**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 4**

**CHAPTER 3**

**Ananda Attaches to Causes and Conditions**

J2 He also instructs Ananda.
K1 Ananda traces the Buddha's words and attaches to causes a conditions.
 **Sutra:

Ananda then bowed at the Buddha's feet, arose in the great assembly, and said to the Buddha, "The World Honored One now explains that when the three conditions of the karma of killing, stealing, and lust are cut off, the three causes for them do not arise. Then the madness of Yajnadatta in the mind ceases of itself, and just that ceasing is Bodhi. It is not something obtained from anyone else. These clearly are causes and conditions; why, then, does the Thus Come One abruptly reject causes and conditions?"

Commentary:**

Ananda then bowed at the Buddha's feet, he prostrated himself and grasped the Buddha's feet, then arose in the great assembly, and said to the Buddha, "The World Honored One now explains that when the three conditions of the karma of killing, stealing, and lust are cut off" the Buddha has discussed how the greed of killing, the greed of stealing, and the greed of lust, these three kinds of karma, bring about the continuity of the world, the continuity of living beings, and the continuity of karmic retribution. When these three conditions are cut off, the three causes for them do not arise. Then the madness of Yajnadatta in the mind, that confusion in the mind, ceases of itself, and just that ceasing is Bodhi. It is not something obtained from anyone else. It does not come from somewhere outside. That's what the Buddha said. These clearly are causes and conditions. This principle is quite obviously the dharma of causes and conditions. Why, then, does the Thus Come One abruptly reject causes and conditions? Why does the World Honored One reject causes and conditions, spontaneity, and mixing and uniting? What you are talking about right now is the dharma of causes and conditions.
 **Sutra:

It was through causes and conditions that my mind became enlightened, World Honored One, and that is not only true of us who are young in years, of us sound-hearers who still have to study. Mahamaudgalyayana, Shariputra, and Subhuti, who are now in this assembly and who followed the elder brahmans, became enlightened and obtained the state of no outflows upon hearing the Buddha expound upon causes and conditions.

Commentary:**
Ananda said, "It was through the principle of causes and conditions that my mind became enlightened, World Honored One, and that is not only true of us who are young in years, of us bhikshus, of us sound-hearers who still have to study." The level of fourth-stage arhatship is called the position of "having nothing left to study." Those at the level of the first, second, and third fruition still have to study. "Sound-hearers" are the arhats who awakened to the Way upon hearing the Buddha speak dharma. Mahamaudgalyayana, of the "big bean clan," Shariputra, "son of the egret," and Subhuti, "born into emptiness," who are now in this assembly and who followed the elder brahmans, the brahmans who expounded the theory of spontaneity became enlightened and obtained the state of no outflows upon hearing the Buddha expound upon causes and conditions. They heard
the doctrine of the twelve links of conditioned causation as expressed by the Buddha and became enlightened. They became arhats with no outflows. They had no more ignorance, and so:

All their outflows were ended;
They had done what had to be done,
And would undergo no further becoming.

When all their outflows were ended, they became fourth-stage arhats, they obtained the penetration of the extinction of outflows. They had done what had to be done and would not have to undergo further rebirth.
 **Sutra:

Now you say that Bodhi does not come from causes and conditions. So the spontaneity that Maskari Goshaliputra and others advocated in Rajagriha then becomes the primary meaning! I only hope you will let fall great compassion and break through my confusion.

Commentary:**

World Honored One, you previously spoke the dharma of causes and conditions and the arhats opened enlightenment and were certified as having attained the fruition. Now you say that Bodhi does not come from causes and conditions. Now you've done away with causes and conditions. The spontaneity that Maskari Goshaliputra and others advocated in Rajagriha then becomes the primary meaning!

Maskari Goshaliputra was a leader of an externalist path that propounded spontaneity. His name means one who has not seen the Way, ( bu jian dao). By using causes and conditions, the Buddha destroyed the theory of spontaneity. Now that the Buddha has renounced causes and conditions, Ananda says, spontaneity must reign supreme. I only hope you will let fall great compassion and break through my confusion. Buddha, I hope that with your mind of great kindness and compassion you will bring us out of our confusion. Instruct those of us who don't recognize true principle, those of us with too much false thinking.

K2 The Thus Come One expels his deep emotion and upbraids him for attaching so tightly.
L1 He uses an analogy to expel his emotion and put forth his meaning.
 **Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Let us take the case of Yajnadatta in the city: if the causes and conditions of his madness cease, the nature that is not mad will spontaneously come forth. The entire principle of spontaneity and causes and conditions is nothing more than that.

Commentary:**

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Let us take the case of Yajnadatta in the city: if the causes and conditions of his madness cease. Can you explain the causes and conditions of his madness? If his madness ceases, the nature that is not mad will spontaneously come forth. The entire principle of spontaneity and causes and conditions is nothing more than that. Tell me, what aspect of his situation arose from causes and conditions, and what aspect of it was spontaneous? That's all there is to say about these two principles: it's just a matter of what I have explained here."
 **Sutra:

Ananda, Yajnadatta's head was spontaneously there, it was a spontaneous part of him. There was never a time when it was not. Why, then, did he suddenly fear that he had no head and start running about madly?

Commentary:**

Ananda, do you realize that Yajnadatta's head was spontaneously there? He never lost it, and he never got it back. It was a spontaneous part of him. That's just the way he was: he had a head. There was never a time when it was not. It wasn't that originally he didn't have a head. Why, then, did he suddenly fear that he had no head and start running about madly? His head was there; it was never lost. You tell me, then, why he got scared and said that he was afraid he didn't have a head. He frightened himself into losing his head and started running around like a mad man. What were the causes and conditions here? Where was the spontaneity?
 **Sutra:

If he naturally had a head and went mad due to causes and conditions, would it not be just as natural for him to lose his head due to causes and conditions?

Commentary:**

Why didn't he really lose his head?
 **Sutra:

Basically his head was not lost. The madness and fear arose from falseness. There was never any change that took place. Why, then, labor the point about causes and conditions?

Commentary:**

Basically his head was not lost. The madness and fear arose from falseness. He picked up a mirror one morning and said that he could see the eyes and eyebrows of the head very clearly in the mirror, but fretted that he could not see his own eyes and face. Madness and fear arose, and he went running crazily about. His madness and fear arose from falseness. There was never any change that took place. Although he went mad and began running about in fear that he had no head, there really hadn't been any change at all. So why, then, labor the point about causes and conditions? What causes and conditions are you going to make out of this? What spontaneity was involved?
 **Sutra:

If the madness were spontaneous, the madness and fear would be fundamental. Before he went mad, then, where was his madness hidden?

Commentary:**

If the madness were spontaneous, if you want to argue the point and say that in fact his madness arose spontaneously of itself, the madness and fear would be fundamental, the madness and fear would have been there all the time. Before he went mad, then, where was his madness hidden? Show me the place that the madness was hiding. You can't find it.
 **Sutra:

If the madness were not spontaneous, and his head were in fact not lost, why did he run about in a state of madness?

Commentary:**

If the madness were not spontaneous, were we to say his natural state he was not mad, and his head were in fact not lost, there was nothing false about his head; it was not a phony head in the first place, why did he run about in a state of madness? Why did he go mad and run about?
 **Sutra:

If you realize that you have a head and recognize the madness of your pursuit, then both spontaneity and causes and conditions become idle theories. That is why I say that the three conditions' ceasing to be is itself the Bodhi mind.

Commentary:**

Ananda, if you realize that you have a head, if you understand clearly about your own head, and recognize the madness of your pursuit: you see that it is you who are running madly about. When you know that you have not lost your head and realize that there is no reason for you to be running crazily about, then both spontaneity and causes and conditions become idle theories. Talk about causes and conditions and spontaneity just becomes a joke. That is why I say that the three conditions, ceasing to be is itself the Bodhi mind. When there is no more greed of killing, greed of stealing, or greed of lust in you, when you have cut off these three causes and conditions, you have attained the Bodhi mind.

L2 Tells him repeatedly to expel absolutely all emotion.
 **Sutra:

The Bodhi mind's being produced and the mind subject to production and extinction's being extinguished is simply production and extinction.

Commentary:**

We refer to the Bodhi mind as being produced and the mind of production and extinction as being extinguished, but in reality they have no actual substance or nature.
 **Sutra:

The ending of both production and extinction is the effortless Way. If there is spontaneity, then clearly it must be that the thought of spontaneity arises and the mind subject to production and extinction ceases: that, then, is still prouction and extinction.

Commentary:**

The ending of both production and extinction is the effortless Way. It is the great Shurangama Samadhi. If there is spontaneity, then clearly it must be that the thought of spontaneity arises. You should understand that if there is spontaneity, then the thought of spontaneity arises, and the mind subject to production and extinction ceases. You should realize that. That, then, is still production and extinction. If your understanding is that the mind subject to production and extinction is extinguished, then you are proposing a case of production and extinction, not a case of spontaneity.
 **Sutra:

To call the lack of production and extinction spontaneity is the same as to say that the single substance formed by the combination of all mundane appearances is a mixed and united essence, and that whatever is not mixed and united is basically spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:**

To call the lack of production and extinction spontaneity is the same as to say that the single substance formed by the combination of all mundane appearances is a mixed and united essence. Saying that spontaneity is the opposite of production and extinction is just like saying that spontaneity is the opposite of a lot of appearances in the world coming together and forming a mixed and united substance. It is like saying that a lack of mixing and uniting is spontaneity. Spontaneity in those terms is still in the realm of duality.
 **Sutra:

When spontaneity is devoid of spontaneity, and mixing and uniting are devoid of their unifying quality, so that spontaneity and unity alike are abandoned, and both the abandonment of them and their existence cease to be that is no idle theory.

Commentary:**

When spontaneity is devoid of spontaneity, and mixing and uniting are devoid of their unifying quality. The phrase, "mixing and uniting" refers to causes and conditions. When spontaneity isn't spontaneity and mixing and uniting don't have the causes and conditions of mixing and uniting, so that spontaneity and unity alike are abandoned. The two doctrines of spontaneity and of the uniting aspect of causes and conditions are each abandoned. And both the abandonment of them and their existence cease to be. When one separates from causes and conditions and spontaneity, both are gone. There is no spontaneity and no causes and conditions; both dharmas are abandoned. That is no idle theory. There aren't any causes and conditions and there isn't any spontaneity. Such an explanation as that is no idle theory, it's not just talking in riddles.

L3 He directly scolds him for his excessive attachment to idle theories.
 **Sutra:

Bodhi and Nirvana are still so far away that you must undoubtedly pass through kalpas of bitterness and diligence before you cultivate them and are certified.

Commentary:**

Bodhi and Nirvana, those fruitions, are still so far away that you must undoubtedly pass through kalpas of bitterness and diligence before you cultivate them and are certified. If we look at where you are now, Ananda, Bodhi and Nirvana are very far away, indeed. You will certainly have to pass through very many kalpas, enduring a lot of suffering and toiling at great length, before you can finish cultivating and reach certification and attainment to Bodhi and Nirvana.
 **Sutra:

You can hold in memory the twelve divisions of the sutras spoken by the Buddhas of the ten directions and their pure, wonderful principles as many as the sands of the River Ganges, but it only aids your idle theorizing.

Commentary:**

You can hold in memory, you can remember very clearly and never leave anything out, the twelve divisions of the sutras spoken by the Buddhas of the ten directions. I explained the twelve divisions of the canon at the beginning of this sutra. I wonder if anyone still remembers them. And their pure, wonderful principles as many as the sands of the River Ganges. In the twelve divisions of the canon the doctrines are pure and inconceivable and as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, but it only aids your idle theorizing. Although you can remember so many sutras, it does nothing but help you concoct idle theories. It's not real.

L4 He proves to him that idle theories have no merit.
 **Sutra:

You can discuss causes and conditions and spontaneity and understand them perfectly clearly, and people in the world refer to you as the one foremost in learning. You have spent aeons upon aeons saturating yourself with learning, yet you could not avoid the difficulty of Matangi.

Commentary:**

I will list the twelve divisions of the canon again for you:

1. Prose;
2. Repetitive verses;
3. Bestowal of predictions;
4. Interjected passages;
5. Analogies;
6. Former events;
7. Present lives;
8. Universalities;
9. Previously non-existent dharma;
10. Unrequested dharma;
11. Unconnected dharma;
12. Discussions.

When I listed them, I didn't look at any note's or refer to any commentary. I remembered them. In the same way, those of you who are following this explanation of the sutra should remember what you read. When you study, you should aim at remembering it. It's a lot of bother when you don't remember clearly what you've studied, so that you have to look things up before you can explain them. You should work to remember the essential parts of the sutra. You can discuss causes and conditions and spontaneity and understand them perfectly clearly. You can remember the principles very clearly and explain them precisely. And people in the world refer to you as the one foremost in learning. You have spent aeons upon aeons saturating yourself with learning.

You've developed your intelligence and memory-power. Oh, now I get it. Now I know why none of you remember the things I explain. I figured it out when I reached this passage of text in the sutra. It never occurred to me before. You've seen that Ananda was able to remember so many sutras but that it didn't do him any good, so you have decided not to commit a single sentence to memory. You don't want to be like Ananda, who depended on erudition and neglected samadhi. That's probably it, isn't it?

He became infused with study and learning, like the incense saturates the air here in the hall. In fact, those of you who come to hear the sutras every day may not remember what you've heard, but just think how helpful it is in ridding yourself of bad habits and faults. At the very least, when you are studying the sutras you won't be smoking cigarettes or doing other things that are bad for you Every day that you study you get better. Some people say that when they study they advance a little and then retreat a little, but in the final analysis, retreating from having studied is a lot better than not having studied at all. If you never take a single step forward, how could we even speak of retreat?

"Yet you could not avoid the difficulty of Matangi. Although you remember so many things, you still couldn't keep out of trouble with Matangi. In other words, as soon as you see a woman, you get confused. Tell me, what use are you? No matter how many books you've read, no matter how much Buddhadharma you remember, what use is it all if you forget everything as soon as you see a woman? Why are you like that?" the Buddha asks Ananda. Ananda, no doubt, was red in the face at this point. Although he had been certified to the first fruition of arhatship, he must have blushed when Shakyamuni Buddha asked him that question.
 **Sutra:

Why did you have to wait for me to use the spiritual mantra of the Buddha's summit? The fire of lust in Matangi's daughter's heart died instantly, and she attained the position of an Anagamin. Now she is one of a vigorous group in my dharma assembly. The river of love dried up in her, and she was able to set you free.

Commentary:**

The Buddha said, "You've studied so much Buddhadharma, but you go berserk as soon as you see a woman. You lost your head, and you followed that woman right into her house, and once you got in there you were on the verge of doing some unmentionable things. What were you up to, anyway?" At this point the Buddha was like a judge cross-examining Ananda. Why did you have to wait for me to use the spiritual mantra of the Buddha's summit and tell Manjushri Bodhisattva to go save you? You yourself remember so much of the twelve divisions of the canon; why didn't you recite them for her? Why did you lose control? You see a woman and forget everything. The way you look at it, the only thing that exists in the whole world is women.

The fire of lust in Matangi's daughter's heart died instantly. Her sexual desire, her ignorance, instantly died, and she attained the position of an Anagamin, the third fruition of arhatship. Matangi's daughter had loved Ananda. He became more important to her than her own life. She went home and told her mother that she absolutely had to trap Ananda. Her mother recited the "former Brahma Heaven mantra," and Ananda became confused. Actually, we say the mantra confused him, but basically the deviant cannot overcome the proper. If Ananda hadn't had the least bit of interest in Matangi's daughter, then the recitation of the mantra would have had no effect. It's certain that Matangi's daughter caught Ananda's eye. He stole several glances at her. "What a pretty girl!" Determined not to look again, he turned his head away but gave in again and took another look. After looking her over a few times this way, the thought of the beauty of Matangi's daughter had planted itself in his mind. So when her mother recited the mantra, Ananda followed her in a daze. If this hadn't been the case, he never would have gone along.

The Buddha realized that Ananda was on the verge of destroying the precept-substance, and so he immediately spoke the Shurangama Mantra. He commanded Manjushri Bodhisattva to take the mantra and go provide protection so that Ananda could be saved. When he got there and recited the Shurangama Mantra, Ananda's mind cleared. "How did I get here?" he wondered, and he headed directly back to the Jeta Grove in the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary. He had been right at the point of intercourse with Matangi's daughter, and when Manjushri Bodhisattva arrived with the Shurangama Mantra, Ananda no doubt jumped up, threw on his clothes, and ran out. When Matangi's daughter realized he was leaving, she pursued him. "Why are you leaving at the most important moment?" she cried. So Ananda ran back to the Jeta Grove with Mantangi's daughter chasing along behind. When she arrived, the Buddha asked her, "What are you doing here?"

"I love Ananda,' she replied.

"What do you love about Ananda?" the Buddha asked.

She said, "I love Ananda's nose."

"We'll cut off his nose and give it to you," was the Buddha's immediate reply.

"I love Ananda's eyes," she continued.

"We'll gouge them out and you can have them," the Buddha interrupted.

"I love Ananda's whole face," she summed up.

"That's easy," said the Buddha, "We'll just slice it off and you can take it back with you."

"If you slice it off, it won't be attractive," she protested.

"If it wouldn't be attractive then, what do you find so attractive about it now when it's still intact?"

And in the moment she took to think that over, she suddenly became enlightened and was certified to the third fruition of arhatship. Because her love for Ananda was so extreme, she instantaneously accomplished to the fruition when the Buddha spoke that dharma for her.

Now she is one of a vigorous group in my dharma assembly. The word translated as "group" here is literally "forest" in the Chinese text; it represents a gathering of people who are courageously vigorous. Let me say to all of you now that you don't have to fear sexual attraction between men and women; all you have to do is wake up to it and realize what it's really all about. Then there will be some hope for you. It's just to be feared that you won't wake up, but will be totally confused and keep going back to it, thinking it is a source of happiness. In actuality, it is really agonizing. If you really understood, you'd never do it again. But you don't, so you think about it when you're awake and dream about it when you are asleep and can't leave it alone.

The river of love dried up in her. Love is like a torrential river which flows on ceaselessly, swirling around you on all sides. But when Matangi's daughter heard the Buddha speak dharma, for her the river' of love disappeared. The fire of love and desire was transformed into an indestructible body of vajra. And she was able to set you free. Because Matangi's daughter was certified to the third fruition of arhatship, she didn't try to hold onto you, and so now you've been set free.

At this point, Ananda was still a first stage arhat. Hadn't even obtained the second fruition, but Matangi's daughter went right past him and was certified to the third fruition.

In five hundred former lives, Ananda and Matangi's daughter had been married to each other. So when she saw Ananda, it was love at first sight, she had met her husband from former lives. Her love for him was unavoidable. In fact, they probably had vows from former lives. Last life she had probably said to Ananda, "In the future, let's always get married to each other. Let us never part." That's why the love between them was so strong that they fell in love as soon as they laid eyes on each other.

L5 He urges him to diligently cultivate no outflows.

**Sutra:

Therefore, Ananda, your ability to keep in mind the Thus Come One's wonderful secret teachings of aeon after aeon is not as good as a single day of no-outflow cultivation that is intent upon getting far away from the two worldly sufferings of love and hate.

Commentary:**

Therefore, Ananda, your ability to keep in mind the Thus Come One's wonderful secret teachings of aeon after aeon, you can remember and recite the Buddha's teachings. "Secret" means what cannot be expressed in words or conceived of in thought, that is, what is inconceivable and ineffable. "Secret" also refers to knowledge which is not shared between two people. For instance, I am unaware of a dharma being spoken for you; and you do not realize that a dharma is being spoken for me. It may be the same dharma, but when one person hears it, it is one principle, whereas another person hears in it a different meaning. One explanation of a single principle is viewed differently by different people. That's what is meant by "secret"; each person received his own benefit. "Teachings" is literally "adornments" in the text, indicating that the doctrines that the Buddha explains are extremely lofty and valuable.

But your ability to remember so many sutras is not as good as a single day of no-outflow cultivation. It's not as good as cultivating dharma-doors with no afflictions, dharma-doors with no false thinking. At the level of fourth stage arhatship there are "no outflows." Bodhisattvas also have no outflows. To have no outflows means you have cut off all your habits and faults, your ignorance and afflictions, your greed, hatred, and stupidity. The Buddha speaks of non-outflow cultivation that is intent upon getting far away from the two worldly sufferings of love and hate. People think that love is a wonderful thing, and so there is love between men and women, love between fathers and sons. But in fact love is suffering. "I know, of course, that being apart from those you love is suffering," you say. But even if you aren't away from them, it's still suffering. It's still suffering.

When love reaches the ultimate point, it turns into its opposite, hate. Why does hate arise? Because there is love. Why does love arise? Because there is hate. And what goes on between couples and parents and children is a matter of past causes reaping effects in this present life. Some couples are as "polite as guests" to each other. They mutually respect each other. The expression in China is "She places things above her eyebrows" when she serves her husband. This refers to a wife of old who used to lift the plates of food above her eyebrows in a gesture of respect before serving them to her husband. Her husband also was particularly respectful of her; they were like close friends. There was no sticky emotion between them. So if couples have affinities from former lives, in this life they will be compatible. The husband must be careful not to do anything to offend his wife and the wife must not do anything to hurt her husband. When a couple has affinities, each helps the other out in every situation. If the wife gets sick, the husband quickly finds a doctor to treat her illness. If the husband is tired, the wife thinks of ways to make her husband comfortable.

Some couples come together because of mutual antagonism. Again, because of resentment and animosity built up from former lives, they come together in this life, and no matter what the husband says, the wife disagrees. No matter what the wife thinks, the husband disapproves. The household becomes one of complete antagonism and there is bickering and quarreling from morning to night. The husband beats his wife, and she retaliates by cracking his head open or drawing blood wherever she can, so that he's embarrassed to be seen in public. Wouldn't you say that this is suffering? It started out as love and turned into hate. That's why it's said that they are one and the same suffering.

All day long people talk about love, love, love. What love? You love day in and day out, you love until you die. But tell me, who are you going to love then? If you understand the principle, the two sufferings of love and hate don't exist. If you don't understand this principle, then both sufferings are agony. Therefore, we cultivate to be come enlightened, to understand, so that we will not be turned around by these states. So don't love and don't hate. That is the Middle Way.

L6 He reminds him of the baseness of his experience and severely scolds him.
 **Sutra:

In Matangi's daughter, a former prostitute, love and desire were dispelled by the spiritual power of the mantra. Now her name in dharma is Bhikshuni "Nature."

Commentary:**

In Matangi's daughter, a former prostitute, love and desire were dispelled by the spiritual power of the mantra. In former lives she had been a woman of the streets, with a great amount of sexual desire. Even so, the strength of the Shurangama Mantra obliterated her emotional love. So now we know that the function of the Shurangama Mantra is to obliterate each person's love and desire. "Then I don't want to recite it any more," you retort. "I don't want my love and desire to disappear. I want to keep them around." Keep them around? Well, that's up to you. If that's what you want, no one will force you to do otherwise. But you should also know that the Shurangama Mantra not only gets rid of emotional love and desire, it can increase your spiritual powers and your wisdom. Its power is inconceivable.

Emotional love is suffering. As was just mentioned, love and hate are both suffering. Take unrequited love, for instance. People in love think of nothing else but the object of their desire to the point that they can't sleep and they lose their appetite. They keep dreaming up methods of pursuit, but in the end they never get what they want. Wouldn't you say that ceaseless thinking is suffering? Now her name in dharma is Bhikshuni "Nature." Her name represents her understanding of the self-nature. As soon as the Buddha spoke dharma for her, she was immediately certified to the third fruition of arhatship without going in sequence through the first two stages. She was certified to all three fruitions at once. It was because she saw through it, saw that love and desire are basically empty. Ananda was still stuck at the first stage while his wife of five hundred former lives went right past him.
 **Sutra:

She and Rahula's mother, Yashodhara both became aware of their past causes and knew that for many kalpas they had endured the suffering of greed and love. Because they singlemindedly became permeated with the cultivation of the goodness of no outflows, they were both freed from their bonds and received predictions. Why, then, do you cheat yourself and still remain caught up in looking and listening?

Commentary:**

She and Rahula's mother, Yashodhara. Rahula was the Buddha's son, but he was not conceived through sexual intercourse. Shakyamuni Buddha was married at seventeen years old and left the home-life at nineteen. Although he married, it was not a sexual relationship. Before the Buddha left home, Yashodhara wanted to have a son by him. So the Buddha pointed to her belly and she conceived. This may sound like a myth, but this is how it is actually recorded in the Buddhist sutras. You may want to figure out how she could get pregnant just by having him point at her, but you'll find it's an inconceivable and ineffable state of affairs.

Rahula's name means "obstacle." Rahula lived in his mother's womb for six years. This is another case of cause and effect. In a former life, Rahula had plugged up a mouse-hole, and it took six days for the mouse to gnaw out another passageway. As a result, Rahula had to undergo the retribution of dwelling six years in his mother's womb.

Yashodhara, Rahula's mother's name, means "renowned," indicating that she had a good reputation. People considered her an especially fine woman.

Matangi's daughter and bhikshuni Yashodhara both became enlightened, and both became aware of their past causes and knew that for many kalpas they had endured the suffering of greed and love. They obtained the knowledge of past lives and thus were not only aware of their former lives but knew the causes and effects of life after life from limitless kalpas past. They knew that the reason why they had not awakened for life after life was that they suffered from greed and emotional love. Matangi's daughter had been a prostitute in former lives and Yashodhara's sexual desire was not small either. However, they single-mindedly became permeated with the cultivation of the goodness of no outflows, they turned the light around and became infused with cultivation. They decided they did not want to go down the path to birth and death any longer. They wanted to turn around and cultivate the goodness of no outflows, the ultimate wholesomeness, and because of that they were both freed from their bonds and received predictions. The bonds are those of greed and desire, which tie one up so one cannot get free. And those of you now who read the phrase "freed from their bonds," if you have good roots, should become enlightened, and you should wonder, "Oh, why am I still bound up in this?" And they received predictions in which the Buddha told them what time they would become Buddhas. Why, then, do you cheat yourself and still remain caught up in looking and listening? You are still attached to sounds and forms. Why are you attached to appearances? Why haven't you renounced them?

H3 The great assembly is led to enlightenment and praises his goodness, and expresses gratitude for the benefit they have received.
 **Sutra:

When Ananda and the great assembly heard the Buddha's instruction, their doubts and delusion were dispelled. Their minds awakened to the actual appearance, they experienced "light ease" both physically and mentally, and they obtained what they had never had before.

Commentary:**

When Ananda and the great assembly heard the Buddha's instruction, that subtle and wonderful dharma-door, their doubts and delusion were dispelled. Before this, Purna and Ananda had both had doubts and questions, as did the members of the great assembly. Now the Buddha's instruction had quelled their doubts. Their minds awakened to the actual appearance. They understood the doctrine of the treasury of the Thus Come One, which is empty and yet not empty, the substance and principle of the actual appearance. They experienced "light ease" both physically and mentally. It's not easy to describe the experience of "light ease." In the same way, only one who drinks a glass of water knows whether the water is cold or warm. The experience of light ease is the initial expedient of Chan meditation. It occurs when one has a little bit of success; one has an extremely blissful feeling. The mind experiences great joy and the body feels very relaxed and at ease. You sit there and your legs don't hurt and your back doesn't ache and there are no false thoughts in your head; you don't know where the pain and false thoughts have gone to. And now, as Ananda and Purna and the members of the great assembly listen to the Buddha's explanation of wonderful dharma, the Buddha used the Buddha-light to aid them all. Everyone then felt a most pleasing and peaceful sensation. Sometimes when you listen to the sutras, you, too, may have this experience. The more you listen, the happier you get; the more you hear, the more you like it. "The Buddhadharma is so wonderful," you think. "Too bad I didn't hear it sooner," and you experience boundless and limitless bliss. The Buddha used his samadhi to fill them with bliss, and they obtained what they had never had before.

**Sutra:

Once again he wept, bowed at the Buddha's feet, knelt on both knees, placed his palms together, and said to the Buddha, "The unsurpassed, great, compassionate, pure and precious king has instructed me well, so that, by means of these various causes and conditions, expedients, and encouragements, all of us who were immersed in the sea of suffering have escaped it."

Commentary:**

My guess is that Ananda didn't have any other talent except crying, except, of course, his erudition, his talent in hand, but crying runs a close second. Up to this point, Ananda has cried five times. Again he cried, with a flood of tears streaming down his face. Once again he wept and bowed at the Buddha's feet. He sobbed like a baby, bowing on the one hand and crying on the other. He knelt on both knees, placed his palms together, and said to the Buddha, "The unsurpassed, great, compassionate, pure and precious king, there is no one loftier than you, no one with a more compassionate mind." "Pure and precious king" refers to the Buddha.

The Buddha has instructed me well. You've used good and clever expedients to teach me, so that, by means of these various causes and conditions, expedients, and encouragements, you've used all kinds of expedient devices, all kinds of analogies, and very clever skill-in-means. "Expedient" dharmas are basically not true. For instance, at the beginning of his teaching, the Buddha discussed causes and conditions to destroy the theory of spontaneity propounded by adherents of externalist paths. Now he is rejecting the idea of causes and conditions, because it is really an expedient device which is, by definition, not ultimate dharma. "Encouragements" occur, for example, when a teacher might say to a disciple, "You write characters very well; you've made a lot of progress. You'll become very accomplished in your study of Chinese." Or, he might say, "You are sitting in Chan meditation a lot better these days. You used to have a lot of false thoughts, but they have subsided significantly. You're showing a little samadhi from your cultivation."

All of us who were immersed in the sea of suffering have escaped it. All of us were really dull-witted and couldn't figure out what to do. But now we've gotten out of the sea of suffering, that is, out of emotional love and desire. Don't make the mistake of thinking those things are a garden of pleasure; they are the sea of suffering. Now that Ananda has escaped it, he's feeling a lot more relaxed, not as harried as he used to be. He is so grateful for the Buddha's compassion that he is moved to tears. It was all right for Ananda to cry then, but we here shouldn't be crying so much now. Why? Ananda cried for the sake of the dharma, but I notice that most of the tears I see here are evidence of emotional desire. Some can't see their boyfriends, so they cry. Some can't see their girlfriends, so they cry. This crying is going on because you haven't escaped the sea of suffering, whereas when Ananda cried this time it was because he had escaped. By whose power? Shakyamuni Buddha pulled him out. So now, when we hear the sutra, we should turn the light inward and take a good look at what we find reflected there. In what way do we differ from Ananda?

F3 He explains the method of Shamatha and causes him to deeply enter through the ear organ.
G1 He selects the organ for direct entry.
H1 Ananda expresses an analogy of seeking the door so he can enter.
I1 He tells what he has experienced from the Buddha's instruction.
 **Sutra:

World Honored One, having heard the sound of dharma like this, I know that the treasury of the Thus Come One, the wonderful, enlightened, bright mind, pervades the ten directions and includes the Thus Come One, the lands of the ten directions, and the pure, precious adornments of the land of the wonderfully enlightened King. Yet, the Thus Come One once again admonishes that erudition is of no merit and is not as good as cultivation.

Commentary:**

Ananda says: World Honored One, having heard the sound of dharma like this, through the Buddha's guidance and instruction, I know that the treasury of the Thus Come One, the wonderful, enlightened, bright mind, pervades the ten directions and includes the Thus Come One, the lands of the ten directions, and the pure, precious adornments of the land of the wonderfully enlightened King, the Buddha's land. Now we know that the doctrine that the nature of the treasury of the Thus Come One pervades the dharma-realm is really true. Yet, the Thus Come One once again admonishes that erudition is of no merit and is not as good as cultivation. The Buddha scolds me, saying that no matter how strong my memory is, it is useless if I don't reach the state of no outflows. I'll never be able to get to the essence of cultivation and develop any skill.

I1 He gives an analogy of searching for a door in a house.
 **Sutra:

So now I am like a wanderer who suddenly encounters a reigning king who bestows upon him an elegant house. He has obtained a mansion, but there needs to be a door in order for him to enter it.

Commentary:**
Ananda said: So now I am like a wanderer who suddenly encounters a reigning king. A wanderer is someone who roams along the dry land (lu) or waterways (bo), a traveler. He's someone who goes from place to place and stops at inns. He doesn't have a house of his own. Then, suddenly he meets someone who perhaps is the king of a country, or even an emperor, who bestows upon him an elegant house. The ruling king represents the Buddha. The Buddha obviously can't be compared to a mere king, but Ananda is just using an analogy here. The elegant house is the nature of the treasury of the Thus Come One. He has obtained a mansion, but there needs to be a door in order for him to enter it. The house is as large as a palace, but if he doesn't even get through the door, he won't see all the beauty within. He's got the house, but there must be a door before he can get inside. This represents the fact that one may understand the nature of the treasury of the Thus Come One, but there has to be a method of cultivation before one can enter the nature.
 **Sutra:

"I only hope the Thus Come One will not withhold his great compassion in instructing those of us in the assembly who are covered over by darkness, so that we may renounce the small vehicle and attain at last the Thus Come One's nirvana without residue, the fundamental path of resolve, and that he will enable those who still must study to know now how to subdue the age-old seeking of advantage from conditions, to obtain dharani, and to enter into the knowledge and vision of the Buddha."

Having said this, he made a full prostration, and together with the members of the assembly, he single-mindedly awaited the Buddha's compassionate instruction.

Commentary:**

"I only hope the Thus Come One" I, Ananda, wish that you, the World Honored One, will not fail to display your compassion in instructing those of us in the assembly who are covered over by darknes, those who are stupid, lack understanding, and are confused. He is referring to all in the assembly who had not been certified to the fruition and become enlightened. So that we may renounce the small vehicle. There is the great vehicle and the small vehicle in Buddhism. The people of present-day Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand still revere the dharmas of the small vehicle in their cultivation. The Buddha spoke the dharmas of the small vehicle in the beginning. After some disciples had studied these teachings, they went away to other places to propagate the Buddhadharma. Later, when the Buddha spoke the dharmas of the great vehicle, they were not there to see or hear. As a result, they said that the Buddha had not spoken the great vehicle dharma. The great vehicle was inauthentic, they claimed, something created later by others. They would not recognize it. But, here in the Shurangama Sutra Ananda himself beseeches the Buddha to explain to them a method whereby they can renounce the small vehicle.

In order to explain this, I'll tell you of a comparable situation: When I was in Manchuria, I rarely spoke and seldom conversed with any of my disciples. For one thing, it was my home town, and so everyone knew me and my origins. They knew me as "Filial Son Bai," because before I left the home-life I had practiced filial piety. When I sat by my mother's grave for three years, people looked upon me with high regard, as a model among people. Gradually I developed a bit of a reputation which extended beyond those who knew me. That was in part because I did another strange thing in those days. In the winter I did not wear cotton-padded clothing; I wore two or three single layers of cloth the year-round, the same pieces for years on end. I didn,t wear socks with my open arhat shoes, and I could also walk bare foot in the snow without difficulty. So, when people laid eyes on me, they wanted to take refuge. Through whatever places I passed, there would be several dozen, at least, who would take refuge, until every village within a hundred mile radius of my temple housed my disciples. For this reason, I rarely spoke; I just conducted myself well. When they took refuge, they were taking refuge with my manner of conduct. Wherever I went, I meditated. In Manchuria, then, although I was able to explain the sutras, I rarely did so; I hardly ever spoke at all. When I got to Hong Kong, I lectured the sutras and spoke dharma and rarely taught people how to meditate. Nor did I teach them the dharmas of the thousand hands and eyes.

Now in America I have transmitted these essential dharmas to every "room-entering" disciple. If someone from Hong Kong came and you told them that you study such-and such a dharma with me, they would say, "No, the master doesn't know the dharmas of great compassion. How can he transmit them?" They would be like those adherents to the small vehicle who would not acknowledge that the Buddha spoke the dharmas of the great vehicle. It's the same principle.

Some people hold that the dharmas of the small vehicle are wrong; some contend that the dharmas of the great vehicle are wrong. Actually, there is no right or wrong in the Buddhadharma. All you have to do is be single-minded in your cultivation, and you can accomplish Buddhahood with any dharma. But it must be said that the dharmas of the small vehicle are predominately expedient dharma; the great vehicle dharma called the dharma-door of actual appearance has perfectly fused and unobstructed doctrines. It is not something that adherents of the small vehicle can understand. And attain at last the Thus Come One's nirvana without residue: the arhat experiences nirvana with residue. At the level of Buddhahood there is nirvana without residue. There is no dwelling at all; The two kinds of death are forever gone.

In nirvana without residue one attains the state of no production and no extinction. The fundamental path of resolve, refers to the fact that the path of our cultivation upon initial resolve for enlightenment is also the Way of ultimate Bodhi which we obtain. Thus, it can be explained as both the initial path and the ultimate result. Ananda asks the Buddha for instruction in nirvana without residue, the fundamental path of resolve, the skill needed to begin the dharma-door of cultivation that will bring about entry into the door of the nature of the treasury of the Thus Come One. He asks that the Buddha will enable those who still must study, the arhats of the first, second, and third fruitions, to know now how to subdue the age-old seeking of advantage from conditions. Teach us how to subdue our ignorance and affliction, how to subdue our age-old attitude of seeking advantage from conditions. Teach us how to obtain dharani. "Dharani" is a Sanskrit word that means "uniting and holding" and to enter into the knowledge and vision of the Buddha.

Having said this, he made a full prostration, and together with the members of the assembly, he single-mindedly awaited the Buddha's compassionate instruction.