**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 1**

**CHAPTER 5**

**The Way to Shamatha**

D2 The Tathagata replies about Shamatha.
E1 He explains the wonderful samadhi from beginning to end.
F1 He explains the general name of the Buddha’s samadhi causing Ananda to know the causes cultivated and the fruition obtained by all Buddhas.

**Sutra:In the midst of the great assembly, the World Honored One then extended his golden arm, rubbed Ananda’s crown, and said to Ananda and the great assembly, “There is a samadhi called the King of the Foremost Shurangama at the Great Buddha’s Summit Replete with the Myriad Practices; it is a path wonderfully adorned and the single door through which the Tathagatas of the ten directions gained transcendence. You should now listen attentively.” Ananda bowed down to receive the compassionate instruction humbly.

Commentary:** Originally this section appeared later in the text, but the elder Dharma Master Yuan Ying saw that it did not fit well there and so he moved it to this place. I have also looked into this several times and I agree that this section of text should appear here. It does not seem appropriate in the other place; it does not tie with what proceeds and follows it there. Here it fits in sequence.

**Then** means when the great Arhats and the great Bodhisattvas as many as the sands in the Ganges River had all assembled from the ten directions, wishing to receive the sagely instruction, and when Ananda had implored the Buddha to explain the initial expedients of cultivation by which the Tathagatas of the ten directions had attained wonderful shamatha, wonderful samapatti, and wonderful dhyana: it was then that **the World Honored One extended his golden arm** and **rubbed Ananda’s crown**.

The Buddha’s arm was naturally golden; it isn’t that he had gilded it. In Buddhism, rubbing the crown of the head represents compassionate loving protection for living beings. Now the Buddha, too, speaks of love, but this is not the ordinary love; rather it is a compassionate, universally pervasive love which protects all beings and causes all their demon-obstacles to disappear. It is not the selfish, emotional love which most people refer to. Take careful note of this point.

Of all the kinds of love in the world, the strongest is parents’ love for their children. No matter how bad a child may act toward his parents, they’ll still forgive him. "He’s just a child,” they’ll say. “He doesn’t understand things.” Even when a small child strikes his father or scolds his mother, the parents simply regard it with amusement, and don’t feel that he has done anything wrong.

”Why are parents like that?” you ask.

Because they love their children so much. The love of parents for their children is deeper and fiercer than the love between husband and wife.

I admire Americans in this respect. By the time their children are eighteen years old they are allowed to stand on their own. Sometimes parents don’t pay any attention to them after that age. That is fine; it is very good to raise sons and daughters to be independent of their parents. The only problem is that the children are often not experienced enough at that age to exercise mature judgement and so they easily get off to a wrong start. They are easily blown over by the winds of current trends or are pulled into the water by friends who are not upright, and once they have landed in the water it is not easy for them to get back out by themselves. As a result, at the present time in America there are many young people who don’t recognize their country, who don’t know the meaning of a home, even to the point that they don’t even know what they themselves are all about. From morning to night they take LSD, marijuana and other drugs until they lose all clarity and are totally confused from dawn to dusk. If you ask them what they do for their country they say, “What does it have to do with me?” If you inquire about their family they say, “I don’t have any.” You might say they have left home, and yet of course they haven’t, although they claim to have no home. They’re caught in a total vacuum and that to me is most pitiful.

The Buddha’s loving protection for all living beings is like that of parents for their children yet stronger. Rubbing the crown is an expression of that loving protection. Just as an acupuncture needle revitalizes your blood and energy, so, as he rubs your crown, the Buddha’s hand emits light which dispels all the darkness within you. In this way he relieves you of all evil and increases your good roots.

”I’ve missed the opportunity,” you lament. “If only I had been born when the Buddha was in the world, I could have asked the Buddha to rub my crown so my evil would be eradicated and my good roots increased.”

Who told you not to be born at the time when the Buddha was in the world? Who told you to be born now? You can’t blame anyone but yourself. And regret is of no use. Don’t be regretful. You can’t blame other people. You can’t blame heaven. And you can’t blame the Buddha. We have been born now, so now we should study the Buddhadharma. If we are sincere enough the Buddha will be moved and will come and rub our crowns in expression of his loving protection. Although the Buddha has entered nirvana, his pure dharma body pervades all places. You should not think that the Buddha has left us. The Buddha is always with us; it’s just that we cannot see him. All our daily activities - walking, standing, sitting, lying down, eating, getting dressed - take place within the Buddha’s dharma body. So we are always with the Buddha. It is just that the eyes of ordinary people haven’t the spiritual penetration to see the Buddha.

The Buddha rubbed Ananda’s crown **and said to Ananda and the great assembly, “There is a samadhi called the King of the Foremost Shurangama at the Great Buddha’s Summit Replete with the Myriad Practices; it is a path wonderfully adorned and the single door through which the Tathagatas of the ten directions gained transcendence.”** Not only Ananda but everyone in the great assembly as well - the great bhikshus, great Bodhisattvas, the king, elders, and laypeople - was instructed by the Buddha in the ultimately durable king of samadhis, which includes within it all the samadhis of all the myriad methods of cultivation. All Buddhas of all places have reached Buddhahood along this wonderful, splendid path and through this one door.

**You should now listen attentively.** “Listen carefully. Pay attention,” the Buddha told Ananda. “Don’t be nonchalant when you listen to me speak sutras. Take all of your essential energy and pour it into your ears. Don’t strike up false thoughts. Don’t sit there during the sutra lecture and be thinking about running out on the streets to see what is happening.”

**Ananda bowed down to receive the compassionate instruction humbly.** When Ananda heard the Buddha say that, he stood up and then bowed, and humbly awaited the holy teaching. He remained kneeling ready to listen to what the Buddha was about to say about the Shurangama, the king of samadhis.

F2 He explains the path of Shamatha, causing Ananda to awaken to the secret cause and have a great blossoming forth of complete understanding.
G1 He destroys upside-down thinking by speaking of the empty Tathagata store.
H1 The Tathagata smashes the false and reveals the true.
I1 He casts out and destroys the false mind to which Ananda attaches by opening the way to Shamatha.
J1 He establishes that Ananda grasps at the mind.
K1 He asks him about his resolve based on grasping at the appearance he saw.

**Sutra: The Buddha said to Ananda, “You and I are of the same family and share the affection of a natural relationship. At the time of your initial resolve, what were the outstanding characteristics which you saw in my dharma that caused you to suddenly cast aside the deep kindness and love found in the world?”

Commentary:** Ananda waited humbly to receive the Buddha’s compassionate instruction. But first the Buddha questioned him about his reasons for leaving the home-life.

**The Buddha said to Ananda, “You and I are of the same family and share the affection of a natural relationship.”** Ananda and the Buddha were paternal first cousins. The Buddha was saying, “You and I are like brothers.” One speaks of the “affection of a natural relationship” because in the world, natural relationships take precedent over everything else. Such relationships form a natural cycle. After being a son or daughter you become a father or mother and then you become a grandfather or grandmother, and if you are filial to your father and mother, your children will be filial to you. If you aren’t filial to your parents, your sons and daughters won’t be filial to you. It is said:

Of all the kinds of good practices
Filial piety is the first.
Of all the myriad evils,
Licentiousness is the worst.

In China, filial feeling is considered the root of goodness, its most fundamental form. There are twenty-four paragons of filial virtue in Chinese history, among whom some of the most notable were Tan Xiang, Meng Zhong, and Wang Xiang.

Tan Xiang’s father and mother were sick and wanted some sweet melon to eat, of a kind grown in northern China. However, it was winter and the snow was heavy on the ground, so how could there be any melons? Tan Xiang planted a melon seed in the frozen earth, stretched out on top of it to warm the ground, and began to cry. “How can I get this melon to grow quickly so I can harvest it for my parents?” he lamented. He cried and cried until suddenly something very strange happened. It’s not certain whether it was a response evoked from a Bodhisattva or from a Buddha or from a ghost or spirit, but right then and there a melon grew, blossomed, and bore fruit for Tan Xiang to harvest and carry home to his parents, a miraculous response to his one true thought of sincere filial regard. So it’s said, “Tan Xiang cried for melons.”

Meng Zhong’s parents wanted some bamboo shoots to eat, and unable to find any, he began to weep. He wept until he suddenly saw tender bamboo shoot sprouting in the spots where his tears had fallen. Such strange events are incomprehensible. Don’t try to use your thinking mind to figure them out. “Meng Zhong’s tears sprouted the bamboo.”

In the dead of winter, Wang Xiang’s parents both fell ill and wanted some carp to eat. Wang Xiang didn’t have any money to buy fish, and all the waters were frozen over, so he opened his clothing and lay down on the ice. In northern China the ice gets very thick in the winter, but his warm skin melted the ice through. It was his plan to fish for a carp through the hole, but suddenly a carp jumped out of the hole all by itself. Wang Xiang hurried home with it and told his parents what had happened. “We won’t eat the carp,” his parents decided, “because it is probably the son or grandson of the Dragon King who sent it to us.” Although they didn’t eat the carp, their illness was cured nevertheless. “Wang Hsiang lay down to catch a carp.”

True filial conduct can move heaven. Sons and daughters should pay particular attention to the practice of filial piety. The great Emperor Shun of China was so filial that elephants were moved to plow for him and birds did his weeding.

**At the time of your initial resolve, what were the outstanding characteristics which you saw in my dharma that caused you to suddenly cast aside the deep kindness and love found in the world?** The Buddha asked Ananda what first made him decide to renounce worldly love and leave the home-life; what good states of mind did he experience that led to his resolve.

In this world the kindness of parents is very great and the love between couples is particularly intense. If people could transform the love which exists between married couples into love for the study and practice of the Buddhadharma, then there wouldn’t be anyone who didn’t realize Buddhahood. Unfortunately, most people can’t do that. If you can, that is inconceivably fine.

What made Ananda pay no further attention to his parent’s deep kindness or his wife’s emotional love? What made him totally disregard everything except following the Buddha and leaving the home-life?

**Sutra: Ananda said to the Buddha, “I saw the Tathagata’s thirty-two characteristics, which were so supremely wonderful, so incomparable, that his entire body had a shimmering transparence just like that of crystal.

Commentary: ”**Speak up! Quickly!” the Buddha said. “Don’t think about it, just tell me straight out about what made you decide to leave home.”

Since he was supposed to speak plainly, **Ananda said to the Buddha, “I saw the Tathagata’s thirty-two characteristics.”** From the invisible crown on the top of his head down to his level, well-proportioned feet, thirty-two major and eighty minor characteristics adorn the Buddha’s body.

”These thirty-two characteristics were **so supremely wonderful, so incomparable**, finer than anything I’d ever seen,” Ananda said. “Nothing in the world can compare to the wondrous adornment of your appearance, Buddha.”

The Buddha’s reward body, **his entire body had a shimmering transparence just like that of crystal**.

**Sutra:”I often thought to myself that these characteristics cannot be born of desire and love. Why? The vapors of desire are coarse and murky. From foul and putrid intercourse comes a turbid mixture of pus and blood which cannot give off such a magnificent, pure, and brilliant concentration of purple-golden light. And so I thirstily gazed upward, followed the Buddha, and let the hair fall from my head.”

Commentary:**When Ananda **often thought to** himself **that these characteristics cannot be born of desire and love**, he used his ordinary discriminating consciousness, his ordinary mind which is subject to production and extinction. How, he thought, could the thirty-two special characteristics of the Buddha be born from emotional, lustful, desire and thoughts of love? **The vapors of desire are coarse and murky. From foul and putrid intercourse comes a turbid mixture of pus and blood.** Men and women have intercourse and think it is good, but it actually gives off vapors which are extremely rancid. We can’t rely on our bodies born from the desire of men and women to **give off such a magnificent, pure, and brilliant concentration of purple-golden light**, the color of distant mountains, which constantly illumines the Buddha’s body.

Thinking this, Ananda **thirstily gazed upward, followed the Buddha, and let the hair fall from** his **head**. Ananda forsook one kind of love, his emotional love for his family, and took up another kind: he fell in love with the Buddha’s appearance. And that is the reason Ananda left the home-life.

Right here is where Ananda made his mistake. He didn’t leave home out of a genuine desire to cultivate the Way and after he left home he concentrated too heavily on studying the sutras. Earlier, I said that you should change the love which exists between married couples into a love for the Buddhadharma. But that doesn’t mean that merely by love alone you can put an end to birth and death.

”What must be done?” you ask.

You need to genuinely cultivate the Way. You have to be mindful of what you are doing at all times and in all places. You must never forget for even a moment to practice and uphold the Buddhadharma. Early in the morning and late at night you should be studying the Shurangama Sutra, sitting in meditation, and listening to the sutra lectures. Don’t have false thinking and don’t talk so much, since neither can help you at all in your study of the sutra or your investigation of Chan. You should stake your very lives on the work and sacrifice everything else in order to study Buddhism. Then the understanding you gain will enable you to be genuinely wise and truly intelligent.

But since Ananda was solely concerned with loving the Buddha, he didn’t cultivate samadhi. He thought (as he confesses in the text), “The Buddha is my older cousin. When the time comes the Buddha will give me samadhi power.” He didn’t realize that no one could stand in for him, in body or in mind. Ananda was very intelligent, probably more intelligent than any of us, but when he concentrated on studying the sutras at the expense of cultivating samadhi, he was too smart for his own good. He mastered the words but not the substance. He could remember all the dharma the Buddha had spoken and never got one word of it wrong, but without any samadhi-power, he fell under the spell of the Brahma Heaven mantra of Matangi’s daughter.

Instead of imitating the Buddha’s wisdom, his awakening, and his Way-virtue, Ananda just modeled himself on the Buddha’s appearance. In past lives he was probably attached to appearances, and so he concentrated on the superficial aspect of things. Although he remembered the sutras the Buddha spoke, he didn’t pay a lot of attention to what they said. He was more concerned with the Buddha’s appearance to the point that if on any given day he just saw the Buddha, that was enough to make him happy.

Anyone who wants to obtain genuine samadhi power must first cast love aside. But to replace love with hate is another mistake. “I don’t love anything,” you say. “I despise whoever I see. Stay away from me! I want to be alone. I want to cultivate by myself.” With this attitude, you’ll never obtain samadhi. You must neither hate nor love. It should be as if there were no difference between you and other people. Everyone is equal. If you are one with and equal to other people, who is there to love? Who is there to hate? No one.

”I can’t manage that,” you say. “That’s hard work.”

If you can work hard, then you can obtain what is true. If you don’t work hard, you won’t obtain it. Follow the teachings, and don’t listen to your own thoughts about it. The ordinary mind is the Way.

Because Ananda liked the Buddha’s adorned appearance, he was able to reject the deep compulsion for worldly kindness and love and let the hair fall from his head. When the Buddha was in the world, those who left home under him did not have to shave their heads. The Buddha simply said, “Good man, you are now renouncing worldly life and leaving home. Let your beard and hair fall of itself and let you be robed in the kashaya.” As soon as the Buddha said this the bhikshu’s hair and beard would fall out, because the Buddha used his spiritual penetrations to cause it to fall. Now that the Buddha has entered nirvana we have to receive the precepts at a precept-platform, but when the Buddha was in the world one became possessed of the precept substance when he spoke those few words, and one was robed in the precept sash.

In China the precept-platform used to be three years long. But three years eventually proved too long, so a scientific method was adopted to speed up the process so that one could receive the precepts in fifty-three days. Now some places transmit the precepts in eighteen days, and there are even places that will do it in a week. Now from mechanization we’ve advanced to electronics, to the point that in Hong Kong on Ta Yu mountain there are places where the precepts are transmitted in three days’ time. Actually, a three-day precept-platform is not in accord with dharma.

K2 He points out that all living beings have a misconception.

**Sutra:The Buddha said, “Very good, Ananda. You should all know that all living beings are continually born and continually die, simply because they do not know the everlasting true mind, the bright substance of the pure nature. Instead they engage in false thinking. It has been so since time without beginning. Their thoughts are not true, and so the wheel keeps turning.

Commentary: The Buddha said, “Very good, Ananda.”** The Buddha encourages Ananda, telling him he has done a very good thing to resolve to become a bhikshu. Then he addresses the entire assembly, the great bhikshus, great Arhats, great Bodhisattvas, and all the people present, saying that they **should all know that all living beings are continually born and continually die -** birth and death are undergone in a continuous succession which never ceases, and we leave behind a pile of bones as large as a mountain. Birth and death; death and birth; birth and death. Where did you come from, and where are you going? You don’t know. You are dragged about by your karmic conditions, your karmic obstacles. Where will you be born next? Where were you before? You don’t even know how you got here and you don’t know where you will go after you die.

“Why is there birth and death?” you ask.

Because you don’t understand, **do not know the everlasting** true mind which does not move or waver, which is not produced or extinguished, which is not defiled or pure, and to which there is nothing added or taken away. Because this mind does not move or waver it is called “everlasting.” Because there is nothing to be added or taken away from it, it is called “true.”

Merely to know of the true mind is not enough; you must also recognize **the bright substance of the pure nature**. This is your own self-nature, your dharma-nature. It is clear and pure, and its brilliance pervades and illumines everything everywhere. But you aren’t aware of it; you’ve forgotten it. It is like a bright pearl hidden in your clothing.

The Dharma Flower Sutra tells of a wealthy man whose son was unhappy at home and ran away. But just before he left, his parents, who feared their son would end up penniless and become a vagrant sleeping in the streets, secretly sewed a pearl that grants all wishes into the youth’s clothing. The son left, and as predicted soon ended up a drifter. But he didn’t realize that a priceless pearl was sewn in his clothing, so he couldn’t take advantage of the benefit it would provide him. The bright substance of your everlasting pure nature, your true, unchanging mind, is like the youth’s priceless pearl: since you are unaware of it, you can’t use it to good advantage. **Instead** you **engage in false thinking. It has been so since time without beginning**. You use the conscious mind, which is subject to production and extinction. Its **thoughts are not true**, but it takes control of you and makes you murky and confused; it spins you around and pulls you into the mire. Since your actions are based on it, **the wheel keeps turning** in a perpetual cycle of birth and death. But if your false thinking is cast out and exhausted once and for all and no more is produced, and you recognize your true mind, your births and deaths will cease.

### The False Consciousness is Without a Location

J2 He actually destroys the false mind.
K1 The Tathagata thoroughly refutes three points of confusion.
L1 His refutation that the false consciousness is without a location.
M1 He instructs that Ananda should reply to the teaching with a straightforward mind.

**Sutra:”Now you wish to investigate the unsurpassed Bodhi and actually discover your nature. You should answer my questions with a straightforward mind, because that is exactly the way the Tathagatas of the ten directions escaped birth and death. Their minds were all straightforward, and since their minds and words were consistently that way, from the beginning, through the intermediate stages to the end, they were never in the least evasive.

Commentary:**The Vimalakirti Sutra says, “The straightforward mind is the field of enlightenment.” And thus the Buddha instructs Ananda: **Now you wish to investigate the unsurpassed Bodhi and actually discover your nature. You should answer my questions with a straightforward mind.** “Don’t think about it,” he says, “don’t use false thinking to try to figure out how to answer me correctly. Don’t approach it as if you were in combat with me and must figure out what maneuver you should make to defeat me, as if this were the martial arts where one must decide how to counter-attack.” The Buddha was concerned that if Ananda tried to answer in a roundabout manner, it would be impossible to arrive at true principle.

Why is the straightforward mind the field of enlightenment? At the point when you have not yet given rise to a first thought, that is your true mind, your Way-mind. This is the state of “primary thought,” the primary truth that exists prior to the spoken word. As soon as you begin thinking that is to say, as soon as you strike up false thinking, it is no longer your true mind at work. It is your conscious mind which is full of “second thoughts.” Instead of speaking up directly, and using your straightforward mind to express yourself, you start thinking about it: “Ah, I shouldn’t say that; if I say that I’ll be wrong. I should say this.” But then you think about it again and change your mind again.

When you speak, use your primary thought. Why? **Because that is exactly the way the Tathagatas of the ten directions escaped birth and death.** There is a verse about the Chinese character xin, “mind,” which goes:

Three small dots like a cluster of stars,
And a hook shaped like a crescent moon.
Beget animals with fur and horns,
Yet perfection of Buddhahood comes from it too.

The ten dharma realms are not beyond a single thought of the mind. Your thoughts can send you not only into the animal realm, but into Buddhahood as well. Not only are Buddhas made from the mind, ghosts are creations of the mind, and so are gods, arhats, and Bodhisattvas. For instance, you are now studying the Buddhadharma, investigating the Shurangama Sutra without fear of whatever difficulties may arise. This is because you repeatedly planted a single indestructible seed of thought into the field of your mind in countless former lives. A Bodhi-seed has taken root so that now you are studying the Buddhadharma. Of course this single thought of the true mind has been helped along by the conscious mind, which thought over and over, “Should I study the Buddhadharma or not?” You kept sawing the issue back and forth until finally you cut through it.

**Their minds were all straightforward, and since their minds and words were consistently that way.** The Chinese characters ru shi ”that way” refer specifically to the straightforward mind and do not have the same meaning as when they occurred in the opening sentence of the sutra where ru shi means “thus” in “Thus I have heard.”

**From the beginning, through the intermediate stages to the end.** “The end” refers to wonderful enlightenment, the achievement of Buddhahood. “The beginning” refers to the stage of dry wisdom, which precedes the ten faiths. These positions will be discussed later in the text. “The intermediate stages” are the long period of cultivation between the stage of dry wisdom and the achievement of Buddhahood, through the various stages of Bodhisattvahood to equal enlightenment and then wonderful enlightenment. Through all that time the Buddhas of the past **were never in the least evasive** and used only their straightforward minds. And so they became Buddhas.

Ananda would not use his straight mind to answer the questions, but would answer in round-about ways, making it impossible to arrive at any true principles. So the Buddha first wanted to explain to him clearly that he should give straight answers and not be muddled about it. “Now I am speaking essential dharma-doors for you,” said the Buddha, “I’m explaining how to actually discover your nature, the initial doctrines concerning the realization of Buddhahood, so you can’t be casual or do a lot of hedging when you answer me. You must use your straightforward mind to answer me.”

M2 He asks Ananda about his ability to see and his ability to love.

**Sutra: ”Ananda, I now ask you: at the time of your initial resolve, which arose in response to the Tathagata’s thirty-two characteristics, what was it that saw those characteristics and who delighted in them?”

Commentary:**The Buddha again questions Ananda: **Ananda, I now ask you: at the time of your initial resolve.** In making his decision to cultivate the Way, when Ananda used his conscious mind to think about the Buddha’s appearance, **the Tathagata’s thirty-two characteristics,** Ananda was taking advantage of the situation. This is the meaning of **in response to**. So the Buddha asks: **What was it that saw those characteristics and who delighted in them?

Sutra:Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, this is the way I experienced the delight: I used my mind and eyes. Because my eyes saw the Tathagata’s outstanding characteristics, my mind gave rise to delight. That is why I became resolved and wished to removed myself from birth and death.”

Commentary: Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, this is the way I experienced the delight: I used my mind and eyes.”** Most people would say that this was correct, that he used his eyes and mind to see the Buddha. But as the sutra text continues you will come to find out this is a mistake.

**Because my eyes saw the Tathagata’s outstanding characteristics, my mind gave rise to delight.** I used my eyes to look at the Buddha’s thirty-two major and eighty minor characteristics and in my mind love arose. What was it I loved? I saw the Buddha’s characteristics and adornments were immaculately pure, not at all filthy like bodies born from love and desire. **That is why I became resolved and wished to removed myself from birth and death.** I wanted to follow the Buddha, leave the home-life, and cultivate the Way. The history of my leaving home is like that.” That is how he answered Shakyamuni Buddha’s question.

M3 He asks Ananda where his mind and eyes are.

**Sutra: The Buddha said to Ananda, “It is as you say, that experience of delight actually occurs because of your mind and eyes. If you do not know where your mind and eyes are, you will not be able to conquer the wearisome dust.

Commentary:**Ananda told the Buddha that the reason he decided to leave the home-life was because he saw the Buddha’s supreme characteristics and in his mind he loved them.

**The Buddha said to Ananda, “It is as you say, that experience of delight actually occurs because of your mind and eyes.”** Nonetheless, do you know where your mind is? Do you know if your eyes have the ability to see? Do you know where your eyes are?

”Those kind of questions are totally senseless,” you object. “His eyes were in his face and his mind in his body. Anybody knows that.”

But that’s not your true mind. Nor is that genuine seeing. Behind the Buddha’s questions lies the wisdom of the Tathagata. **If you do not know where your mind and eyes are, you will not be able to conquer the wearisome dust.** The “dust” means defilement, and “wearisome” means disturbing. The dust disturbs your mind, and it troubles your nature, so that you can’t change your false thinking into your true mind. It’s just as when two armies clash, and one becomes the victor. You are the victor if you are able to conquer the dust, that is, if you are able to cut off the road to birth and death.

**Sutra:”For example, when a king’s country is invaded by thieves and he sends out his troops to suppress and banish them, the troops must know where the thieves are.

Commentary:** The Buddha then presents an analogy: **For example, when a king’s country is invaded by thieves** who wish to seize the land, **he sends out his troops to suppress and banish them,** to quell them and drive them out. But the troops he sends **must know where the thieves are.** In the same way, the reason you cannot put an end to the beginningless eons of birth and death is because you do not know where your mind and eyes are.

**Sutra: ”It is the fault of your mind and eyes that you flow and turn. I am now asking you specifically about your mind and eyes: where are they now?”

Commentary:** The more the Buddha says the less principle there is in it! “I will tell you further that **it is the fault of your mind and eyes that you flow and turn**. Why do you get born and die? What causes you to flow and turn in birth and death, revolving endlessly on the turning wheel of the six paths? Your mind and eyes are to blame. Your mind and eyes are at fault for making you undergo birth and death and rendering you incapable of obtaining liberation. Since they are to blame, **I am now asking you specifically about your mind and eyes: where are they now?** Speak up quickly!” the Buddha exhorts Ananda.

M4 The seven places which are attached to are all non-existent.
N1 Ananda attaches to the mind as being in the body.
O1 Ananda brings up the ten kinds of beings as all alike reckoning the mind as inside.

**Sutra:Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, all the ten kinds of living beings in the world alike maintain that the conscious mind dwells within the body; and as I regard the Tathagata’s blue lotus-flower eyes, they too are on the Buddha’s face.

Commentary:**In this section of the text Ananda has not answered with a straightforward mind. He’s being evasive. When Ananda was asked by the Buddha, “Where is your mind? Where are your eyes?” he was at a loss and didn’t know what the best answer was. Still, he had to speak, so he sized up the situation and said: **World Honored One.** I believe at this point Ananda was speaking in a very soft voice. Why? Because he wasn’t sure of himself. He didn’t know if he was right or not. He just guessed based on what he knew; he was hesitant, on the verge of speaking and yet not daring to do so.

He brought up **all the ten kinds of living beings**. These will be discussed later so we will not explain them here. They include those born from wombs, those born from eggs, those born from moisture, those born by transformation, those with thought, and so forth as listed in the *Vajra Sutra*. Basically, there are twelve kinds of living beings, but here the kind without form and the kind without thought are omitted.

So Ananda said in a soft voice, “All of the ten kinds of living beings **in the world alike maintain that the conscious mind dwells within the body**.” The “conscious mind” is the mind subject to birth and death, the discriminating, calculating mind. Ananda doesn’t mention himself. He talks about the ten kinds of living beings. He didn’t talk about himself for fear he might somehow be different from other living beings. So he says, “All the ten kinds of living beings are like that, it’s not just I, Ananda, alone, who am that way.” There was a bit of condescension in his tone, implying, “After all, everyone knows that the mind is inside.”

”**And as I regard the Tathagata’s blue lotus-flower eyes, they too are on the Buddha’s face.** As I lean forward and scrutinize the Thus Come One’s eyes, so bright and wide that they resemble lotus flowers, they are on the Buddha’s face,” Ananda says. His remark was also subtly implying: “Plain as can be, your eyes are on your face; why do you still have to ask me?” But he didn’t dare actually come out and say that.

**Sutra:
”I now observe that these prominent organs, four kinds of defiling objects, are on my face, and so, too, my conscious mind actually is within my body.”

Commentary:**Ananda said, “World Honored One, your blue lotus-flower eyes are on your face. **I now observe that these prominent organs, four kinds of defiling objects, are on my face.”** The “prominent organs” refer to the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, all of which are located on the face. They are quite distinct and visible. “**And so, too, my conscious mind actually is within my body.** As I now think about it further, my discriminating conscious mind which can know pleasant and unpleasant, good and bad, is actually in my body.” That is how Ananda answered the Buddha’s question.

O2 The Tathagata uses not seeing inside the body to refute this.
P1 The Tathagata brings up an example.

**Sutra:The Buddha said to Ananda, “You are now sitting in the Tathagata’s lecture hall looking at the Jeta Grove. Where is it at present?”

”World Honored One, this great many-storied pure lecture hall is in the Garden of the Benefactor of the Solitary. At present the Jeta Grove is in fact outside the hall.”

Commentary:** Having heard Ananda’s answer that his mind was in his body and his eyes were on his face, the Buddha initially did not make any direct reply. Instead, the Buddha asked Ananda another question.

**The Buddha said to Ananda, “You are now sitting in the Tathagata’s lecture hall looking at the Jeta Grove.** As you gaze at Prince War Victor’s grove, **where is it at present?”** The Buddha didn’t give any indication whether the mind is indeed inside or outside. He just fired another question back at Ananda in order to combat Ananda’s thought process.

Ananda answered the Buddha, “**World Honored One, this great many-storied pure lecture hall is in the Garden of the Benefactor of the Solitary.** The Buddha’s large, pure and clean lecture hall is in the garden of the elder Anathapindaka. **At present the Jeta Grove is in fact outside the hall.** The pure lecture hall, the place where we all are, is in the garden. Prince Jeta’s grove is actually outside the hall.”

The Buddha then said to him:

**Sutra: ”Ananda, as you are now in the hall, what do you see first?”

”World Honored One, here in the hall I first see the Tathagata, next I see the great assembly, and from there, as I gaze outward, I see the grove and garden.”

Commentary:**Shakyamuni Buddha heard Ananda say his external organs, his eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, the four defiling objects, forms, sounds, smells, and tastes are outside of him, while his conscious mind is in his body. The Buddha then asked him where the Jeta Grove was. Now the Buddha asked: **Ananda, as you are now in the hall, what do you see first?** Ananda has said his mind was in his body, and so the Buddha asked him what he saw first when he was in the hall.

Ananda answered, “**World Honored One, here in the hall I first see the Tathagata.** The first thing I see when I’m in the lecture hall is the Buddha,” he replied, “You, World Honored One.”

**Next I see the great assembly.** After that I see the great Bodhisattvas, great Arhats, and the sound-hearers. **And from there, as I gaze outward, I see the grove and garden.** I see the Jeta Grove and the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary.

**Sutra:
”Ananda, why it is you are able to see the grove and the garden as you look at them?”

”World Honored One, since the doors and windows of this great lecture hall have been thrown open wide, I can be in the hall and see into the distance.”

Commentary:** The Buddha continued: **Ananda, why it is you are able to see the grove and the garden as you look at them?** How can you see them? What’s the reason you are able to see them?

”Each time the Buddha seems to speak with less and less principle,” you say.

But within what he says is deep meaning. As we investigate more deeply, you will come to realize it.

Ananda answered: **World Honored One, since the doors and windows of this great lecture hall have been thrown open wide, I can be in the hall and see into the distance.** From inside I can see the Jeta Grove and the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary.

P2 The place where the text originally was.
P3 The Tathagata questions him about the example.

**Sutra: The Buddha said to Ananda, “It is as you say. When one is in the lecture hall and the doors and windows are open wide, one can see far into the garden and grove. Could there be someone in the hall who does not see the Tathagata and yet sees outside the hall?”

Ananda answered: “World Honored One, to be in the hall and not see the Tathagata, and yet see the grove and fountains is impossible.”

”Ananda, you are like that too.**

**Commentary:**In this section of text the Buddha sets up a question to come back on Ananda. **The Buddha said to Ananda, “It is as you say. When one is in the lecture hall and the doors and windows are open wide, one can see far into the garden and grove.** You are absolutely right. You are inside now and yet you can see the Jeta Grove and the Garden of Anathapindaka. **Could there be someone in the hall who does not see the Tathagata and yet sees outside the hall?** Could there be a living being who doesn’t see the Thus Come One, but sees only the grove and garden outside the hall? Is this possible?” the Buddha asked.

**Ananda answered, “World Honored One, to be in the hall and not see the Tathagata, and yet see the grove and fountains is impossible.** If someone were inside,**”** Ananda says, “he certainly would be able to see the Buddha. There’s no way he could see what’s outside the hall and not see the Buddha, who’s inside the hall.”

Ananda’s answer was very decisive.

”**Ananda, you are like that too,”** the Buddha replied. Ananda said it was impossible to be inside and not see the Buddha inside, and the Buddha proceeds to tell Ananda that Ananda himself is just like someone inside the hall who can’t see the Buddha, but can only see outside the hall.

P4 From that example comes the refutation.

**Sutra: ”Your mind is capable of understanding everything thoroughly. Now if your present mind, which thoroughly understands everything, were in your body, then you should be aware first of what is inside your body. Can there be living beings who first see inside their bodies before they observe things outside?

Commentary:**It is said that people are the most capable among the myriad things, and that of all their attributes their minds are the most capable. However, **your mind** which **is capable of understanding everything thoroughly** refers only to the conscious mind. **Now if your present mind, which thoroughly understands everything, were in your body, then you should be aware first of what is inside your body.** The Buddha argues that if Ananda’s mind is really inside his body, as Ananda says, then he ought to be able to know first of all what the inside of his body is like, in the same way that someone inside the lecture hall is able to see the people inside. “But **can there be living beings who first see inside their bodies before they observe things outside?”** the Buddha asks. The Buddha knew that Ananda had not yet understood, and that he still did not know what the basic substance of the true mind is like. He was still adroitly making use of his false-thinking mind, his conscious mind. So the Buddha continues his explanation:

**Sutra:
”Even if you cannot see your heart, liver, spleen, and stomach, still, the growing of your nails and hair, the twist of your sinews, and the throb of your pulse should be clearly understood. Why don’t you perceive these things? If you cannot perceive what is inside at all, how can you perceive what is outside?

Commentary:** ”You say your mind is in your body, and your power of seeing is in your eyes,” the Buddha tells Ananda. But if your mind, with its power to know, is inside, you should know what your **heart, liver, spleen, and stomach** are like. **Even if you cannot see** them, you should be able to perceive things that are happening on the surface like **the growing of your nails and hair**. You should be able to know how many fractions of an inch they grow each second. In fact, **the twist of your sinews, and the throb of your pulse should be clearly understood.** You should know all about them. **Why don’t you perceive these things?** Why don’t you know?

**If you cannot perceive what is inside at all, how can you perceive what is outside?** Your mind is inside and you don’t know what’s going on inside you. So how could you know what is going on outside?

P5 The concluding refutation.

**Sutra:”Therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that the aware and knowing mind is in the body.”

Commentary:**”Your argument won’t stand,” the Buddha tells Ananda. “Since you can’t perceive what is inside you, **therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that the aware and knowing mind is in the body**.” After using various analogies and arguments, the Buddha tells Ananda directly that it is wrong to place the considering, thinking, knowing mind inside the body.

N2 Ananda attaches to the mind as being outside the body.
O1 Ananda presents the analogy of the lamp and determines it is the same as the Buddha’s meaning.

**Sutra: Ananda bowed his head and said to the Buddha, “Upon hearing such a dharma-sound as the Tathagata has proclaimed, I realize that my mind is actually outside my body.

Commentary:**Ananda’s argument that the mind is inside the body did not hold up. Shakyamuni Buddha jolted him out of his folly and destroyed his position. And so **Ananda**, who was well versed in etiquette, **bowed his head**, which means he prostrated himself, **and said to the Buddha, “Upon hearing such a dharma-sound as the Tathagata has proclaimed, I realize that my mind is actually outside my body.” “**My mind is not in my body! It has run outside. I’m sure that’s where it is!” exclaims Ananda. One doesn’t know when his mind ran outside, but now he suddenly says that’s where it is.

**Sutra: ”Why? For example, a lamp alight in a room will certainly illumine the inside of the room first, and only then will it pour through the doorway to reach the recesses of the hall. For all living beings who do not see within their bodies but only see outside them, it is as if the lighted lamp were placed outside the room, so that it cannot illumine the room.

Commentary:** ”**Why?** Why do I say my mind has run outside? **For example, a lamp alight in a room will certainly illumine the inside of the room first, and only then will it pour through the doorway to reach the recesses of the hall.** If my mind were inside,” Ananda reasons, “I would certainly be able to see what is happening inside my body, in the same way that a lamp inside a room will certainly light up the room.”

**For all living beings who do not see within their bodies but only see outside them, it is as if the lighted lamp were placed outside the room, so that it cannot illumine the room.** The Buddha pointed out that one cannot see one’s heart, liver, spleen, and stomach, and so Ananda concludes that the mind is outside, just like the lighted lamp outside the room. It is outside so one cannot see things inside.

**Sutra: ”This principle is certainly clear: it is absolutely beyond all doubt and exactly the Buddha’s entire meaning, and so it isn’t wrong is it?”

Commentary:**”**This principle is certainly clear.** This doctrine I have presented is certainly correct,” Ananda states emphatically. **It is absolutely beyond all doubt.** Ananda passes judgement in advance. There’s no question about it; it is **exactly the Buddha’s entire meaning**. “My argument is the same as the Buddha’s complete meaning. I couldn’t make a mistake. It isn’t just my idea. I believe the Buddha will agree, won’t he? **It isn’t wrong is it?**” In fact, Ananda is still not positive. “I’m pretty sure this is not wrong.”

O2 The Tathagata refutes by using the mutual awareness of body and mind.
:P1 The analogy makes clear there would be no connection.

**Sutra:The Buddha said to Ananda, “All these bhikshus who just followed me to the city of Shravasti to beg in sequence for food have returned to the Jeta Grove and are rolling their food into balls as they eat. I have already finished eating, but consider the bhikshus: when one person eats, does everyone get full?”

Ananda answered, “No, World Honored One. Why? These bhikshus are arhats, but their individual lives differ. How could one person’s eating cause everyone to be full?”

Commentary:**Ananda felt certain that the Buddha would agree that the mind is outside. Who would have suspected that the Buddha wouldn’t even consider the proposal? **The Buddha said to Ananda, “All these bhikshus who just followed me to the city of Shravasti to beg in sequence for food have returned to the Jeta Grove and are rolling their food into balls as they eat.”** They begged from house to house and then returned to the grove of trees donated by Prince Jeta. In India they ate by picking up pieces of food in their hands and rolling them into balls, and so this is how the Buddha and his disciples ate. In present-day Burma, bowls are used, but those who have left the home-life still eat their vegetables and rice with their right hand, without using a spoon or chopsticks. They take a piece of food in their hand and roll it over and over. Then they eat it. Eating this way is very appetizing to them, though whether it is ultimately very appetizing I don’t know, since I’ve never tried it.

 **I have already finished eating, but consider the bhikshus: when one person eats, does everyone get full?** I have eaten my fill, but take a look at the assembly: some bhikshus have not finished eating. Now if just one person eats, can the rest get full?

If there is any doubt about this principle, we can try it out ourselves tomorrow. Just serve me food, and all of you can look on while I eat, and you can see if you get full. That will prove the principle found in the sutra.

**Ananda answered, “No, World Honored One. Why?”** Having answered in the negative, Ananda was afraid the Buddha might not understand, so he proceeded to give the Buddha a commentary. “Why do I say they can’t get full? **These bhikshus are arhats, but their individual lives differ.** Although they have become enlightened and they all have spiritual penetrations, still their bodies are not the same. Their appearances, their faces, are all different. If they were all one, then when one ate, all would get full, but they are not one; each has his own individual life. So **how could one person’s eating cause everyone to be full?** Therefore, I say there is no such principle.”

**Sutra: The Buddha told Ananda, “If your mind which understands, knows, sees and is aware were actually outside your body, your body and mind would be mutually exclusive and would have no relationship to one another. The body would be unaware of what the mind perceives, and the mind would not perceive the awareness within the body.

Commentary: The Buddha told Ananda, “If your mind which understands, knows, sees and is aware were actually outside your body, your body and mind would be mutually exclusive and would have no relationship to one another.”** If the mind which has awareness, which calculates, which discriminates, and which has knowledge and views were outside the body, then there would be no connection between the two. They’d have parted ways; they wouldn’t reside together. Your body would be your body; your mind would be your mind, and your mind would be apart from your body. “You pay no attention to my business,” they’d say, “and I won’t pay attention to yours.” **The body would be unaware of what the mind perceives, and the mind would not perceive the awareness within the body.** The body would not be aware of the mind or influenced by it, and if your awareness was within the body, the mind wouldn’t know about it.

P2 Investigation shows there is a connection.

**Sutra: ”Now as I show you my tula-cotton hand, does your mind distinguish it when your eyes see it?”
Ananda answered, “So it is, World Honored One.”

The Buddha told Ananda, “If the mind and eyes create a common perception, how then can the mind be outside?

Commentary:**The Buddha’s hands are extremely soft and supple, like cotton. Now I will relate a point of physiognomy. If you rub someone’s hand and find it to be as soft as cotton, that person has a promising future and will eventually be honorable. Ordinary people’s hands are very stiff. I know my hands, for example, are as stiff as a board, not soft like cotton. However, soft hands do not necessarily indicate a great future. The countenance is equally important in this matter. Are the features heroic? Is the person’s appearance powerful? In general, women’s hands are far softer than men’s. If you don’t believe it, you can notice next time you have occasion to shake hands with a woman. As for men, I have met only two whose hands were extremely soft. However, during the time I knew them neither one of them displayed signs of greatness. Their appearances didn’t match up. I have one disciple with extremely soft hands - he had never done any physical labor, but he is also very ordinary. A fellow student of mine, who was also a relative, also had extremely soft hands, but before I came to America he had not done anything of great importance, and I don’t know if he has accomplished anything since then.

The Buddha told Ananda, “**Now as I show you my tula-cotton hand, does your mind distinguish it when your eyes see it?** When your eyes see it, does your mind make a distinction that my hand is a tula-cotton hand?”

**Ananda answered, “So it is, World Honored One.”** Yes. My eyes see it and my mind distinguishes it. My mind makes a discrimination of fondness. “Ah,” it says, “the Buddha’s tula-cotton hand is the very finest. This is one of the thirty-two hallmarks of the Tathagata.”

**The Buddha told Ananda, “If the mind and eyes create a common perception, how then can the mind be outside?”** If your mind knows what your eyes see, how can you say that your mind is outside your body? If it were outside, how could it perceive what the eyes see? Note, though, the Buddha does not say that the mind is inside. It has already been made clear that that too, is a mistake.

P3 Concluding refutation.

**Sutra:

”Therefore you should know you state the impossible when you say that the mind which knows, understands, and is aware is outside the body.”

Commentary:**Since Ananda’s argument that the mind is inside the body did not hold up, he revised his contention to say that the mind is outside the body. The World Honored One has used all kinds of analogies to instruct him, but unfortunately Ananda only knows how to analyze the Buddhadharma by means of his conscious mind, which is subject to production and extinction. He does not perceive the pure nature and bright substance of the everlasting true mind. So the Buddha once again gives Ananda his critique: “**Therefore you should know you state the impossible when you say that the mind which knows, understands, and is aware is outside the body.** You were wrong,” the Buddha says. The mind which calculates and understands is not outside your body. Do you understand? You have made a mistake.

N3 Ananda attaches to the mind’s being hidden in the eyes.
O1 Ananda uses the analogy of crystals covering the eyes.

**Sutra: Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said, since I cannot see inside, my mind does not reside in the body. Since my body and mind have a common awareness, they are not separate and so my mind does not dwell outside my body. As I now consider it, I know it is in a certain place.”

Commentary:** Ananda considered: here it is again. It is just because he keeps considering that he makes mistakes. **Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said.”** Ananda says, “I followed the Buddha to leave the home-life and I listen to the Buddha’s teaching, including the doctrine the Buddha has just spoken, those proclamations of the dharma-sound. **Since I cannot see inside, my mind does not reside in the body.** If the mind were inside the body, I’d be able to see my heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys, the five viscera. **Since my body and mind have a common awareness, they are not separate and so my mind does not dwell outside my body.** The Buddha now says it is not outside. **As I now consider it, I know it is in a certain place.** Now I have another thought. Outside is not correct, inside is not correct, therefore it has to be in a certain particular place.”

**Sutra:The Buddha said, “Now where is it?”

Ananda said, “Since the mind which knows and understands does not perceive what is inside but can see outside, upon reflection I believe it is concealed in the organ of vision.

Commentary:The Buddha said, “Now where is it?** Ah, you say it is in a certain place. What place? Where is your mind? Hurry up and tell me.” That’s how he questioned him.

**Ananda said, “Since the mind which knows and understands does not perceive what is inside but can see outside, upon reflection I believe…”** Before, he said, “As I now consider it,” and here again he says, “Upon reflection.” It’s still his conscious mind at work. Consideration and reflection both make use of the conscious mind, the mind subject to production and extinction. What is his reflection? The mind **is concealed in the organ of vision**. The organ of vision refers to the eye. It is hidden away there, Ananda says. The mind was stashed there where no one could see it. That.s what is meant by “concealed.”

The Buddha doesn’t reply to this right away. In fact the sutra text leaves you in suspense for a while. Today I heard someone say that he didn’t understand the sutra. To say nothing of your not understanding, Ananda himself didn’t understand at this point. You have to listen to the entire sutra; then you will come to understand. If you haven’t heard it completely, how could you be expected to understand? Of course you don’t understand. Why would you want to listen to sutras in the first place if you already understood them? You shouldn’t say, “I don’t understand what is being said so I’ll stop listening.” It’s just because you don’t understand that you should listen.

**Sutra:”For example, when someone places crystal bowls over his eyes, the bowls cover his eyes but do not obstruct his vision. The organ of vision is thus able to see, and discriminations are made accordingly.

Commentary:**Ananda gives the Buddha an **example** to explain his new contention. **When someone places crystal bowls over his eyes, the bowls cover his eyes but do not obstruct his vision.** Actually there is no such person, but Ananda invents someone who puts on eyeglasses - that is what is meant here. In the Buddha’s day they were called crystal bowls. The glasses cover the eyes, but this does not stop the eyes from seeing out. In Ananda’s analogy, the mind is represented by the eyes, and the eyes, where Ananda contends the mind is hidden, are represented by the glasses. Our mind, Ananda contends, is hidden in our eyes, but this does not stop our mind from seeing out.

**The organ of vision is thus able to see, and discriminations are made accordingly.** That is, as soon as you see, your mind knows it. Discrimination takes place in the organ of vision, where, Ananda says, the mind is hidden. “This time the doctrine I have expressed is the right one,” Ananda says. He still considers himself to be very intelligent. “See how smart I am? I have an answer for everything the Buddha asks me.” Why does Ananda keep making mistakes? It is because he uses the mind subject to production and extinction. No matter what the circumstance is, he always uses his thought-processes to consider it from each side. His considerations are grounded in the thoughts of his consciousness, and he recognizes the consciousness to be the true mind. He doesn’t know that the “true mind” neither exists nor does not exist, and that the true mind is the nature. He is like one who gets off on the wrong road, and the farther he goes, the more he has lost his way, and the more he has lost his way the more he thinks he’s on the right road. So now he brings up yet another analogy for the Buddha to pass judgement on.

**Sutra:”And so my mind which knows, understands, and is aware does not see within because it resides in the organ. It can gaze outside clearly, without obstruction for the same reason: it is concealed in the organ.”

Commentary: ”And so** refers to the doctrine he was just explaining. **My mind which knows, understands, and is aware does not see within because it resides in the organ.** Why can’t I see inside my body? It’s because my mind is in my eyes. **It can gaze outside clearly, without obstruction for the same reason: it is concealed in the organ.** Why can I see outside but not inside? It is because my mind, which also refers to vision, the power of seeing, is concealed in the eye. So there is no obstruction when I look outside.” Whether Ananda is right in his theory will become clear in the following passages.

O2 The Buddha uses dharma to show the analogy is not apt.
P1 He discusses its aptness.

**Sutra:The Buddha said to Ananda, “Assuming that it is concealed in the organ, as you assert in your analogy of the crystals: if someone were to cover his eyes with the crystals and look at the mountains and rivers, would he see the crystals as well?”

”Yes, World Honored One, if a person were to cover his eyes with the crystals, he would in fact see the crystals.”

Commentary:**Having heard Ananda use the analogy of the crystals, **the Buddha said to Ananda, “Assuming that it is concealed in the organ, as you assert in your analogy of the crystals**: Suppose it is the way you explain it,” the Buddha says, “and the mind is concealed in the organ. **If someone were to cover his eyes with the crystals and look at the mountains and rivers, would he see the crystals as well?** When the person in your analogy puts on his glasses in order to see, and he takes a look at the mountains, rivers, and the vast expanse of earth, does he see his glasses?”

”**Yes, World Honored One, if a person were to cover his eyes with the crystals, he would in fact see the crystals.** When someone wears glasses, he sees the mountains, rivers, the vast expanse of earth, and he also sees the glasses.” That is what the Buddha asked Ananda and how Ananda answered him.

**Sutra:The Buddha said to Ananda, “If your mind is analogous to the eyes covered with crystals, then when you see the mountains and rivers, why don’t you see your eyes?

Commentary:The Buddha said to Ananda,** “You put on glasses and can see the mountains, rivers, and the vast expanse of earth, and you can also see the glasses. **If your mind is analogous to the eyes covered with crystals**: if your mind dwells within your organ of vision, then your eyes are like the glasses in the analogy. So when your mind looks at the mountains, rivers, and the great expanse of earth, **then when you see the mountains and rivers, why don’t you see your eyes?”**Someone will say, “I see my eyes.”

I also see my eyes - if I look in a mirror. If you could see your own eyes simply by turning your light back to reflect upon yourself, then the Buddha’s argument here wouldn’t work. But the flesh eyes of an ordinary person cannot see themselves. And although Ananda had attained the first stage of arhatship, his flesh eyes could not look into his own eyes either.

So the Buddha asks him, “You made up the analogy for the mind being hidden in the eyes, like eyes covered with glasses, didn’t you? So your eyes would be like the crystals in the analogy and since you say you can see the crystals, then why can’t you see your own eyes at this very moment?” That is what the Buddha asked him.

P2 Both possibilities explored and refuted.

**Sutra:

”If you could see your eyes, your eyes would be part of the external environment. If you cannot see them, why did you say that the mind which understands, knows, and is aware is concealed in the organ of vision as eyes are covered by crystals?

Commentary:**Shakyamuni Buddha questioned him further: **If you could see your eyes, your eyes would be part of the external environment.** It has already been made clear that Ananda does not see his eyes, but the Buddha was concerned that Ananda would become so confused that he’d contend he could see his own eyes. So the Buddha points out that if Ananda could see his eyes, that would mean his eyes would be outside of him and not part of his body. And thus the organ of vision would not be able to see. You couldn’t say, as you just did, that “the organ of vision is thus able to see, and discriminations are made accordingly.”

**If you cannot see them, why did you say that the mind which understands, knows, and is aware is concealed in the organ of vision as eyes are covered by crystals?** If you cannot see your eyes, then how can you contend that your mind is hidden in your organ of vision the way eyes are covered by glasses? Your analogy of the crystals doesn’t hold up. It too is incorrect.

P3 The concluding refutation.

**Sutra:”Therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that the mind which knows, understands, and is aware is concealed in the organ of vision in the way that the eyes are covered by crystals.”

Commentary: Therefore** - because of the doctrine explained above - **you should know that you state the impossible when you say that the mind which knows, understands, and is aware is concealed in the organ of vision in the way that the eyes are covered by crystals**. To say that the aware and knowing mind is hidden in the eye is incorrect. Your doctrine is not right. You are wrong again.

N4 Ananda attaches to the mind as being divided between light and dark.
O1 Ananda takes seeing light and dark as divisions of inside and outside.

**Sutra: Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I now offer this reconsideration: viscera and bowels lie inside the bodies of living beings, while the orifices are open to the exterior. There is darkness at the bowels and light at the orifices.

Commentary:**Ananda was criticized by the Buddha and so he came up with another theory to answer the Buddha’s question. **Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I now offer this reconsideration.** Now I think of it this way: **viscera and bowels lie inside the bodies of living beings, while the orifices are open to the exterior.”** What is meant by living beings? This phrase has already appeared several times in the text but has not yet been explained. Living beings are born from the mixing of a multitude of karmic conditions which result in birth. Each of you people are not engendered from one kind of karma but from many. Just as a field of crops requires many conditions beyond the simple planting of a seed - there must be earth, sunshine, and rain - we people are also born from a variety of causes and conditions. The “viscera and bowels”: the heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys are said to be the five viscera, and the six bowels are the large intestine, the small intestine, the “triple warmer,” the bladder, the gall bladder, and the stomach. The bowels can be said to be hidden because they are inside and they can also be called “filthy” because everything in them is either excrement or urine.

As to the apertures and openings, the eyes, ears, and nose are apertures, and the eye-socket, the entrance to the inner ear, and the nostrils are openings. Then, of course, there is the mouth-opening, an opening which you never manage to fill up. Today you eat your fill, but tomorrow you are hungry again. So you eat again and fill up the opening but by the following day you’re hungry once more. Everything has moved out. Inside there is a constant assimilation of the new and elimination of the old. This process causes people a lot of trouble. Eating is a lot of trouble. Just think of it: if you didn’t spend three hours a day eating three meals, we could use the extra time to lecture sutras or sit in Chan. But because you eat three times a day, you’re kept extremely busy every day just filling up that mouth-opening. But in the end, you’ll never fill it up.

**There is darkness at the bowels and light at the orifices.** Since the bowels and viscera are hidden in the body, they are in darkness. How is it one knows external things? Because there are apertures, so there is light. Now Ananda isn’t referring to them as eyes in his analogy, but as apertures. Ananda is really smart. He’s decidedly intelligent.

**Sutra:

”Now, as I face the Buddha and open my eyes, I see light: that is to see outside. When I close my eyes and see darkness, that is to see within. How does that principle sound?.

Commentary:** Ananda is more intelligent than we are. We couldn’t think of so many ways to answer. How many methods has he come up with already? He has one opinion after another. Whatever the Buddha asks, he has an answer for it. He’s always got something to say; he’s full of theories and arguments and thoughts and considerations. He was, after all, foremost among the disciples in learning. Where there is no principle, he can expound a principle. He would have made a first-rate lawyer. **Now, as I face the Buddha and open my eyes, I see light: that is to see outside. When I close my eyes and see darkness, that is to see within.** When I see light, it is seeing outside; when I see darkness, it is seeing inside. **How does that principle sound?** What do you say to that?

O2 The Tathagata uses the fact that seeing inside is not possible as his refutation.
P1 His refutation: that which is seen is not inside.

**Sutra: The Buddha said to Ananda, “When you close your eyes and see darkness, does the darkness you experience lie before your eyes? If it does lie before your eyes, then the darkness is in front of your eyes. How can that be said to be ‘within’?

Commentary:**Instead of telling Ananda whether his latest proposition is right or wrong, the Buddha asks Ananda another question. **The Buddha said to Ananda, “When you close your eyes and see darkness.** You say that when you close your eyes you see darkness, and that that is to see within. But **does the darkness you experience lie before your eyes?** Speak up. Tell me. **If it does lie before your eyes, then the darkness is in front of your eyes. How can that be said to be ‘within’?** How can you say that to see darkness is to see inside?”

**Sutra:”If it were within, then when you are in a dark room without the light of sun, moon, or lamps, the darkness in the room would constitute your ‘warmers’ and viscera. If it is not before you, how can it be seen?

Commentary: ”If it were within,”** the Buddha continues, “If you reason that the darkness before you is actually your insides, **then when you are in a dark room without the light of sun, moon, or lamps, the darkness in the room would constitute your ‘warmers’ and viscera**. That darkness would become your ‘three warmers’ and your viscera and bowels. The whole room would turn into your organs and intestines. Why? Because it is dark, and you’ve just said that the darkness you see is inside your body.” The “three warmers” consist of the upper, the middle and the lower warmers. The function of these three is very important in the human body. If they become diseased, the resulting illness is not easy to cure.

**If it is not before you, how can it be seen?** If the darkness is not in front of your eyes, how can you see it? You can only see what is before your eyes. How can you see things that are behind your eyes. What about it? The Buddha is demolishing Ananda’s latest proposition from every angle, and it’s hard to say what line of reasoning Ananda might use to answer him next.

P2 His refutation: the ability to see is not actual.

**Sutra:”If you assert that there is an inward seeing that is distinct from seeing outside. In that case, when you close your eyes and see darkness, you would be seeing inside the body. Therefore, when you open your eyes and see light, why can’t you see your own face?

Commentary:**The Buddha continues his questioning: **If you assert that there is an inward seeing that is distinct from seeing outside.** Suppose that there are two kinds of seeing and that you are able to face inward and see. **In that case, when you close your eyes and see darkness, you would be seeing inside the body. Therefore, when you open your eyes and see light, why can’t you see your own face?** You argue that to see darkness is to see inside your body; then when you open your eyes to see outside, why can’t you look at your own face and tell me what it’s like? Note that Ananda doesn’t protest that he can see his own face in a mirror, which is what someone else did upon hearing this argument. Maybe they didn’t have mirrors then.

**Sutra:”If you cannot see your face, then there can be no seeing within. If you can see your face, then your mind that knows and understands and your organ of vision as well must be suspended in space. How could they be part of your body?

Commentary:If you cannot see your face, then there can be no seeing within.** I just asked you if you can see your face, and you didn’t have anything to say. But if you can’t see your own face with your eyes open, how can you close your eyes and see inside. This is what you have argued, but your contention has no basis in principle.

**If you can see your face, then your mind that knows and understands and your organ of vision as well must be suspended in space. How could they be part of your body?** If you say you actually can see your own face, though, then your discriminating mind and your eyes wouldn’t be on your face; they’d be out in space. If they were on your face, then you couldn’t see your face. But if you can see your face, then how can you say your mind and your seeing are inside?

**Sutra:
”If they are in space, then they are not part of your body. Otherwise the Tathagata who now sees your face should be part of your body as well.

Commentary: If they are in space, then they are not part of your body.** Empty space is not your body, and if your mind and eyes were in space they wouldn’t have any connection with you. **Otherwise -** if you say that they would have a connection with you - if you say that those separate entities in space would be part of your substance - **the Tathagata who now sees your face should be part of your body as well**. The Buddha told him, “If you want to say that your eyes and mind are in empty space, then they are not part of your body. If you say that this mind and these eyes of yours are hanging in space and yet are still part of your body, then it should be that the Tathagata, who sees your face from the vantage-point of space, is also part of your substance. In that case, I’d be you. I have become you. Is that possible?”

**Sutra:
”In that case, when your eyes perceive something, your body would remain unaware of it. If you press the point and say that the body and eyes each have an awareness, then you should have two perceptions, and your one body should eventually become two Buddhas.

Commentary:In that case, when your eyes perceive something, your body would remain unaware of it.** Is that the way it is? **If you press the point and say that the body and eyes each have an awareness, then you should have two perceptions.** If you insist on this line of reasoning, then it follows that there are two kinds of awareness, that of the body and that of the mind. Each would have its own separate perception. **And your one body should eventually become two Buddhas.** Why? It is a single perception which realizes Buddhahood. Now that you have dual perception, you should become two Buddhas. Can you become two Buddhas?

P3 Concluding refutation.

**Sutra:
”Therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that to see darkness is to see within.”

Commentary: Therefore you should know**: because of the various doctrines just discussed, you should know **that you state the impossible when you say that to see darkness is to see within**. Once again, your argument is incorrect.

N5 Ananda attaches to the mind as being that which exists in response.
O1 Ananda reckons the mind exists in response to whatever it joins with.

**Sutra:Ananda said to the Buddha, “I have heard the Buddha instruct the four assemblies that because the mind arises every kind of dharma arises, and that because dharmas arise, every kind of mind arises.

Commentary:**Now Ananda questions the Buddha again. **Ananda said to the Buddha, “I have heard the Buddha instruct the four assemblies.”** Before, Ananda used his own ideas to think of places where the mind and seeing might be located, and each idea was refuted by the Buddha. So now he doesn’t speak for himself; he quotes the Buddha. He said, “I have heard the Buddha instruct the four assemblies.” The four assemblies are the bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas, and upasikas. Bhikshus and bhikshunis are men and women who have left the home-life. Upasakas and upasikas are men and women at home who have received the five precepts. Upasakas and upasikas are also called laypeople. These four groups comprise the four assemblies.

**Because the mind arises every kind of dharma arises.** Because you have a mind - the Buddha is speaking of the conscious mind - all kinds of dharmas arise. This refers to the manifestation, within the consciousness, of various states of being. Dharmas have no self-nature, but only come into being because of conditions. **Because dharmas arise, every kind of mind arises.** Because causes and conditions produce dharmas, every kind of thought arises. That is what you said, Buddha; this is a doctrine which the World Honored One explained, and so no doubt it is right, Ananda says. Now, based on that doctrine of the World Honored One, I have an opinion. What is it?

**Sutra:

”As I now consider it, the substance of that very consideration is truly the nature of the mind. Wherever it comes together with things, the mind exists in response. It does not exist in the three locations of inside, outside and in between.”

Commentary:As I now consider it.** Ananda’s thinking again. What is he thinking? **The substance of that very consideration is truly the nature of the mind.** The substance of my thought is the nature of my mind. My being aware, my understanding, my knowing, these are the nature of my mind.

**Wherever it comes together with things**: Wherever the mind encounters causes and conditions, it joins together with those causes and conditions, and **the mind** comes into being **in response.** Whenever there is a joining together, there is the mind. If there isn’t any joining together, there isn’t any mind. **It does not exist in the three locations of inside, outside and in between.** It isn’t inside, it isn’t outside, and it isn’t in between; rather, anywhere that it meets with causes and conditions, the mind comes into being. If there are no conditions then probably there isn’t any mind. Once again, what Ananda says seems to be right but isn’t. He still has not recognized it clearly.

O2 The Tathagata uses the refutation that it lacks a substance or a fixed place.
P1 His refutation that it lacks a substance.

**Sutra:The Buddha said to Ananda, “Now you say that because dharmas arise, every kind of mind arises. Wherever it comes together with things, the mind exists in response. But if it has no substance, the mind cannot come together with anything. If, having no substance, it can yet come together with things, that would constitute a nineteenth realm brought about by a union with the seventh defiling object, and there is no such principle.

Commentary:**The Buddha fires Ananda’s explanation back at him. **The Buddha said to Ananda, “Now you say that because dharmas arise, every kind of mind arises. Wherever it comes together with things, the mind exists in response.** You say that the mind comes into being wherever it comes together with things. If there is no coming together, then, of course, there is no mind. That’s the way you explain it. **But if it has no substance, the mind cannot come together with anything.** But does this mind you speak of actually have any substance to it? If it has no substance or appearance it cannot unite with anything. If there were no form or appearance, what would join with what?”

**If, having no substance, it can yet come together with things.** It would be unreasonable to insist that it can unite with things even though it has no substance, but suppose you do insist. **That would constitute a nineteenth realm brought about by a union with the seventh defiling object, and there is no such principle.** The eighteen realms would turn into the nineteen realms: the additional realm would be the one where, as you explain it, your mind comes into being. What are the eighteen realms? Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are the six organs. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and dharmas are the six defiling objects. And between the six organs and the six defiling objects are produced discriminations, called the six consciousnesses. Altogether, these make up the eighteen realms. The six organs and six defiling objects which face them are called the twelve places or twelve entrances. The six consciousnesses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and mind-consciousness are added to make eighteen realms. The Buddha points out that the logical extension of Ananda’s argument is that there is a nineteenth realm, the place in which a supposed substanceless mind comes into being when it “comes together with things.” These things the mind joins with would be a seventh defiling object. But there is no such principle. Ananda is wrong again.

P2 His refutation that a substance exists.

**Sutra: ”If it does have substance, when you pinch your body with your hand, does your mind which perceives it come out from the inside or in from the outside? If it comes out from the inside, then, once again, it should see within your body. If it comes in from outside, it should see your face first.”

Commentary:**The Buddha now explains his reason for saying Ananda is wrong again. **If it does have substance**: the Buddha has just shown it is absurd to say the mind has no substance. But if it does have a substance, if your mind has a mind-substance, **when you pinch your body with your hand, does your mind which perceives it come out from the inside or in from the outside?** Does the mind come forth from within or does its substance enter in from outside? At first you maintained that your mind is inside, but now you have stated that it is not inside, outside, or in between. Where, then, does your mind come from when it comes together with things as you say it does? Now I tell you to pinch yourself, and your mind comes together with that. Does your mind which perceives the pinch come from outside or from inside? **If it comes out from the inside, then, once again, it should see within your body.** It’s already been proven that the mind cannot be inside, since otherwise it would see inside the body. **If it comes in from outside, it should see your face first.** If your mind is outside, it would be seeing your face before it perceives the pinch. Does your mind see your own face?

Ananda got irritated with the Buddha at this point.

**Sutra:Ananda said, “Seeing is done with the eyes. The mind’s perception is not that of the eyes. To say it sees doesn’t make sense.”

Commentary:** Ananda decided that the Buddha’s explanation was too illogical, so he thereupon disagreed and began to argue. **Ananda said, “Seeing is done with the eyes. The mind’s perception is not that of the eyes.** It is the eyes which see things. The mind just knows things. **To say it sees doesn’t make sense.”** You said the mind sees, but that is certainly wrong. That also lacks principle. Before, the Buddha criticized Ananda’s idea and said “there is no such principle.” And now Ananda retorts with the same criticism. “You say that if the mind comes from outside, it should see the face. But the mind merely knows things; it doesn’t see them. What sees are the eyes.” The farther he runs, the farther away he gets.

**Sutra:The Buddha said, “To suppose that the eyes can see is like supposing that the doors of a room can see. Also, when someone has died but his eyes are still intact, his eyes should see things. How can it be death if one can still see?

Commentary: The Buddha said, “To suppose that the eyes can see is like supposing that the doors of a room can see.** Can doors of a room see things? **Also, when someone has died but his eyes are still intact, his eyes should see things. How can it be death if one can still see?”** In fact, of course, once you’re dead your eyes cease to see, though they may still be physically intact. If it were the case that after death the eyes can still see, how can this be death?

But these days dead people’s eyes are removed and put in eye-banks. They still can be used. What does this prove about the Buddha’s contention in the sutra that eyes can’t see after death? Although it may be that the eyes can see, they still need to borrow the efficacious quality of the self-nature in order to see. If there is just an eye all by itself, although it has the potential to see, it is devoid of awareness. So it cannot see. You must add the efficacious bright aware nature of a person in order to enable it to see. The eyes are like doors or windows. They do not see by themselves. They are transparent bodies which act as windows through which people can look at things. In the body of a dead man they have no power.

**Sutra:"Furthermore, Ananda, if your mind which is aware, understands, and knows in fact has substance, then is it a single substance or many substances? Does its substance perceive the body as it now resides in it or does it not perceive it?

Commentary:**The Buddha continues to address his disciple. **Furthermore, Ananda, if your mind which is aware, understands, and knows in fact has substance**: if you are determined upon saying that your mind which calculates and discerns all things has a substance, **then is it a single substance or many substances?** Does your mind have one substance or many? **Does its substance perceive the body as it now resides in it or does it not perceive it?** Where is this substance in your body? Does it spread throughout the body or not?

**Sutra:"Supposing that it were a single substance, then when you pinched one limb with your fingers, the four limbs would be aware of it. If they all were aware of it, the pinch could not be at any one place. If the pinch were confined to one place, then the single substance you propose would not be possible.

Commentary:Supposing that it were a single substance, then when you pinched one limb with your fingers, the four limbs would be aware of it.** Let us suppose the mind is composed of a single substance which resides within the body. Then if you pinch one of your legs or arms, both legs and both arms should all have an awareness of it. Why? Because you said the mind has a single substance. But in fact if you pinch one limb, only that one limb feels pain. The other three limbs are unaware of the pinch. **If they all were aware of it, the pinch could not be at any one place.** If you say that when you pinch one leg, the other leg and both arms feel it, then how could you be able to locate the pinch on your body? It would feel the same as if you had pinched all four limbs. **If the pinch were confined to one place, then the single substance you propose would not be possible.** If you can feel the pinch in a certain single place, then you can’t contend the mind is a single substance which pervades the body.

**Sutra:"Supposing that it were many substances: then you would be many people. Which substance would be you?

Commentary:Supposing that it were many substances.** This would explain why the three limbs don’t feel a pinch on the fourth limb. But **then you would be many people.** If your mind has many mind-substances, then you wouldn’t be just one person. In that case, **which substance would be you?** Which mind-substance is your mind-substance?

**Sutra:"Supposing it were a pervasive substance: the case would be the same as before in the instance of pinching. But supposing it were not pervasive; then when you touched your head and touched your foot simultaneously, the foot would not perceive it if the head does. But that is not how you are.

Commentary: Supposing it were a pervasive substance: the case is the same as before in the instance of pinching.** The Buddha patiently repeats his earlier explanation. If you say that the mind is a single substance that pervades the body, then when you pinch one spot, your whole body should hurt. **But supposing it were not pervasive; then when you touched your head and touched your foot simultaneously, the foot would not perceive it if the head does. But that is not how you are.** But if you say the substance of the mind does not entirely pervade the body, then your foot would have no feeling when you bump your head. But, bump your head or not, your foot still feels things. So you can’t say the mind does pervade the body, and you can’t say it doesn’t, either.

P3 Concluding refutation.

**Sutra:"Therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that wherever it comes together with things, the mind exists in response.”

Commentary:**This was Ananda’s fifth attempt to locate his mind, and the Buddha again showed his learned disciple’s arguments are groundless.

N6 Ananda attaches to the mind as being in the middle.
O10 Ananda attaches to the mind as being in the middle of the organ and the defiling object.
P1 Ananda brings up the teachings and recklessly reckons the mind is in the middle.

**Sutra:Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I also have heard the Buddha discuss true appearance with Manjushri and the other disciples of the Dharma King. The World Honored One also said, ‘The mind is not inside and it is not outside.’

Commentary:**Ananda again uses the Buddha’s words as a basis for his argument, to prove that his own opinion is valid. **Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I also have heard the Buddha discuss true appearance with Manjushri and the other disciples of the Dharma King.** This is how you explained it, Buddha; it’s not something I made up. You said it that way.” As soon as he opens his mouth, he tries to justify himself by turning the Buddha’s words to his own use. Ananda has a lot of nerve.

Manjushri is Wonderfully Auspicious Bodhisattva, also called Wonderful Virtue Bodhisattva. The other disciples of the Dharma King include Guan Yin Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva who regards the sounds of the world; Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva of great strength, and other great Bodhisattvas. The Buddha is the Dharma King, and Bodhisattva are his disciples.

What is meant by “true appearance”? True appearance has no appearance. There isn’t anything at all. That is true appearance. And yet there is nothing which has no appearance. You say there isn’t anything at all, but at the same time there is everything. Everything is produced from within true appearance. There is nothing which does not come forth from within it. We speak of true emptiness, of wonderful existence, and of true suchness; these also refer to “true appearance.” Within true appearance is wonderful existence. In wonderful existence is true emptiness. So it is said that true emptiness does not obstruct wonderful existence, and wonderful existence does not obstruct true emptiness. At the ultimate point of emptiness there is existence. At the ultimate point of existence there is nothing at all.

”**The World Honored One also said, ‘The mind is not inside and it is not outside.’** Buddha, this is just what you’ve said. If I repeat it, how can you say it is wrong?” is what Ananda is implying.

**Sutra:
”As I now consider it, if it were within, it would see things it does not see; if it were outside, there would be no common perception. Since it cannot see inside, it cannot be inside; and since the body and mind have common perception, it does not make sense to say it is outside. Therefore, since there is a common perception and since there is no seeing within, it must be in the middle.”

Commentary: As I now consider it**: I am thinking it over again. **If it were within, it would see things it does not see.** Saying the mind is within the body would imply that we could see within the body. **If it were outside, there would be no common perception.** The Buddha has just demonstrated that if the mind were outside the body, the mind and body could not have the kind of common perception that they do have. **Since it cannot see inside, it cannot be inside.** Since the mind does not know what is inside the body, it won.t work to say that it is located inside. **And since the body and mind have common perception, it does not make sense to say it is outside.** Our bodies and minds share knowledge of one another, as the Buddha just explained when he pointed out that Ananda experiences a common perception when his eyes see the Buddha’s hand and his mind distinguishes it. If the mind were outside the body, there would be no common perception. So it can’t be outside.

**Therefore, since there is a common perception and since there is no seeing within -** now that I understand this, I realize that **it must be in the middle**. Ananda now decides that the mind is in the middle. Precisely where this middle is he doesn’t say. Is it in the middle of the body, or in a middle outside the body? That is how the Buddha proceeds to question him.

P2 The Tathagata says the location of the middle must be fixed.

**Sutra: The Buddha said, “You say it is in the middle. That middle must not be haphazard or without a fixed location. Where is this middle that you propose? Is it in an external place, or is it in the body?

Commentary: The Buddha said, “You say it is in the middle. That middle must not be haphazard or without a fixed location.** This middle of yours has to be somewhere; there has to be some sense and certainty about it. Therefore, **where is this middle that you propose?”** Consider that question. The Buddha presses the point: **Is it in an external place, or is it in the body?** Is your middle someplace outside, or it is in your body?

**Sutra:
”If it were in the body, it could not be on the surface of the body since that is not the middle. But to be in the middle is no different than being inside. If it were in an external place, would there be some evidence of it, or not? If there were no evidence of it, that would be the same as if it did not exist. If there were evidence of it, then it would have no fixed location.

Commentary:If it were in the body, it could not be on the surface of the body since that is not the middle. But to be in the middle is no different than being inside.** Supposing this middle you say the mind is located in is in the body: is it on the surface of the body? But then it isn’t in the middle. Is it in the middle of the body? But that is to say the mind is inside the body, and we’ve already rejected that as impossible. **If it were in an external place, would there be some evidence of it, or not?** If you say that the middle is somewhere else, can you point out where it is? Is there something about it that allows us to discern it? **If there were no evidence of it, that would be the same as if it did not exist.** If there is nothing to indicate its presence, if you can’t point to it as being in a certain place, then it does not exist. You still haven’t shown me a middle. **If there were evidence of it, then it would have no fixed location.** Why does the Buddha say this?

**Sutra:”Why? Suppose that someone were to indicate the middle by a marker. When regarded from the east, it would be to the west, and when regarded from the south, it would be to the north. The marker is unclear, and the mind would be equally chaotic.”

Commentary:**Why? **Suppose that someone were to indicate the middle by a marker.** Someone pounds a sign in the ground reading: “This place is the middle.” **When regarded from the east, it would be to the west, and when regarded from the south, it would be to the north.** Your sign may say “middle” but if you stand to the east of it, the sign is west of you: how is this the middle? Then you might stand to the south of it: now it is to the north of you. This is also not the middle. Basically, as I said earlier, the ten directions do not exist. You might say that something is south of you, but if you go south of it, it becomes north. You could then say it is north, but if you go north of that north, it becomes south again. So which is it? There is nothing fixed about it. The principle is the same here. **The marker is unclear, and the mind would be equally chaotic.** The marker doesn’t indicate anything at all; it cannot fix a middle. If the mind were in the middle, it would be as unfixed as your marker; it would be chaotic. Ultimately, which place is the middle? There isn’t any place that is the middle. So the middle you speak of is probably also a mistake.

P3 Ananda brings up an alternative view.

**Sutra: Ananda said, “The middle I speak of is neither of those. As the World Honored One has said, the eyes and forms are the conditions which create the eye-consciousness. The eyes make discriminations; forms have no perception, but a consciousness is created between them. That is where my mind is.”

Commentary: Ananda said, “The middle I speak of is neither of those.** The mind isn’t located inside or outside; this isn’t what I meant, World Honored One. **As the World Honored One has said, the eyes and forms are the conditions which create the eye-consciousness.** It’s just as you explained before, World Honored One.”

Ananda is still using statements the Buddha made in the past as evidence for his points of view. “World Honored One, you said that when the eye encounters forms, the eye-consciousness is created between them. **The eyes make discriminations.** Why are the conditions for the arisal of the eye-consciousness, of seeing, created when the eyes encounter form? Because the eyes make discriminations. **Forms have no perception, but a consciousness is created between them. That is where my mind is.** The defiling object of form has no awareness of its own, but when the eyes encounter it, a kind of discriminating mind arises in their midst, and this is where my mind is. The middle I’m talking about is the place where the eyes and forms meet to create the eye-consciousness. That is the mind.”

O2 The Tathagata uses combining the two or not combining the two to refute his argument.
P1 He brings up two possibilities.

**Sutra: The Buddha said, “If your mind were between the eye and an object, does the mind’s substance combine with the two or does it not?

Commentary:** The Buddha listened to Ananda dispute his explanation and replied, **“If your mind were between the eye and an object, does the mind’s substance combine with the two or does it not?** Suppose it is as you say, and the mind is in the middle between the eye and the defiling object of form. Do they combine? Are they one or are they two?”

P2 He shows that both possibilities are impossible.

**Sutra: ”If it did combine with the two, then objects and the mind-substance would form a chaotic mixture. Since objects have no perception, while the substance has perception, the two would stand in opposition. Which is the middle?

”If it did not combine with the two, it would then be neither perceiver nor perceived and would have no substance or nature. Where would the characteristic of “middle” be? Commentary: If it did combine with the two -** if your mind, the mind you say is in the middle, includes the sense organs and their objects - **then objects and the mind-substance would form a chaotic mixture**. Which, then, is the substance of your mind, and which are the objects? Can you make a distinction? If you cannot, they are mixed chaotically together in a confusing disorder. **Since objects have no perception, while the substance has perception, the two would stand in opposition.** Things don’t know anything, while your eye-organ has a mind-substance. They are opposites. **Which is the middle?** Where is the middle you speak of? Is your mind in the middle of your eye, or is it in the middle of the objects the eye sees?

**If it did not combine with the two, it would then be neither perceiver nor perceived and would have no substance or nature.** If your mind does not combine with the eye and the object the eye sees, it will not be perceiving anything; it will have no nature that is aware. **Where would the characteristic of ‘middle’ be?** In the final analysis, where is your mind?

P3 Concluding refutation.

**Sutra:”Therefore you should know that for the mind to be in the middle is impossible.”

Commentary:**For these reasons, Ananda, you should understand that your argument that the mind is in the middle won’t stand. There is no such principle.

N7 Ananda attaches to the mind as being non-attachment.
O1 Ananda presents the idea of non-attachment as being the mind.

**Sutra:Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, when I have seen the Buddha turn the dharma wheel in the past with great Maudgalyayana, Subhuti, Purna, and Shariputra, four of the great disciples, he often said that the nature of the mind which perceives, makes discriminations, and is aware is located neither within nor outside nor in the middle; it is not located anywhere at all. That very non-attachment to anything is what is called the mind. Therefore, is my non-attachment my mind?”

Commentary:**One suspects that Ananda began to get nervous after hearing the Buddha refute yet another of his arguments. He had exhausted his knowledge and reached the end of his wits. By this time, there was no way out for him; there was no escape. So once again he transferred some of the principles the Buddha had spoken previously to the present situation in an attempt to save himself from defeat.

**Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, when I have seen the Buddha turn the dharma wheel in the past with great Maudgalyayana,”** whose name means “descendent of a family of bean gatherers”; **Subhuti,** whose name means “born into emptiness”; **Purna,** whose name means “son of completion and compassion”; and **Shariputra, four of the great disciples**. They turn the dharma wheel together. What does it mean to “turn the dharma wheel”? It means to use the words spoken by the Buddha to teach and transform living beings. They are spoken this way and that way and all around, just as the principles of the Shurangama Sutra are now being explained over and over. That’s why it is called a “wheel.” Turning the dharma wheel reveals the principles and it crushes the heavenly demons and followers of other religions. When those of other religions encounter this wheel they are smashed by it. Obliterated.

**He often said**, he repeated many times in the Agama sutras and the Vaipulya sutras, **that the nature of the mind which perceives, makes discriminations, and is aware is located neither within nor outside nor in the middle; it is not located anywhere at all.** If the nature of the mind which calculates, knows, and makes distinctions is located neither inside nor outside, it should be located between them, in the middle; but it isn’t there either. It isn’t anywhere. **That very non-attachment to anything is what is called the mind.** The aware, perceptive mind is not attached anywhere at all, and since it has no place of attachment, it is called the mind. **Therefore, is my non-attachment my mind?** “Now, I’m not attached. The mind I speak of is also not attached. But I don’t know whether one can call it ‘mind’.” Ananda thought that if he asked it this way, the Buddha would certainly agree that what he referred to was the mind. After all, the Buddha himself had said so.

But what the Buddha had said previously was said in accordance with worldly dharmas. His explanation then was geared to the understanding of the people he was speaking to then. People of the small vehicle do not understand great vehicle dharma, and if one were to explain the true mind to them without any introduction, they would not believe it; so the Buddha spoke to them about the conscious mind. He was complying with worldly dharmas. Now Ananda wishes to take the conscious mind of ordinary people as his mind. Is he right? Basically, Ananda’s view would be acceptable from the point of view of ordinary people. But the mind the Buddha is speaking of is not the conscious mind. It is the permanently dwelling true mind, not the mind which has false thinking. Yet Ananda still thinks his false-thinking mind is his true mind; he continues to mistake a thief for his son.

O2 The Tathagata uses the existence or non-existence of the appearance of the mind as refutation.
P1 He asks if it exists or not.

**Sutra:The Buddha said to Ananda, “You say that the nature of the mind which perceives, makes discriminations, and is aware is not located anywhere at all. The entirety of things existing in the world consists of space, the waters, the land, the creatures that fly and walk, and all external objects. Does your non-attachment also exist?

Commentary:**The Buddha again replied to Ananda’s explanation with a question: **You say that the nature of the mind which perceives, makes discriminations, and is aware is not located anywhere at all.** To have no attachment is to have no location. **The entirety of things existing in the world consists of space, the waters, the land, the creatures that fly and walk, and all external objects.** There are two kinds of worlds: the sentient world, composed of living beings, and the material world, which includes all the mountains, rivers, the great expanse of earth, and all the various buildings. These and empty space and the myriad external objects together make up the two kinds of retributions: dependent retribution, which includes the land, the waters, the buildings; and proper retribution, which refers to our bodies. The world consists of these two. **Does your non-attachment also exist?** Among all these things in the world, where are you? What place are you not attached to? Is there someplace where there is non-attachment or is there not? If your non-attachment is nowhere, then that’s the same as saying it doesn’t exist.

P2 He shows that neither are possible.

**Sutra:”If it does not exist, it is the same as hairs on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. How can you speak of non-attachment?

Commentary:If it does not exist, it is the same as hairs on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit.** Have you ever seen a turtle with hair or a horned rabbit? In other words, there is no such thing. **How can you speak of non-attachment?** If it doesn’t exist, what is it you are attached to? Why did you bring up the world “non-attachment”?

**Sutra:”If non-attachment existed, it could not be said to be non-existent. To be non-existent is to be without attributes. To be existent is to have attributes. Whatever has attributes has a location; how then can it be said to be unattached?

Commentary: If non-attachment existed, it could not be said to be non-existent.** You propose that at a certain place there is a certain non-attachment. But you cannot say there isn’t anything there. You speak of non-attachment, but if there is a certain thing called non-attachment, then you still have something; and how can you call that non-attachment? But if in fact it doesn’t exist - if there is nothing there - why do you want to assign the name “non-attachment” to it? That is really a case of putting a head on top of a head or riding a donkey in search of a donkey.

**To be non-existent is to be without attributes.** If you haven’t any attachment, that is non-existence. **To be existent is to have attributes. Whatever has attributes has a location; how then can it be said to be unattached?** But if it is not non-existent, then it has characteristics, and if something has form and an appearance, it thereby must have a location. If it has a location, how can you say it is unattached?

P3 Concluding refutation.

**Sutra: ”Therefore you should know, to call the aware, knowing mind non-attachment to anything is impossible.”

Commentary:**Ananda’s seventh attempt to locate his mind has failed, as well. The Buddha says, **“Therefore you should know,** Ananda, **to call the aware, knowing mind non-attachment to anything is impossible.** To say that your mind is non-attachment won’t work either. Your argument won’t stand. It is unreasonable.”

The False Consciousness is Not the Mind

L2 The Tathagata admonishes that the false consciousness is not the mind.
M1 Ananda reproves himself and asks for instruction.

**Sutra: Then Ananda arose from his seat in the midst of the great assembly, uncovered his right shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, respectfully put his palms together, and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:**During the dialogue with the World Honored One, Ananda had spun in circles and couldn’t escape; he went around and around and still had not found the right road, because he was using his discriminating conscious mind and mistaking it for his true mind. And so from beginning to end he was unable to enter into the realm of the mysterious. He didn’t measure up; he didn’t pass the test.

**Then Ananda arose from his seat in the midst of the great assembly**; at that time there were great bhikshus, great Arhats, and great Bodhisattvas in the dharma assembly. He **uncovered his right shoulder**. This means he let the right side of his robe fall, the way the sash I am now wearing over my robe is designed to leave the right shoulder uncovered. In China customs are such that exposing one’s shoulder would not be considered respectful, but by Indian custom, uncovering the right shoulder is a gesture of respect, especially in Buddhism. When he uncovered his right shoulder and **placed his right knee on the ground,** that represents the purity of body karma. The body cannot create evil karma in that position. He **respectfully put his palms together**: that represents the purity of mind karma. **And said to the Buddha**: that represents the purity of mouth karma. Thus the purity of the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind are represented as Ananda requests dharma of the Buddha.

**Sutra: ”I am the Tathagata’s youngest cousin. I have received the Buddha’s compassionate love and have left the home-life, but I have been dependent on his affection, and as a consequence have pursued erudition and am not yet without outflows.

Commentary:** Now Ananda thinks over how he has spent his time since he has left the home-life. He says: **I am the Tathagata’s youngest cousin.** In Shakyamuni Buddha’s family there were four kings and eight sons. His father was one of the four brothers, each of whom had two sons. Ananda was the youngest of them. **I have received the Buddha’s compassionate love and have left the home-life.** I followed the Buddha and left the home-life. In leaving home, one leaves the home of ignorance which could be said to be everyone’s house; one leaves the home of the three realms, that is, the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm; one leaves the home of affliction; and one leaves the worldly home, that is the home of one’s family. When you leave home, you leave these and many other kinds of homes. But though Ananda left his worldly home, he had not yet severed his emotional feelings. He still had not left the homes of ignorance and affliction or the home of the three realms.

**But I have been dependent on his affection.** Ananda confesses that he has relied too much on his family tie with the Tathagata. He allowed himself to be disobedient sometimes in order to get the Buddha’s attention. He would sometimes act like a child and be deliberately rambunctious, or he would purposefully not abide by the rules, and he expected the Buddha to sympathize with him, to take care of him. **And as a consequence have pursued erudition and am not yet without outflows.** He concentrated on learning at the expense of samadhi. Ananda had reached the first stage of arhatship, but it is not until the fourth stage that one is without outflows. At the fourth stage one puts an end to birth and death does not have to flow back into the three realms. But in the first stage, outflows remain.

**Sutra: ”I could not overcome the Kapila mantra. I was spun around by it and sank in the house of prostitution, all because I did not know the location of the realm of reality.

Commentary: I could not overcome the Kapila mantra.** I was incapable of opposing the mantra that came from the Brahma Heaven which the religion of the yellow-haired used - that deviant dharma of those “side doors and outside ways.” I did not have enough strength to counteract it and **was spun around by it and sank in the house of prostitution.** The deviant mantra plunged me into confusion and I sank as if drowning in the sea. There is another explanation, since the Chinese character for “stank” is also the word for urine: Ananda is indicating that he came in contact with something unclean. He went into the filthy brothel where women sold themselves. He found himself stuck there as if in a cesspool and could not extricate himself. If the Buddha had not used the Shurangama Mantra to rescue him, Ananda would not have had the opportunity to compile the sutras. If the sutra store had been compiled at all, it would have been done by someone else. Ananda would have had no part in it. Fortunately Shakyamuni Buddha used the Shurangama Mantra to rescue him, so he was able to compile the Shurangama Sutra and give us a record of these causes and conditions.

**All because I did not know the location of the realm of reality.** The realm of reality is another name for the true mind. Why did I sink in the house of prostitution? Because I did not know where the fundamental true mind is. To this very moment, Ananda is still trying to find a location for the mind. He’s being boggled by his own intelligence. He keeps spinning around in it and doesn’t know how to get out.

**Sutra:”I only hope that the World Honored One, out of great kindness and pity, will instruct us in the path of shamata to guide the icchantikas and overthrow the mlecchas.”

Commentary:I only hope that the World Honored One, out of great kindness and pity**. Now I only have one wish, that the World Honored One will extend his great compassion, to rescue me from my suffering and bring me bliss. I hope the Buddha **will instruct us in the path of shamata to guide the icchantikas and overthrow the mlecchas.** World Honored One, teach not only myself but all those in the great assembly, who upon hearing the dharma have given rise to doubts. Instruct us in how to develop concentration; show us the path to the cultivation of the dharma door of stillness.

Icchantika is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean “insufficient faith.” Icchantikas are those whose faith is deficient, and a deficiency of faith is the same as no faith at all. Icchantikas are also said to be those who have “burned up their good roots.” What is left once their good roots are burned up? Bad roots.

Dharma Master Dao Sheng once explained the Nirvana Sutra in China before the final volume had arrived from India. In the first half of the sutra, it says that icchantikas have no Buddha-nature. Most dharma masters then explained the line as meaning that icchantikas cannot become Buddhas. Actually, in the final volume of the sutra it says that icchantikas can also become Buddhas, but at that time the final volume of the sutra was not known in China. Nevertheless, when Dharma Master Dao Sheng came to that passage of text in the first part of the sutra, he did not follow its apparent meaning, but explained instead that icchantikas can become Buddhas. As a result, the other dharma masters opposed him, were jealous of him, and said that he had had the nerve to contradict the sutra’s meaning and had done it just to be different. Actually, Dharma Master Dao Sheng wasn’t saying the sutra was wrong or that the Buddha had spoken incorrectly. He understood the principle behind it, and although he had not seen the final volume of the sutra, he already realized that the Buddha could not have spoken the dharma this way. But because jealousies had been aroused, no one came to listen to him explain sutras any longer, so he went to Su Zhou, near Shanghai, to Hu Qiu mountain. There he lectured the Nirvana Sutra to the rocks. When he again reached the passage of text that said icchantikas do not have the Buddhanature, he asked the rocks, “I say icchantikas also have the Buddhanature. What do you say? Am I right, or not?” The rocks on the mountain bowed their heads in silent assent. So it is said:

When Sheng the venerable
spoke the dharma,
Even the rocks
bowed their heads.

Basically, of course, rocks are senseless things which cannot move, but even so they agreed with Dharma Master Dao Sheng’s explanation and so bowed their assent. There are reasons for this. I believe there were ghosts and spirits sitting or sprawled out on the rocks. On second thought, they couldn’t have been sprawled out, because you have to sit up when you listen to sutras. When the dharma master asked his question, the ghosts and spirits were so exuberant in their agreement that they made the rocks shake. Or, perhaps in past lives these rocks had spiritual natures which were now hidden away in a casing of rock, and this is why they could register their agreement. So,

When Sheng the venerable
spoke the dharma,
Even the rocks
bowed their heads.

Still, icchantikas are extremely difficult to save. When you elucidate principle for them, they never quite believe you. “Hey,” they say, “Who ever heard of such a thing?” No matter how well you speak dharma for them, they don’t believe you. They are like Kaushthila who took “non-acceptance” as his doctrine. No matter what you said to him, he wouldn’t listen, he wouldn’t accept it. That’s an icchantika.

Mleccha is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean “a fondness for defilement.” Mlecchas like unclean places. Mleccha also means “evil knowledge and views.” Most people’s knowledge and points of view are good, but these people’s are evil. They are solely intent upon doing wrong. They exude nothing but poisonous fluids, which are not only bad for them but also influence others to imitate them. So we people should clean up a bit and not take special pleasure in filth. Ananda asked the Buddha to overcome the mlecchas and prevent people from falling victim to a fondness for unwholesome places, from having such a problem.

**Sutra:After he had finished speaking, he placed his five limbs on the ground along with the entire great assembly. Then they stood on tiptoe waiting attentively and thirstily to respectfully hear the instructions.

Commentary:
After he had finished speaking, he placed his five limbs on the ground**. “Five limbs” refer to his two hands, his two feet, and his head. In Buddhism this is the most respectful gesture of all. He bowed **along with the entire great assembly**. Not only did Ananda bow to the Buddha after he finished making his request, everyone in the great assembly followed suit. **Then they stood on tiptoe waiting attentively and thirstily to respectfully hear the instructions.** “Attentively” indicates that they listened carefully, intent upon what instructions the Buddha would give them, upon the doctrine of samadhi which Ananda had requested. They were inexpressibly thirsty for the dharma as if their mouths were parched and they were waiting for a drink of water. The wisdom-life of the dharma-bodies of these people had dried up and withered, and they were waiting for the Buddha to pour the water of dharma over them and nourish their dharma bodies’ wisdom-life.

The phrase “on tip-toe” refers to how people stretch up in readiness to listen when they are in the back of the room and wish to hear better. Those who compiled the sutras used these descriptive terms to indicate how happy these people were to hear the dharma. They “stood waiting”: this also indicates that those far from the Buddha stood on tip-toe in order to get a better view of him as they waited for him to speak. Why did they want to see the Buddha? Because everyone is fond of the Buddha’s thirty-two adorning hallmarks and eighty subtle characteristics, and everyone likes to gaze at them, including the great Bodhisattvas, great Arhats, great bhikshus, and laypeople in the Shurangama dharma assembly. I believe they were of more or less the same mind as Ananda. It was because of the Buddha’s thirty-two hallmarks that Ananda had left the home-life, and it was probably because of the Buddha’s hallmarks that the others in the assembly had come to hear the dharma.

The word “respectfully” is used to indicate again how the kings, the great ministers, the elders, and laypeople all stood waiting with great reverence to hear the Buddha explain the doctrine of samadhi.

M2 The Tathagata reveals it is not the mind.
N1 The display of light destroys the manifestation of all appearances.

**Sutra:Then the World Honored One radiated forth from his face various kinds of light, dazzling light as brilliant as hundreds of thousands of suns.**

**Commentary:Then** was when Ananda placed his five limbs on the ground and the great assembly attentively, thirstily stood on tip-toe waiting respectfully to hear the instruction. **The World Honored One radiated forth from his face**: the Chinese is mian men, literally “face-door,” but this just refers to the face. You should not go looking for a door on the Buddha’s face. He hasn’t any doors on his face, just windows. His eyes are windows and his nostrils are caves in which people can sit in meditation and cultivate. Not only is that possible in the Buddha’s nostrils, it can be done in any one of ours as well. If you want to say there is a door, the mouth could be called a door, but there is no reason to stick to every word so closely.

The Buddha emitted from his face **various kinds of light, dazzling light as brilliant as hundreds of thousands of suns.** The Buddha emitted not just one kind, but many kinds of light from his face. In general there are five colors of light, but in the five colors many, many color-combinations can be distinguished. The Buddha’s light was more powerful than a lightning flash, brighter than an electric light, as it radiated back and forth. The sunlight in the world we live in is very powerful, but the Buddha emitted light whose intensity was a thousand times greater than the light of hundreds of thousands of suns. How much light would you say that was? When Ananda compiled the sutras he described the Buddha’s light this way because this was the way he himself had personally witnessed it.

**Sutra: The six kinds of quaking pervaded the Buddharealms, and thus lands as many as fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions appeared simultaneously.

Commentary: The six kinds of quaking pervaded the Buddharealms**. All the billions of worlds where there was a Buddha - not only our Saha world but all the others - experienced the six kinds of earthquakes. Three kinds involve movement: quaking, erupting, and heaving up. Quaking is the motion of the earth in an earthquake. Erupting refers to intermittent agitations which cause the earth to little by little gush forth like water from a fountain. Heaving up refers to continual, violent upward movements of the earth. Sometimes the earth can be heaped up to form high places and sometimes it can sink to form depressions. At present our planet earth is in the midst of changes brought about by the six kinds of earthquakes.

The other kinds of earthquakes - cracking, roaring, and striking - involve sound. Cracking is not the same as quaking, which is a simple movement of the earth. When there is cracking, whole sections of the earth are torn asunder. The earth splits apart and often rends whole buildings in the process. Roaring occurs when the earth emits sound unheard in the world. Striking occurs when the earth splits apart and the two faces of the crevasse strike against one another.

The six kinds of earthquakes occur for various reasons: when someone in the world become a Buddha; when someone becomes enlightened, but has not yet realized Buddhahood, that is, when he accomplished the result of arhatship; and when a demon king wishes to disturb the minds of people in the world. So there are good earthquakes and bad earthquakes. When they are good, that is, when a Buddha accomplishes the Way or someone achieves enlightenment, no matter how great a disturbance the six kinds of earthquakes cause, no one will be injured. When a demon king comes to display his demonic power and disturb the minds of people in the world, he can kill people and wreak destruction. When there is an earthquake in one country and many people perish, and then the same thing happens in another country, that is a demon king who has decided to flex his muscles, awe the people of the world, and extend the scope of his power. It is just like a political demonstration: the demon kings stage demonstrations for us people, in order to say: “Take a look at how great my demonic powers are. I can overturn heaven and upset earth.” Therefore we should be careful to determine whether each experience we encounter is a good or bad situation, since there are many distinctions.

Speaking of earthquakes, I remember experiencing an earthquake one night after my mother died, when I was practicing filial piety beside her grave. I was sitting in dhyana, and everything was empty - there was no self and no others - when suddenly I felt a movement, an agitation. I thought to myself, “Ah, what is this demon that can shake my body this way? Its strength is certainly formidable.” I didn’t realize it was an earthquake. The next day someone came to tell me there had been an earthquake - a very strange earthquake. During it, the well near where I sat had spouted fire. This was a water-well, not a volcano, and yet fire had come forth from it. There are many strange things in this world.

I believe someone is thinking, “I’m sure that beneath the well there was a vein of sulfur which fed a volcano, and that is why the well spouted fire.” Maybe that’s the way it was.

**And thus**: Once the six kinds of earthquakes occurred, **lands as many as fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions appeared simultaneously.** How many fine motes of dust are there? They are uncountable. Yet the lands which appeared were as incalculably numerous as dust-motes. The great Arhats, great Bodhisattvas, great bhikshus, elders, laypeople, and the king and his ministers all saw these lands appear simultaneously. What kind of experience would you say that was?

**Sutra:The Buddha’s awesome spirit caused all the realms to unite into a single realm.

Commentary:The Buddha’s awesome spirit**: Shakyamuni Buddha used his awesome spiritual strength, the power of his spiritual penetrations, to cause **all the realms**, all the lands as many as the fine motes of dust, **to unite into a single realm.** Although the lands were innumerable, they all came together into one. For example, nowadays we can enlarge a very small photograph into a very large one and reduce a very large photograph into a very small one; wouldn’t you say that is a spiritual penetration? In the same way, Shakyamuni Buddha, by means of his spiritual power, made distant places close, by reducing all the myriad lands throughout the great trichiliocosm into a single one, as if he were reducing a photograph. And yet, though the lands were united into one, each remained perfectly intact in their original order, each still located in its respective position without being mixed up. The reason the Buddha brought all the worlds together was so that everyone in all the worlds could see and listen to him as he explained the inexpressibly wonderful dharma.

**Sutra:And in these realms all the great Bodhisattvas, each remaining in his own country, put their palms together and listened.

Commentary:**Shakyamuni Buddha brought all the lands and realms together into one because he wanted everyone to be able to listen to the explanation of the great Shurangama Samadhi, so that the Bodhisattvas in every land could come to understand this doctrine. So he emitted a great light from his face, a blazing light as brilliant as hundreds of thousands of suns, until every land was illumined. **And in these realms all the great Bodhisattvas, each remaining in his own country, put their palms together and listened** to Shakyamuni Buddha speak dharma and explain the Shurangama Sutra.

N2 The two roots of true and false are revealed.
O1 The Tathagata brings up former reasons and illustrates them with an analogy.

**Sutra: The Buddha said to Ananda, “All living beings, from beginningless time onward and in all kinds of upside-down ways, have created seeds of karma which naturally run their course, like the aksha cluster.

Commentary:**After the Buddha had reduced the worlds to the number of fine motes of dust to a single world, in which all the respective worlds remained in perfect order, the great Bodhisattvas in each of these worlds thirstily gazed at the Buddha with uplifted faces. Like Ananda, they were inexpressibly thirsty, wanting to drink the dharma-water of Shakyamuni Buddha.

All of you have probably experienced a severe thirst. When you are hungry, after a while the hunger seems to subside a bit and is not so severe, but if you are thirsty, perhaps as a result of eating something salty, not having any water to drink is very difficult to bear.

Why were the Bodhisattvas so inexpressibly thirsty? They had eaten too much of the salt of affliction. Ananda, who had concentrated exclusively on being greatly learned and had neglected his samadhi-power, had eaten too much of the salt of being greatly learned. They wanted the water of samadhi to quench their thirst, to irrigate them, so they thirstily gazed upward. In explaining this, my own throat feels dry. But my dryness comes from talking, whereas the great Bodhisattva’s dryness came from not having obtained the dharma.

Some of you aren’t clear about this and say, “I don’t understand what I’m reading.” If you know that you don’t understand, that itself is understanding. If you truly didn’t understand, you wouldn’t even be aware of your lack of understanding. You would sit there and not know whether you understood. Now you are aware that you do not understand very much of the sutra you are reading, and that means you have some understanding. If you have the hope of understanding, the day will come when you will understand and be clear about the sutra. If you understood thoroughly right now, that would be something else again. In that case, this dharma master would be left with nothing to eat. If you understood the sutra before I even finished explaining it, what use would there be for me in the future? I’d be useless! However, to understand the sutra immediately isn’t possible. It’s also impossible to understand everything there is to know about the affairs of the world in a single day. Some time is required. As you read more, you will quite naturally come to understand. Why don’t you understand? Because you haven’t read much.

**The Buddha said to Ananda.** Just as I am now explaining to you who are reading this, the Buddha explained to Ananda. But I’m not the Buddha and you are not Ananda. I am just explaining this recorded history about Ananda for you.

**All living beings, from beginningless time onward.** All living beings include those born from eggs, from wombs, from moisture, or by transformation; those with form, without form, with thought, or without thought; those not entirely with thought, and those not entirely without thought. When the Buddha spoke sutras, he himself couldn’t completely explain the doctrines. He said, “From beginningless time onward” - from time without any starting-point. When would you say that was? If you were trying to be logical, you would say this passage doesn’t make sense. But in fact there is no way to state when people came into being.

What is the beginning? By way of explanation, just take a single family. You say, “I am my father’s son.” Whose son is your father? Your father is your grandfather’s son. Whose son is your grandfather? You keep tracing your family tree until you can’t trace it any further. “This man was my family’s very first founding father,” you say. But who was his founding father? Trace that. Find out. You cannot find out. It is said that people evolved from monkeys. What did monkeys evolve from? If monkeys can turn into people, how do you know that all people evolved from monkeys? Couldn’t any have evolved from pigs? or from dogs? or from cows? If monkeys can evolve into people, then all other living beings can evolve in the same way. All can undergo mutual transference. So you trace back and forth and you find there isn’t any beginning.

Now, with scientific and archaeological discoveries, people know how many thousands of years ago things occurred, how many tens of thousands of years ago things occurred. They know where the remains of human bones from ten thousand years ago or a million years ago are found. So what? Is that proof of something? You cannot say it is. It doesn’t prove anything.

”If that’s not evidence of anything, then why do societies invest so much money in research and experimentation?” you say. That’s the foolishness of this world. Having nothing to do, people look for something to do. If they hadn’t done these muddled things, how could this world’s resources have become so depleted and wasted away? If you truly understand, what can you say is real in this world? Find something real and bring it here for me to look at. Everyone is born in a stupor and dies in a dream.

”But they benefit the country! etc…” you say.

They’re muddled people doing muddled things. They think themselves intelligent, but actually they are just cheating themselves, because one cannot find the beginning. “From beginningless time onward.” One need speak of nothing more than one person’s life and his genealogy which has no beginning or end. As to our lives, when would you say they began?

”Mine began at my birth in this life,” you say.

If it really did begin just that short time ago, then there’s no problem. It is just to be feared that it did not begin such a short time ago. That is why there is a problem.

**And in all kinds of upside-down ways.** That foolishness I spoke of before is just to be upside-down, and to be born in a stupor and die in a dream. You say, “I’ve got to give this body some good things to eat and some nice clothes to wear.” And then what? Ultimately, then what? As I said before, you’re just putting finery on a toilet. What’s so great about it? That’s to be upside-down. To invent something to do when there is nothing to do is to act “in all kinds of upside-down ways.” It’s to fail to recognize one’s pure basic substance and to apply one’s effort to false thinking instead, “Ah,” you say, “So-and-so is really fine.” So what if he is really fine? Or you say, “So-and-so is really rotten.” So what if he is really rotten? If you investigate a little more deeply you’ll find that these kinds of things do not exist. What is fine and what is rotten? It is discrimination through the eyes of living beings that divides things into fine and rotten, good and bad, right and wrong. In the treasury of the Thus Come One there are no such questions. There isn’t anything at all in the treasury of the Thus Come One. It is absolutely clean. Our eyes may see the mountains, the rivers, the earth, and vegetation - all the myriad things - but they are simply manifestations of consciousness. When you really understand the dharma of no production and no extinction, then there basically isn’t anything at all. But this doctrine is not easy to comprehend. We must come to understand its meaning gradually.

They **have created seeds of karma which naturally run their course, like the aksha cluster.** Living beings’ ignorance leads them to act in upside-down ways, and their various upside-down acts create every kind of karma. According to their various karmas, they undergo various retributions. Why do people do evil things? It is because of their ignorance, their lack of understanding, their state of delusion. Their delusion leads to the creation of bad karma, and since they create bad karma they undergo the retribution of suffering. It is a three-part process: delusion, leading to the creation of bad karma, which leads to the retribution of suffering. The Buddha compares the process to the *aksha*, a shrub found in India which bears three fruits in a cluster on one stem. Though you may have never seen an aksha, the sutra makes the meaning clear, and one cannot fail to understand it. The aksha cluster represents the three fruits of delusion, karma, and retribution, which are interconnected as if they were joined on a single stem. You can’t say which precedes the other; they follow after one another in a continuous revolution, life after life, aeon after aeon. Where would you say it all began? There is no beginning. It’s an endless cycle on the spinning wheel of the six paths of rebirth

Each of us people born here in the world is like a fine mote of dust which suddenly rises high, suddenly falls low, is suddenly up and suddenly down. When your actions are good and meritorious you are born higher. When you do things which create offenses, you fall. Therefore we people should do good things and accomplish meritorious deeds. Don’t do things which create offenses because this world runs on the principle of cause and effect, the law of karma. And the seeds of karma naturally run their course: you undergo a retribution for whatever you do.

There is a distinction between “karma” and “cause.” It is said that whenever you plant a cause, you reap its effect. A cause is a particular action which will lead in the future to a particular effect. Karma is the general process by which this inevitably happens. It’s like planting a seed in the ground in the spring: this is the cause which, at the end of the growing season, brings about the effect of the harvest in the autumn. The entire process, from planting through months of growth to maturity and harvest, is karma. The causes you plant will determine what harvest you reap. If you plant good causes, you will reap good results. If you plant bad causes, you will reap bad results.

Your karma is made up of whatever you ordinarily do most. For example, when you run a business you engage in “commercial karma.” Your occupational karma can be good karma or bad. If you are a butcher, for example, you have the occupational karma of killing; if you are a thief, your occupational karma is stealing; if you do nothing but engage in illicit sexual affairs, you have the occupational karma of lust. If you never tell the truth, your occupational karma is lying. In general, whatever you do continually is your karma, and your retribution will be in accordance with it.

Thus karma is created from the very first ignorant thought, and from karma born of ignorance comes retribution. The three together like an aksha cluster. This is how the Buddha clearly explains the process of karma to Ananda in this passage.

**Sutra: ”The reason those who cultivate cannot accomplish unsurpassed Bodhi, but instead reach the level of a sound-hearer or of one enlightened to conditions, or become accomplished in outside ways as heaven-dwellers or as demon-kings or as members of the retinue of demons is that they do not know the two fundamental roots and are mistaken and confused in their cultivation. They are like one who cooks sand in the hope of creating savory delicacies. They may pass through as many aeons as there are motes of dust, but in the end they will not obtain what they want.

Commentary: The reason those who cultivate cannot accomplish unsurpassed Bodhi.** This includes those of all the outside ways as well as all Buddhists. People cultivate the Way in the hope of obtaining something, and accomplishing something. What they wish to accomplish is the unsurpassed enlightened Way. They want to obtain the unsurpassed fruition of enlightenment. “Bodhi” is the accomplishment of Buddhahood. Bodhisattvas are called “surpassed lords” because above them is the Buddha, while Buddhas are the “unsurpassed lords,” and “unsurpassed Bodhi” is the state of having accomplished Buddhahood.

**But instead reach the level of a sound-hearer or of one enlightened to conditions.** Can cultivators reach positions other than Buddhahood? Sound-hearers are those who hear the Buddha’s sound and awaken to the Way. They cultivate the dharma of the four truths. Those enlightened to conditions cultivate the dharma of the twelve links of conditioned causation.

**Or become accomplished in outside ways as heaven-dwellers or as demon-kings or as members of the retinue of demons.** What is meant by “outside ways”? The term has been mentioned often. Those who “seek the dharma outside the mind” are said to follow an outside way. In fact, everyone who has not reached enlightenment or realized Buddhahood can be said, in a sense, to be an externalist.

There are many heavens. The one closest to us is the Heaven of the Four Kings. It lies halfway up Mount Sumeru on the north, south, east, and west. The four heavenly kings are the Heavenly King of Increase and Growth, the Heavenly King of Learning, the Heavenly King of the Broad Eyes, and the Heavenly King Who Upholds his Country. The lifespan of the inhabitants of the Heaven of the Four Kings is 500 years. However, fifty years among us people is equivalent to only one day and night in that heaven.

Above the Heaven of the Four Kings is the Trayastrimsha Heaven where the lifespan of inhabitants is 1000 years. A hundred years among people is equivalent to one day and night in the Trayastrimsha Heaven. Trayastrimsha is Sanskrit for “thirty-three,” since the Trayastrimsha Heaven is made up of thirty-three heavens, eight each on the north, south, east, and west sides of Mount Sumeru, making thirty-two, with the thirty-third, the Trayastrimsha Heaven located on Mount Sumeru’s peak.

The lord of the Trayastrimsha Heaven was a woman in the past. Once she saw a Buddha-image in a temple which had a leak in its roof. She resolved to repair the leak so the rain would not ruin the Buddha-image. She was a poor peasant woman, but she had friends, and she convinced thirty-two of her friends to join in her resolve. It was the merit and virtue derived from cultivating this vow which enabled those thirty-three people to be born in the heavens and become rulers of the Heaven of the Thirty-three. In the Shurangama Mantra is the phrase *Na Mwo Yin Two La Ye*. *Na Mwo* means homage to and *Yin Two La Ye* is the heavenly lord of the Heaven of the Thirty-three (*Indra*).

The Heaven of the Four Kings and the Heaven of the Thirty-three are the first two desire-heavens. The rest of the heavens will be explained in detail later.

The demon-kings dwell in the sixth desire-heaven. Not only demon-kings, but an entire population of demons dwells there: demon women, demon-children, and demon-grandchildren. Demons, too, have retinues, or followings, and the demon-kings hold court in the sixth desire heaven, where they reign supreme. Most of the dharmas cultivated in outside ways lead the cultivators to end up as demon kings at best, and more commonly as ordinary demons. At worst they will end up as demon-women. Demon-women are particularly beautiful and quite seductive. It doesn’t matter who you are. Ananda, for example, who had accomplished the first stage of arhatship, didn’t have enough samadhi-power to keep control of himself when he saw a demon-woman. He was ready to try anything. Demon-women are very powerful. You people who cultivate the Way should be careful not to let a demon attract you.

What do I mean by that? If you don’t have sufficient samadhi power, you won’t be able to maintain your composure when you encounter this situation, and the demon will spin you around and you will find yourself trailing along after a demon-woman into a demon’s hole.

If I say any more, the demons will complain, “You’re saying so much and exposing all our faults,” so I’ll stop talking. In general, just be careful. Develop your samadhi-power thoroughly, and then there will be nothing to fear. This is a most wonderful test I’m giving you.

Why can’t they become Buddhas or even become demon-kings? It is **that they do not know the two fundamental roots and are mistaken and confused in their cultivation.** These two roots are extremely important and will be explained in the following passages. And they misunderstand; they are mistaken about how to cultivate and as a result become confused. They don’t know how to work properly. For example, there is an outside way in India which professes to cultivate asceticism by sleeping on beds of nails. They say that one derives merit and virtue from bearing that kind of pain. What merit and virtue is there in that? Even if you were to sleep on knives, it would be of no use. Other people in India emulate the morality of cows and dogs. They mimic the behavior of those animals. Why? It is also a case of being mistaken and confused in their cultivation. They consider themselves genuine cultivators of the Way, but they are practicing non-beneficial ascetic practices which reap no fruit, no matter how hard you cultivate them.

What are they like? Now the Buddha gives us an example. **They are like one who cooks sand in the hope of creating savory delicacies. They may pass through as many aeons as there are motes of dust, but in the end they will not obtain what they want.** The sand will remain nothing but sand. It cannot change into food. Those who do not understand the two fundamental roots and are mistaken and reckless in their cultivation are doing what amounts to the same thing. O2 The Tathagata explains what the two roots are.

**Sutra: ”What are the two? Ananda, the first is the root of beginningless birth and death, which is the mind that seizes upon conditions and that you and all living beings now make use of, taking it to be the self-nature.

Commentary:What are the two?** The Buddha will now explain the two fundamental roots to Ananda, and I think everyone would like to know what they are. However, I’m not going to discuss them just yet. I’m going to tell you first about Ananda’s elder brother Sundarananda, since I haven’t introduced him to you yet. Sundarananda got along very well with his wife Sundari; they stuck together like glue. All day long they stayed right beside one another, they were so compatible. In fact, to distinguish him from Ananda, Sundarananda was given the name Sundari’s Nanada - Sundarananda.

The day came when the Buddha went to cross Sundarananda over. He took up his bowl and went to Sundarananda’s home to beg for food. When Sundarananda saw the Buddha coming, he withdrew from his wife and said, “Wait a bit, I am going to make offerings to the Buddha.”

His wife said, “You are going to make offerings to the Buddha? Well, come back immediately. Don’t go and then not come back.” “Of course, I’ll come right back,” Sundarananda said.

Sundari then spit on the dirt floor and said, “You’d better be back before that dries, or I won’t let you in my bed.”

Sundarananda heeded the command and said, “I’ll be back right away, for sure.” And he took vegetables and rice to fill the Buddha’s bowl.

He went to fill the bowl, but how was he to know that the Buddha would act so strangely? The Buddha used his spiritual power. Every time Sundarananda took a step forward to place the food in the Buddha’s bowl, the Buddha backed up, so that Sundarananda couldn’t reach the bowl. Sundarananda kept advancing to keep up with the Buddha, and in just a few steps they arrived at the Jeta Grove, despite the fact that it was a long way from Sundarananda’s house. Once they got there, Shakyamuni Buddha said, “Don’t go back. You stay here with me and leave the home-life.”

Sundarananda was shocked; he got goose-flesh. “Impossible,” he said emphatically. “I can’t stay. Sundari is waiting for me. I can;t remain here and leave home.”

The Buddha said, “You can’t leave home? Let me show you some things and see what you think.” He took Sundarananda to a place where there were hordes of monkeys. “Which is more beautiful,” the Buddha asked him, “these monkeys or your wife Sundari?”

”Obviously Sundari is more beautiful,” replied Sundarananda. “How could Sundari be compared to a monkey?”

”Quite right,” the Buddha agreed, and took him to the heavens. As they strolled among they noticed one particular palace was bustling with activity as servants scrubbed and polished. There were also 500 heavenly maidens in that palace, each one exquisite beyond compare.

”Why are you doing all this cleaning?” Sundaranda asked one of the servants.

”We’re getting this palace ready for the Buddha’s cousin Sundarananda,” they replied. “After he cultivates he’ll come to heaven to enjoy his blessings. These 500 heavenly maidens will be his wives.”

Sundarananda was ecstatic.

”Tell me, Nanada,” the Buddha said to him, “which would you say is more beautiful, Sundari or these heavenly maidens?”

”These maidens, obviously,” Sundarananda replied. “Why, compared to these maidens, Sundari is as ugly as a monkey.”

”Fine,” said the Buddha, “this place is being readied for you.” After they finished touring the place the Buddha took his cousin down to the hells. There they saw two ghosts heating a cauldron of oil. One of the ghosts was sound asleep and although the other one was awake, he didn’t have his eyes open. Nanda sized up the situation and thought to himself, “These ghosts are suppose to be tending the fire under that cauldron, but they’re not doing their job at all. Boy, are ghosts lazy!” Then he meddled a bit and nudged one, saying, “What are you doing this for?”

The little one’s droopy eyes popped open and glared at him. “What’s it to you?” he snapped.

”I just wondered,” said Sundarananda.

”You gotta know, huh? Okay, I’ll tell you. The Buddha’s got a cousin who’s cultivating the blessings of people and gods. He’s going to get born in the heavens and enjoy 500 years of heavenly blessings before he falls. Once he topples, however, he’ll come all the way down to hell and when he gets here, we’re supposed to have this pot hot. He’s to be deep-fried alive.”

Sundarananda was horrified and his hair stood on end. He suddenly understood the whole picture and thought, “Those heavenly maidens are ravishing, but 500 years of bliss with them isn’t worth it if I’m eventually going to end up in a pot of boiling oil. I’d better follow the Buddha, leave home, and be a monk.” So he forgot about Sundari and left home.

In order to rescue Sundarananda, the Buddha had to accompany him to the heavens and the hells. But saving Ananda, Sundarananda’s younger brother, was proving even more difficult. The Buddha explains one principle and Ananda doesn’t understand. The Buddha explains another principle and Ananda still doesn’t understand. The Buddha keeps on explaining and Ananda continues to be confused. Now the Buddha reveals the two fundamental roots that cause people to be mistaken and confused in their cultivation. He wanted to lead Ananda to understand how to direct his cultivation so that he could become a Buddha in the future.

**Ananda, the first is the root of beginningless birth and death.** From beginningless time onward you have endured birth after birth, death after death, death after death, birth after birth. I have already explained the meaning to you: “Unaware of the pure nature and bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind, they use false thinking. Such thoughts are not true, and so the wheel keeps turning.” In this passage once again the fundamental root of continual birth and death is revealed. It **is the mind that seizes upon conditions and that you and all living beings -** not just you, but all living beings - **now make use of.** To “seize upon conditions” is to act exclusively on the basis of false thought. For example, say, you go to school and knock yourself out trying to get on the good side of your professor by buttering him up. You flatter him by using all his titles and saying things you hope will please him. Why? In the hope that he’ll give you a high grade. You think, “It’s clear he’s going to give me an 80, but if I’m nice to him and maybe give him a gift or a little something, he might raise my grade a couple of points.” You gain advantages in imperceptible ways. That is an example of seizing upon conditions.

Another example occurs during elections for president, mayor, or senator. The candidates go around drumming up votes, and soliciting support from their friends. That, too, is a case of the mind seizing upon conditions, instead of letting things naturally take their course. If it were to happen naturally that you were to become president, you wouldn’t have to campaign to let everyone see that you were a worthy candidate. Your virtue would be obvious and people would look up to you. You wouldn’t have to persuade people; they quite naturally would elect you president. That’s the ideal way to do it. Anything else falls in the realm of seizing upon conditions.

An incident involving the Chinese Emperor Yao illustrates the point. When Emperor Yao got old, he wanted to relinquish his kingdom to a virtuous and worthy person. He had heard that Chao Fu and Xu Yu had great virtue and he decided to offer the empire to Chao Fu.

Why was he called Chao Fu, “Nest”? For one thing, he lived in a pretty strange place. He built a nest in a tree, just like a bird, and lived there. His manner of life was so simple that he drank by just scooping up water in his cupped hands. Once some people saw him do that and realized he didn’t have anything to drink from, so they gave him a gourd. He hung the gourd from a branch of his tree but it made such a racket when the wind blew that he finally threw it away; deciding it was just too much trouble.

Emperor Yao had heard how pure and lofty Chao Fu was, and he was determined to yield the throne to him. So he went to announce his intent. “I’m old now,” he said to Chao Fu. “You should come and be emperor. I’ll give my position to you.”

No sooner had he gotten the words out of his mouth then Chao Fu plugged up his ears and marched off. “I’m not the least bit interested in such talk,” he retorted. “In fact you’ve dirtied my ears by saying such things to me.” He headed for the river, where he proceeded to wash his ears.

Now it so happened that Xu Yu was at the river, too, watering his ox. “Why are you washing your ears?” he demanded.

”That Emperor Yao is really odious,” replied Chao Fu as he scrubbed away. “He came here to tell me he wants to bestow the country on me, and he asked me to become the emperor. His proposal has made my ears dirty, so I’m washing them.”

”How can my ox drink the water you’re using to clean your ear?” exclaimed Xu Yu. “My ox can’t drink such filthy stuff.” And he led the ox upstream for a drink of clean water.

You see, in ancient times, a sage would not only refuse the imperial throne, he would even say the very request had sullied his ears. And yet today it’s “Hey! Vote for me as president!” “Select me as your governor!” as candidates barnstorm across country making connections, wining and dining, wheeling and dealing, and even buying votes. But Chao Fu and Xu Yu would not seize upon conditions. They represent the ultimate in pure and lofty virtue.

Making use of the mind that seizes upon conditions, you take **it to be the self-nature.** You mistake your ordinary mind for your self-nature, and that is why you cannot end birth and death. You haven’t recognized it for what it is; instead you take a thief for your son, who in the future will plunder all the gems in your household. It is nothing but a false thought to think you can have any accomplishment by using the mind that seizes upon conditions. This is the mistake Ananda made.

**Sutra: ”The second is the primal pure substance of the beginningless Bodhi Nirvana. It is the primal bright essence of consciousness that can bring forth all conditions. Because of conditions, you consider it to be lost.**

**Commentary: The second is the primal pure substance of the beginningless Bodhi Nirvana.** There is no beginning; therefore the Buddha calls it “beginningless”; it was even before the beginning itself had occurred.

”Bodhi” is Sanskrit; it is interpreted to mean “awakening to the Way.” There are three kinds of Bodhi: The Bodhi of the true nature, which refers to your inherent Buddha-nature. Originally, everyone has the Buddha-nature; The Bodhi of actual wisdom, which refers to your genuine wisdom, not false wisdom; Expedient Bodhi, which refers to the state of people who have accomplished Bodhi and who then use expedient and clever means to teach and transform living beings. These three kinds of Bodhi can be said to be one. Divided they are three; in combination they are one. Together they are the Bodhi of the true nature, and from it comes the Bodhi of actual wisdom and expedient Bodhi.

Where does Bodhi itself come from? Bodhi doesn’t come from anywhere or go anywhere. Each of us is endowed with it. No one person has any more or less of it than anyone else. It neither increases nor decreases, is neither produced nor extinguished, is neither defiled nor pure.

Most people think that nirvana follows upon death, but actually it is not necessarily an after-death state. It is the certification to and attainment of a principle. “Nirvana” is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean “neither produced nor destroyed.” Since it is neither produced nor destroyed, birth and death are ended. One attains nirvana when one reaches the position of not being subject to birth and death. But nirvana is not the Buddha’s dying. When the Buddha dies, he enters nirvana; he enters and certifies to the principle of nirvana with its four virtues of permanence, bliss, true self, and purity. Some people who haven’t seen things clearly in their study of Buddhism think that nirvana is just death, but nirvana is emphatically not death. One who holds this view does not understand Buddhist principle.

**It is the primal bright essence of consciousness.** “Primal” means that it is originally a pure substance, that is, one which is neither defiled nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing. Originally its light illuminates everywhere. “Consciousness” here does not refer to the eight consciousnesses, nor to the eye-consciousness, the ear-consciousness, the nose-consciousness, the tongue-consciousness, the body-consciousness, the mind-consciousness, nor the manas or the alaya consciousnesses. It is not any of the eight consciousnesses. It refers to the essence of consciousness, which is but another name for Bodhi Nirvana. The phrase is used here to avoid repetition for the sake of literary style. It refers to the most essential and wonderful aspect of consciousness, the inherent Buddha-nature, the bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind **that can bring forth all conditions. Because of conditions, you consider it to be lost.** Because these causal conditions arise, you keep getting farther and farther away from where you want to be, like someone running farther and farther down the road. Didn’t I say before that the more Ananda answered the Buddha’s questions the farther off the track he got? All conditions are transformed and appear from within the primal bright essential consciousness, but after a long time of clutching at these conditions, it seems that something has been lost. What is lost? Nothing, really. The primal bright essential consciousness seems to be lost, but it isn’t. The primal pure substance of Bodhi Nirvana is the true jewel in your household. Basically, it is right there with you but you don’t know how to use it to your advantage. Since you can’t use it, it seems to be lost. It is as if you had a valuable gem which you have hidden away so well that after a long time you can no longer remember where you put it. Once you forget where it is, you can no longer make use of it. Although you may be destitute, you don’t know how to get at it and derive benefit from it. It’s the same as if it weren’t there. What do you use instead? You use your false thinking, your mind that seizes upon conditions. In the process you forget the true mind, and once it is forgotten, it is as good as lost. And this is why you have not become Buddhas and are bound up by birth and death instead: you have not found your true mind.

**Sutra:”Living beings lose sight of the original brightness: therefore, though they use it to the end of their days, they are unaware of it, and without intending to they enter the various destinies.

Commentary:Living beings lose sight of the original brightness.** Living beings seem to lose their pure basic nature, the bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind. In actual fact it is not lost. **Therefore, though they use it to the end of their days, they are unaware of it.** Living beings use the pure nature and bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind every day, since it is primarily from the true mind that the false-thinking mind which seizes upon conditions springs forth in the first place. Absolutely everything is a manifestation of the true mind, and it helps you from morning till night. But you don’t realize it. All you know how to use is your false-thinking mind.

The true mind is manifest in seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, awareness, and knowing. “What is the Buddha-nature?” someone once asked. Shakyamuni Buddha replied,

In the eyes it is called seeing,
In the ears it is called hearing,
In the nose it smells scents,
In the tongue it tastes,
In the hands it is dexterity,
In the feet it is agility.

He said, “What is the Buddha-nature?” It is the seeing-nature and the hearing-nature. It is the natural way in which the hands hold things. All of these are imperceptible manifestations of the true mind; but people are unaware of it. Now Ananda is still confused and so the Buddha uses all manner of analogies to explain to him.

**And without intending to they enter the various destinies.** Because they cling to the mind that seizes upon conditions, living beings enter their various destinies and yet are unaware of what they are doing. Your destiny is the place you tend toward. You walk right into it. Where do you end up? In the various destinies; that is, on the turning wheel of the six paths. There are the three good destinies of the gods, the asuras, and people, and the three evil destinies of the animals, the hungry ghosts, and the hell-beings. Whatever karma you create, you undergo a retribution for it. Without realizing it, you end up by entering one of the six paths. It is not that you particularly want to, but fall you do, just the same.

The destiny of the asuras is sometimes listed as an evil destiny. Asuras are said to be “strong in fighting,” since fighting is what they like to do best. They are always ready to pick a quarrel with people. Asura is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean “without wine” and also as “deformed.” Asuras like to drink wine, but when they are in the heavens, they don’t get any wine to drink. “Deformed” refers to the male asuras, whose bodies and faces are misshapen and ugly. They have hairlips and buck teeth. But the asuras women are gorgeous. The Jade Emperor encountered one such particularly beautiful female asura and chose her for his wife.

Now the Jade Emperor, Shakra, that is, liked to go hear sutras. He would transform himself into a man and come to this world to listen to sutras. But his asura wife “drank vinegar,” that is, she got jealous. “You go off to the world every single day. I wonder what weird essence or fox spirit has got you in her clutches. You’re chasing after a fox spirit, aren’t you?” She was accusing him of playing around with another woman. Worldly women are not the only ones who get jealous about their husbands.

Eventually Shakra’s wife decided to make herself invisible and follow along to find out what he was up to. (In this day and age there are private detectives to handle such matters, but probably they didn’t exist then so she had to run her own investigation and spy on him for herself.) So, when the Jade Emperor arrived at the dharma assembly, he bowed to the dharma master, paid his respects, and then took a seat in the assembly. It just so happen that on that particular day there were women sitting on either side of him. When the asura woman saw that, she was beside herself, and she made herself visible right there in the assembly to confront the emperor. “It’s no wonder you come here every day with so many women to keep you company,” she began.

The Jade Emperor was outraged. “I come here to listen to sutras and you’ve barged in and disturbed the Bodhimanda. You’re really creating heavy offenses.” He boxed her ears and she burst into tears and ran off to find her father. She demanded a divorce and refused to go back to her husband. Her father came to her defense and promised to wage war on the Jade Emperor. “I’ll defeat him and take the throne,” he consoled her. “Don’t fret.”

The fight was on. Every day the asura king did battle with the Jade Emperor. The emperor called out his full regalia, but the asura king’s ferocious battalions were in their element, and little by little the Jade Emperor was beaten back. He was losing ground fast. As a faithful follower of the Buddha, he went to the Buddha and asked him to devise some strategy. The Buddha gave him his *kashaya -* his robe - saying, “Take this back with you, tear it into strips and have each of your soldiers carry a piece of it. Then tell them all to recite ‘Mahaprajnaparamita’ (great wisdom which has reached the other shore.).”

The Jade Emperor did as he was instructed. The entire army began reciting “Mahaprajnaparamita” and when the next attack came the asuras fell. They were totally unprepared for the unprecedented force of the heavenly troop’s blows and admitted defeat once and for all.

Asuras are said to be “deformed”. They have the blessings of the gods, but not the virtue. There are asuras not only in the heavens but also among people. Soldiers and thieves are examples of human asuras. But a distinction has to be made here. In this country, military service is mandatory and people are drafted. Some of them are not asuras. Some of these that go into battle are just kids. At eighteen they’re drafted and at that age they haven’t the least bit of samadhi-power. They get jittery at the mere mention of war.

Front line troops should be trained for five years. For instance, they’ll be twenty-three if they enter the service at eighteen and train for five years, and by that time they have a little samadhi-power and some experience, so that if they are sent into battle, they have sufficient courage to cope with it. If they’re too young, their samadhi isn’t strong, they lack experience, and they haven’t got any guts. So I think that in the present circumstances, not every soldier is an asura. In former times, people who actually wanted to be soldiers or robbers could be classed as asuras.

There are other asuras besides soldiers. For instance, someone who has a big temper and is always picking fights with others has the nature of an asura. In general, asuras have violent tempers.

Wild stallions are an example of asuras. There are also asuras among the hungry ghosts. For the most part, living beings enter the four evil destinies. This is the meaning of this passage of text. Some living beings don’t lose their way and are born in the path of people or in the heavens, but that is still to “enter the various destinies without intending to.” You take the wrong road. N3 The Tathagata tells him directly that the false consciousness is not the mind.
O1 The Tathagata firmly admonishes him with a straight, “hey!”

**Sutra:

”Ananda, since you now wish to know about the path of shamatha with the hope of getting out of birth and death, I will question you further.”

Then the Tathagata raised his golden arm and bent his five wheeled fingers as he asked Ananda, “Do you see?”

Ananda said, “I see.”

Commentary:Then the Tathagata raised his golden arm**. As he was about to question Ananda, the Tathagata stretched his gold-colored arm out in front of him **and bent his five wheeled fingers as he asked Ananda, “Do you see?”** You can see how the Buddha is treating Ananda like a child by asking him such a simple question as whether he sees the Buddha raise his arm and bend his fingers. The fingers are said to be “wheeled” because the Buddha has the mark of the thousand-spoked wheel on his hands and on his feet. You could also say that “wheeled” refers to his bending his fingers in sequence: one, two, three, four, five.

It was something everyone could see. Why did the Buddha ask about such a simple matter? You may see it as simple now, but actually it is not. The more the Buddha’s question is delved into as the text continues, the deeper and more wonderful it becomes. It is just in the course of ordinary everyday matters that you can totally comprehend your inherent Buddha-nature. The familiar places you come in contact with every day are the representations of the Buddha-nature. But when you don’t know that through your own experience, then what is wrong seems right, and what is right seems wrong, and what is not lost seems lost. Basically you haven’t lost it, but it seems lost to you. Basically you haven’t forgotten it, but you can’t quite recall it. So your own family jewels, the scenery of your homeland, are not easy to understand. Why? Because from beginningless time the fundamental root of birth and death - the mind that seizes upon conditions - has been too strong. If the mind that seizes upon conditions would disappear, you would understand your inherent Buddha-nature in an instant.

**Ananda said, “I see.”** Take a look at this point. Why did the Tathagata stretch out his golden arm and bend his five wheeled fingers? It was to let Ananda know that the pure nature and bright substance of the permanently dwelling mind can manifest in the eye, in the seeing-nature. And that is why he concentrates on discussing doctrines involving seeing in the following passages. He wanted to lead Ananda to become enlightened through the seeing-nature.

So the Chinese patriarchs, the great virtuous ones of the Chan school would often just point a finger when asked for instruction. That is another way of telling you to become enlightened through the seeing-nature. Sometimes when you requested instruction from them they stared at you wide-eyed and speechless. They were indicating that you should break through at that point and comprehend the meaning totally. So in the Chan school they use ferocious stares. The Chan master may make some gesture in order to lead his disciples to become enlightened. If you understand, you become enlightened; if not, you miss the opportunity. A lot of Chinese patriarchs were that way. But they were enlightened, and so it was appropriate for them to use such methods to teach people. But you cannot say, “I heard that patriarchs merely point their finger, so when I meet up with someone I’ll point my finger and bring about his enlightenment.”

Have you become enlightened yourself? If you yourself haven’t become enlightened, how can you teach others to do so? If you haven’t become enlightened, you shouldn’t decide to go help other people while disregarding the fact that you yourself have outflows. To try to rescue others while paying no attention to whether you yourself have accomplished the Way first is to be like a clay Bodhisattva crossing a river; he has a hard time protecting himself. Until he tries to cross the river, the clay Bodhisattva stays intact, but as soon as he hits the water, he disintegrates and disappears. If you haven’t attained the state of no outflows, and you nevertheless go out to help people, you will be influenced by the social environment you find yourself immersed in. You’ll be transformed and won’t be able to transform others. You’ll be turned around by the affairs of the world instead of being able to turn them around. So before you have attained enlightenment and the state of no outflows, you are always in danger.

Take this sutra, for example. If I didn’t understand the doctrines in it myself, I wouldn’t be able to explain it for you. I dare not say that I thoroughly understand it, but to be frank about it, I am clearer about it than you. Because I know more than you, I am explaining what I know so that you can also know it. But even at that, I’m just explaining a little. If I were to explain to you everything I know, there wouldn’t be enough time. I’m just bringing up the important points.

**Sutra:The Buddha said, “What do you see?”

Ananda said, “I see the Tathagata raise his arm and bend his fingers into a fist of light which dazzles my mind and my eyes.”

The Buddha said, “What do you see it with?”

Ananda said, “The members of the great assembly and I each see it with our eyes.”

The Buddha said to Ananda, “You have answered me by saying that the Tathagata bends his fingers into a fist of light which dazzles your mind and eyes. Your eyes are able to see, but what is the mind that is dazzled by my fist?”

Commentary:The Buddha said, “What do you see?”** The Buddha is still talking. He hasn’t entered samadhi.

**Ananda said, “I see the Tathagata raise his arm and bend his fingers into a fist of light which dazzles my mind and my eyes.”** World Honored One, I see you stretch out your arm and bend your five wheeled fingers, and your fist emits light. That light shines brightly that I can hardly even open my eyes. My mind is illumed by it as well.

**The Buddha said, “What do you see it with?”** What is it that see?

**Ananda said, “The members of the great assembly and I each see it with our eyes.”** Ananda didn’t speak just for himself; he included everyone in the great assembly. He’s got witnesses, the way the defense in court calls in witnesses to testify that the defendant is not a thief. He calls in friends and relatives to act as character witnesses. So if Ananda were to speak for himself, his statement that he saw with his own eyes might still be subject to question, so he drags in some support by including the great assembly. “Everyone in this assembly maintains that the eyes see. They all use their eyes to see it.”

**The Buddha said to Ananda, “You have answered me by saying that the Tathagata bends his fingers into a fist of light which dazzles your mind and eyes. Your eyes are able to see, but what is the mind that is dazzled by my fist?”** That is correct. Your eyes are capable of seeing. But what do you conceive to be your mind which is being illumined by my fist? What do you take to be the mind? The Buddha is taking another step forward.

**Sutra:Ananda said, “The Tathagata is asking where the mind is located. Now that I use my mind to search for it thoroughly, I propose that precisely what is able to investigate is my mind.”

The Buddha said, “Hey! Ananda, that is not your mind.”

Commentary:Ananda said, “The Tathagata is asking where the mind is located.** World Honored One, you now ask me where my mind is. **Now that I use my mind to search for it thoroughly.”** He looked for his mind. “I have searched every which way, absolutely everywhere, exhausting all possibilities, I have been chasing my mind. **I propose that precisely what is able to investigate is my mind.** I can investigate things, and that means there is a mind; so that which is capable of investigating things is probably my mind.” He says “propose”; that means he’s not absolutely sure. But he thought what he said had a lot of principle, and he was confident that he.d succeeded in finding the mind. Little did he know the Buddha would scold him.

**The Buddha said, “Hey!”** This was the same word the Buddha used to reprimand Aniruddha. “Hey! Hey! How can you sleep?” he asked him, and as a result of that reprimand, Aniruddha didn’t sleep for a week, went blind as a result and then with the aid of the Buddha opened his heavenly eye. Here, the Buddha uses the same word to answer Ananda. He didn’t say whether Ananda was right or wrong, he just used an expletive to yell at him. Why did the Buddha yell at Ananda? Because Ananda’s answer was a grave mistake; it was totally wrong. Earlier, he had persisted in taking the conscious mind as the true mind, and that was already a mistake. Now he still hasn’t understood. Sometimes people can wake up when they see something while their mind is totally concentrated. Ananda was extremely intent on his dialogue with the Buddha, and at that point the Buddha showed him his dazzling hand in the hope that Ananda would realize that it is the seeing-nature that sees. But Ananda disappointed the Buddha again by saying instead that it is the eyes and the mind that see. The Buddha guided him along by saying, “Fine, it’s the eyes that see; and what do you take to be the mind?” But once again Ananda said that his ability to investigate is his mind. Yet that is merely the conscious mind.

So the Buddha used sound to lead Ananda to awaken to the Way through his hearing-nature. He shouted, “Hey!” in a harsh and stern tone, using his awesome virtue to cause Ananda to be enlightened upon hearing the sound. But Ananda had been steeped in confusion too long; he knew only scholarship and had neglected samadhi power. The Buddha had worked long and hard to teach and transform him, and Ananda still didn’t understand. When the Buddha saw this, he used his compassionate heart to draw him in by explaining more gently, **“Ananda, that is not your mind.”**O2 Ananda is alarmed and asks what it is called.

**Sutra: Startled, Ananda leapt from his seat, stood and put his palms together, and said to the Buddha, “If it’s not my mind, what is it?”

Commentary:** Ananda was so taken aback that he jumped to his feet, looking stunned and alarmed. He stood to avoid being disrespectful when he addressed the Buddha. **Startled, Ananda leapt from his seat, stood and put his palms together, and said to the Buddha, “If it’s not my mind, what is it?** If it’s not my mind, what do you call it then?” Ananda didn’t know what to do. Suddenly he was without a mind.

O3 The Tathagata reveals its name and clears up the mistake.

**Sutra: The Buddha said to Ananda, “It is your perception of false appearances based on external objects which deludes your true nature and has caused you from beginningless time to your present life to recognize a thief as your son, to lose your eternal source, and to undergo the wheel’s turning.”

Commentary:** This section of text explains not only Ananda’s problem but the problem of you and me and everyone else. Everyone should know that from beginningless time we have all taken thieves to be our sons. We have covered over our basic nature so it cannot appear.

**The Buddha said to Ananda**, “Ananda, don’t be nervous. Ananda, don’t be upset. You’re asking what it is that is able to investigate, aren’t you? Now I will tell you in detail. **It is your perception of false appearances based on external objects**.” “False” means it is unreal. The mind that investigates is not your self nature; it is not your true mind. It is merely a more subtle form of false thinking which makes distinctions. The shadow of external objects **deludes your true nature and has caused you from beginningless time to your present life to recognize a thief as your son**. You have mistaken the false perception of externals for your son, and so you have lost **your eternal source**. You have lost all your gems, all your family heirlooms; your basic, permanently dwelling, unchanging true mind. The meaning here is the same as it was above: it’s not that you have actually lost it; it just seems to be lost. This causes you **to undergo the wheel’s turning.** Because you are unaware of your own family treasure, you do not know how to make use of it, and so you rise and sink on the turning wheel of birth and death. The wheel governs you and turns you, and you cannot transcend its cycle. That is why you are the way you are now. This life, next life, life after life will follow that same endless turning, suddenly high, suddenly low, suddenly above, suddenly below. Sometimes you are born in the heavens and sometimes you fall back to earth. There is a saying that goes:

Out of a horse’s belly
into the womb of a cow.
How many times back and forth
have you passed by Yama’s halls,
As you go from Shakra’s palaces
down into Yama’s pot?

Sometimes you become a horse, at other times you are a cow. In front of Yama’s halls you trudge back and forth one knows not how many times. You are like Sundarananda, whom the Buddha took to the heavens, saying that if he cultivated the Way he would be rewarded with rebirth there, with 500 goddesses serving him. Sundarananda was beside himself with joy. But he forgot King Yama’s pot, for once your heavenly blessings are used up you fall again, perhaps into the hells, where you are boiled in a pot of oil. The path of the turning wheel is dangerous. Once you start spinning on it, you end up going the wrong way and if you are in the least bit careless, once you get started in the wrong direction it is difficult to get back. So now that you have been born a human being, you should hurry up and wake up from this dream. Hurry up and get enlightened. Don’t continue as Ananda did to recognize a thief as your son.

### The False Consciousness is Without a Substance

L3 Determining that the false consciousness is without a substance.
M1 Ananda expresses his fear and asks for instruction.

**Sutra: Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I am the Buddha’s favorite cousin. It is because my mind loved the Buddha that I was led to leave the home-life. It is my mind that not only makes offerings to the Tathagata, but also, in passing through lands as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges River to serve all Buddhas and good, wise advisors, and in martialing great courage to practice every difficult aspect of the dharma, I always use this mind. Even if I am slandering the dharma and eternally withdrawing my good roots, it would also be because of this mind. If this is not my mind, then I have no mind, and I am the same as a clod of earth or a piece of wood. Without this awareness and knowing, nothing would exist.

"Why does the Tathagata say this is not my mind? I am startled and frightened and not one member of the great assembly is without doubt. I only hope that the World Honored One will regard us with great compassion and instruct those who have not yet awakened."

Commentary:** After listening to the Buddha’s explanation, Ananda still didn’t understand. He still wanted to debate the issue. **Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I am the Buddha’s favorite cousin.”** He said, “I am the Buddha’s youngest and most favored cousin, and the Buddha loves me dearly. As I stand before the Buddha I am like a child.” The word “favorite” means that the Buddha let him have his own way. He didn’t try to control him. Ananda could do whatever he pleased. **It is because my mind loved the Buddha that I was led to leave the home-life.** Ananda says that it was his mind that loved the Buddha’s thirty-two hallmarks. The Buddha’s face is like the clear full moon, and like a thousand suns emitting light. His hallmarks are exquisite. “So the Buddha told me to leave home, and as soon as he suggested it I agreed, because I loved his adorning hallmarks and characteristics.” Ananda hadn’t forgotten that the causes and conditions for his leaving home were his seeing the Buddha’s thirty-two hallmarks.

**It is my mind that not only makes offerings to the Tathagata -** my mind makes offerings not only to you, World Honored One - **but also, in passing through lands as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges River to serve all Buddhas and good, wise advisors -** when Ananda says “serve,” he means “I go to attend on all Buddhas, to make offerings to all Buddhas, to bow to all Buddhas, and I do the same for teachers of vast knowledge and experience. **And in martialing great courage to practice every difficult aspect of the dharma, I always use this mind.** I do all the things other people cannot do. People fear suffering, but I am not afraid to suffer. I look after Buddhas and tend to their every need. I bear what others cannot bear and practice what others cannot practice, and what I use in doing so is my mind. The reason I am able to develop merit and virtue by making offerings to the Triple Jewel is because I use this mind. **Even if I am slandering the dharma and eternally withdrawing my good roots, it would also be because of this mind.** Even if you say that I am slandering the dharma to speak this way - even if I were to retreat and cut off my good roots to the point that there were none left, I would still be using this mind.” This sentence can alternately be said to mean that Ananda is supposing that if he ever were to slander the dharma, he still thinks it would be his mind that would be doing it. **If this is not my mind, then I have no mind, and I am the same as a clod of earth or a piece of wood. Without this awareness and knowing, nothing would exist.** Ananda is really flustered to be speaking in this way. “I’ve become someone without a mind. I’m no different from dirt or wood. I have no mind. If I am separate from this conscious mind that makes discriminations, then what else is there? There isn’t anything at all. My present ability to hear the sutra and listen to dharma is a function solely of this mind. Beyond that I have nothing.

”**Why does the Tathagata say this is not my mind? I am startled and frightened and not one member of the great assembly is without doubt.** Now I am really alarmed. You’ve talked me right out of my mind. And not only myself: I believe everyone has doubts regarding this, and the pain of my fears and the assembly’s doubts is unbearable.” By “doubts” is meant that they had not understood the doctrine and had questions about it. Why did Ananda say that the great assembly had doubts, but that he himself was alarmed? It’s that all the others in the assembly were onlookers and so they had not thought to take the situation personally and put themselves in his place. They simply took note of the principles. But Ananda was being addressed personally, so when Shakyamuni Buddha said he didn’t have a mind he was shocked. “No mind? That’s too much. Next thing you know I won’t have a life either.”

Ananda says that everyone else who was listening to his dialogue with the Buddha had doubts about what they heard, but in fact that too was a deduction Ananda made with his conscious mind. “Probably they haven’t understood either,” he thought. He didn’t realize that the great Bodhisattvas who were present, although they hadn’t said anything, had long since understood. Within his small frame of reference Ananda was deducing things about those whose frame of reference was much greater. Actually, however, I believe that members of the assembly such as Manjushri Bodhisattva, Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and Great Strength Bodhisattva, couldn’t have had any doubts.

**I only hope that the World Honored One will regard us with great compassion and instruct those who have not yet awakened.** Compassion can pull people out of suffering. “Please rescue each of us from our distress,” Ananda says, “and teach those of us who have not understood this doctrine so that we can understand.”

M2 Tathagata comforts him.
N1 He bestows the profound meaning of the teaching.

**Sutra:Then the World Honored One gave instruction to Ananda and the great assembly, wishing to cause their minds to enter the state of patience with the non-production of dharmas.

Commentary:Then the World Honored One**. At the time that Ananda asked the Buddha to instruct those who had not yet awakened, Shakyamuni Buddha pitied his young cousin and felt a loving protectiveness for him. So he **gave instruction to Ananda and the great assembly, wishing to cause their minds to enter the state of patience with the non-production of dharmas.** What is meant by the “patience with the non-production of dharmas”? There are three kinds of patience: patience with production; patience with dharmas; and patience with the non-production of dharmas, where there is neither production nor any dharmas. No dharmas are and no dharmas cease to be. When you attain patience with the non-production of dharmas, you see that in each of the four sagely and six ordinary dharma realms not even the minutest dharma arises and not even the minutest dharma is destroyed. The four sagely dharma realms are beyond the realm of desire, the realm of form and the realm of formlessness, while the six ordinary realms are within the three realms but in none of them is there any production or extinction; and yet the fundamental substance of every dharma is in a state of unmoving suchness. Because they are in a state of unmoving suchness, there is neither production nor extinction.

Before you understand you think: “Oh no, there is no production or extinction, and all the ten thousand dharmas vanish!” A fear arises in your heart; you can’t bear the idea of it. But if you actually experience the state of non-production and non-extinction, in fact it will not seem at all unusual and you will be able to bear it, because you attain patience with the non-production of dharmas. Then you will have gained a mutual response with the Way.

A mutual response occurs when you are about to attain enlightenment but have not yet done so. When the mutual response occurs, the only thing you can do is cherish it in your heart. You yourself know, but you cannot go around telling people about it. It is inexpressible. That is what is called patience with the non-production of dharmas. When you can see that the mountains, the rivers, the earth, and all that grows forth from them are things within your self-nature; that the three realms are only the mind, and that the myriad dharmas are only consciousness; once you attain that state, then everything, every dharma, is devoid of production and extinction. Everything you see - the mountains, the rivers, the earth, the plants - are all one true appearance. That is patience with the non-production of dharmas. Before you have truly realized and truly obtained this state, you must be patient. You must be able to bear it. That too is patience with the non-production of dharmas.

Now the Buddha spoke to the assembly, wishing to cause everyone there and all living beings to attain the state of patience with the non-production of dharmas.

N2 He often speaks of the wonderful mind.

**Sutra: From the lion’s seat he rubbed Ananda’s crown and said to him, “The Tathagata has often said that all dharmas that arise are only manifestations of the mind. All causes and effects, the worlds as many as fine motes of dust, come into being because of the mind."

Commentary: From the lion’s seat**. This does not mean that the Buddha mounted a lion and sat on it, or that his seat was carved in the shape of a lion. The Buddha’s speaking dharma is like the roar of a lion, and so the place where the Buddha sits is called the lion’s seat. **He rubbed Ananda’s crown**. The Buddha rubbed the top of Ananda’s head with his hand. In Buddhism, rubbing the crown is a gesture which represents the power of the utmost compassionate love to attract living beings and draw them in. **And said to him, “The Tathagata has often said that all dharmas that arise are only manifestations of the mind.** I, the Tathagata, have often said in the past that every single dharma, whether worldly or transcendental, is manifested entirely from within our minds. **All causes and effects**: cause upon cause, effect after effect, all that occur in this world and throughout the **worlds as many as fine motes of dust, come into being because of the mind.”** They are all brought because of our minds. So the ancients of China had a saying:

If a man recognizes his mind
There’s not an inch of dirt left on earth.

What is there? Where did it go? That’s the Chan school’s way of expressing the irony of the ineffable. Unfortunately, we have not recognized our minds, and so the great earth is still a big mound of dirt.

N3 He confirms that the true mind has substance.

**Sutra:

"Ananda, when all the things in the world, including blades of grass and strands of silk thread, are examined at their fundamental source, each is seen to have substance and a nature, even empty space has a name and an appearance."**

**Commentary:** The Buddha called Ananda’s name again, **“Ananda, when all the things in the world, including blades of grass and strands of silk thread, are examined at their fundamental source, each is seen to have substance and a nature, even empty space has a name and an appearance.”** Absolutely everything in the world, including the mountains, the rivers, the earth, vegetation, and all the myriad appearances, even down to blades of grass or fine strands of silk thread, and even empty space, which still has the name “empty space” and has the appearance of empty space, all have a substance and a nature.

**Sutra:"How much the less could the clear, wonderful, pure bright mind, the essence of all thoughts, itself be without a substance?"

Commentary:**How much the less could the wonderful pure mind have no substance? It, too, certainly has substance.

N4 He shows that the false consciousness has no substance.

**Sutra: "If you insist that the nature which knows and observes and is aware of distinctions is the mind, then apart from all forms, smells, tastes, and touches - apart from the workings of all the defiling objects - that mind should have its own complete nature."

Commentary: If you insist -** if you are determined to hold to all of your own fixed ideas, opinions, and deductions, as a miser hoards gold, saying **that the nature which knows and observes and is aware of distinctions is the mind, then apart from all forms, smells, tastes, and touches - apart from the workings of all the defiling objects - that mind should have its own complete nature.** If the mind which makes distinctions is the true mind, then it should exist apart from any connection with forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, or dharmas. Although only four of the six sense objects are mentioned, all six are meant. If the conscious mind is indeed the true mind, then it should continue to exist as yet another complete nature beyond the experiences involving the six sense objects. There should be another mind besides the one that goes out the entrances of the six organs, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

Is that the way it is? No, but the Buddha offers this hypothetical explanation in order to teach Ananda.

**Sutra:

"And yet now, as you listen to my dharma, it is because of sound that you are able to make distinctions."

Commentary:**Now the Buddha begins to explain that Ananda does not have a conscious mind that exists apart from its perceptions. **And yet now, as you listen to my dharma, it is because of sound that you are able to make distinctions.** Ananda, you are here listening to me speak this dharma, and it is the sound that allows you to make distinctions. It is not the case that you can hear sounds when are no sounds.

**Sutra:"Even if you could extinguish all seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, and maintain an inner composure, the shadows of your discrimination of dharmas would remain."

Commentary: Even if you could extinguish all seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, and maintain an inner composure**; even if you could temporarily stop seeing, hearing, being aware, and knowing, it would simply be a state of emptiness. To attain it is a kind of skill. Once you do away with seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, you can dwell in inner repose; it is very quiet, there isn’t anything going on, you don’t do anything. You are empty and free from care. Adherents of outside ways consider this experience the highest one possible. They sit there and feel there is no self and no others, that everything is empty, that even their own bodies have disappeared, and they consider that to be real skill. That is what is meant by “maintaining an inner composure.” In fact there is a bit of attainment, some amount of gong fu, of spiritual skill, in keeping that composure. You experience light ease, a small amount of peace, and concentration. Since adherents of outside ways take this state to be the ultimate, they struggle to maintain it so it won’t be lost. They don’t want to lose their gong fu.

But actually, in that kind of state **the shadows of your discrimination of dharmas would remain.** The state of inner composure is still just a function of the sixth consciousness, the mind-consciousness; “dharmas” refers here to the objects of the mind. The first five consciousnesses vanish: those of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. Vision and hearing aren’t directed outside; smells and tastes do not affect you, and the body is not influenced by an awareness of touch. But the sixth consciousness is called the solitary mind-consciousness because it functions even when the other consciousnesses are extinguished. Dreaming, for example, is a function of the mind-consciousness. The state of inner composure is another example. The five consciousnesses are extinguished, and you feel that seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are all gone, but you still have thought. There remain the subtle defiling objects of dharmas which are extremely hard to detect. They are subtle distinctions of the mind: the shadows of discriminations that fall on the mind. It is not a real state. When you have attained it, you feel that what is going on is very fine; but from the point of view of Buddhism, you haven’t even taken the first step. Don’t feel satisfied and think to yourself, “Oh, this is the skill that comes from sitting in Chan meditation.” Instead, you should continue to make progress. If you stop at that place, it is easy to fall into dull emptiness, where the seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are extinguished and there seems to be nothing at all; but dull emptiness is of no benefit in developing your Chan skill. The sixth consciousness, the solitary mind-consciousness, is a place where it is easy to take the wrong road and go astray.

There are four aspects of the solitary mind-consciousness:

1. The solitary mind-consciousness in dissipation. This refers to our everyday mind which is scattered and makes discriminations.
2. The solitary mind-consciousness in insanity and incoherence. When someone goes crazy and speaks incoherently, the sixth consciousness is in an insane state, and it has control of him.
3. The solitary mind-consciousness in dreams. When you dream you see all kinds of colors and strange unusual things. That is the solitary mind-consciousness playing tricks.
4. The solitary mind-consciousness in samadhi. That is the state of inner composure that we are talking about here. The seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are all totally extinguished, but the solitary mind-consciousness in samadhi is still alive.

**Sutra:"I do not insist that you grant that it is not the mind. But examine your mind in minute detail to see whether there is a discriminating nature apart from the objects of sense. That would truly be your mind."

Commentary:**The Buddha further said to Ananda, “**I do not insist that you grant that it is not the mind.** I am not ordering you to agree with what I say. **But examine your mind in minute detail -** think about it carefully - **to see whether there is a discriminating nature apart from the objects of sense. That would truly be your mind.**” If when you are apart from the objects of sense you still have a discriminating nature, that would be your genuine mind.

**Sutra: "If this discriminating nature has no substance apart from objects, then it is shadows of discriminations of objects of mind."**

**Commentary: If this discriminating nature has no substance apart from objects** - if you cannot find the substance of your discriminating nature apart from the defiling objects of sense - **then it is shadows of discriminations of objects of mind.** It is not your true mind.

**Sutra:"The objects are not permanent, and when they pass out of existence, such a mind would be like hair on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. In that case your dharma body would be extinguished along with it. Then who cultivates and attains patience with the non-production of dharmas?"

Commentary:**This passage of text explains the matter a little more clearly. **The objects are not permanent, and when they pass out of existence, such a mind would be like hair on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit.** If when you have a thought when confronted with an object, you say there is a discrimination and that that is your mind. If when confronted with an object you have a thought, when you aren’t confronted with an object there is no thought. Sometimes objects disappear; they change and cease to be. Then you are not confronted with an object, and there is no thought, no discrimination. Then where is this mind you speak of? It is like hair on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. When do tortoises grow hair? Never. When do rabbits grow horns? It’s as if you didn’t have a mind at all. **In that case your dharma body would be extinguished along with it.** Since you haven’t any mind, your dharma body doesn’t exist either. How can you have a dharma body without a mind? **Then who cultivates and attains patience with the non-production of dharmas?** What do you use to cultivate the Way and achieve enlightenment? If you have neither mind nor body, who awakens to patience with the non-production of dharmas?

**Sutra:At that point Ananda and everyone in the great assembly was speechless and at a total loss.

Commentary:** The Buddha explained that if the mind exists in the discriminations of external objects, then apart from objects there is no discrimination, so doesn’t that mean there is no mind? If there is no mind there is no dharma body either. And with no mind and no dharma body, who is it that cultivates and attains the patience with the non-production of dharmas? Ananda and the members of the great assembly thought about it and saw that he was right. **At that point Ananda and everyone in the great assembly was speechless and at a total loss.** No one had anything to say. They just stared, but this time they didn’t enter samadhi.

J3 Conclusion: the Tathagata reiterates the reason.

**Sutra: The Buddha said to Ananda, “There are cultivators in the world who, although they realize the nine successive stages of samadhi, do not achieve the extinction of outflows or become arhats, all because they are attached to birth-and-death false thinking and mistake it for what is truly real. That is why now, although you are greatly learned, you have not realized the accomplishment of sagehood."

Commentary:The Buddha said to Ananda.** The Buddha saw that everyone was fidgeting and practically beside themselves, not knowing what to do. They had all lost their minds.

In Mencius, Confucius says of the mind:

Its goings out and comings in have no fixed time
And its location is unknown.
Just that is called the mind.



You don’t know what time it leaves, you don’t know when it returns, and you don’t know where it went. Probably that is the mind. However, the mind Confucius speaks of is also the false-thinking mind, not the true mind. How could the true mind go out and enter? It doesn’t have any exits or entrances.

Mencius also said:

When a person’s chickens and dogs get loose
he knows he should go look for them,
But when his mind escapes
he doesn’t know that he should search for it.

Here, too, he is talking about the mind which strikes up false thoughts from morning to night, running east, running west, running back and forth. He doesn’t know enough to watch over his own mind, to tell it not to run down so many roads in vain. I’ve said your false-thinking mind allows you to be in New York in the space of a thought with no need to spend money on an airplane or train ticket; and you can play on the Brooklyn Bridge without bothering to take a bus; it’s really a cheap way to travel but it is a tremendous exertion for the mind. That is what it says in Mencius about the conscious mind, the mind that Ananda is familiar with. The conscious mind is impermanent. The true mind is permanent.

**There are cultivators in the world who, although they realize the nine successive stages of samadhi**. The nine successive stages of samadhi are the first, second, third, and fourth stages of dhyana; the four places of emptiness:

1. the place of the heaven of boundless emptiness;
2. the place of the heaven of boundless consciousness;
3. the place of the heaven of nothing whatsoever;
4. the place of the heaven of neither thought nor no thought

and the samadhi of the extinction of feeling and thought. They **do not achieve the extinction of outflows or become arhats, all because they are attached to birth-and-death false thinking.** Why do they cultivate and achieve the nine successive stages of samadhi and yet cannot obtain the penetration of the extinction of outflows and accomplish arhatship? It is because they are attached to false thinking of birth and death **and mistake it for what is truly real**. They make the mistake of taking that false thinking to be true.

**That is why now, although you are greatly learned, you have not realized the accomplishment of sagehood.** By this time Ananda had reached the first stage of arhatship, so why does the Buddha say nevertheless that, despite the advantages that come with erudition, Ananda hasn’t realized the accomplishment of sagehood? The Buddha means Ananda has not obtained the penetration of the extinction of outflows. He is not devoid of outflows. In the small vehicle, the first stage of arhatship is considered to be a level of sagehood, but among Bodhisattvas it is not.