**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 3**

**CHAPTER 5**

**The** **Eighteen Realms**

N4 The eighteen realms are the treasury of the Thus Come One.
O1 General statement.

**Sutra: “Moreover, Ananda, why do I say that the eighteen realms are basically the wonderful nature of true suchness, the treasury of the Thus Come One?

Commentary:** Shakyamuni Buddha said to Ananda, “How is it **that the eighteen realms are basically the wonderful nature of true suchness, the treasury of the Thus Come One?”**What are the eighteen realms? They are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind - that makes six - together with forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas, the six defiling objects, which are six more realms. To them are added the six consciousnesses: the eye consciousness, the ear consciousness, the nose consciousness, the tongue consciousness, the body consciousness, and the mind consciousness. These three groups of six are the eighteen realms. The six sense organs are matched to the six defiling objects, and between them are produced the six consciousnesses. The consciousnesses are defined as that which makes distinctions. The sense organs are defined as that which grows, in that they are grown on our bodies. The defiling objects are defined by their quality of defilement. They are unclean, and they defile the nature of the six organs. When the six organs are matched with the six defiling objects, consciousnesses arise. The eyes see forms and make distinctions among them as being attractive or unattractive. They like the forms or they do not, and thus give rise to discriminations. With the ears it is the same: they hear sounds as pleasing or displeasing. Either they like a sound or they do not like it. The production of such distinctions is called the ear consciousness. The nose smells fragrance and stench. The two defiling objects of fragrance and stench are distinguished as such. You may like some odors and dislike others, and in this way you give rise to a nose consciousness. The tongue distinguishes flavors. Because the organ of the tongue is matched to the defiling objects of flavors, there is the discrimination of flavor. Flavors are either pleasant or disgusting - you either like them or you don’t. The body organ is matched with defiling objects of touch - smooth or abrasive, coarse or fine, various kinds of sensations, either pleasant or unpleasant. The body organ matched with the defiling objects of touch produces a consciousness which discriminates these sensations.

The organ of the mind is matched with the defiling objects of dharmas. The five defiling objects just discussed - forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch - all have form and appearance. Only the defiling objects of dharmas are without form or appearance. There is no representation of them. Nonetheless, when the organ of the mind is matched with the defiling objects of dharmas, discrimination is produced in the mind, and so the mind also has a consciousness. In this way the six organs matched with the six defiling objects produce the six consciousnesses, and together they make up the eighteen realms. Although they are divided into eighteen realms, they are entirely contained within the wonderful nature of true suchness of the treasury of the Thus Come One.

O2 Specific explanation.
P1 The realm of eye, form, and consciousness.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss organ, object, and consciousness.

**Sutra: “Ananda, as you understand it, the eyes and form create the conditions that produce the eye consciousness.

Commentary: Ananda, as you understand it -** Ananda, it is like the principle which you have already understood - **the eyes and form create the conditions that produce the eye consciousness.** The organ of the eye matched with the defiling object of form are the conditions.

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

**Sutra:“Is the consciousness produced because of the eyes, such that the eyes are its realm? Or is it produced because of form, such that form is its realm?

Commentary:** As to this consciousness which is produced when the six organs match up with the six defiling objects: **is the consciousness produced because of the eyes, such that the eyes are its realm?** Is it because of the eyes that the consciousness is produced, and does it take the eyes as its boundaries? **Or is it produced because of form, such that form is its realm?** Is it because of the defiling objects of form that the eye consciousness is produced, and does it take the defiling objects of form as its boundary?

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and refutes all possibilities.
R1 Refutes that it comes from the eyes.

**Sutra: “Ananda, if it were produced because of the eyes, then in the absence of emptiness and form it would not be able to make distinctions; and, so even if you had a consciousness, what use would it be?

Commentary: Ananda, if it were produced because of the eyes -** Ananda, if it were because of the eyes that the eye-consciousness was produced, then it would have no connection with form and emptiness. Thus, the causes and conditions of form and emptiness would be non existent with regard to the eye-consciousness. **In the absence of emptiness and form it would not be able to make distinctions.** If there were no form and no emptiness, there would not be anything which was distinguished, either. This is because you have to be facing form for a distinction to be made. Or, if you are facing emptiness, a distinction can also be made. But, what you propose here is that there isn’t any form or any emptiness. Then, what distinctions can be made? There isn’t anything you can discriminate. **So even if you had a consciousness, what use would it be?** Just suppose you did have a consciousness; how could you use it? It would be useless.

**Sutra:“Moreover, your seeing is neither green, yellow, red, nor white. There is virtually nothing in which it is represented, therefore, what is the realm established from?

Commentary: Your seeing** means your vision. Your eyes see forms and are able to produce a consciousness. Your seeing, which is capable of vision **is neither green, yellow, red, nor white.** It is not of those colors. **There is virtually nothing in which it is represented, therefore, what is the realm established from?** Where do you set up the realm?

R2 Refutes that it is produced from form.

**Sutra: “Suppose it were produced because of form. In emptiness, when there was no form, your consciousness would be extinguished. Then, why is it that the consciousness knows the nature of emptiness?

Commentary:Suppose it were produced because of form.** If you want to say, “Ah, the eye consciousness is produced because of the defiling objects of form.” **In emptiness, when there was no form, your consciousness would be extinguished.** When there were no forms in emptiness and there was nothing for you to discriminate, your consciousness would be extinguished. If the eye consciousness is based on form, then when there are no forms to see, your eye consciousness should disappear. **Why is it that the consciousness knows the nature of emptiness?** How, then, do you know that it is emptiness? Since you are able to know that it is the nature of emptiness, your consciousness has clearly not disappeared. You still have it. Therefore, it is not based on form. So, where does your consciousness come from?

**Sutra: “Suppose a form changes. You are also conscious of the changing appearance; but your eye consciousness does not change. Where is the boundary established?

Commentary:** You say that it is because of form that the eye-consciousness is produced. **Suppose a form changes. You are also conscious of the changing appearance.** You know that the appearance of the form is changing. **But your eye consciousness does not change.** But, your eye consciousness hasn’t changed. **Where is the boundary established?** If it were produced from the form, your consciousness would change when the form changes. But it does not. So, where is the realm of the consciousness established? If consciousness were produced from form, the realm would be established at the place of the form. But, when the form changes, your consciousness does not chase off after the form and change along with it. Ultimately, where is the realm of your consciousness?

**Sutra: “If the eye consciousness were to change when form changed, then there would be no appearance of a realm. If it were not to change, it would be constant, and given that it was produced from form, it should have no conscious knowledge of where there was emptiness.

Commentary:If the eye consciousness were to change when form changed.** The way it was stated above was that the eye-consciousness does not change. If you say that it does change when it encounters changes in form, **then there would be no appearance of a realm.** Then there would be no realm. It would be constantly changing. **If it were not to change, it would be constant.** If it does not go along with the changes, it is there eternally. **And given that it was produced from form -** since it has been said that the consciousness is produced from form - **it should have no conscious knowledge of where there was emptiness.** If the consciousness were produced from something with characteristics and an appearance, it would not know where emptiness is, because its realm would lie within form. Belonging with things that have a material nature, it would be a kind of consciousness which would not know of emptiness.

R3 Refutes that it arises from a combination of the two.

**Sutra: “Suppose the eye consciousness arose both from the eyes and from form. If they were united, there would still be a point of separation. If they were separate, there would still be a point of contact. Hence, the substance and nature would be chaotic and disorderly; how could a realm be set up?

Commentary:Suppose the eye consciousness arose both from the eyes and from form.** Suppose the organ of the eye, matched with the defiling objects of form, and they produced it together. **If they were united, there would still be a point of separation.** If the two together produced the consciousness, then when the two were joined, there would certainly be a boundary between them, because they would not be a single entity. You propose that the eye produces the eye consciousness and the defiling objects of form also produce it. The defiling objects of form have no knowledge, while the eye organ has a knowing awareness. What the form produces will be without awareness; what the eye organ produces will have a knowing awareness. When something that has knowing awareness unites with something that lacks it, their dissimilarity means that there certainly will be a boundary between them. There will still be a point of separation.

**If they were separate, there would still be a point of contact.** If they are separate, half is the sense organ and half is the defiling object. One half has knowing awareness, and the other half lacks it. It is a combination of two things. **Hence, the substance and nature would be chaotic and disorderly; how could a realm be set up?** If it is explained this way, the substance and nature are scattered, and there can be no organization. Therefore, if in its basic substance it cannot be distinguished clearly, how can this realm of consciousness exist? The realm cannot be established.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

**Sutra: “Therefore, you should know that as to the eyes and form being the conditions that produce the realm of eye-consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the three aspects of the eyes, form, and the form realm do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:Therefore, you should know** - because of this, Ananda - **that as to the eyes and form being the conditions** - the joining together of the eye organ and the defiling objects of form - **that produce the realm of eye-consciousness, none of the three places exists.** If you pursue this doctrine in detail, you will see that none of the three places has a location. **Thus, the three aspects of the eyes, form, and the form realm -** the organ of the eye, the form dust, and the eye consciousness - **do not have their origin in causes and conditions.** At their basis, they are not produced from causes and conditions. **Nor do their natures arise spontaneously.** They are a representation of the nature of true suchness of the treasury of the Thus Come One.

P2 The realm of ear, sound, and consciousness.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss organ, object, and consciousness.

**Sutra: “Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it, the ear and sound create the conditions that produce the ear consciousness.

Commentary:Ananda,** as you ordinarily conceive of it, **as you understand it, the ear and sound create the conditions that produce the ear consciousness.** The organ of the ear hears the defiling objects of sound and together they give rise to causes and conditions. The ear consciousness is then produced. With the ear comes the production of a nature which makes discriminations, which is the ear consciousness.

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

**Sutra: “Is this consciousness produced because of the ear such that the ear is its realm, or is it produced because of sound, such that sound is its realm?

Commentary:Is this consciousness produced because of the ear such that the ear is its realm?** What do you say? Is this consciousness called the ear consciousness because it is produced by the ear? **Or is it produced because of sound, such that sound is its realm?** Or is it produced because of sound, taking the defiling objects of sound to make up its realm? What do you say its realm is? The Buddha challenges Ananda to understand his meaning, but Ananda doesn’t have anything to say. The more the doctrine is explained, the more he feels he doesn’t understand. So, once again he doesn’t dare to speak. Shakyamuni Buddha continues:

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and rejects all possibilities.
R1 Refutes that it comes from the ear.

**Sutra: “Ananda, suppose the ear consciousness were produced because of the ear. The organ of hearing would have no awareness in the absence of both movement and stillness. Thus, nothing would be known by it. Since the organ would lack awareness, what would characterize the consciousness?

Commentary:Ananda, suppose the ear consciousness were produced because of the ear.** Suppose you say that the ear consciousness was produced because of the ear. Yet, the two characteristics of movement and stillness must be present, perhaps one, perhaps the other. So, **the organ of hearing would have no awareness in the absence of both movement and stillness.** When the characteristic of neither movement nor stillness appeared, the ear by itself would not be aware of anything. By itself it would have no knowing awareness. **Thus, nothing would be known by it.** The ear definitely would not know of the existence of the defiling objects of sound. If the two characteristics of movement and stillness did not exist, there would be no sound, and without any sound, obviously nothing would be known. **Since the organ would lack awareness** - since it would not be able to know - **what would characterize the consciousness?** Where would your consciousness come from? What would the consciousness be like? This consciousness does not exist either.

**Sutra:“You may hold that the ears hear, but when there is no movement and stillness, hearing cannot occur. How, then, could the ears, which are but physical forms, unite with external objects to be called the realm of consciousness? Once again, therefore, how would the realm of consciousness be established?

Commentary: You may hold that the ears hear.** Suppose you say that the ear consciousness is not produced because of the ear, but rather that the ear has a nature of hearing and that, therefore, the consciousness is produced from within the nature of hearing. **But when there is no movement and stillness, hearing cannot occur.** If there isn’t any sound of movement or of stillness, then you don’t hear anything. Since you do not hear anything, hearing is not accomplished. You cannot call it hearing. **How, then, could the ears, which are but physical forms, unite with external objects to be called the realm of consciousness?** You can consider the ear to be among the defiling objects of form, and so how can they combine with external objects, which are also form, to produce a realm? This cannot be. **Once again, therefore, how would the realm of consciousness be established?** Then where, ultimately, would the realm of the ear consciousness come from? Would it be established with the ear or with the defiling objects of sound? It certainly should come from one or the other. Which one?

**Sutra:“Suppose it was produced from sound. If the consciousness existed because of sound, then it would have no connection with hearing. Without hearing, then the characteristic of sound would have no location.

Commentary:Suppose** you were to say that the realm of the ear-consciousness **was produced from sound. If the consciousness existed because of sound -** if the sound brings about the realm of the ear consciousness - **then it would have no connection with hearing. Without hearing, then the characteristic of sound would have no location.** If there isn’t any hearing, then there isn’t any sound, and without sound the consciousness would be absent. When the nature of hearing is gone, the characteristic of sound is gone, too. Without any hearing, how can there be a consciousness, a hearing nature?

R2 Refutes that it is produced from the sound.

**Sutra:“Suppose consciousness existed because of sound. Given that sound exists because of hearing, which causes the characteristic of sound to manifest, then you should also hear the hearing consciousness.

Commentary:Suppose consciousness existed because of sound.** Suppose that the consciousness is produced from sound. Perhaps you want to say that the ear consciousness arises from sound. **Given that sound exists because of hearing, which causes the characteristic of sound to manifest -** we can say that sound exists because of the hearing nature; that is how the characteristic of sound arises. But, if that is the case, **then you should also hear the hearing consciousness.** The hearing should hear what its own consciousness sounds like. You say that the consciousness is produced from sound, that without any sound there wouldn’t be any consciousness; then, because you hear sound, you should also hear the consciousness.

**Sutra:“If the hearing consciousness is not heard, there is no realm. If it is heard, then it is the same as sound. If the consciousness itself is heard, who is it that perceives and hears the consciousness? If there is no perceiver, then in the end you would be like grass or wood.

Commentary:If the hearing consciousness is not heard, there is no realm.** If it is not heard, there is no realm. If the consciousness is produced because of sound, then there can be the consciousness when there is sound. When there is no sound there isn’t any consciousness. When you hear the sound, you should hear the consciousness, and, by the same token, when the consciousness is not heard there will be no realm. **If it is heard, then it is the same as sound.** What is heard is sound. What you can hear cannot be called a consciousness; it is a sound. **If the consciousness itself is heard, who is it that perceives and hears the consciousness?** The hearing consciousness has the ability to know. But, if the hearing consciousness has already been heard, whose consciousness heard it? Someone else’s? Whose consciousness perceived the consciousness? Who is it who knew: “Oh, now I am hearing the consciousness.” **If there is no perceiver** - if you say no one perceives it, that there is no other consciousness which knows the circumstances of the hearing consciousness, **then in the end you would be like grass or wood.** If the hearing lacked perception, then you would be like grass and trees. So, this proposition will not stand.

R3 Refutes that it arises from a combination of the two.

**Sutra:“Nor is it likely that the sound and hearing mix together to form a realm in between. Since a realm in between could not be established, how could the internal and external characteristics be delineated?

Commentary:Nor is it likely that the sound and hearing mix together to form a realm in between.** Nor can you say that sound and the hearing of sound mix together haphazardly, without their being distinguished at all clearly. In that way the boundaries of the realm would be unclear, because things incongruous cannot be clearly marked to form an intermediate realm. **Since a realm in between could not be established** - thus, if there is no clear indication of the position of the realm, **how could the internal and external characteristics be delineated?** The inside, outside, and middle of the ear consciousness realm are not delineated - the boundaries between the ear, the sound, and the point between them are not established anywhere. So, the consciousness can have no realm.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

**Sutra:“Therefore, you should know that as to the ear and sound creating the conditions which produce the realm of the ear consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the three aspects of the ear, sound, and sound consciousness do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:Therefore,** because of this, **you should know,** Ananda, **that as to the ear and sound creating the conditions** - the mutual causes and conditions of the ear and sound - **which produce the realm of the ear consciousness, none of the three places exists.** The realm of the ear consciousness, the realm of the ear organ, and the realm of the defiling objects of sound are all non existent; they have no fixed location. **Thus, the three aspects of the ear, sound, and sound consciousness -** the realms of the ear organ, of the defiling objects of sound, and of the consciousness of the existence of sound - these three realms - **do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.** They, too, are nothing but representations from the wonderful nature of true suchness of the treasury of the Thus Come One.

P3 The realm of nose, smell, and consciousness.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ, object, and consciousness.

**Sutra: "Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it, the nose and smells create the conditions that produce the nose-consciousness.

Commentary: Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it.** You have heard this teaching of the provisional vehicle before. The provisional vehicle discusses the five skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, and the eighteen realms. You understand all these doctrines. But, the eighteen realms were then described as expedient dharma doors for those of the two vehicles and those of externalist sects, in order to take them across. Now I am going to discuss this doctrine with you in more detail. Don’t become attached to these defiling objects of dharma.

**The nose and smells create the conditions that produce the nose-consciousness.** The nose and smells together give rise to causes and conditions, which are that the nose smells a smell, and the smell comes to the organ of the nose. They together produce the conditions that give rise to the nose consciousness. When it does arise, where would you say it comes from in the last analysis? Ultimately, is there such an entity as a nose consciousness?

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

**Sutra: “Is this consciousness produced because of the nose, such that the nose is its realm? Or, is it produced because of smells, such that smells are its realm?

Commentary: Is this consciousness produced because of the nose?** Would you say the nose consciousness was produced because of the nose organ, **such that the nose is its realm? Or, is it produced because of smells, such that smells are its realm?** What is the location of the realm of the nose consciousness?

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and refutes them all.
R1 Refutes that it is produced from the nose.

**Sutra:“Suppose, Ananda, that the nose consciousness were produced because of the nose, then in your mind, what do you take to be the nose? Do you hold that it takes the form of two fleshy claws, or do you hold it is an inherent ability of the nature which perceives smells as a result of movement?

Commentary: Suppose, Ananda, that the nose consciousness were produced because of the nose.** Suppose it were the nose organ that produced the consciousness which lies between the nose organ and the defiling objects of smells. **Then in your mind, what do you take to be the nose?** In that case, what do you consider to be your nose, when you think about it?

Basically a nose is a nose, and yet the Buddha still asks him what he takes to be his nose. Probably the Buddha was trying to get Ananda to say he took his eyes for his nose or his ears for his nose, but Ananda still did not understand this doctrine.

**Do you hold that it takes the form of two fleshy claws?** Do you hold that the nose is that piece of flesh which looks like two claws? **Or do you hold it is an inherent ability of the nature which perceives smells as a result of movement?** Or do you hold it is the awareness of smell, the ability to smell? When there is awareness of smells there is movement sniffing. Do you take this nature to be the nose?

**Sutra:
“Suppose you hold that it is fleshy claws which form an integral part of your body. Since the body’s perception is touch, the sense organ of smelling would be named ‘body’ instead of ‘nose,’ and the objects of smelling would be objects of touch. Since it would not even have the name ‘nose,’ how could a realm be established for it?

Commentary:**The Buddha said further to Ananda: **Suppose you hold that it is fleshy claws.** Suppose you consider the nose consciousness to have the nature of flesh - **which form an integral part of your body.** Things which are flesh are part of the human body. **Since the body’s perception is touch -** what the body is aware of is called touch; it is not called the nose consciousness - **the sense organ of smelling would be named “body” instead of “nose,” and the objects of smelling would be objects of touch.** What has the nature of flesh is the body and what the body is aware of is the defiling object of touch. **Since it would not even have the name “nose,” how could a realm be established for it?** In this case, there wouldn’t be anything with the name “nose consciousness.” Without even the name “nose,” how could you establish a realm for it?

The Buddha isn’t being logical. We all know that we have noses. Now he’s caused Ananda’s nose to disappear. Ultimately, do people’s nostrils point up or down? The Buddha didn’t ask Ananda that, but now I am asking you who are studying the *Shurangama Sutra*: Do you all know whether your nostrils point up or down? If you can answer that question, you will pass your monthly examination.

**Sutra:“Suppose you held that the nose was the perceiver of smells. Then, in your mind, what is it that perceives? Suppose it were the flesh that perceived. Basically, what the flesh perceives is objects of touch, which have nothing to do with the nose.

Commentary: Suppose you held that the nose was the perceiver of smells.** Suppose you consider the perception of smells, that kind of knowing awareness, to be your nose consciousness. **Then, in your mind, what is it that perceives?** What do you take to be the perceiver? **Suppose it were the flesh that perceived.** Do you say that you perceive smells with your flesh? **Basically, what the flesh perceives is objects of touch, which have nothing to do with the nose.** What the flesh is aware of is called objects of touch. So, it can’t be called the nose.

**Sutra:
“Suppose it were emptiness that perceived. Then emptiness would itself be the perceiver, and the flesh would have no awareness. Thus, empty space would be you, and since your body would be without perception, Ananda would not exist.

Commentary:**Ananda, **suppose it were emptiness that perceived.** The emptiness that the Buddha is referring to is the emptiness close to the nostrils. He proposes that the nose-consciousness exists at the place where the nostrils and the emptiness come together. **Then emptiness would itself be the perceiver, and the flesh would have no awareness.** If you took the emptiness to be the nose consciousness, which does the perceiving, then emptiness would know itself, while your flesh would have no awareness. **Thus, empty space would be you.** If you say that the consciousness is produced from emptiness, then emptiness would be your body, Ananda. Why? Because your consciousness would be in the emptiness in front of your nostrils. This emptiness would have self-awareness. If you don’t share this awareness, then it doesn’t have anything to do with you. But, if you do share it, if you know that it is a consciousness that makes distinctions, then your body would be emptiness along with it. **Since your body would be without perception, Ananda would not exist.** In that case, you, Ananda, would not even have a place to stand. There wouldn’t be any place for you, because, after all, you are emptiness.

**Sutra: “If it is the smell that perceives, perception itself would lie with the smell. What would that have to do with you?

Commentary:If it is the smell that perceives -** if you say that your nose consciousness comes from the defiling object of smells, **perception itself would lie with the smell.** If it were the smell that produced the perception, then the consciousness would belong to the smell and not to you. So, **what would that have to do with you?** It wouldn’t have anything to do with you.

**Sutra:“If it is certain that vapors of fragrance and stench are produced from your nose, then the two flowing vapors of fragrance and stench would not arise from the wood of airavana or chandana. Given that the smell does not come from these two things, when you smell your own nose, is it fragrant, or does it stink? What stinks does not give off fragrance; what is fragrant does not stink.

Commentary:**The word for “stench” in Chinese is pronounced *xiu* or *chou*. Basically, it should be pronounced *chou* here, but when people hear that word they immediately get a bad impression, so here we will pronounce it *xiu*. **If it is certain that vapors of fragrance and stench are produced from your nose** - you say that pleasant and unpleasant smells are produced from your nose - **then the two flowing vapors of fragrance and stench** - that is, the fragrant scent and the unpleasant smell - **would not arise from the wood of airavana or chandana.** In this case, the stench would not be produced from the airavana, which is a kind of tree with an extremely bad smell.

How bad does it smell?

The wood puts forth a stench like that of a three-to-five-week-old corpse which is decaying under the blazing sun and can be smelled for a long way off. The red flowers of the airavana are very beautiful but very poisonous, and if someone were to eat one of them, that person would immediately die. Chandana has been discussed before. It is also called oxhead chandana, and it comes from Uttarakuru, the northern continent. As soon as the fragrant chandana wood is lit, it can be smelled for thirteen miles. Sometimes the airavana grows near the chandana, and when this happens the airavana doesn’t stink. This is an example of the ultimate stench becoming fragrance, and the ultimate fragrance becoming stench. The same is true of people. Places where there are only bad people have a kind of stench - everyone smells bad. But, perhaps there is a good person among them who exerts his influence and changes them all into good people; his presence is like the fragrance of chandana wood. When a thing reaches the furthest point there will certainly be change.

When stagnation reaches its furthest point,
peace comes along.

When something is as bad as it can get, it gets better. And, when things are as good as they can get, they go bad. For example, in this world, scientific progress has now led to a lot of discoveries, but when the discoveries reach their furthest point, the world will be destroyed. And, afterward, people will be totally ignorant. Then, after a time of ignorance, they will begin to discover things again, and when they discover a lot of things again, the world will be destroyed again. That’s how this world is. It goes in cycles.

**Given that the smell does not come from these two things -** if airavana and chandana do not give off vapors - **when you smell your own nose, is it fragrant, or does it stink? What stinks does not give off fragrance; what is fragrant does not stink.** If the smell is not good, then it is not fragrant. If it is a good smell, then it does not stink.

**Sutra: “Suppose you say you can smell both the fragrance and the stench; then you, one person, would have two noses, and I would now be addressing questions to two Anandas. Which one is you?

Commentary:Suppose you say you can smell both the fragrance and the stench -** if you say that you yourself can smell and that what you smell is both fragrant and stinking, **then you, one person, would have two noses.** Why? Didn’t the Buddha just say that what is fragrant does not stink, and what stinks is not fragrant? If you say you smell both smells, and if you say that smells are produced from the nose, then you should have two noses. How could your one nose smell two scents? **And I would now be addressing questions to two Anandas.** After all, there are two noses, so there should be two Anandas whom I am questioning about the Buddhadharma. **Which one is you?** Which is your body?

**Sutra:“Suppose there is one nose; then fragrance and stench would not be two. Since stench would be fragrance and fragrance would become stench, there would not be two natures, thus what would make up the realm?

Commentary:Suppose there is one nose.** Perhaps you insist that there is just one nose, not two, saying that you haven’t two bodies, so you must have only one nose. **Then fragrance and stench would not be two.** Fragrance would simply be stench, and stench would be nothing but fragrance; there wouldn’t be any distinction between them. **Since stench would be fragrance and fragrance would become stench, there would not be two natures.** If the two scents of fragrance and stench mix together, neither nature remains. The fragrance isn’t fragrant and the stench doesn’t stink. Without these two natures, where would your realm of nose consciousness come from? Where could you establish its bounds?

R2 Refutes that it is produced from smells.

**Sutra: “If the nose consciousness were produced because of smells, it follows that it is in existence just because of smells. Just as the eyes can see but are unable to see themselves, so, too, if it exists because of smells, it would not be aware of smells.

Commentary:
If the nose consciousness were produced because of smells** - if you say that the nose consciousness is produced because of smells - **it follows that it is in existence just because of smells.** Suppose that the nose consciousness exists because of the smell of vapors. **Just as the eyes can see but are unable to see themselves** - the eyes’ vision cannot return the light and illumine within to see themselves - **so, too, if it exists because of smells, it would not be aware of smells.** If it is because of smells that the nose-consciousness exists, then basically you should not be aware of smells in your nose consciousness. How could you still be aware of them? However, in fact, you are aware of smells, so it is not from smells that the nose consciousness is produced.

**Sutra:
“If it is aware of smells, then it is not produced from smells. If it had no awareness, the realm of smelling would not come into being. If the consciousness were not aware of smells, then the realm would not be established from smells.

Commentary:If it is aware of smells, then it is not produced from smells.** If there is an awareness of smells, then how could awareness arise from the smells? A nose consciousness both produced from smells and aware of smells would be like eyes which could see themselves. If you say it is aware of smells, then it is not produced from smells. On the other hand, if you say it has no awareness, it cannot be the nose-consciousness. Something that lacks awareness is not consciousness. The meaning of consciousness is that it makes distinctions; it must have awareness.

**If it had no awareness** - for the defiling objects of smell are devoid of knowing awareness - **the realm of smelling would not come into being.** It cannot be that smells, which lack awareness, are what establish the realm of nose consciousness. **If the consciousness were not aware of smells, then the realm would not be established from smells.** Furthermore, it’s been proved that if the nose consciousness comes from smells, it cannot also be aware of them. If it is aware of smells, then it cannot come about because of them.

R3 Refutes that it arises from a combination of the two.

**Sutra: “Since there is no intermediate realm of consciousness, there is no basis for establishing anything internal or external, either. Therefore, the nature of smelling is ultimately empty and false.

Commentary:**It has no location. Where would you say it arose from? Since it is not produced from smells, nor from the nose, nor from emptiness, it is ultimately empty and false.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

**Sutra: “Therefore, you should know that, as to the nose and smells being the conditions which produce the realm of the nose consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the three aspects of the nose, smells, and the realm of smelling do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:Therefore, you should know** - because of what has been said, you should know, Ananda - **that, as to the nose and smells being the conditions** - the mutual causes and conditions - **which produce the realm of the nose consciousness, none of the three places exists.** There is no realm of the nose organ, nor is there a realm of the defiling object of smells, nor is there a realm of a smelling consciousness; none of these three realms exists. **Thus, the three aspects of the nose, smells -** the nose organ and the defiling object of smells - **and the realm of smelling** - the consciousness which enables you to be aware of the defiling objects of smell - these three realms - **do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.** They, too, are a manifestation of the wonderful nature of true suchness from within the treasury of the Thus Come One. They definitely do not have a fixed location.

Don’t be attached to the provisional dharma doors which I spoke previously: the eighteen realms and the twelve places. All of them are empty, false, not actual. But, in order to draw in those of the small vehicle, it was necessary to explain all those dharma doors, all those places. Basically, they do not exist. Now, in explaining this, I am explaining the dharma door of the characteristic of reality - the primary truth, the great Shurangama Samadhi - and, so you cannot bring up all those theories I explained before and compare them to the dharma door of the primary truth which I am now explaining. Thus, none of those realms discussed before holds up; they are not fully correct. They don’t count as the Buddha’s dharma.

When there is a day without a lecture on the sutra, don’t just treat it as a vacation. If you do, your minds can become scattered. When you have a day off, you should keep your body and mind under control. Don’t be too scattered. You should study with great intensity and not just do a passable job of things.

Further, there is the matter of taking precepts. At our *Shurangama Sutra* Cultivation and Lecture Session, there are people who wish to take the five lay precepts, the eight lay precepts, and the Bodhisattva precepts. Those who take the five precepts and the eight precepts are called *upasakas* and *upasikas -* precepted laymen and laywomen. Someone who takes the Bodhisattva precepts is called a Bodhisattva. People who have taken the Bodhisattva precepts are Bodhisattvas. Originally it was only left home people who received the Bodhisattva precepts, but since the definition of a Bodhisattva is one who benefits himself and benefits others, laypeople can also take the Bodhisattva precepts. Receiving precepts is extremely important in Buddhism. All of you who want to take precepts should not miss an opportunity to do so. You can take one precept, two precepts, three precepts, four precepts, five precepts, eight precepts, and the ten major and forty eight minor precepts. Laypeople cannot take the ten precepts, because the ten precepts are for *sramanera* (novice monks and nuns). Receiving one precept is called taking the small half. Receiving two precepts is called taking half the precepts; taking three precepts is called taking more than half, and taking five precepts is called taking the entire five.

The first precept prohibits killing; but, if you cannot stop killing, you can take the second precept, which prohibits stealing. If you like to drink, like a drinking disciple I have, and you don’t want to take the fifth precept, which prohibits taking intoxicants, you can take the precept against killing, the precept against stealing, and the third and fourth precepts, which prohibit sexual misconduct and lying. If you say, “I like to lie, I can’t take the precept that prohibits lying,” you can take the precepts against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and intoxicants. Perhaps you say you can’t stop killing - sometimes you unintentionally kill ants, or mosquitoes - and to take the precept and break it afterward would involve an even greater offense. Then you can decide against taking the precept that prohibits taking life. It is up to you. So, don’t miss the opportunity.

I don’t mind telling you that in China, if you want to receive precepts, you can’t do it without paying two hundred dollars. Why? It is like a business. You certainly have to pay. The money I am speaking of is not the money used to buy the robe and sash which are worn by precepted disciples. That is something for you, and how much money you spend on that is your business. The two hundred dollars is charged as a payment to the master and the temple. However, I don’t charge. Whether or not you have money doesn’t matter. In fact, I am giving a pair of arhat shoes to all of you who have participated in the Shurangama session. But, these arhat shoes are not meant to encourage you to practice the Way of an arhat - to benefit just yourself and not to benefit others. They are meant to teach you to remember that arhats are of the small vehicle, and that you should go down the path of the great vehicle. You should put on your arhat shoes and practice the Bodhisattva Way. P4 The realm of tongue, flavors, and consciousness.

Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ, object, and consciousness.
Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

**Sutra: “Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it, the tongue and flavors create the conditions that produce the tongue-consciousness.

"Is the consciousness produced because of the tongue, such that the tongue is its realm, or is it produced because of the flavors, such that the flavors are its realm?

Commentary:**The Buddha calls out to Ananda: **Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it -** in the past, when I explained the Buddhadharma of the small vehicle to you, the provisional vehicle, in order to teach and transform all living beings, I spoke about the realms of the tongue and flavors among the eighteen realms. **The tongue and flavors create the conditions that produce the tongue-consciousness.** Together they create the conditions. By having a tongue, one recognizes tastes. When there are flavors, the tongue is able to know of them. They work together to produce the tongue consciousness. The organ of the tongue and the defiling objects of flavors stand paired with one another, and in their midst is produced a mind which makes distinctions; this is called the tongue consciousness. But, ultimately, where are the bounds of the tongue consciousness? **Is the consciousness produced because of the tongue, such that the tongue is its realm?** Is the consciousness born from the tongue, and does the tongue consciousness use the tongue to form its boundaries? **Or is it produced because of the flavors, such that the flavors are its realm?** Perhaps it is produced because of the defiling object of flavors and takes the defiling objects of flavors as its boundaries. Tell me, Ananda.

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and refutes all possibilities.
R1 Refutes that it is produced from the tongue.

**Sutra: “Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the tongue. Then all the sugar cane, black plums, huang lien, salt, wild ginger, ginger, and cassia in the world would be entirely without flavor. Also, when you taste your own tongue, is it sweet or bitter?

Commentary:Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the tongue.** If the tongue consciousness were produced because of the tongue organ, **then all the sugar cane, black plums** - these are the sour plums mentioned earlier, when the Buddha said that just thinking of them caused the mouth to water. **Huang lien** (*coptis japonica*) is an extremely bitter medicine. **Salt** simply refers to the kind of salt we eat. **Wild ginger** (*asarum sieboldi*) is another kind of medicine. **Ginger and cassia** are also herbal medicines. All such substances in the world **would be entirely without flavor.** If the tongue consciousness were produced because of the tongue, the flavors of these medicines would not exist.

"**Also, when you taste your own tongue, is it sweet or bitter?** Further, you say that the tongue consciousness comes from the tongue. Try it, then. What does your tongue taste like?” the Buddha asks Ananda.

**Sutra: “Suppose the nature of your tongue were bitter. Then, what would it be that tasted the tongue? Since the tongue cannot taste itself, who would have the sense of taste?

“If the nature of the tongue were not bitter, there would be no flavor engendered by it. Thus, how could a realm be established?

Commentary:Suppose the nature of your tongue were bitter.** Ananda, if upon tasting your tongue you found it was bitter, **what would it be that tasted the tongue? Since the tongue cannot taste itself, who would have the sense of taste?** Who would it be who was aware of and knew of the tongue consciousness?

**If the nature of the tongue were not bitter, there would be no flavor engendered by it.** If the tongue had no flavor, then the tongue itself would not produce flavor. **Thus, how could a realm be established?** Then where would the realm of the tongue consciousness be established? Where would it be?

R2 Refutes that it is produced from flavors.

**Sutra: “If it were produced because of flavor, the consciousness itself would be a flavor. The case would be the same as with the tongue organ being unable to taste itself. How could the consciousness know whether it had flavor or not?

Commentary: If it were produced because of flavor, the consciousness itself would be a flavor.** If you say that flavor produces the consciousness, then consciousness also becomes a flavor. **Then the case would be the same as with the tongue organ being unable to taste itself.** You say the consciousness is itself a flavor. But, a flavor cannot know its own flavor, just as the tongue cannot taste itself. Bitterness, for example, could not taste itself and say, “Oh, I am bitter.” Flavor basically has no knowing awareness. **How could the consciousness know whether it had flavor or not?** Since flavor is without a knowing awareness, how could it have within it a consciousness which makes distinctions? How could it tell whether it was sweet or bitter? Flavor cannot taste itself.

**Sutra:“Moreover, flavors do not all come from one thing. Since flavors are produced from many things, the consciousness would have many substances.

Commentary:** You say the consciousness is produced from the flavor, but there is not just one kind of flavor. There are many kinds. **Moreover, flavors do not all come from one thing.** Sour, sweet, bitter, hot, salty - there are many kinds of flavors produced from many things. For instance, hot peppers are hot, black plums are sour, sugar cane is sweet, *huang lian* is bitter, salt is, of course, salty. **Since flavors are produced from many things, the consciousness would have many substances.** But, the substance of consciousness does not have a variety of natures.

This passage points to the fact that consciousness is unchanging. It “accords with conditions and does not change; it is unchanging, and yet it accords with conditions.” Thus, although there are many kinds of things which produce many kinds of flavors, the tongue consciousness does not imitate flavors in having so many substances. Shakyamuni Buddha is explaining this way intentionally in order to cause Ananda to understand that the consciousness is produced from the treasury of the Thus Come One. It is not a particular flavor or the tongue that produces the consciousness.

**Sutra:“Suppose that the consciousness were of a single substance and that the substance was definitely produced from flavor. Then, when salt, bland, sweet, and pungent were combined, their various differences would change into a single flavor and there would be no distinctions among them.

Commentary:Suppose that the consciousness were of a single substance and that the substance was definitely produced from flavor.** It was stated above that one substance cannot be produced from many flavors; however, if we say that the consciousness is, nevertheless, one substance and that it is produced from the various flavors, then we have to say that the various flavors combine and change into a single flavor. **Then, when salt, bland, sweet, and pungent were combined, their various differences would change into a single flavor.** In that case, **there would be no distinctions among them.** There wouldn’t be all those flavors of sour, sweet, bitter, hot, and salty. “Pungent” here means hot. “Bland” means tasteless. They would be a single flavor.

**Sutra:“If there were no distinctions, it could not be called consciousness. So, how could it further be called the realm of tongue, flavor, and consciousness?

Commentary:** A lot of flavors are combined into one substance, and each loses its original flavor. For instance, if you add something sweet to hot things, they are no longer as hot, and the sweet is no longer as sweet. Their flavors change. If you combine sour, sweet, bitter, hot, and salty together you alter their original flavor. So, when the original flavors disappear they change into a single flavor. And, within this flavor nothing can be distinguished. **If there were no distinctions -** if there were no flavor to be distinguished - **it could not be called consciousness.** The consciousness makes distinctions, but here it does not make distinctions, it cannot be called consciousness. It can’t even be called consciousness, **so, how could it further be called the realm of tongue, flavor, and consciousness?** It could not.

R3 Refutes that it is produced from emptiness.

**Sutra:“Nor can it be that empty space produces your conscious awareness.

Commentary:**Your tongue consciousness cannot be produced from empty space. It can’t be that emptiness produces your consciousness, your mind.

R4 Refutes that it arises from a combination of these.

**Sutra: “The tongue and flavors could not combine without each losing its basic nature. How could a realm be produced?

Commentary:The tongue and flavors could not combine without each losing its basic nature.** If the tongue and flavors combine, neither would retain a nature. **How could a realm be produced?** How can you give it a name and set it up as the tongue consciousness realm? You cannot.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

**Sutra: “Therefore, you should know that, as to the tongue and flavors being the conditions that produce the realm of tongue consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the three aspects of the tongue, flavors, and the realm of the tongue do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary: Therefore** - because of this, Ananda, **you should know that, as to the tongue and flavors being the conditions** - as to the tongue and flavors together producing the causes and conditions **that produce the realm of tongue consciousness, none of the three places exists.** You say that the consciousness is produced from the tongue organ, but it isn’t. You say it is produced from the defiled objects of flavors, but it isn’t. Nor can it be produced from the tongue consciousness itself. Thus, none of those three places has a substantial nature. **Thus,** if it is explained this way you can realize that **the three aspects of the tongue, flavors, and the realm of the tongue -** the consciousness realm of the tongue - these three - **do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.** They are not produced from causes and conditions, nor are they produced spontaneously. For them to be produced from causes and conditions would be for them to fall into the realm of existence. For them to be produced spontaneously would be for them to fall into the realm of emptiness. Emptiness and existence are two kinds, and they are not the completed meaning of the Middle Way. They are the causes and conditions taught by the provisional teaching, and the spontaneity taught by adherents of externalist sects. Where does the tongue consciousness realm ultimately come from? It, too, is a manifestation of the wonderful nature of true suchness of the treasury of the Thus Come One.

P5 The realm of body consciousness, objects of touch.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ, object, and consciousness.
Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

**Sutra: “Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it, the body and objects of touch create the conditions that produce the body consciousness.

"Is this consciousness produced because of the body, such that the body is its realm, or is it produced because of objects of touch, such that objects of touch are its realm?

Commentary:Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it** - in the doctrines of the small vehicle, the Provisional Teaching, which you have heard, **the body and objects of touch create the conditions that produce the body consciousness.** The organ of the body and the defiling objects of touch combine to produce conditions, and the existence of these conditions produces the body consciousness. The distinction of the body consciousness is produced.

**Is this consciousness produced because of the body?** Does this consciousness exist because the body produced it, **such that the body is its realm?** Is the body the realm of the body consciousness? **Or is it produced because of objects of touch?** Or is it the defiling objects of touch that produce the consciousness which makes distinctions?

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and refutes all possibilities.
R1 Refutes that it is produced from the body.

**Sutra:“Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the body. When there was no awareness of the two conditions of contact with and separation from objects of touch, what would the body be conscious of?

Commentary:Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the body.** Suppose you say the consciousness is produced because of the body. **When there was no awareness of the two conditions of contact with and separation from objects of touch, what would the body be conscious of?** What about the case when there is neither unity nor separation for the body to be conscious of? What is the body aware of then? What consciousness would it have? Thus, how can the consciousness be produced only from the body?

R2 Refutes that it is produced from objects of touch.

**Sutra: “Suppose it were produced because of objects of touch. Then you would not need your body. Without a body, what could perceive contact with and separation from objects of touch?

Commentary: Suppose it were produced because of objects of touch.** If you say the objects of touch produce the consciousness, then it is not produced from your body. **Then you would not need your body.** It would have nothing to do with your body. **Without a body, what could perceive contact with and separation from objects of touch?** Is there anyone in this world who can say, “It is not I who experience objects of touch with my body, but another body which perceives the sensation of unity and separation.” This doesn’t happen either.

Why do I say that?

R3 Refutes that it is produced from a combination of these.

**Sutra:

"Ananda, things do not perceive objects of touch. It is the body that perceives objects of touch.

Commentary:Ananda,** you should know that **things do not perceive objects of touch. It is the body that perceives objects of touch.** Things do not have the power of awareness. They do not have a nature that makes distinctions. You say the consciousness that makes distinctions comes from things; this is a mistake. If you can perceive the existence of objects of touch, the defiling objects of touch, it is your body that perceives them. If it were not for your body, how would you know there had been objects of touch? It is because objects of touch come into contact with your body that there is that awareness. Ultimately, however, where is the realm of the consciousness that is produced in the midst of the objects of touch and your body? Is it in the body, or is it in objects of touch?

**Sutra: “What the body knows is objects of touch, and what is aware of objects of touch is the body. What is objects of touch is not the body, and what is the body is not objects of touch.

Commentary: What the body knows is objects of touch.** The consciousness which makes distinctions is aware of objects of touch by means of your body. The body’s awareness comes about because of objects of touch. Thus, contact is what is known, and the body is what experiences contact. So your consciousness knows of the body because of contact. The awareness arises from the contact.

**And what is aware of objects of touch is the body.** “Awareness” here refers to consciousness. With the consciousness you are aware of a sensation of touch, and that sensation of touch comes from the body.

**However, what is objects of touch is not the body.** To speak of the body by itself, the defiling object of touch is simply the defiling object of touch - it is not the body. **And what is the body is not objects of touch.** And your body is not the defiling objects of touch. The two work together, but they are not the same. So, if we try to determine exactly where, between your body and the defiling objects of touch, the consciousness is, if you say that the consciousness definitely lies on one side or the other - either on the side of the body or on the side of the objects of touch - you won’t be able to find it. If you cannot find it between the body and the objects of touch, then you fail to locate the actual place of the consciousness. So where will you go to find the consciousness?

**Sutra:“The two characteristics of body and objects of touch are basically without a location. If it united with the body, it would be the body’s own substance and nature. If it were apart from the body, it would have the same appearance as empty space.

Commentary:The two characteristics of body and objects of touch** have no fixed location. You try to find out where the characteristic of the body and the characteristic of objects of touch ultimately are, but they **are basically without a location. If it united with the body, it would be the body’s own substance and nature.** If the consciousness unites with the body, if you want to say that the consciousness is produced from the body, then it would be the body’s own substance and nature. **If it were apart from the body, it would have the same appearance as empty space.** Suppose you say the consciousness is apart from the body. But, what is apart from the body is empty space, and you cannot find the appearance of a consciousness. So, the consciousness does not have the characteristic of a substance.

**Sutra:“Since the inside and the outside don’t stand up, how can one set up a middle? The middle cannot be set up, either. The inside and the outside are by nature empty. From what realm, then, is your consciousness born?

Commentary: Since the inside and the outside don’t stand up, how can one set up a middle?** You say the consciousness is inside, but it is not; you say it is outside, but it is not; you say it is in the defiling objects of touch, but it is not; you say it is in the organ of the body, but it is not. Since, then, neither the inside nor the outside exist, how can there be an appearance of a middle? **The middle cannot be set up, either.** You cannot distinguish where the middle is. **The inside and the outside are by nature empty.** There isn’t any middle, and there isn’t any inside or outside. They are by nature empty. **From what realm, then, is your consciousness born?** There isn’t any inside, there isn’t any outside, and there isn’t any middle. So, ultimately, what does the consciousness make use of to form its realm? Where can it set up a realm?

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

**Sutra: “Therefore, you should know that, as to the body and objects of touch being the conditions that produce the realm of body consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the three aspects of the body, objects of touch, and the realm of the body do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:**The various principles explained above demonstrate that the realm of the body consciousness cannot be found. It has no realm. **Therefore, you should know** - because of this, Ananda, you ought to know - **that, as to the body and contact being the conditions -** the body and the defiling objects of touch being the mutual conditions - t**hat produce the realm of body consciousness -** earlier, in the teaching of the provisional vehicle, the principle of the production of the body consciousness realm was discussed - **none of the three places exists. Thus, the three aspects of the body, objects of touch -** the organ of the body and the defiling objects of touch - **and the realm of the body -** the realm of body consciousness - these three - **do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.** They are a manifestation from within the nature of the treasury of the Thus Come One. You cannot find a fixed location for them. So, you should not compare the teaching methods of the provisional vehicle to the true and actual principles of the actual vehicle.

What was spoken before was expedient dharma. The dharma which is now spoken is the number one truth, it is the teaching method of the complete meaning of the Middle Way, which is totally different from the former dharma door. The five skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, and the eighteen realms - all these various dharmas do not arise from causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Earlier, the Buddha used the dharma of causes and conditions to smash theories of spontaneity propounded by externalist sects. That is why Ananda became attached to the dharma of causes and conditions and couldn’t reject it. He couldn’t give up the idea. He thought that the dharma which had been spoken previously could not be altered, could not be changed. Why is the Buddha now negating the principles which he previously explained? For the Buddha himself not to recognize the dharma which he himself had spoken before is to contradict himself, isn’t it? He contradicts what he himself said. It is at this point that Ananda gives rise to all kinds of doubts and keeps coming up with questions. So now the Buddha tells Ananda that he explained the dharma of causes and conditions earlier in order to counteract the externalist sects’ explanation of the dharma of spontaneity; it was certainly not ultimate. It was certainly not the essential dharma door. Now the complete meaning of the Middle Way, the number one truth, the genuine dharma-door is being explained, and the former methods cannot be used; you cannot continue to hold on to them. Ananda had not understood that, so he kept asking questions.

P6 The realm of mind, dharmas, and consciousness.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ, and object, and consciousness.

**Sutra: “Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it, the mind and dharmas create the conditions that produce the mind consciousness.**Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

**“Is this consciousness produced because of the mind, such that the mind is its realm, or is it produced because of dharmas, such that dharmas are its realm?**Q3 Discusses them separately and together and refutes all possibilities.
R1 Refutes that it is produced from the mind.

**“Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the mind. In your mind there certainly must be thoughts; these give expression to your mind. If there are no dharmas before you, the mind does not give rise to anything. Apart from conditions, it has no shape; thus, what use would the consciousness be?

Commentary: Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it** - you heard this dharma in the past - **the mind and dharmas create the conditions** - the organ of your mind and the dusts of dharmas together produce conditions - **that produce the mind consciousness.** In the midst of these conditions, the mind consciousness arises. **Is this consciousness produced because of the mind**? Is it because of the mind that the mind consciousness arises, **such that the mind is its realm**? **Or is it produced because of dharmas** - or is it dharmas that produce the mind consciousness - **such that dharmas are its realm?

Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the mind.** Suppose you say that the mind consciousness is produced because of the mind. **In your mind there certainly must be thoughts.** In the organ of your mind you certainly will have some kind of thinking. And, it is these thoughts of yours which **give expression to your mind.** They bring forth the mind consciousness of the organ of the mind. **If there are no dharmas before you –** “dharmas before you” means your present thoughts. If you are not thinking, if you haven’t any thoughts, **the mind does not give rise to anything.** In the organ of your mind there are no defiling objects of dharmas - no thoughts. No dharma can arise. **Apart from conditions, it has no shape.** Apart from these causes and conditions - the mind and the defiling objects - the mind consciousness has no shape. There basically is no form or shape, because the mind is conditioned by dharmas. So then, what is its appearance? It has none. Apart from the mind that seizes on conditions, there is no form or shape. **Thus, what use would the consciousness be?** When there is no form or shape, where is the consciousness? What ability does it have to create its own function as a consciousness?

**Sutra: “Moreover, is your conscious awareness the same as your mind organ, with its capacity to understand and make distinctions, or is it different? If it were the same as the mind, it would be the mind; how could it be something else that arises? If it were different from the mind, it should thereby be devoid of consciousness. If there were no consciousness, how would it arise from the mind? If there were consciousness, how would it differ from the mind? Since it is by nature neither the same nor different, how can a realm be established?

Commentary:** The Buddha said to Ananda: **Moreover, is your conscious awareness the same as your mind organ, with its capacity to understand and make distinctions, or is it different?** That is, are the natures of your conscious mind and the organ of your mind the same? **If it were the same as the mind, it would be the mind.** You may say that the conscious mind is the same as the organ of the mind, but what is the same as the organ of the mind is the organ of the mind and cannot be called the consciousness. **How could it be something else that arises?** If the mind consciousness is the organ of the mind, how can you say the consciousness arises within the organ of the mind? **If it were different from the mind, it should thereby be devoid of consciousness.** “Different from the mind” means the same as defiling objects of dharmas. Defiling objects of dharmas have no ability to make distinctions. The organ of your mind has the ability to make distinctions. The consciousness also has the ability to make distinctions. If it is different from the mind, if it were produced from the mind, it would not be the same as the mind. If it were not the same, it would have no consciousness.

**If there were consciousness** - if you say there is consciousness - **how would it differ from the mind?** How can your mind know your own mind? **Since it is by nature neither the same nor different** - neither nature is possible - **how can a realm be established?** You say that your consciousness and the organ of the mind are the same, but that doesn’t work; you say they are different, but that doesn’t work, either. Neither case is possible. And, since they are impossible, how can you set up a realm in the midst of them and say there is a mind consciousness realm?

R2 Refutes that it is produced from dharmas.

**Sutra: “Suppose it were produced because of dharmas. None of the dharmas of the world exists apart from the five defiling objects. Consider the dharmas of form, the dharmas of sound, the dharmas of smell, the dharmas of taste, and the dharmas of touch: each has a clearly distinguishable appearance and is matched with one of the five organs. They are not what the mind takes in.

Commentary:Suppose it were produced because of dharmas.** You may want to say that the mind consciousness is produced because of dharmas, since the mind is conditioned by dharmas. But, **none of the dharmas of the world exists apart from the five defiling objects.** “The world” here refers to the sentient world and the material world. None of the dharmas in these worlds is apart from the realms of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch. **Consider the dharmas of form, the dharmas of sound, the dharmas of smell, the dharmas of taste, and the dharmas of touch.** You should take a look at them. **Each has a clearly distinguishable appearance** - forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch all have their own appearances which are very clear - **and is matched with one of the five organs.** They are opposite the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. The five organs are matched with the five defiling objects. **They are not what the mind takes in.** They do not belong to the organ of your mind.

**Sutra:“Suppose your consciousness were indeed produced through a reliance on dharmas. Take a close look at them now: what does each and every dharma look like?

Commentary:**Your mind consciousness has no connection with the first five defiling objects. Now, **suppose your consciousness were indeed produced through a reliance on dharmas.** Perhaps you believe that the defiling objects of dharmas produce the mind consciousness. **As you now take a close look at them now** - you should contemplate then carefully and in detail; take a good, close look. **What does each and every dharma look like?** What are the dharmas which can produce the mind consciousness like? Are they apparent, or are they non apparent?

**Sutra:“Underlying the characteristics of form and emptiness, movement and stillness, penetration and obstruction, unity and separation, and production and extinction there is nothing at all.

Commentary:**If you depart from the defiling objects of **form and emptiness, movement and stillness, penetration and obstruction, unity and separation, and production and extinction -** these various dharmas - **there is nothing at all.** “Underlying” means to have no connection with the dharmas just mentioned; if you depart from these characteristics and break all connections with them, “there is nothing at all.” No matter how you look at it, it is to be feared you won’t come up with anything. The defiling objects of dharmas are invisible. So, you may look for their appearance, but you cannot find it.

**Sutra: "When there is production, then form, emptiness, and all dharmas are produced. When there is extinction, then form, emptiness, and all dharmas are extinguished. Since what is causal does not exist, if those causes produce the consciousness, what appearance does the consciousness assume? If there is nothing discernable about the consciousness, how can a realm be established for it?

Commentary:When there is production, then form, emptiness, and all dharmas are produced.** If the dharmas of form, emptiness, and the like mentioned above are produced, they are produced simultaneously. **When there is extinction, then form, emptiness, and all dharmas are extinguished.** When there is extinction, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas are all extinguished at the same time. **Since what is causal does not exist, if those causes produce the consciousness, what appearance does the consciousness assume?** “What is causal” refers to the defiling objects of dharmas. They are gone; you cannot find them. Since the defiling objects of dharmas are gone, how can there be consciousness? Basically, it does not exist. Basically, the defiling objects of dharmas which are produced haven’t any substance or nature of their own. Thus, where will you go to find a consciousness? The consciousness, basically, cannot exist, either. Suppose the consciousness did exist; what would its appearance be? What is the consciousness like? Does it have an appearance, or not? **If there is nothing discernable about the consciousness -** since it has no appearance that can be found - **how can a realm be established for it?** The consciousness doesn’t even have any characteristics; how can you set up a realm for it? Therefore, the realm of the mind consciousness does not exist, either.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

**Sutra: “Therefore, you should know that, as to the mind and dharmas being the conditions that produce the realm of the mind consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the three aspects of the mind, dharmas, and the realm of the mind do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.”

Commentary: Therefore, you should know** - because of this, Ananda, you should understand this principle - **that, as to the mind and dharmas being the conditions that produce the realm of the mind-consciousness, none of the three places exists.** You, basically, cannot find a mind realm, and you cannot find a mind consciousness realm, nor can you find a realm of dharmas. These three places, among the eighteen realms, are all non existent. **Thus, the three aspects of the mind, dharmas, and the realm of the mind** - the organ of the mind, the defiling objects of dharmas, and the mind consciousness realm - these three - **do not have their origin in causes and conditions** - basically, they do not belong to what is included among dharmas of cause and condition - **nor do their natures arise spontaneously.** Nor do they belong to what is said to be spontaneous by adherents to externalist sects.

What are they then? The mind, the defiling object of dharmas, and the mind consciousness produced in their midst are all one part of the nature of wonderful true suchness of the treasury of the Thus Come One.