the Buddha, bowed, and wept sorrowfully.** His grief was extreme. Sorrow welled up from deep within him and he wept silently, out of remorse. The finest word in this section of text is the word **regretting**, because it indicates that Ananda had awakened. If he hadn’t been regretful, then upon returning to the Jeta Grove he still would not have been able to be honest about what had happened. He would have returned to where the Buddha was and acted as if nothing had happened. He would have put on a front. The very best thing about Ananda was that he didn’t put on a front. He came back, faced the Buddha and bowed, without any pretences, because he knew he had to correct his errors and change his ways. He wanted the Buddha to teach him new paths. Because of this, he was able later to realize enlightenment.

**From time without beginning** means not just this time in this present life, but many lives, many eons past, from the time Ananda very first became a person. No one could say when that was, so it is referred to as time without beginning.

**He had been preoccupied with erudition.** Life after life, time after time he had concentrated on his studies, so that he had developed “great learning and strong memory”; but he had neglected to develop, **had not yet perfected his strength in the Way**, that is his samadhi-power. His samadhi-power was very meager, extremely immature. Fortunately, Shakyamuni Buddha had rescued him, so he placed himself on the ground in obeisance, paying deference with his body and mind. **He respectfully and repeatedly** bowed over and over again, without being the least bit lazy about it.

He **requested** of Shakyamuni Buddha that the Buddha explain the principle by which **the Tathagatas of the ten directions had realized Bodhi**. He didn’t ask the Tathagatas, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions to speak; you should not misread the text at this point. If Ananda was asking the Buddhas of the ten directions to speak, what was Shakyamuni Buddha doing there? He was Shakyamuni Buddha’s disciple; would he have ignored what was right before him and gone seeking instead for some distant Buddhas of the ten directions? No; the text means that he turned to Shakyamuni Buddha and asked him to explain what doctrine the Tathagatas of the ten directions had relied on to become enlightened. Ananda didn’t know what skill he ought to develop in order to realize Buddhahood; but he had heard of three kinds of samadhi - **shamatha, samapatti, and dhyana**; so he brought them up and referred to them each as **wonderful**, in order to emphasize them.

As soon as Shakyamuni Buddha heard his request, he knew Ananda was an outsider: that he didn’t know about the samadhi for realizing Buddhahood. And what is the samadhi for the realization of Buddhahood? It is the Shurangama Samadhi. It was just because Ananda didn’t understand the Shurangama dharma-door that he proceeded to bring up a lot of arguments, as the text describes below.

**The very first expedients**. Ananda wanted to know about expedient dharma-doors for the beginner, the easiest way to start cultivating, the simplest methods of practice.

Some people have immediately become prejudiced. “Ananda concentrated on erudition and almost ended up by falling,” they say. “Obviously it is useless to study a lot. I’m going to cultivate samadhi exclusively, and not study at all.” This one-sided view is not in accord with the Middle Way. The principle of being in accord with the Middle Way is to be neither too far to the left or too far to the right, or too far in front or too far behind. Ananda was also prejudiced because he concentrated on learning and neglected samadhi. But if you concentrate exclusively on samadhi and neglect learning, your wisdom won’t develop. You must study to gain understanding, and you must also practice to gain samadhi, and then the two will be integrated. At the Buddhist lecture hall we both investigate sutras and meditate. By putting aside everything else and not letting your mind wander to the north, south, east, and west, you can concentrate your whole attention on the Buddhadharma. Don’t waste valuable time. Don’t just chatter on at random or do things which are of no benefit. You can’t make squares and circles if you don’t have a compass, and in the same way, you have to follow the rules in your daily practice. In the Chan hall, when the wooden fish is hit three times it is a signal to stop and be still. During that period no one should talk. Those who do may receive a beating from Wei Tuo Bodhisattva’s jeweled pestle.

”He hasn’t hit me yet,” you say.

He hasn’t gotten angry yet. But when he does, things get serious fast. So everyone should take care to genuinely follow the rules. When the rules are followed, there can be successful accomplishments. Don’t be so casual.

The people in this assembly are basically very well-behaved, but just in case some may have forgotten the importance of the rules I am mentioning them once again. During the period set aside for study of the *Shurangama Sutra*, all should single-mindedly apply themselves to the study of the sutra and to their meditation. If you do, I can guarantee there will be a response and you will have some accomplishment. If you do not become greatly enlightened, you will certainly gain a little enlightenment. You won’t miss out on the merit and virtue. If you are sincere and single-minded during this period of study and practice, you will certainly gain some advantages. I am not cheating you. However, if you don’t follow the rules you’ll be like the Mongolian who goes to the opera and misses out altogether. You’ve come from far away for no other reason than to study the dharma, and that makes me very happy - so much so, that no matter how hard I have to work I don’t fear the suffering. During the dharma assembly I am determined to research and explain the sutra, do everything in my power to bring the sutra out in the open for you. It is my hope that all of you will obtain the advantages to be gained from the Buddhadharma. However, although I say this, whether you listen or not is still up to you. If you chose not to listen, there is nothing I can do, because I am not you and you are not me.

You can also say that you are me and I am you. How? We are connected to one another in that we breathe the same air. Thought of in this way, everyone becomes one identical substance, and so you shouldn’t obstruct me and I shouldn’t obstruct you. Everyone investigates the Buddhadharma together and becomes enlightened together. If there is one who has not yet become enlightened, then I will not have fulfilled my responsibility.

Pay no attention to whether the Buddhadharma seems deep or shallow. You should resolve: “If I understand, I will investigate further, and if I don’t understand, I want to investigate even more.” Understanding a little is a lot better than not understanding anything at all. You should say to yourself: “If I understand one word of the sutra the dharma master is lecturing, that’s one word which I never understood before, and that makes it worthwhile; I’ve obtained advantage.” The value of that single word is inexpressibly great.

Why was Ananda unable to resist the mantra “formerly of the Brahma Heaven,” since he had after all reached the first stage of arhatship? It was because in the past, in cultivating samadhi, he had used his conscious mind. The conscious mind is subject to production and extinction and is not ultimate. A samadhi which is developed by using the thought-processes of the conscious mind, such as the “stop and contemplate” method of the Tian Tai teaching, involves the eighth consciousness. It does not address the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished. If one bases one’s work on the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished, one can cultivate a samadhi which is neither produced nor extinguished. That is a genuine samadhi, one that cannot be moved by outside forces.

But Ananda used only his conscious mind in whatever he did. For instance, when he listened to sutras, he used his mind to remember the principles the Buddha spoke. But the conscious mind which remembered the principles cannot lead to the fundamental solution. So when Ananda encountered a demonic state, he failed to recognize it.

It is essential for people who cultivate the Way to be able to recognize their environment. If you can recognize states when they arise, you won’t be influenced by them. They won’t move you. Samadhi-power can be victorious over any state whether it be good, bad, agreeable, or disagreeable. In the midst of them all, you can remain “thus, thus, unmoving, completely and eternally bright.” That is genuine samadhi-power.

If happy situations make you happy and sad events make you sad, you’re being influenced by states. If you keep jumping from joy to anger, to sorrow, to happiness, you’re being influenced by states. Not to be influenced by external states is to be like a mirror: when something appears it is reflected, when it passes there is stillness. The basic substance of the mirror is always bright. It cannot be defiled. To have samadhi-power and not to move is to have genuine wisdom, thorough understanding. It is very important to understand this.

”Shamatha” is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean “still and pure.” However, it is a stillness and purity which is forced. One attains a kind of samadhi by deliberately forcing the mind to have samadhi-power and not to strike up false thinking. It is not the ultimate samadhi. It is merely a kind of expedient device cultivated by those of the small vehicle. At the very beginning of his teaching, Shakyamuni Buddha taught this method to those of the two vehicles.

”Samapatti,” also Sanskrit, is interpreted to mean “contemplation and illumination” of such dharmas as the twelve links of conditioned causation and the four truths.

”Dhyana,” also Sanskrit, is interpreted to mean “thought-cultivation” or “still consideration.” One uses the mind to trace the coming and going of thoughts, in much the same way as in the cultivation of “stopping and contemplating.” The Tian Tai school lists three stoppings which relate to the three contemplations: empty, false, and the middle. That teaching is basically a good one, but it is nothing compared to the Shurangama Samadhi. Dhyana can be ultimate or non-ultimate. Those of the small vehicle cultivate using the conscious mind; they make discriminations using the conscious mind. Since the conscious mind is subject to production and extinction, its use will not lead to the genuine solid samadhi of the Buddha.

”What should we cultivate?” you wonder.

The Shurangama Samadhi.

”How do we cultivate the Shurangama Samadhi?”

The sutra text will gradually make that clear. If you attend to the explanation of the sutra and understand it, you will know how to achieve the Shurangama Samadhi. You won’t be left in a daze. At present you don’t know where to begin and are like someone standing in a dense forest on the side of a mountain while trying to see what the face of the mountain looks like. As the poet Su Dong Po put it:

I can’t tell what Lu mountain really looks like
Because I myself am standing on the mountain.

If he had walked away from it, though, he could have seen. Now we are within the Shurangama Samadhi; you are boring your way into the Shurangama Samadhi and if you continue to progress you will gradually come to see it clearly. Then you will know you have obtained a real gem. You’ll be able to climb the jeweled mountain, grab two big fistfuls of gold, fill your arms with the gems and go back down the mountain. Even if you continually take from it, the supply will never be exhausted. It will be an endless supply, more than you could ever use in a lifetime. In the future you will be able to achieve the Shurangama enlightenment and then go on to teach and transform living beings.

**Sutra:At that time Bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, great Arhats, pratyekas, and others from the ten directions, were also present. Pleased at the opportunity to listen, they withdrew silently to their seats to receive the sagely instruction.

Commentary::That time** is when Ananda asked Shakyamuni Buddha to explain how the Tathagatas of the ten directions had realized Bodhi, that is, right enlightenment. It has already been mentioned that **Bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges** were present, so this refers to yet more Bodhisattvas. The Ganges River is miles wide and its sands are as fine as flour, like fine motes of dust. During a storm, the sands and stones fly about, as dangerous as desert dust-storms. Now, how many grains of such fine sand would you estimate there to be in a river some 15 miles wide? Could you figure it? Probably even the best mathematician would be unable to come up with a number. Since the Ganges’ sands are unreckonable, they are used to represent a non-existent number, a number beyond all calculations.

A Bodhisattva, an “enlightened being,” is also called “a living being with a great Way-mind.” No matter how badly people may act towards him, he doesn’t hold it against them. He absolutely never becomes irritated, never loses his temper. His Way-mind is firm and vast. A Bodhisattva is also called a “dedicated lord,” since he has already resolved to be a Bodhisattva.

**The ten directions.** The [*Amitabha Sutra*](http://cttbusa.org/amitabha/amitabha.htm) speaks of the Buddhas of the six directions, but it does not mention the ten directions. The six are north, east, south, and west, up, and down. The additional four are northeast, southeast, northwest, and southwest. I say, though, that basically there isn’t even one direction. The earth is round, so what directions can there be? But the Buddhist sutras speak of ten directions, and besides, the “round” I speak of is not yet an established fact; so don’t rely on what I say. As I see it, the world is transformed from a single source; everything is within the great light treasury, the Tathagata store, where there is no north, south, east, west, or the four intermediate points, or up or down. That is the way I see it, but perhaps it is not right.

There were, not little arhats, but **great Arhats**, whose Way was great. It does not mean that they were physically big, that they were particularly tall. It means that their dharma-nature was great, the power of their dharma was great, their cultivation of virtue was great.

Arhat has three meanings:

1. Worthy of offerings.

They were worthy of the offerings of gods and people. In the causal ground a bhikshu “begs for his food” and as a result, as an arhat, he is “worthy of offerings.”

2. Killer of thieves.

The Buddha taught people not to kill. Isn’t killing a violation of precepts? No, not in this case, because the thieves referred to are not external thieves, but the thieves within you.

“What are the thieves within us?” you wonder.

There are the thieves of ignorance, the thieves of affliction, and the six thieves - the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Unbeknownst to you, they rob you. You don’t realize it, but when your eyes look at things, your essential energies were originally full, but once you start looking at a lot of things the thieves which are your eyes steal your valuable treasures. When you listen things all the time, then your hearing-nature disperses and your vital energies are stolen away. You shouldn’t say, “My eyes are my best friend and my ears always help me out, my nose smells things and my tongue distinguishes tastes - they are all very helpful.”

No. These six thieves steal your unsurpassed true treasures. They plunder the wealth of your household without your even realizing it. You’ve got a thief for a neighbor but don’t even realize it; you say, “Don’t blame him for stealing my things!” This is a very, very important point I am making. Don’t be mistaken and think I am just joking. If you hadn’t lost these things, you would have realized Buddhahood long ago. Look into it, think it over. You feel you haven’t lost anything? Well, I know that the things you have lost are priceless treasures no money could buy. You’ve lost them and you still think everything is just fine. “My eyes can see so far - clearer than anyone else’s,” you say and think that this is good. But the more clearly you see the more essential energy is lost.

At this point you say, “Dharma master, one of your lectures is more than enough. You haven’t said anything that has the least bit of principle to it.”

Since you haven’t yet understood what I say, of course you are going to think it lacks principle. Wait until you understand and then you will know that what I say is genuine principle.

3. Not born.

Not born, arhats are also not extinguished; they are not subject to production and extinction. They have attained the patience of the non-production of dharmas. They do not have to undergo birth and death again. That is, they have “done what had to be done and do not undergo any further existence.” They will not fall into the three realms, although they haven’t attained anuttarasamyaksambodhi, the unsurpassed proper and equal right enlightenment.

In the Sutra in Forty-two Sections the Buddha said,

”Be careful not to believe your own mind: your mind cannot be believed. Once you have attained arhatship, then you can believe your own mind”

”Why can’t one believe one’s own mind?” you ask.

Because your mind is false thinking, and if you believe false thinking you will do false things; if you do false things, you must undergo a false birth and death. If you don’t believe the false thoughts, if you don’t trust your own mind, then you can avoid the false birth and death.

”When can one believe one’s own mind?”

When you attain the fourth stage of arhatship you can believe your own mind. Until then you shouldn’t choose to listen to yourself instead of to the advice of a good and wise advisor. The right thing to do is to listen to the instructions of a good and wise one.

**Pratyekas**, pratyekabuddhas - those enlightened to conditions and solitarily enlightened ones - **and others** were also present. **Pleased at the opportunity to listen, they withdrew silently to their seats to receive the sagely instructions**. There were many, many more beings as well, not just one or two, who all wanted to hear the sound of the dharma the Buddha was speaking, the wonderful sagely instructions, the doctrines of the holy ones. They really liked to listen, and they sat silently to one side to hear the Buddha speak.