**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 2**

**CHAPTER 2**

**The Two False Views**

M2 The Buddha destroys the false and reveals the true.   
N1 Ananda tells of his confusion and asks for instruction.  
  
**Sutra: Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, it is still not clear in my mind what the Buddha, the World Honored One, has explained for me and for others like me about causes and conditions, spontaneity, the characteristic of mixing and uniting, and the absence of mixing and uniting. And now to hear further that to see seeing is not seeing adds yet another layer of confusion.   
  
Commentary: Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, it is still not clear in my mind what the Buddha, the World Honored One, has explained for me and for others like me.** Buddha, for the sake of me, a sound-hearer, and for the sake of the condition-enlightened ones, you have explained about **causes and conditions, spontaneity, the characteristic of mixing and uniting, and the absence of mixing and uniting** - characteristics which do not mix and unite. **It is still not clear in my mind.** Buddha, after hearing your explanation, we still have not become enlightened. We haven’t understood. Our minds still haven’t opened to enlightenment. **And now to hear further that to see seeing is not seeing adds yet another layer of confusion.”** Ananda is heckling the Buddha again. He says the expression of this kind of doctrine has caused him to add yet another layer of confusion, obscurity, and lack of understanding. He’s like some people who have heard this much of the Shurangama Sutra and are still saying, “What is it talking about? I don’t understand. I have listened for all these days, and the more of it I hear the less clear I become.”  
  
**Sutra:   
  
"Humbly, I hope that with your vast compassion you will bestow upon us the great wisdom eye so as to show us the bright pure enlightened mind.” After saying this he wept, made obeisance, and waited to receive the holy instruction.   
  
Commentary:   
Humbly, I hope that with your vast compassion.** I kneel before the Buddha and hope that the Buddha will bring forth great compassion and **will bestow upon us the great wisdom eye.** Give me the wisdom eye, **so as to show us the bright pure enlightened mind**. Buddha, please explain the enlightened mind with its pure substance to us of the two vehicles, the sound-hearers and the condition-enlightened ones.   
  
**After saying this** - at this point Ananda was really nervous. So when he’d finished speaking, what do you suppose he did? **He wept** and **made obeisance.** He cried. He resorted to the talents of a child and stood crying before the Buddha, and he bowed his head just like a child who is deprived of its milk and sees its mother and cries for a drink of milk. Requesting the dharma is like asking for milk to drink. **And waited to receive the holy instruction.** He waited for Shakyamuni Buddha to give him some dharma-milk to quell his hunger and confusion.   
  
N2 The Buddha compassionately promises to explain.   
  
**Sutra: Then the World Honored One, out of pity for Ananda and the great assembly, began to explain extensively the wonderful path of cultivation of all samadhis of the Great Dharani.   
  
Commentary:** Ananda’s weeping brought the Buddha out of samadhi. He came out of samadhi to explain to him the doctrine of the Way, the doctrine of wonderful samadhi. **Then the World Honored One, out of pity for Ananda.** “Then” was when Ananda was famished and wanted milk to drink. It was when Ananda’s confusion was so deep that he sought clarity. It was when Ananda wept and made obeisance. Basically the Buddha is endowed with a heart of great kindness and great compassion, so when Ananda cried the Buddha’s compassionate heart was moved once again, and he wished to quickly speak dharma for him. Since Ananda was his youngest cousin, it was likely that here the Buddha showed him a special fondness and protection. **And the great assembly.** However, he didn’t do this just for Ananda’s sake, but for the sake of everyone in the great assembly also. He **began to explain extensively** – “extensively” means that he categorized and made distinctions - as he explained **the wonderful path of cultivation of all samadhis of the Great Dharani**.   
  
The Sanskrit word “dharani” refers to mantras; sometimes the word “mantra” will be used, and sometimes “dharani.” When “dharani” is used, the meaning is “all-encompassing upholder.” It encompasses all dharmas and upholds limitless meanings. That is, all dharmas are contained within the mantra, and the limitless wonderful meanings are produced from the mantra. This is one way to explain it. I have another way of explaining it. “All-encompassing” means holding the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind entirely encompassing them to make them pure. Precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, the three non-outflow studies, are upheld. Great dharanis are not the same as small ones. A small one is just a little mantra, and its effect is not as great. What is spoken of here is a great dharani.  
  
”Samadhi” is concentration. “The wonderful path of cultivation.” Ananda wants to cultivate the wonderful path to the dharmas of the samadhi of the great all-encompassing upholder. Now Shakyamuni Buddha is going to proclaim the genuine dharma.   
  
**Sutra: He said to Ananda, “Although you have a strong memory, it only benefits your wide learning. But your mind has not yet understood the subtle secret contemplation and illumination of shamatha. Listen attentively now as I explain it for you in detail.   
  
Commentary:** The Buddha presents the topic. He tells him in advance what he is going to explain to him. **He said to Ananda, “Although you have a strong memory, it only benefits your wide learning.”** Your memory is excellent, and you learn a great deal by the use of it. When things pass before your eyes, you do not forget them. But your power of memory can help only your learning, your ability to open wisdom through hearing.   
  
**But your mind has not yet understood the subtle secret contemplation and illumination of shamatha.** “Shamatha” is the doctrine of quietude. It has an unspeakably wonderful power of subtle secret contemplation and illumination. But your mind has not yet understood. You have not realized it in the least, you haven’t the least bit of understanding. **Listen attentively now as I explain it for you in detail.** You should pay particular attention now and listen to me while I explain to you bit by bit, point by point, layer by layer. Don’t cry, Ananda. Be good and I will tell you now, I’ll explain it for you. Don’t be sad.   
  
**Sutra:   
"And may this explanation cause all those of the future who have outflows to obtain the fruition of Bodhi.**   
  
**Commentary: And may this explanation cause all those of the future who have outflows.** “Those of the future” includes us who are here now. We are now the “future” referred to then.   
  
Everyone is said to have outflows before they are certified as having attained the fourth fruition of arhatship. “Outflows” means every kind of fault. If, for example, someone likes to drink, he is said to have a “drinking-outflow.” Those who like to smoke cigarettes have a “cigarette-outflow.” Those who like to eat fine food have the outflow of eating fine food. Those who like to wear good clothes have the outflow of wearing good clothes. If these examples don’t make it clear, then let me put it this way: in general, whatever you like most is an outflow.   
  
You say, “What I like to do most now is meditate, so that must be a ‘meditation-outflow.’”  
  
That’s different. Meditation directs you upward. When I said the things you like most, I meant things that send you downhill. If you like things which make you go down, they are outflows.  
  
Outflows do not refer only to the things you have done in the past. If a thought stirs in your mind, and you say “I used to have that fault and now I have changed, but I still think about wanting to do it,” that is an outflow. That’s how fierce it is. All you have to do is let the thought stir in your mind, and you flow down. If you don’t move your mind, you ascend upward.   
  
Arhats of the first, second, and third fruitions cannot be said to have no outflows, but when one attains the fourth fruition of arhatship, there are no more outflows.   
  
Now the Buddha speaks of causing all those who have outflows **to obtain the fruition of Bodhi.** How can the enlightened fruition of Bodhi be obtained? You need to have no outflows. If you have outflows, you cannot expect to obtain the enlightened fruition of Bodhi. Do you want to try things out? You have outflows because you have been trying things out from beginningless time until now. So don’t continue to be so confused. Don’t act as if you hadn’t even heard what I have said, thinking “The dharma master probably wasn’t referring to me. There are so many people here that he’s undoubtedly talking about someone else. The little faults I have don’t matter that much. I’m fond of that fault and I don’t need to give it up just yet. Why? Because the dharma master is not talking about me. He’s probably talking about someone else.” But you shouldn’t fool yourself. If you fool yourself, you will miss the opportunity to become a Buddha. From beginningless time onward, you have flowed through birth and death in this Saha world, getting born and dying, getting born and dying, roaming around and forgetting to return. That’s really upside-down. Now that you have met the Buddhadharma, you should quickly resolve to be courageous and vigorous and wake up. Don’t continue to roam around and forget to return. N3 He explains in detail.   
O1 He reveals Ananda’s confusion.   
P1 He describes two views.   
  
**Sutra:   
  
"Ananda, all living beings turn on the wheel of rebirth in this world because of two upside-down discriminating false views. Wherever these views arise, revolution through the cycle of appropriate karma occurs.   
  
Commentary:**As soon as you read this section of text, you should experience immediate terror. You should be shocked. **Ananda, all living beings turn on the wheel of rebirth in this world.** The Buddha calls to Ananda and says, “All living beings of this world spin on the wheel of birth and death, flowing and twisting through births and deaths. They spin like the wheel of an automobile, sometimes being born in the heavens, sometimes entering the hells. Sometimes they become asuras, sometimes they are people. Sometimes they become animals. Sometimes they are hungry ghosts. The turning wheel of the six paths continually revolves without cease **because of two upside-down discriminating false views**. The wheel is turned by two kinds of perversions which result when the conscious mind makes distinctions and gives rise to false views. These views stem from individual and collective karma. **Wherever these views arise -** at any time or place that these false views come into being - **revolution through the cycle of appropriate karma occurs.”** Whatever is seen is false, there is nothing true. What is meant by “false views”? If we truly understood, the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, the houses, buildings, structures, and dwelling places would not exist.  
  
“That presents a real problem, then, because if there isn’t anything at all, where am I going to live?” you say.   
  
You still live in your house. Don’t worry.   
  
"Wherever these views arise, revolution through the cycle of appropriate karma occurs.” You receive a fitting retribution for whatever karma you create - both individual and collective. If you do good, virtuous deeds, you get reborn in the heavens. If you commit crimes you fall into the hells. Whatever karma you create brings you an appropriate retribution which you must undergo. In whatever place you create a particular incident, you will undergo an appropriate retribution on the turning wheel.   
  
The Buddhadharma is very subtle and wonderful. Those who are within the Buddhadharma may not be aware of its advantages to them. And those who are outside the Buddhadharma may not be able to find out the bad points of being outside. But within Buddhism, every bit of good you do and every single offense you commit is accounted for, and the accounting is never wrong by even a hair’s breadth.   
  
Buddhism is also completely free and equal. There is absolutely no prejudice. Why is it said to be so impartial? All living beings, including hungry ghosts and those in the hells, can become Buddhas if they resolve to cultivate the Buddha-Way. Even the worst people can eventually become Buddhas. Even the worst animals can eventually become Buddhas. Externalist sects say that bad people are always bad and that there is no way to save them. But in the Ming dynasty, a tiger bowed to Great Master Lian Chi, became his disciple, and wanted to protect him. Wherever Great Master Lian Chi went, the tiger followed him. No one was afraid of Great Master Lian Chi, but when the tiger arrived on the scene, people kept their distance. They caught sight of the shadow and ran away, crying, “A tiger is coming!” and everyone ran for cover.   
  
Monks beg: they ask people to give them food. Great Master Lian Chi was no different. He also begged for his food, and when he didn’t have any food to eat, he told the tiger disciple to go out begging.  
  
"But everyone is afraid of tigers. Who would have dared make offerings to one?” you ask.   
  
Your point is well-taken, but Great Master Lian Chi had taught this tiger to be good and not to harm anyone. So after a long time, everyone came to know that the tiger was a genuinely good tiger, and no one was afraid of it. Besides that, Great Master Lian Chi had taught it to enter the city walking backwards, and people weren’t so afraid when the first thing they caught sight of was the tiger’s tail rather than its head. What is more, all Great Master Lian Chi’s disciples recognized that their tiger dharma-brother had come. The ones who had taken refuge before he did called him “little dharma-brother tiger,” and the ones who had taken refuge after he did called him “elder dharma-brother tiger.” And when he arrived, people fought to make offerings to him. This one gave three dollars. That one gave five dollars. Another gave eight dollars, and another ten dollars. By the time the tiger had finished his begging-round, there was enough to feed them for a whole year. So, although tigers are very evil, this one knew enough to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and protect it. He was not bad, and in the future he can become a Buddha. That is an example of how equal the Buddhadharma is.   
  
The Buddhadharma is also very free. Your doing of good and evil is of your own making; no one puts any restrictions on you. No one says you absolutely must do good things and not bad things. All I can do is exhort you not to do bad things, but if you are determined to do them I can’t make a jail exclusively for my disciples who don’t listen to my teaching. There is no law like this in the Buddhadharma. There is no talk of putting people in jail to cause them to change their minds and reform.   
  
**Sutra:   
  
"What are the two views? The first consists of the false view based on living beings. individual karma. The second consists of the false view based on living beings’ collective share.   
  
Commentary:** The two kinds of upside-down false views mentioned above cause all living beings to revolve in the turning wheel of the six paths. After they are born they die, and once they die they are reborn. Their births and deaths never cease. The cycle is never cut off. It is because these kinds of false views take control that people undergo birth and death.   
  
**What are the two views? The first consists of the false view based on living beings’ individual karma.** It can also be called the false views based on one’s individual share, and the false views based on the collective share can also be called the false views based on collective karma. Individual karma is what makes you different from other people. It is your own particular private karma, not the same as anyone else’s. “False views based on individual karma” means that you have your own particular opinions and activities, and so the karma you create is particular to you.   
  
People’s false views based on individual karma make them “display their differences and exhibit their peculiarities.” “Display their differences” means they show themselves to be unlike other people. They always feel that they are not the same as the ordinary lot. And the karma they create is special. How? Absolutely everyone wants to be “number one.” Everyone likes to be first. And this is because each person’s karma is different from everyone else’s. This too is a false view. To display differences and exhibit peculiarities are both instances of false views. They are instances of false thought, false deeds, and false behavior.   
  
The individual karma which results is all created from false thoughts in the mind - false thoughts of great expectations for the self. The higher the better. People put on a special style, and individual karma is the result.   
  
**The second consists of the false view based on living beings’ collective share.** The collective share is what is the same as everyone else’s. It can also be called “public karma,” which includes such things as natural disasters, drought and starvation, and man-made calamities. The heavens fall and the earth revolves, and innumerable people are killed, a hundred thousand or a million or even ten million people are all killed at once in a single place. That is “public karma.” “False views based on the collective share.” False thoughts create this kind of collective karma. Because living beings confuse things for themselves and recognize a thief as their son, they create the false views of the collective share, that is, collective karma. It is false views created from false thinking. “Views” here does not necessarily mean what is seen, but refers to opinions. People’s opinions are shared collectively; everyone’s opinions are identical. Living beings’ false thinking creates this kind of false karma. And then they undergo a false retribution. It is said they give rise to delusions, create karma, and undergo a retribution. In the beginning they don’t understand, and that is why they create karma. Once they create the karma they must undergo the retribution.   
  
I will tell you about a response resulting from collective karma. In China in the thirty-third year of the Republic (1944), there was a drought in the province of Honan. Not only was there no rain, but incalculable swarms of locusts came raining from the skies. Each locust was about three or four inches long. They flew through the air and did nothing but eat the crops in the fields. They would swoop down and strip the fields of sprouts and shoots, no matter what kind of crops were growing. The locusts were fierce. They came in droves which covered the skies and blocked off the sun. People could catch a whole butterfly-net full with a single swipe, and they’d bring them home to eat. Because they didn’t have any rice or any other food then, people ate the locusts. The locusts ate the crops, so the people ate the locusts.   
  
For the most part, it is easy for a child’s Buddha eye to open, and at that time there were children who saw why there were so many locusts in the air. They saw that there was an old man in empty space with a long white beard, spitting the locusts out of his mouth. As his spit fell, it turned into locusts. There would be no way to estimate how many there were once they fell to the ground. They were more than a foot thick - not just at one place, but for a radius of several hundred miles. Wouldn’t you say this was strange? This is truly an example of collective karma, of the false views from the collective share. The people caught the locusts and brought them home to cook them, but when they put them on the table to eat them, they turned into human excrement. The locusts turned into human excrement by themselves. They didn’t wait to be eaten to turn into it. Wasn’t that strange? No matter how hungry people are, they cannot eat their own excrement. That’s what their karmic obstruction was like. That’s how fierce it was. How could it not be false views? People fled from Honan to the western capital of Chang An, a distance of more than 800 miles. And incalculable numbers of people died on the road every day from starvation. When people die of starvation, the hungrier they get the more they laugh. They died laughing on the road. So I say that dying of starvation is not bad.   
  
That’s what happened in China in the thirty-third year of the Republic. Not just one person, but many people told me about it. I didn’t witness it personally, but many dharma masters related the story to me, ones who had been there at the time and endured that hunger. I didn’t ask whether they ate the locusts. So there is no need for you to ask me that question now. P2 He defines each.   
Q1 The false view of individual karma.   
R1 He describes what is seen.  
  
**Sutra:  
"What is meant by false views based on individual karma? Ananda, it is like a person in the world who has red cataracts on his eyes so that at night he alone sees around the lamp a circular reflection composed of layers of five colors.  
  
Commentary:**Above I gave a very general explanation of the false views of individual karma and of the collective share. Now the Buddha is going to give a detailed explanation of the false views of individual karma. **What is meant by false views based on individual karma? Ananda, it is like a person in the world,** like any person in the world**, who has red cataracts on his eyes.** A red film has grown over his eyes and covers them, **so that at night he alone sees around the lamp a circular reflection composed of layers of five colors.** Individual karma is special and makes people different from other people. Because the person in the Buddha’s example wanted to display his differences and exhibit his peculiarities, he has obtained a karmic retribution which is not the same as others’. There is a saying, “All you do is spend your strength at the threshold of a ‘reflection of light’.” This person’s eyes are diseased, and so when he looks at the lamp, it changes; it produces a circular reflection. Around the lamp is a circle of iridescent light - yellow, red, white, black - it is complete with every color. “Layers” means there were not just five colors; there were ten thousand purples and a thousand reds, every color there is, even ones you have never seen before. Would you say these colors and the circular reflection are true or false?   
  
For instance, there basically isn’t any problem with people’s eyes, and people proceed to create a problem. What problem? They don’t see things clearly. They give rise to an illusory seeing. They look at the wall and it transforms into colors - the five hues and the six colors - opalescent. How do I know this? I met a man once who may have been taking LSD or some other hallucinogen, I don’t know, but there he was looking at a wall and laughing, “Haw, haw!” - a big guffaw that didn’t stop.   
  
"Why are you laughing like that?” I asked him.   
  
"Look!” he said, “Different colors! Oh! Different colors!” Now wouldn’t you say he was like the man with the red cataracts? Basically there was nothing wrong with his eyes, so he took some drug or other and turned himself upside-down so that when he looked at the wall it writhed with color. Basically it was just a wall. But he saw different colors. Would you say that was true or false? He thought it was true. Anyone who hadn’t taken such a drug would think he was dreaming and talking in his sleep. There was nothing wrong with his eyes and he created this problem.   
  
Now the Buddha explains this question in further detail.   
  
R2 He looks into the question of it being individual.  
  
**Sutra:   
  
"What do you think? Is the circle of light that appears around the lamp at night the lamp’s colors, or is it the seeing’s colors?   
  
Commentary:What do you think?** What is your opinion about this, Ananda? **Is the circle of light that appears around the lamp at night the lamp’s colors, or is it the seeing’s colors?** What about the appearance of that light, in layers of five colors: are the colors emitted from the lamp, or do they come forth from the seeing? Speak up, Ananda.   
  
**Sutra: "Ananda, if it is the lamp’s colors, why is it that someone without the disease does not see the same thing, and only the one who is diseased sees the circular reflection? If it is the seeing’s colors, then the seeing has already become colored; what, then, is the circular reflection the diseased person sees to be called?   
  
Commentary:** Here the World Honored One asks Ananda another question: **Ananda, if it is the lamp’s colors -** if you say that the circular reflection which displays layers of the five colors is emitted by the lamp - **why is it that someone without the disease does not see the same thing?** “Someone without the disease” refers to the Buddha and all the great Bodhisattvas. Those who are diseased are living beings. The lamp represents true principle. When the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas look, they see true principle. When living beings look, they see a circular reflection. They can see the lamp, but around it there is still a circular reflection, composed of multiple layers of the five colors. This is what ordinary people and all living beings see.   
  
The five colors represent the five skandhas: form, feeling, thought, activity, and consciousness.   
  
**Sutra:  
"Moreover, Ananda, if the circular reflection is in itself a thing apart from the lamp, then it would be seen around the folding screen, the curtain, the table, and the mats. If it has nothing to do with the seeing, it should not be seen by the eyes. Why is it that the person with cataracts sees the circular reflections with his eyes?   
  
Commentary: Moreover, Ananda, if the circular reflection is in itself a thing apart from the lamp.** If the circular reflection of five colors is an entity separate from the lamp, then when the man glances around at other things in the room like **the folding screen, the curtain, the table, and the mats** then the reflection **would be seen** around them. But in fact he doesn’t see anything around them. So is the reflection really separate from the lamp? **If it has nothing to do with the seeing, it should not be seen by the eyes.** If you want to force the issue and say it is definitely a separate entity, it shouldn’t have any connection with the eyes. **Why is it that the man with cataracts sees the circular reflections with his eyes?** His eyes, even though faulty and diseased, are the vehicle for his seeing the circular reflection. Since it is his diseased eyes which see it, how can you say the circular reflection is separate from seeing?   
  
R3 He promises to explain the false cause.   
  
**Sutra:   
"Therefore, you should know that in fact the colors come from the lamp, and the diseased seeing brings about the reflection. Both the circular reflection and the faulty seeing are the result of the cataract. But that which sees the diseased film is not sick. Thus you should not say that it is the lamp or the seeing or that it is neither the lamp nor the seeing.   
  
Commentary:Therefore, you should know -** Ananda, you should look into this - **in fact the colors come from the lamp.** When a person with pure eyes looks at the lamp, he sees only the lamplight, he doesn’t see the reflection. **The diseased seeing brings about the reflection.** So the reflection is because of the cataract on the man’s eyes. The man’s seeing is faulty and so it creates a false reflection around the lamp when he looks at it. Since “the colors come from the lamp,” you can’t say that the reflection is separate from the lamp or that it is merely from the eye. Since “the diseased seeing brings about the reflection,” you can’t say that the reflection is separate from the seeing or that it is merely from the lamp.   
  
**Both the circular reflection and the faulty seeing are the result of the cataract.** The “seeing” referred to here is the faulty seeing. The lamp’s reflection and the faulty seeing are both due to the diseased eye - the red cataract. **But that which sees the diseased film is not sick.** “That which sees” in this case refers to the pure seeing, the true sight - not the false, faulty seeing. This pure seeing which can see the cataract is like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who can see living beings.   
  
**Thus you should not say that it is the lamp or the seeing or that it is neither the lamp nor the seeing.** You should not become attached here and try to fix things by insisting that it is the lamp or it is the seeing. Since the colors come from the lamp and the diseased eye creates the reflection, you can’t pinpoint one or the other of these as the sole cause. Once again, the colors come from the lamp so it is not that the lamp is not the cause. The reflection comes from the cataract on the seeing-eye, so it can’t be that the seeing is not involved.   
  
The Buddha continues to be quite explicit in his compassionate explanation for Ananda.   
  
R4 An analogy makes clear the reason.   
  
**Sutra:   
"It is like a second moon often seen when one presses on one’s eye while looking up into the sky. It is neither substantial nor a reflection because it is an illusory vision caused by the pressure exerted on one’s eye. Hence, a wise person should not say that the second moon is a form or not a form. Nor is it correct to say that the illusory second moon is apart from the seeing or not apart from the seeing.   
  
Commentary: It is like a second moon often seen when one presses on one’s eye while looking up into the sky. It is neither substantial nor a reflection because it is an illusory vision caused by the pressure exerted on one’s eye.** The “second moon” is analogous to the circular reflection seen by the person with cataracts. The second moon is not “substantial,” in the same way that the circular reflection is not created from the seeing alone. Nor is the second moon “a reflection” in the same way that the circular reflection is not just based on the lamp’s colors. “Pressure exerted on one’s eye” is analogous to the cataract on the person’s eye. You can try this out yourself if you are not clear about what the analogy means. Take your finger and press it in the corner of your eye. The pressure will give you “double vision” and so you will see a “second moon.”   
  
**Hence, a wise person -** if you use your wisdom to regard this, you **should not say that the second moon is a form or not a form. Nor is it correct to say that the illusory second moon is apart from the seeing or not apart from the seeing.** Basically what results from the pressure against the eye is false to begin with. To use it as basis for arguing further about what it is and what it is not is just adding falseness to falseness. Would a wise person do that?   
  
R5 He shows how the analogy ties with the dharma.   
  
**Sutra:   
  
"It is the same with the illusion created by the diseased eyes. You cannot say it is from the lamp or from the seeing: even less can it be said not to be from the lamp or the seeing.   
  
Commentary:It is the same with the illusion created by the diseased eyes.** The second moon is not real. It only exists because of the pressure on the eye. The circular reflection is not real. It only exists because of the cataract. They are both empty and false. **You cannot say it is from the lamp or from the seeing: even less can it be said not to be from the lamp or the seeing.** It originated from the cataract on the man’s eye, so you can’t say it comes from the lamp or from the seeing. But the circular reflection only appears around the lamp and is only seen when the man uses his eyes to look at it, so you can’t say it is not from the lamp and not from the seeing. The circular reflection is totally illusory to begin with; why squabble about what it is and is not? Q2 False view of the collective share.   
R1 He describes what is seen.  
  
**Sutra:  
  
"What is meant by the false view of the collective share? Ananda, in Jambudvipa, besides the waters of the great seas, there is level land that forms some three thousand continents. East and west, throughout the entire expanse of the great continent, there are twenty-three hundred large countries. In the other, smaller continents in the seas there may be two or three hundred countries, or perhaps one or two, or perhaps thirty, forty, or fifty.   
  
Commentary:**This section of text talks about the false view of the collective share. The false view of the individual share causes each person to see differently. The false view of the collective share is that everyone has the illusion of seeing the same thing at almost the same time. So a country is used by way of analogy.   
  
**What is meant by the false view of the collective share?** What is said to make up the false view of the collective share? **Ananda**, listen carefully. I will tell you. **In Jambudvipa,** in the southern continent, **besides the waters of the great seas, there is level land that forms some three thousand continents.** Outside the seas is the level land, which is divided into three thousand continents. **East and west, throughout the entire expanse of the great continent -** in the middle of these three thousand continents there is a great continent, and north, south, east, and west, to count them all up, **there are twenty-three hundred large countries. In the other, smaller continents in the seas -** in the small islands and small continents, **there may be two or three hundred countries, or perhaps one or two, or perhaps thirty, forty, or fifty.** It is not fixed how many there are.   
  
**Sutra:   
  
"Ananda, suppose that among them there is one small continent where there are only two countries. The people of just one of the countries together experience evil conditions. On that small continent, all the people of that country see all kinds of inauspicious things: perhaps they see two suns, perhaps they see two moons with circles, or a dark haze, or girdle-ornaments around them; or comets, shooting stars, ‘ears’ on the sun or moon, rainbows, secondary rainbows, and various other evil signs.   
  
Commentary:** The Buddha called to Ananda again: **Ananda, suppose that among them there is one small continent where there are only two countries.** Suppose in Jambudvipa there is an island, a small continent, with only two countries on it. Now although these two countries are on the same island, there is a boundary between them, and the karmic retribution the inhabitants experience is not the same. **The people of just one of the countries together experience evil conditions.** The people of one of the countries undergo a certain retribution all together, and they experience evil conditions. “Evil conditions” refers to inauspicious circumstances and many kinds of disasters and difficulties - great winds, for example, or heavy rains. Recently in America there were tornadoes that blew people off into space, killing several hundred in all. That is an example of an inauspicious circumstance. That’s what is meant by an evil condition. You see, on that one continent, some people underwent the evil retribution, and some people did not. In the same way, people in San Francisco did not undergo the evil condition of the tornado; they did not experience that suffering. But in the midwest, houses were blown into empty space, trees were uprooted and blown completely away, and there was flooding and fire. Such disasters are far too prevalent.   
  
**On that small continent, all the people of that country see all kinds of inauspicious things.** What do they see? Sometimes the trees will talk. They hear someone speaking, and it turns out to be a tree. There isn’t a person in sight. That’s an inauspicious event. Among supernatural events there are some very inauspicious things. **Perhaps they see two suns.** Perhaps the people in the one country see two suns, which is an indication of a great change within the country, something inauspicious. Perhaps the leader of the country will die or will be assassinated by someone who wants to usurp the power. This is because:   
  
The skies can’t have two suns,   
The people can’t have two kings.  
  
There can’t be two suns in the sky. If you see two suns, that is inauspicious. Or perhaps this president will kill that president. **Perhaps they see two moons.** No matter what country it is, there will be only one sun and one moon. But the people of this country see two moons appear. This also indicates that something inauspicious is in store for the country.   
  
**With circles, or a dark haze, or girdle-ornaments around them.**  
Circles around the moon indicates wind:   
Dampness in the foundations indicates rain.   
  
When the moon looks like it has water around it, as if it were soaking in water, there will be a windstorm. And when the foundations of the house are damp, it will rain. Circles indicate the presence of an evil energy surrounding the moon. Just looking at it makes one uncomfortable. It is very unusual. “A dark haze” refers to a black, very murky energy which covers the moon. The moonlight doesn’t shine through it, and yet it is not a cloud.  
  
”Girdle-ornaments” refers to a formation around the side of the sun or moon which looks like the ornaments worn by women around their waist. In general, the sun and moon can’t be surrounded by anything. If there is something there, it is not a good sign.   
  
**Or comets, shooting stars.** The light of a comet extends over a great distance. During the reign of the first emperor of the Qin dynasty of China (255-206 BC) comets appeared quite often, and as a result the people experienced extreme distress and suffering during that period. Shooting stars, or meteors, also emit a long trail of light, though not as long as a comet’s, but their appearance is brief. They are just like flickering flames; one is gone and then another appears; then that one disappears and yet another appears. The shooting stars dart through space, and sometimes they fall in showers, and celestial rocks fall out of the sky just like rain pouring down.  
  
”**Ears” on the sun or moon.** This refers to times when it appears that the sun or moon has grown ears. **Rainbows, secondary rainbows.** Some say that in the morning they are called “rainbows” and in the evening they are called “secondary rainbows.” In general they are yin and yang. And they indicate that heaven and earth are out of balance. Nevertheless, if you can change, if the people of that country can change their minds, everything will be all right. **And various other evil signs** means that not just the few mentioned here, but many others appeared as well, large ones and small ones.   
  
If the country is flourishing, then every single thing is auspicious. If the country is on the decline, then every single thing is inauspicious. If one person has the reward of blessings, the rest of the people can follow along and borrow his light. If the people follow someone who lacks blessings, they will undergo suffering. Take a look at the country’s leader, the country’s president. If he has blessings, the people will follow him and have blessings as well. If he hasn’t any blessings, the people will follow him and endure suffering. It can be said that the head of a country is responsible for every circumstance.   
  
R2 Ultimately they are not real.  
  
**Sutra:   
  
"Only the people in that country see them. The living beings in the other country from the first do not see or hear anything unusual.   
  
Commentary:** These two countries on the same small continent should have the same karmic retribution, but in one of them, inauspicious signs indicating disaster and difficulty appear, and everyone in the entire country sees them. **Only the people in that country see them. The living beings in the other country from the first do not see or hear anything unusual.** But in the other country on the small continent, all the people, all the beings there, do not see these states or hear these sounds. This is called the false view of the collective share. The power of the karma of the beings in the one country is similar, and so they have this false seeing. Those in the other country do not have the same karma, and so they don’t have that false seeing. P3 He compares the two to clarify the meaning.   
Q1 General mention.   
  
**Sutra:   
  
"Ananda, I will now go back and forth comparing these two matters for you, to make both of them clear.   
  
Commentary:** Fearing that Ananda might not be attentive, the Buddha called to him once again: **Ananda, I will now go back and forth comparing these two matters for you.** I will now compare the causes and conditions of these two matters, perhaps going backwards or perhaps forward, describing them to you together. “The two matters” are referring to the man with the diseased eyes seeing a circular reflection around the lamp, and the entire population of one country seeing all kinds of disasters and evil conditions which were not seen by the people in the other country. I will compare these various principles **to make both of them clear.**Q2 Specific explanation.   
R1 He describes individual karma.   
S1 He brings out that what is able to discern objects is the cataract.  
  
**Sutra:   
  
"Ananda, in the case of the living being’s false view of individual karma by which he sees the appearance of a circular reflection around the lamp, the appearance seems to be real, but in the end, what is seen comes into being because of the cataracts on the eyes.   
  
Commentary:** The Buddha called again to Ananda: **Ananda, in the case of the living being’s false view of individual karma.** The living being spoken of before had his own special individual karma which caused him to see states which in fact were not real. As we explained before, **he sees the appearance of a circular reflection around the lamp, the appearance seems to be real.** He sees a circular reflection around the lamp, as if it were the actual situation, **but in the end, what is seen comes into being because of the cataracts on the eyes**. But when you investigate this doctrine thoroughly, it turns out that the person who sees the circular reflection has cataracts on his eyes and that is why he sees the reflection.   
  
S2 The dharmas which are discerned are brought up and categorized together.   
T1 A general categorization.  
  
**Sutra:   
"The cataracts are the result of the weariness of the seeing rather than the products of form. However, the essence of seeing which perceives the cataracts is free from all diseases and defects. For example, you now use your eyes to look at the mountains, the rivers, the countries, and all the living beings. They are all brought about by the disease of your seeing contracted since time without beginning.   
  
Commentary:The cataracts are the result of the weariness of the seeing.** The eyes are diseased, and so within the seeing a false seeing arises. The false seeing is the weariness of the seeing. **Rather than the products of form.** It is not an actual external state. No actual appearance exists which creates the characteristic of the weariness of seeing. **However, the essence of seeing which perceives the cataracts is free from all diseases and defects.** What is more, seeing circular reflections around the lamp, and the disease of the eyes, have nothing to do with the fundamental seeing of the seeing-nature. It is not that the seeing-nature is diseased. It is the eye which is diseased.   
  
**For example, you now use your eyes to look at the mountains, the rivers,** the great earth, the houses, the buildings, the structures, the dwellings, **the countries, and all the living beings.** Ananda, take yourself as an example. All these things you see with your eyes **are all brought about by the disease of your seeing contracted since time without beginning.**T2 His explanation accords with former passages.   
  
**Sutra:  
"Seeing and the conditions of seeing seem to manifest what is before you. Originally my enlightenment is bright. The seeing and conditions arise from the cataracts. Realize that the seeing arises from the cataracts: the enlightened condition of the basically enlightened bright mind has no cataracts.   
  
Commentary:**The first **seeing** refers to the category of seeing, that which is able to see. The second **seeing** refers to the category of appearances, that which is seen. The category of seeing, which is able to see, and the category of appearances, which are seen, **seem to manifest what is before you**. States manifest like the ones described above, in the example of the man with the diseased eyes who saw circular reflections around a lamp, and the example of the people who had karmic obstructions and could see all kinds of inauspicious things in their country. The two examples are parallel. Just as people whose eyes are not diseased do not see the circular reflections around the lamp, so the people in the neighboring country do not see the inauspicious signs. The circular reflections and the inauspicious signs manifest as a result of karma. Karmic obstructions bring about these appearances. Living beings create karma and must undergo a retribution. **Originally my enlightenment is bright.** These appearances which arise because of karma basically do not have any connection with my originally enlightened nature. **The seeing and conditions arise from the cataracts.** Because the eyes are diseased, they see these kinds of sick things. **Realize that the seeing arises from the cataracts -** if you understand that the seeing is a result of the cataracts on the sick eyes, **the enlightened condition of the basically enlightened bright mind has no cataracts.** Originally one’s own seeing-essence, one’s own basically enlightened bright mind, one’s wonderfully bright true mind, the seeing which can see the seeing, that enlightened nature, has no disease. It is without defects.   
  
S3 Concludes that the seeing that perceives seeing is what is apart from confusion.   
T1 He explains what is most superior.   
  
**Sutra:  
"That which is aware of the faulty awareness is not diseased. It is the true perception of seeing. How can you continue to speak of feeling, hearing, knowing, and seeing?  
  
Commentary:That which is aware of the faulty awareness is not diseased. It is the true perception of seeing.** This is the same as the doctrine that “when your seeing sees your seeing, the seeing is not the seeing.” Your awareness that the eyes are sick is not itself a defective awareness. It is your genuine awareness, the genuine seeing of your seeing-essence. Having a defective awareness is like being in water and not seeing the water. A creature submerged in water does not notice the water. It is only when it is no longer in the water that it sees it as water. What is apart from the water and able to see it as water is the genuine basic enlightenment. The enlightened seeing, which is aware of the disease, is not the seeing that functions with a defect. Only when you are separate from the defect can you know of it. This is the real seeing. **How can you continue to speak of feeling, hearing, knowing, and seeing?** Why do you still want to remain within those faculties and make distinctions and seek? This is the seeing. What other seeing are you looking for?   
  
T2 He describes what is before one’s eyes.   
  
Sutra:  **"Therefore, you now see me and yourself and the world and all the ten kinds of living beings because of a disease in the seeing. What is aware of the disease is not diseased.   
  
Commentary:**The false view of the people of one country - the false view of the collective share - and the individual person’s false view of individual karma are equally empty and false. “**Therefore -** because of this doctrine - **you now see me**, Ananda,” says the World Honored One. “You see me,” referring to himself, “**and yourself**, your own body, **and the world**, all the forms and appearances in the world, **and all the ten kinds of living beings because of a disease in the seeing.**” There are actually twelve classes of living beings, but those lacking thought and lacking form are left out because they cannot be seen. “All these things are the empty and false defect of your seeing, the false views of individual karma and the collective share. It is our false views, our discriminating views, a problem which develops in the seeing. **What is aware of the disease is not diseased.** It is not that your true seeing, your originally enlightened bright mind, has a problem. The problem is with the false seeing, which arises in the false views of your collective karma and which makes you see false characteristics.”  
  
**Sutra:   
  
"The true essential seeing by nature has no disease. Therefore it is not what we normally call seeing.   
  
Commentary:The true essential seeing by nature has no disease.** Its seeing-essence has no problem. Its basic substance is without defects, so the eyes which see the circular reflection are not the seeing-essence. Since the seeing-essence doesn’t have any problem, **therefore it is not what we normally call seeing**. It not only has no problem it does not have anything at all.   
  
What’s it called, then? “Not seeing?”  
  
No. There isn’t any seeing and there isn’t any not seeing. What’s being discussed here? It is your inherent genuine-seeing essence, which comes from our inherent enlightened nature. It comes from the place of basic enlightenment. But “basic enlightenment” is also a name, and basically there isn’t even a name. If you give it a name, you are adding a head on top of a head again. If you call it basic enlightenment, you’ve already said too much.   
  
R2 He explains in detail the similar share.   
S1 He brings up the subjective similarity.  
  
**Sutra:  
"Ananda, let us compare the false views of those living beings’ collective share with the false views of the individual karma of one person.   
  
Commentary: Ananda**, why do I say that it is all simply the manifestations of the false views of living beings? I will tell you. **Let us compare the false views of those living beings’ collective share with the false views of the individual karma of one person.** They’re the same. The seeing that sees the circular reflection composed of multiple layers of the five colors surrounding the lamp is the false view of individual karma. The false view of collective seeing is all the citizens of a country seeing the inauspicious signs. They see two suns, two moons, comets, shooting stars, rainbows and secondary rainbows, and all kinds of inauspicious astrological signs.   
  
In China, in the past, every time there was a shift in dynastic rule, every time the dynasty or the emperor changed, these kinds of inauspicious things always appeared. Long ago in China an emperor who saw some inauspicious signs asked Qin Tien Jian, an astrologer, what their meaning was. Qin Tien Jian answered that they pointed to the death of the king. “But I have a way for you to pass off the calamity on the prime minister.”  
  
”That would not be permissible,” said the emperor. “If I am meant to die, how can I put it off on the prime minister? The prime minister looks after important matters in the country. It would never do for him to die.”  
  
Qin Tien Jian said, “Well if you don’t want the prime minister to die in your place, you can have the people die in his place. It can be turned on the populace at large.”  
  
”The people are the foundation of the state,” said the emperor. “If the people were to die, what meaning would my imperial reign have? That’s also impermissible.” He didn’t want to do that, either.   
  
Qin Tien Jian said, “Then you can transfer the calamity to the year. This year the people will starve to death. That would also be possible.”  
  
”But that won’t do, either.” said the emperor. “I don’t want to starve the people! It’s meaningless to be that kind of an emperor.”  
  
So then Qin Tien Jian bowed to the emperor. “You are truly a just emperor. With so much good in your heart, I am certain that you will not die. There has been an evil omen, but it can change and become auspicious.” And the next day the evil omen disappeared. It is clear from this incident that although evil omens manifest, the evil can be transformed into something lucky. It all lies in a single thought of people’s minds. If in a single thought you change, then what might have been evil can turn into something auspicious. The practice of lighting incense and reciting the Buddha’s name before something is about to happen is another method for bringing about a change. Calamities and blessings lie in a single thought to change. Lao Zi said:   
  
If the mind brings forth good,   
that good affects what has not yet happened   
and turns it into something auspicious.   
If the mind brings forth evil,   
that evil affects what has not yet happened   
and turns it into something horrendous.   
  
In this connection, there are auspicious spirits and evil spirits. You should not think that all spirits are good. The business of evil spirits is repayment in kind. They punish whoever does something wrong. Good spirits protect people who do good. Each spirit has its responsibilities. So the changing of a single thought is extremely important. The fact that that emperor could take responsibility for his own death, and not have the prime minister or the people stand in for him or cause the year to be a bad one, allowed him to encounter the evil and turn it into good. So these matters are all subject to change. They are certainly not fixed.   
  
I am reminded of Yuan Liao Fan, originally called Yuan Xiao Hai, who was an official of the Ming dynasty. After he finished school, his father told him to study to be a doctor, because doctors can save people’s lives as well as make a good living. After he began studying medicine, he met an old man named Kong, who had a long beard, and who was skilled in physiognomy and divination. When he saw Yuan Xiao Hai, he said, “You should go to school! You are an official.”  
  
Yuan Xiao Hai said, “But my father, mother, and family all want me to be a doctor.”  
  
”Don’t study medicine,” was the reply. “You can go to school, and in such and such a year you will achieve such and such a rank in the imperial examination, and in such and such a year you will become a high-ranking official. Then in such and such a year, on such and such a day, you will become a magistrate, and you will become well known. Then, when you are fifty-four, on the fourteenth day of the eighth month, at midnight, your life will come to an end. You will have no sons.” Not only did the old man date the important events of Yuan Xiao Hai’s life, he even calculated the day of his death.   
  
After the divination, Yuan Xiao Hai did go to school, and it turned out that the divination was unbelievably accurate. The rank he achieved in the imperial examination was exactly what old Kong had predicted. The divination didn’t miss by the breadth of a hair. In fact, it was so accurate that Yuan Xiao Hai didn’t even read any longer. What did he do? He waited. He sat there and waited for the bread to come to him. There’s a well-known saying in China: “You just sit on the bed and wait for the salt cakes to fall,” which means one doesn’t do anything at all. One just waits for nature to take its course, waits for one’s destiny to unfold. That’s also a mistake. That’s the way Yuan Xiao Hai was then. He didn’t do anything at all. He didn’t even read. He thought, whatever my fate is to be, I will certainly not fail to receive it. I don’t have to study anything. I don’t have to seek anything. It will certainly come on its own.  
  
So he roamed in the mountains and played in the water and traveled all over on a grand holiday. He took a long-term vacation and didn’t do a thing. Eventually his travels led him to Nan Jing to Qi Sha mountain, where he heard that Dhyana Master Yuan Gu resided. So he went there to see him. Dhyana Master Yuan Gu handed him a round cushion, and the two of them sat in meditation. They sat facing each other for three days and neither of them moved. Dhyana Master Yuan Gu was very surprised.   
  
”Oh,” he said. “Where do you come from? You are a vessel especially endowed with the Way. You’ve sat for three days without having to shift your legs or move at all.”  
  
Yuan Xiao Hai replied, “I know that everything is predetermined, so I hope for nothing. That’s why I don’t have any false thoughts when I sit here, and so I don’t feel any pain in my legs..   
  
Where does the pain in your legs come from? It comes from your false thoughts, that is, the false views which this sutra discusses. Because of false views, your legs ache. If you haven’t any false views, if you have true views, your legs will not hurt. Yuan Xiao Hai said that since he didn’t have any greed and didn’t seek for anything, he didn’t have any false thinking, and so when he sat it was not necessary to move.   
  
Dhyana Master Yuan Gu said, “I’d thought you were an extraordinary person. But as it turns out, you’re just an ordinary person.”  
  
That upset Yuan Xiao Hai. “Why do you say I am an ordinary person?” Everyone wants to come out on top, and Yuan Xiao Hai didn’t want to finish second, either. As soon as he was called an ordinary person, he was unhappy.   
  
Dhyana Master Yuan Gu said to him, “If you weren’t an ordinary person, you wouldn’t have been tied down by your fate for the last several decades. You are bound up by your destiny and haven’t transcended it in the least.”  
  
Yuan Xiao Hai said, “Can one transcend fate? Is it possible not to be bound by one’s destiny?”  
  
Dhyana Master Yuan Gu said, “You’re a scholar. Doesn’t the I Ching say, ‘Bring out the auspicious and avoid the evil’?” That’s what the emperor I just told you about did. He brought out the auspicious and avoided the evil.   
  
After that Yuan Xiao Hai changed his name to Yuan Liao Fan, “putting an end to the ordinary.” “I’m not an ordinary person,” he said. “I have finished with being an ordinary person.” And after that the earlier divination no longer came true. It was said that he would die at fifty-four, on the fourteenth day of the eighth month, but he didn’t die then. His horoscope said he would have no sons, but he had two. He lived to be over eighty. So one’s fate is not fixed. And the auspicious and inauspicious are not fixed, either. All you have to do is do good, for as soon as you change your mind everything changes. Why are things inauspicious? Because your mind has inauspiciousness in it. That is why you encounter inauspicious circumstances. This proves that false views give rise to false causes and conditions. If your views are true, the false causes and conditions disappear.   
  
**Sutra:  
  
"The individual person with the diseased eyes is the same as the people of that one country. He sees circular reflections erroneously brought about by a disease of the seeing. The beings with a collective share see inauspicious things. In the midst of their karma of identical views arise pestilence and evils.   
  
Commentary: The individual person with the diseased eyes is the same as the people of that one country.** The one sick man and the population of that one country all have an empty false seeing. **He sees circular reflections erroneously brought about by a disease of the seeing.** The one man sees circular reflections, and all living beings of that country see all kinds of disasters and difficulties. It is all because of a defect that the empty falseness arises. **The beings with a collective share see inauspicious things.** The multitude of people in that one country, with their collective share of karma see evil omens which are not seen at all in the neighboring country. **In the midst of their karma of identical views arise pestilence and evils.** The karmic obstacles, the evil conditions bring about the pestilence and evils, because a lot of false views can accumulate and become plagues and misfortunes.   
  
S2 He compares their objective similarities.  
  
**Sutra:   
  
"Both are produced from a beginningless falsity in the seeing. It is the same in the three thousand continents of Jambudvipa, throughout the four great seas and in the Saha world and throughout the ten directions. All countries that have outflows and all living beings are the enlightened bright wonderful mind without outflows. Because of the false, diseased conditions that are seen, heard, felt, and known, they mix and unite in false birth, mix and unite in false death.   
  
Commentary:** The false view of individual karma and the false view of the collective share, these two different kinds of karmic responses spoken of above, are **both are produced from a beginningless falsity in the seeing.** They all arise from ignorance, which from beginning-less time onward has given rise to an empty false seeing. That is how these states come into being. “Falsity in the seeing” is just the production of false views. Not to have any false views and to turn one’s back on the dust and unite with enlightenment, and get rid of false thinking, is just the true mind. Why is it that you have a true mind but cannot make use of it? Why can’t you be in control of things? It is because of false views.   
  
**It is the same in the three thousand continents of Jambudvipa, throughout the four great seas.** The one country and one person spoken of above are compared to Jambudvipa with its three thousand continents, and to **the Saha world -** the world known as “Able to Bear” - **throughout the ten directions. All countries that have outflows -** that is, all the countries in which the living beings have not ended birth and death - **and all living beings are the enlightened bright wonderful mind without outflows.** They are all the seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing found within the enlightened bright wonderful mind without outflows. **Because of the false, diseased conditions that are seen, heard, felt, and known, they mix and unite in false birth, mix and unite in false death.** All countries and living beings are the seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing of empty false conditions. When the multitude of conditions mix and unite, they are falsely born. When the multitude of conditions mix and unite, they falsely die.

S3 He concludes that ‘apart from seeing is just enlightenment’ is certification to the teaching.  
  
**Sutra:  
"If you can leave far behind all conditions which mix and unite and those which do not mix and unite, then you can also extinguish and cast out the causes of birth and death, and obtain perfect Bodhi, the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished. It is the pure clear basic mind, the everlasting fundamental enlightenment.   
  
Commentary:**Dependent retribution and proper retribution were discussed above. “Dependent retribution” refers to the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, to the houses, buildings, structures, and dwellings. “Proper retribution” refers to the human body. Dependent retribution undergoes production, dwelling, decay, and emptiness. Proper retribution undergoes birth, old age, sickness, and death.   
  
What is meant by production, dwelling, decay, and emptiness?   
  
In this world, one development and one decline are called one kalpa. When the human lifespan reaches its peak of 84,000 years, then every hundred years the average height decreases by one inch and the lifespan decreases by one year. This continues until the human lifespan reaches ten years; then it begins to increase again. Once again, every hundred years the lifespan increases by one year and the average height increases by one inch. When the lifespan has increased to 84,000 years, that is called one kalpa. A thousand kalpas make one small kalpa. Twenty small kalpas make a middle kalpa. Four middle kalpas make a great kalpa. It takes twenty small kalpas for this world to come into being. It dwells for twenty small kalpas. It decays for twenty small kalpas and it is empty for twenty small kalpas. That is what is meant by production, dwelling, decay, and emptiness. The twenty small kalpas of production make one middle kalpa. The twenty small kalpas of dwelling make a middle kalpa. The twenty small kalpas of decay and the twenty small kalpas of emptiness each make one middle kalpa. So production, dwelling, decay, and emptiness take four middle kalpas, which together make one great kalpa.   
  
In the proper retribution there is birth, old age, sickness, and death. People take twenty years to grow up. They dwell for twenty years, they are sick for twenty years, and during the last twenty years they are preparing to die.   
  
There are two kinds of birth and death: share-section birth and death - the birth and death of the body - and change birth and death. The term “share-section” derives from the fact that each person has a certain share of years to live, and each person has a certain appearance. For example your height may be five feet six inches and mine may be five foot nine, while another person’s height may be three feet. Every person has his own appearance. Ordinary people are subject to share-section birth and death.   
  
Those of the two vehicles, the shravakas and condition-enlightened ones, have ended share-section birth and death, but they are still subject to change birth and death.   
  
What is meant by “change birth and death”? Their thoughts flow on in continual succession. Thought after thought is born, thought after thought dies.   
  
The cause of birth and death is ignorance, and its conditions are karmic activity. This cause, ignorance, and this condition, karmic activity, mix and unite, and there is birth and death. Thus the Buddha said: **If you can leave far behind all conditions which mix and unite -** the mixing and uniting of the conditions of ignorance and the karmic activity - **and those which do not mix and unite -** and any connection with those which do not mix and unite - **then you can also extinguish and cast out the causes of birth and death.** In that way you can extinguish and cast out share-section birth and death and continual change birth and death, **and obtain perfect Bodhi, the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished**. When the cause of birth and death is extinguished and cast out, you obtain the wonderful fruition of nirvana, the perfection of Bodhi, whose nature is neither produced nor extinguished. **It is the pure clear basic mind, the everlasting fundamental enlightenment.** It is also the basic mind, and it is the fundamental enlightenment which dwells permanently and does not change: that is, the self-nature.