**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 5**

**CHAPTER 3**

**Manjushri Selects the Organ of Entry**

J3 The Buddha instructs Manjushri to select one.  
K1 The Thus Come One instructs him to select.  
L1 He first explains that all descriptions are equal.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Then the Thus Come One said to Dharma prince Manjushri, "You should now contemplate these twenty-five great Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are beyond learning. Each has explained the initial expedient in his accomplishment of the Way. All say they have cultivated to true and actual perfect penetration. Their cultivation is equal without distinctions of superior and inferior or earlier and later."  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Then the Thus Come One, Shakyamuni, said to dharma prince Manjushri, "You should now contemplate these twenty-five great Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are beyond learning." Take a look now; reflect on the dharma-door which each of these twenty-five sages used. "Beyond learning" refers to those who have been certified to fourth-stage arhatship or above. Each has explained the initial expedient in his accomplishment of the Way. All say they have cultivated to true and actual perfect penetration. They attained genuine, perfect penetration of the sense-organs. Their cultivation is equal without distinctions of superior and inferior or earlier and later. In fact, there is no way to distinguish them as better or worse, excellent or deficient, or more or less advanced.  
  
L2 His reason for asking him to select one.  
 **Sutra:  
  
I now wish to cause Ananda to become enlightened, and so I ask which of these twenty-five practices is appropriate to his faculties, and which will be, after my extinction, the easiest expedient door for living beings of this realm to enter in order to accomplish the Bodhisattva vehicle and seek the Unsurpassed Way.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Shakyamuni Buddha says: I now wish to cause Ananda to become enlightened. Ananda is still a first-stage arhat. I'd like him to become enlightened and attain the second, third, or fourth fruition of arhatship, and so I ask which of these twenty-five practices is appropriate to his faculties. Which one is right for someone with Ananda's abilities? There are eighteen realms and seven elements; which dharma-door is most appropriate for Ananda? And which will be, after my extinction, the easiest expedient door for living beings of this realm to enter in order to accomplish the Bodhisattva vehicle and seek the Unsurpassed Way. The living beings referred to here are us. We at the Buddhist Lecture hearing this dharma are just the ones he means. You who read this sutra now are also included. So don't set yourself apart and say, "I'm not included." You'll just mess yourself up that way. If you put yourself outside, you will fall in the future, and if you become a horse, cow, dog, chicken, or pig, it won't be easy to get to listen to the Shurangama Sutra. For one thing, you'd never make it up the four flights of stairs to the lecture hall! In Hong Kong, ducks came to listen to my sutra lectures, but that was on the ground floor.  
  
Long ago, Shakyamuni Buddha arranged our seats in this dharma assembly that is now taking place. Don't take yourselves too lightly. Of course, if you don't come to listen now, you won't have a share. "Which of these dharma-doors will be found most expedient by living beings of the future who have great faculties and who in every thought seek the Unsurpassed Way?" the Buddha asks Manjushri Bodhisattva. "Which dharma-door will most easily bring success? Manjushri Bodhisattva, set your mind to it and select one."  
  
K2 Manjushri responds with a verse.  
L1 He prepares to speak the verse.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Dharma prince, Manjushri, receiving the Buddha's compassionate instruction, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and, basing himself on the Buddha's awesome spirit, spoke verses to the Buddha.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Dharma prince, Manjushri, receiving the Buddha's compassionate instruction, arose from his seat. Wonderfully Lucky Bodhisattva was directed by the Buddha to select from any of the eighteen realms and seven elements a method of attaining perfect penetration. He was to find the one most appropriate for Ananda and for us to cultivate. The six sense-organs, the six sense objects, and the six consciousnesses make up the eighteen realms. Earth, wind, fire, and water, along with emptiness, consciousness, and perception are the seven elements, as was explained in detail previously.  
  
Receiving this compassionate instruction from the Buddha, Manjushri Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and, basing himself on the Buddha's awesome spirit, spoke verses to the Buddha. The Bodhisattvas and Arhats all have places to sit around the Buddha, unlike Fire-head Vajra, who must stand in the assembly. Verses can vary in number of feet and lines, but they all contain the principles of the sutra.  
  
L2 He speaks the verse.  
M1 He brings the source up to introduce his selection.  
N1 He shows two sources.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The sea of enlightenment in nature is perfect and clear.  
Complete, distinct Bodhi is a miraculous source.  
But when basic brightness shone so that objects appeared,  
With objects' existence, the nature's brilliance ceased.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The sea of enlightenment in nature is perfect and clear. The sea of enlightenment is boundless, containing within it all the mountains, rivers, and great earth, the vegetation and myriad appearances. The nature of the sea of enlightenment is both clean and perfect. Complete, distinct Bodhi is a miraculous source. The clarity of perfection of the sea of enlightenment is fundamentally subtle and wonderful. But within this subtlety of a single truth, falseness arises, and the light reveals the arising of objects. But when basic brightness shone so that objects appeared / With objects' existence, the nature's brilliance ceased. Basically, the sea of enlightenment contains everything within it. There is nothing which is not in the nature of the treasury of the Thus Come One. But as soon as there is a single ignorant thought, a falseness arises. Once there is falseness, there are objects, defiling appearances. Because of this falseness, the inherent light of the enlightened nature does not shine forth, just as when the sky is covered by clouds.  
  
N2 He discusses production and extinction.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Confusion and falseness bring about emptiness.  
Relying on emptiness, time and space take form.  
Thoughts settle, making countries and lands.  
What knows and feels becomes living beings.  
  
Commentary:**  
Confusion and falseness bring about emptiness. Because of falseness, subject and object come into being. Basically, both aspects are false. In the substance of the sea of enlightenment not a single dharma stands. There isn't anything at all. But, "Staring produces the appearance of fatigue." After a sustained period of time, protraction brings about fatigue. And then a falseness and confusion give rise to emptiness. In the sea of enlightenment there isn't anything, not even emptiness. The verse says below:  
  
The emptiness created within enlightenment  
is like a single bubble in all the sea.  
  
How insignificant that is! And yet, we think of emptiness as being so vast. Relying on emptiness, time and space take form. The ten directions and three periods of time come into being. Thoughts settle, making countries and lands. Once time and space arise out of emptiness, then false thinking becomes solid, making the lands. What knows and feels becomes living beings. Knowledge and sensations turn into living creatures.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The emptiness created within great enlightenment,  
Is like a single bubble in all the sea.  
Lands like fine dust motes, subject to outflows,  
All come forth out of empty space.  
Just as the bubble bursts, space is no longer there.  
How much the less the three states of being!  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The first lines of the verse said, "The sea of enlightenment in nature is perfect and clear / Complete, distinct Bodhi is a miraculous source." The perfection of the pure source of Bodhi is extremely wonderful. Now the verse speaks of the emptiness created within great enlightenment. We all are aware of the existence of emptiness, but do we know where it came from? I believe no one knows. That's because emptiness is so vast. It's impossible to know the limits of empty space or its source. Who is the mother of emptiness? No one knows. But now the Shurangama Sutra points to the source. Emptiness is born from the nature of great enlightenment. And yet within that expanse it is extremely minute. How big is it? It is like a single bubble in all the sea, like a little fleck of foam in the ocean.  
  
Lands like fine dust motes, subject to outflows / All come forth out of empty space. There are three categories of outflows:  
  
1. Outflows of desire;  
2. Outflows of existence;  
3. Outflows of ignorance.  
  
Myriad lands which have outflows all come out of emptiness. The emptiness came out of enlightenment, and the lands came out of emptiness. Just as the bubble bursts, space is no longer there. In the same way that a bubble pops on the ocean, the emptiness disappears in the great enlightenment. How much the less the three states of being!  
  
N3 He makes clear there must be a selection.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Returning to the source, the nature is not two.  
Many are the entrances through expedients;  
None of them does the sagely nature fail to go through.  
Compliant or adverse, all is expedient.  
First resolve and entering samadhi,  
Come slow or fast as there are different norms.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
In his verse, Manjushri Bodhisattva says that emptiness is like a bubble in the sea of enlightenment, and that countries and lands within the emptiness are also extremely minute. If emptiness disappears, all the countries and lands, the mountains, rivers, and the great earth, and the sentient and material worlds all disappear as well.  
  
When one cultivates this dharma-door, returning to the source, the nature is not two. "Returning to the source" means accomplishing Buddhahood. There is only one place to return to, and that is your original home. This world we people live in is not really our home. "I have a home," you protest. But that house is not your genuine home. To become a Buddha is to find your genuine home. Before you become a Buddha, you are a vagabond moving from hotel to hotel. You are always on the move.  
  
Many are the entrances through expedients. Being "expedient" means being unattached. For example, once there was a child crawling toward a well which was flush with the ground. If the child had continued, it would have fallen into the well. The Buddha saw this, but he knew that if he called the child back, it would not have listened, but would have continued to crawl forward. So he made a fist with one hand, held it out, and called, "Child, come back! I have candy in my hand for you! I have candy. Do you like candy?" When the child heard there was candy, it turned around and came back. There was no candy in the Buddha's hand after all. But was the Buddha lying? No. That is an example of an expedient method. He used his "empty fist to save the child" because there was no other method that would have worked at that point. The doors of expedients are uncountable. In general, whatever method will save a person is the dharma-door you use. None of them does the sagely nature fail to go through / Compliant or adverse, all is expedient. When you are certified to the dharma-nature of a sage, there is nothing you cannot understand. What is compliant is expedient, and what is adverse is also expedient. Whatever complies with your abilities and circumstances, you can use in your cultivation. What is "adverse" not in accord with your situation, can still be applied to your cultivation. Both the compliant situations and the adverse ones in which you cultivate are the expedient dharma-doors.  
  
First resolve and entering samadhi / Come slow or fast as there are different norms. Some cultivate more quickly, some more slowly. So they can't all be lumped together.  
  
M2 He examines each door.  
N1 He examines the six defiling objects.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Form and thought combined become the 'dust.'  
Their essence is not discernible.  
How can one use what lacks clarity,  
And expect to gain perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
Form is created from false thinking. Form and thought combined become the 'dust', the defiling objects of form. Their essence is not discernible. It is not clear and comprehensible. How can one use what lacks clarity / And expect to gain perfect penetration? Can you expect to attain the dharma-door of perfect penetration with a method that is neither clear nor ultimate? That is impossible. The verse goes on to say that using the sense-object of form to cultivate perfect penetration is not the best method. Some people are able to be certified to the fruition through this method, but only because they have special conditions with that particular dharma-door. It is not something that most people can cultivate.

**Sutra:  
  
In sounds, language is intermingled.  
But the meaning in a word, a name, a phrase,  
Is such that no single one can include them all.  
How can this bring perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
There are those who awaken to the Way be means of the defiling object of sounds. Nevertheless, in sounds, language is such that no single one can include them all. No one word or one name or one phrase can say everything about everything. How can this bring perfect penetration? One cannot choose sounds as the way to attain perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Awareness of smells comes through contact with them.  
Apart from them, one does not know that they exist.  
Since sensation of them is not constant,  
How can one reach perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The pure youth Adorned with Fragrance awakened to the Way by means of the defiling object of smells. But awareness of smells comes through contact with them. The nose must inhale the vapors of a scent for it to be aware of them. Apart from them, one does not know that they exist. They are not there. Since sensation of them is not constant / How can one reach perfect penetration? Since the nature of smells is not constant or unchanging, one does not always have an awareness of them, and so they can't count as the best method for perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Flavors are not to us fundamental.  
They only exist when there is something to taste.  
Since this sensation is not perpetual,  
How can one derive perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Although there are those who awaken to the Way by means of the defiling object of flavors, flavors are not to us fundamental. The nature of flavors is not the complete and perfect self-nature. They only exist when there is something to taste. It's only when there is something with flavor that the defiling object of flavor comes to be. Since this sensation is not perpetual / How can one derive perfect penetration? The awareness of tastes is not there all the time. Therefore, don't select this dharma-door as the one for perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Touch becomes clear only when something is touched.  
Without an object there can be no contact.  
With fluctuation between contact and separation,  
How can one gain perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Touch becomes clear only when something is touched. Although there are those who awaken to the Way by cultivating the objects of touch, touch can only be known when there is an object to come In contact with. Without an object there can be no contact. The only way contact can be experienced is for there to be someone who makes contact with some object. With fluctuation between contact and separation / How can one gain perfect penetration? Therefore, the defiling object of touch cannot be used, either, as the most effective dharma door for perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Dharmas are known as 'internal dust.'  
Reckoned as 'dust,' they are certainly sense objects.  
Involvement of subject and object cannot be pervasive;  
How then can they lead to perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Mahakashyapa cultivated the mind through dharma-objects, and he attained the samadhi of the extinction of feeling and thought. Dharmas are known as "internal dust." Dharmas are conditions of the mind. Reckoned as "dust," they are certainly sense objects. Since they are defiling objects, they have a location. Since they have a location, they are not at the level of "nonexistence and yet not non-existent." Involvement of subject and object cannot be pervasive. An interaction involving subject and object is not full and complete, not all-pervasive. How then can they lead to perfect penetration?  
  
N2 Examining the five organs.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Although seeing itself is clear and penetrating,  
Making bright what is before one,  
it cannot shine behind.  
Ever reaching only half the four directions,  
How can it manifest perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Although seeing itself is clear and penetrating: the eyes' ability to see is bright and clear, but, making bright what is before one, it cannot shine behind. If it looks in front, it cannot see behind. If it looks left, it cannot see to the right. Ever reaching only half the four directions: it can only see two of four sides at any one time. How can it manifest perfect penetration? It is not the one to choose for perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The nose's breath penetrates in and out.  
But in the rests between there is no air.  
These interruptions render it inconsistent.  
How can one use it for perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The nose's breath penetrates in and out. This stanza discusses the organ of the nose. But in the rests between there is no air. Sometimes the breath stops. There are pauses. These interruptions render it inconsistent. This aspect is a deficiency and makes this organ inadequate also. It is not all-pervasive. How can one use it for perfect penetration? Therefore, this one cannot be selected for perfect penetration, either.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The tongue is not an organ apart from cause;  
Flavors form the source of its sensation.  
When flavors cease, it knows nothing at all.  
How can it attain perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The tongue is not an organ apart from cause. Flavors must enter in upon the tongue for it to experience sensation. Without flavors, it lacks any awareness. Flavors form the source of its sensation. It experiences sensations because of the defiling object of flavor. When flavors cease, it knows nothing at all / How can it attain perfect penetration? You cannot use it to reach perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
It is the same for the body as for objects of touch.  
Neither can be regarded as a perfect awareness.  
With defined and limited invisible divisions,  
How can it be used for perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
It is the same for the body as for objects of touch. The dharma-door of the body is like the objects of touch. Neither can be regarded as a perfect awareness. Its awareness is not complete in itself. With defined and limited invisible divisions / How can it be used for perfect penetration? It is characterized by boundaries and number, and it is invisibly connected with objects of touch, and therefore it is not an appropriate choice for perfect  
penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The mind's knowledge is a mass of deliberations.  
What it perceives is never profound insight.  
Unable to get beyond reflection and thought,  
How can it reveal perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The mind's knowledge is a mass of deliberations. What the mind knows are mental dharmas, defiling objects of mind, a conglomeration of random thoughts. What it perceives is never profound insight / Unable to get beyond reflection and thought / How can it reveal perfect penetration? It can never get to what is tranquil and profound; it can never reach what is ultimate, because one can never get beyond it as long as thought, false thinking and the stream of consciousness, remains. How can this lead to perfect penetration?  
  
N3 Examining the six consciousnesses.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The seeing-consciousness combines three aspects.  
Probe its origin: it has no appearance.  
Since its very substance is variable,  
How can it bring perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The seeing-consciousness combines three aspects. The verse now discusses the consciousnesses, which are a combination of the six sense-organs inside and the six sense objects outside. The six sense-organs have awareness, while the six sense-objects do not. Therefore, the six sense consciousnesses should be half-aware and half-unaware. These three aspects combine into the consciousnesses. Probe its origin: it has no appearance. The consciousness has no appearance. Since its very substance is variable, how can it bring perfect penetration? Since the consciousness itself is in a state of flux, how can you use it to gain perfect penetration? So the eye-consciousness won't work, either.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The heart of hearing penetrates the ten directions.  
When borne on the strength of great causes,  
Those of initial resolve cannot enter this way.  
How can one expect to gain perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The heart of hearing penetrates the ten directions. The dharma door that Universal Worthy Bodhisattva cultivated was the earr-consciousness. But hearing is pervasive only when borne on the strength of great causes. This dharma door requires the power of great and awesome causes. Only then can one cultivate it. Those of initial resolve cannot enter this way. Beings with initial resolve to cultivate the Bodhisattva Way will not find this dharma door appropriate. Since those of initial resolve cannot enter it, how could it be selected for perfect penetration? How can one expect to gain perfect penetration? This one won't do, either.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Reflecting on the nose is a provisional method.  
It only serves to gather in and settle the mind.  
Once settled, the mind is simply still.  
How can that be perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
Reflecting on the nose is a provisional method. Sundrananda cultivated the white spot at the tip of his nose. The cultivation of this dharma door involves thought, and so it is a clever provisional expedient. It only serves to gather in and settle the mind. It is to help quiet a scattered mind. Once settled, the mind is simply still. Its aim is to bring the mind to dwell in one place, but since there continues to be a dwelling-place for the mind, how can that be perfect penetration? It is not the one to pick.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Speaking dharma through the medium of language,  
Is enlightened to by those of former accomplishment.  
But words and phrases are not free of outflows.  
How can this make perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Purnamaitreyaniputra spoke the dharma and awakened by means of the tongue, speaking dharma through the medium of language. In speaking dharma and lecturing sutras, one's voice must be good and one must be accomplished in expressing oneself in language. Then it is enlightened to by those of former accomplishment / But words and phrases are not free of outflows / How can this make perfect penetration? Since they are subject to outflows, they cannot be selected for the dharma-door of perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Refraining from transgressions only controls the body.  
Lacking a body, there is nothing to restrain.  
Since its source is not all-pervasive,  
How can it bring perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The Venerable Upali held the precepts. Refraining from transgressions only controls the body. Both the upholding of precepts and the violation of precepts is done with the body. This is a dharma-door that relates to body and mind. Lacking a body, there is nothing to restrain. If you didn't have a physical body, there would be no need to control it. Since its source is not all-pervasive / How can it bring perfect penetration? This dharma-door is not all-encompassing. It cannot be chosen as the method for perfect penetration, either.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Spiritual penetrations are based on past causes.  
What connection have they with distinguishing dharmas?  
Conditioned thought is not apart from things.  
How can one attain perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
Maudgalyayana was foremost in spiritual penetrations, and it was from the mind-consciousness that he accomplished his spiritual powers. Spiritual penetrations are based on past causes. Possession of spiritual powers comes from causes and conditions set up in past lives. What connection have they with distinguishing dharmas? They are a different thing from discrimination.  
  
Conditioned thought is not apart from things. Spiritual penetrations still require the thought process, however, and therefore they are not divorced from the material plane, they are not complete in themselves. How can one attain perfect penetration? Cultivation through spiritual penetrations is also not the way to go.  
  
N4 Examining the seven elements.  
 **Sutra:  
  
One may contemplate the nature of earth,  
But it is firm and solid, not penetrable.  
What is conditioned is not the sagely nature.  
How can one use it for perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
One may contemplate the nature of earth / But it is firm and solid, not penetrable. Maintaining the Earth Bodhisattva made use of the dharma-door of contemplating the earth. Earth has the qualities of solidity and firmness. It is not penetrable. It is a conditioned dharma, not a dharma-door for entering the flow of the sages. What is conditioned is not the sagely nature / How can one use it for perfect penetration? It doesn't measure up as the best dharma-door for perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
One may contemplate the nature of water,  
But such mental reflection is not the true and real.  
This state of suchness is not an enlightened view.  
How can it give perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
One may decide to cultivate by the contemplation of water and enter the water-contemplation samadhi, as did the pure youth Moonlight. One may contemplate the nature of water / But such mental reflection is not the true and real. For one to enter samadhi according to this method, the thought process, a contemplative consideration, is also initially involved. This state of suchness is not an enlightened view. It is not a natural, spontaneous kind of contemplation. How can it give perfect penetration? So the contemplation of water cannot be considered the method for perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
One may contemplate the nature of fire,  
But admitting dislike is not true renunciation.  
This expedient cannot be one for beginners.  
How can one use it for perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
Fire-head Vajra, Ucchushma, cultivated the contemplation of fire, because he had a tremendous amount of desire. The Buddha instructed him to contemplate the fire of desire in his body. One may contemplate the nature of fire / But admitting dislike is not true renunciation. His decision to reject this was not in itself genuine abandoning. This expedient cannot be one for beginners. It is not a skill-in-means appropriate to those of initial resolve. How can one use it for perfect penetration? It cannot be selected as the dharma-door for perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
One may contemplate the nature of wind,  
But movement and stillness are not non-dual.  
Duality cannot bring highest enlightenment.  
How can one expect perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The Dharma prince Crystal Light used the element wind in his cultivation. One may contemplate the nature of wind / But movement and stillness are not non-dual. Movement and stillness are opposites; they are not absolutes. Duality cannot bring highest enlightenment. Opposites are not the dharma of unsurpassed enlightenment. How can one expect perfect penetration? You can't pick this one for the dharma-door to perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
One may contemplate the nature of emptiness.  
But, its aspect is murky and dull; it lacks awareness.  
What is unaware is different from Bodhi.  
How can it bring perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
One may contemplate the nature of emptiness. Empty Space Treasury Bodhisattva cultivated a body as boundless as emptiness and awakened to the Way. But Manjushri Bodhisattva says here: I contemplate the nature of emptiness and see that its aspect is murky and dull; it lacks awareness. This lack of clarity makes it not an appropriate initial method for enlightenment. What is unaware is different from Bodhi / How can it bring perfect penetration? This one can't be picked as a method to gain perfect penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
One may contemplate the nature of consciousness;  
But one is regarding a consciousness that is not eternal.  
Even the thought of it is empty and false.  
How can one get perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
Maitreya Bodhisattva cultivated the element of consciousness. He contemplated the nature of consciousness. One may contemplate the nature of consciousness / But one is regarding a consciousness that is not eternal. Take a look at the consciousness of the discriminating mind; it is not everlasting. Even the thought of it is empty and false. Where there is something contemplated, and a thought of contemplation, they are empty and false. How can one get perfect penetration? So it cannot be considered perfectly penetrating.  
 **Sutra:  
  
All activities are impermanent.  
So, too, mindfulness has its origin in rising and ceasing.  
Since cause and effect go beyond cause and effect,  
How can we use it for perfect penetration?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Great Strength Bodhisattva cultivated the element of perception. He "gathered in all six organs until a pure mindfulness linked them together." All activities are impermanent / So, too, mindfulness has its origin in rising and ceasing. Both the nature of the recitation and that which is recited are dharmas subject to production and extinction. When you are reciting, it arises; when you cease reciting, it is extinguished. Since cause and effect go beyond cause and effect we seek to go beyond what is subject to cause and effect. How can we use it for perfect penetration? So the dharma-door of mindfulness of the Buddha is not best suited for perfect penetration.

M3 He selects only the ear organ.  
N1 He reveals the wonder of this dharma-door.  
O1 The ear organ is beneficial for those of this world to cultivate.  
 **Sutra:  
  
I now say this, World Honored One,  
Buddha, who has revealed the Saha world:  
In this land the true substance of teaching  
Resides in hearing the sounds purely.  
If one wants to attain samadhi,  
hearing is the best way to enter.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
At this point Manjushri Bodhisattva has finished speaking about the various dharma-doors by which the sages were certified. He continues: I now say this, World Honored One / Buddha, who has revealed the Saha world / In this land the true substance of teaching / Resides in hearing the sounds purely. In this world which is "able to be borne," where the Buddha has compassionately become manifest, the genuine method for teaching and transforming living beings is in the purity of sound. That refers to the dharma-door of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature. If one wants to attain samadhi / hearing is the best way to enter. The skill of returning the hearing to hear the self nature is actually the most wonderful, the best method.  
  
O2 The dharma is used by a superior person.  
P1 General praise of its benefit to self.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Apart from suffering, liberation is found.  
How excellent is he who contemplates the world's sounds!  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Apart from suffering, liberation is found. One can separate from suffering and attain liberation. Separating from suffering is just liberation; liberation is just leaving suffering behind. How excellent is he who contemplates the world's sounds! Ah, the dharma-door of Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva is so fine!  
  
P2 Broadly reveals its benefits to others.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Throughout kalpas as numerous as Ganges' sands,  
He enters Buddhalands as many as fine dust motes.  
Obtaining great power of self-mastery,  
He bestows fearlessness on living beings.**  
Commentary:  
  
Why does he praise Guan Shi Yin? Throughout kalpas as numerous as Ganges' sands / He enters Buddhalands as many as fine dust motes. During that many aeons, Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva goes to countless Buddhalands as numerous as fine motes of dust. Obtaining great power of self-mastery / He bestows fearlessness on living beings. With spiritual power and great ease, he causes living beings not to be afraid.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Wonderful is the sound of Guan Shi Yin,  
A pure sound, like the ocean's roar.  
He saves the world and brings peace to all within it.  
He has transcended the world,  
and his attainment is eternal.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Wonderful is the sound of Guan Shi Yin. Guan Yin Bodhisattva is extremely miraculous. A pure sound, like the ocean's roar. His pure and clear sound is like the thunder of the sea: a single, all-pervasive sound. He saves the world and brings peace to all within it. He rescues those in the world so that all living beings attain peace and contentment. He has transcended the world, and his attainment is eternal. He transcends the world and attains the everlasting enlightenment. He realizes eternal, indestructible, comfortable spiritual powers.  
  
O3 Reveals that his dharma is true and actual.  
P1 True and actual perfection.  
 **Sutra:  
  
I now make this report, 0 Thus Come One,  
Regarding what Guan Yin has just explained:  
It is like someone in a quiet place  
When drums are rolled throughout the ten directions,  
Hearing at once the sounds from all ten places.  
This, then, is the actual true perfection.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
I now make this report, 0 Thus Come One / Regarding what Guan Yin has just explained about his experience with perfect penetration: It is like someone in a quiet place / When drums are rolled throughout the ten directions / Hearing at once the sounds from all ten places. In every one of the ten directions drums are beaten simultaneously. Although the drum-sounds come from ten places, the one person in the quiet room can hear them all at the same time. This, then, is the actual true perfection. This nature is genuinely perfect.  
  
P2 True and actual penetration.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The eyes cannot see through solid forms.  
Mouth and nose are much the same.  
The body registers awareness only through contact.  
Tangled in thoughts, the mind lacks clear connections.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The eyes cannot see through solid forms. "The eyes" here are not the Buddha eye, the wisdom eye, the dharma eye, the heavenly eye, or the flesh eye, not the five eyes. What is referred to here are our ordinary physical eyes. These eyes can only see within boundaries; they cannot see through and beyond them. They cannot see through solid objects. For instance, if we close the windows and pull the blinds, we can't see what is outside. Even in perceiving what is close to use, a single layer of skin prohibits our seeing. For instance, we cannot see what is inside our bodies with the ordinary eyes. The eyes of a sage are a different matter, but here we are discussing the capacity of ordinary eyes. They can't even see through a thin piece of paper! Also, when they look to the right they cannot see to the left, and when they look to the left, they cannot see what's on the right. Mouth and nose are much the same. Between breaths there is a hesitation where no air enters or leaves the nose. And the tongue must have some flavor in order to experience taste.  
  
Without something to taste, it doesn't function. These two, then, are more or less like the eyes. The body registers awareness only through contact. The body must come in contact with objects of touch for sensation to be experienced, and so it is not complete in itself either. Tangled in thoughts, the mind lacks clear connections. The mind's thoughts are random and confused, without any order to them, and so they are not best for perfect penetration either.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Sounds can be heard even through solid walls.  
One can listen to things both near and far.  
None of the other five organs can match this.  
It, then, is penetration true and real.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
With the organ of the ear, sounds can be heard even through solid walls. You can hear what is going on beyond a wall. One can listen to things both near and far / None of the other five organs can match this. The eyes, nose, tongue, body, and mind are not as effective as the ear, it is more perfect than any of them. Its function is perfectly fused and unobstructed. The others cannot compare to it. It, then, is penetration true and real. The other five sense organs do not have this kind of genuine penetration.  
  
P3 True and actual constancy.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The nature of sounds is based in movement and stillness.  
One hears according to whether there is sound.  
With no sound, there is said to be no hearing.  
But this does not mean that the hearing has no nature.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The nature of sounds is based in movement and stillness. Sometimes there are sounds; sometimes there is no sound. When there is no sound, there is stillness. One hears according to whether there is sound. Hearing perceives the movement of sound and the stillness of no sound. With no sound, there is said to be no hearing. That's what we say, but this does not mean that the hearing has no nature. The nature of hearing is definitely not extinguished. When we say there's no hearing, the nature of hearing is in fact not absent.  
 **Sutra:  
  
In the absence of sound, the nature is not gone.  
Nor does it arise in the presence of sound.  
Entirely beyond production and extinction.  
It is, then, truly everlasting.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
In the absence of sound, the nature is not gone. The absence of sound does not mean the nature of hearing has ceased to be. Nor does it arise in the presence of sound. When a sound is heard, there is no change in the nature of hearing. Entirely beyond production and extinction / It is, then, truly everlasting. It is complete in itself and divorced from production and extinction. Birth and death become perfectly fused. The nature of hearing is an everlasting, unchanging nature not subject to production and extinction.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Ever-present, even in dream-thinking, It does not disappear  
when conditions and thought are gone.  
Enlightened, this contemplation transcends cognition,  
Reaching beyond both the body and the mind.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
In the presence of sound, in the absence of sound, at the arising of sound, and at the cessation of sound, the nature of hearing never ceases to be. People may realize this in an ordinary waking state. But is also ever-present, even in dream-thinking. Someone sleeping soundly may hear the sounds of beating clothes and pounding rice as a drum and bell being struck. This proves that hearing is present even in dreams. It does not disappear when conditions and thought are gone. It is not like the mind, which doesn't exist without thoughts. Enlightened, this contemplation transcends cognition. The enlightened contemplation of the hearing-nature goes beyond thought. Reaching beyond both the body and the mind. The body and mind cannot compare to the hearing-nature of the organ of the ear.  
  
O4 He shows that this is the appropriate organ to cultivate.  
P1 Brings up the substance of the teaching in this land.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Now, in the Saha world, the theory of sounds Has been proclaimed and understood.**  
  
P2 Makes clear that the sickness lies in following the sounds.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Living beings are confused about the source of hearing.  
They follow sounds and so they turn and flow.  
Ananda's power to remember was exceptional;  
Nonetheless, he fell prey to a deviant plot.  
Was it not from heeding sounds that he was nearly lost?  
By turning back the flow,  
one will make no such mistake.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Now, in the Saha world, the theory of sounds / Has been proclaimed and understood / Living beings are confused about the source of hearing. They don't understand the inherent hearing nature.  
  
They follow sounds and so they turn and flow. They cannot turn the hearing back to hear the self-nature. They seek outside; they listen outside. They pursue the sounds and run outside. If one allows the ear to race out after sounds, instead of returning the hearing, one gets caught up in the flow of birth and death. It is also a knot. There is birth and death, and so there is a knot. And it all starts because you pursue the defiling objects of sound. You can't bring it all back.  
  
Ananda's power to remember was exceptional. Ananda was always erudite and had a brilliant memory. He could recite by heart all the sutras in the Tripitaka. Nonetheless, he fell prey to a deviant plot. He was smart, but he couldn't avoid the difficulty brought about by Matangi's daughter and the former Brahma Heaven mantra. He was captured by a deviant dharma of an externalist religion. Was it not from heeding sounds that he was nearly lost? / By turning back the flow, one will make no such mistake. If you can turn the hearing back and hear your self-nature, then naturally you will not succumb to any falseness. You won't err like that. The reason Ananda was susceptible to the deception was that he was always seeking outside. He studied this and studied that and was proficient with one sutra and another, but he never returned the light and illumined within. He never stopped to think about how he should act or what he was doing. All he did was study. He studied so much that he forgot what he was all about. That reminds me of the answer Confucius gave when someone came to ask him: "Is there anyone in the world like...?" the questioner began.

"Like what?" asked Confucius. "Someone who moves, taking everyone with him, all the relatives in the household, except his wife. He forgets to take along his wife. Could there be such a person?" What do you suppose Confucius answered? Did Confucius say it was impossible for a person to forget his wife? Or that it was not impossible? Confucius said, "Nowadays, people even forget themselves!"  
  
Not only could they forget their wives, they could even forget their own bodies. The meaning was that they don't remember that in the future their bodies will die. They forget they will have to go through old age, sickness, and death.  
  
Since Ananda concentrated on studying things external to himself and on developing his scholastic abilities, he neglected his samadhi-power. Since he neglected samadhi, he didn't know how to develop the skill of turning the hearing back to hear the selfnature, and so he pursued sounds. He did not make the sounds follow his self-nature and so he got caught up in the difficulty with Matangi's daughter.  
  
N2 He explains in detail how to cultivate this skill.  
O1 He introduces the teaching of turning back the hearing.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Ananda, you should listen attentively:  
I rely upon the Buddha's awesome power,  
In describing to you the Vajra King,  
A samadhi inconceivable of likeness to illusions.  
It is the true mother of all Buddhas.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
When Manjushri Bodhisattva had spoken thus far, he called out to Ananda. He was a Dharma prince with longstanding status, while Ananda was comparatively young. Here, Manjushri Bodhisattva is representing Shakyamuni Buddha in speaking the dharma, and so he gets Ananda's attention. You should listen attentively. Pay attention! Listen to every word; don't be the least bit casual. Don't sit there half asleep while I am speaking this verse! You should understand that this verse I'm speaking is not my own ideas. It is spoken by the power that the Buddha has vested in me. The Buddha indicated that I should speak and express this intent. He told me to select the dharma for your sake. You shouldn't think that it is I, Manjushri Bodhisattva, who is telling you this; it is the Buddha speaking for you. Now do you understand? In describing to you the Vajra King. On the Buddha's behalf I will explain the dharma-door of the Vajra King, A samadhi inconceivable of likeness to illusions / It is the true mother of all Buddhas. This dharma is cultivated without cultivating. One cultivates, and yet one is not cultivating. Not cultivating, one still cultivates. It is rather like putting on a play, and yet at the same time it's real. That's the wonder of it. You can't imagine how subtle and wonderful this dharma-door is. You cannot conceive of it nor express it in words. It is the mother of all Buddhas. Every Buddha is born from this samadhi. So pay attention. Do you want to become a Buddha? If so, you have to keep your mind on what I'm saying. And then you have to develop the skill through actual practice. Don't just spend your efforts on superficial skills. You have to attain some internal gong fu.  
 **Sutra:  
  
You may hear the secret dharma-doors  
Of Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust,  
But without first renouncing desire and outflows,  
You may amass learning,  
but you will still make mistakes.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Manjushri Bodhisattva continues: You may hear the secret dharma-doors / Of Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust. Ananda, you have listened to limitless Buddhas explain their secret dharmas. "Secret" means that you say something for one person and a second person doesn't realize it. Or you speak for the second person and the first one doesn't realize it. Or you speak for the second person and the first one doesn't know. Each is unaware of what is said to the other. Why does the Buddha have secret dharmadoors?  
  
It is because the capacities of living beings are different. Each person is fond of different things. What is more, each person has cultivated a particular path in past lives. Therefore, the Buddha contemplates the opportunities. He looks to see what dharma-door you cultivated before, and based on that he teaches you how to cultivate now.  
  
Contemplating the opportunities,  
he bestows the teaching;  
Speaking dharma  
for the sake of each person.  
  
He does not teach you dharma-doors which are not appropriate for you.  
  
But without first renouncing desire and outflows / You may amass learning, but you will still make mistakes. Although the Buddha has many secret dharmas, you still have to get rid of your desire and outflows. "Desire" is really hard to overcome. As soon as you have desire, you have outflows. The most serious desire, the one people find hardest to cut off, is the desire for forms. If you can cut it off, you are an outstanding person, extraordinary. When you study the Buddhadharma, you must cut off desire, in order to be able to be rid of outflows.  
  
At the fourth fruition of arhatship one has no outflows. A firststage arhat is at the position of seeing the Way, as a result of having extinguished eighty-eight kinds of delusion of views. The second and third fruition are called the position of cultivating the Way. A fourth-stage arhat is at the position of having been certified to the Way. At the first, second, and third fruitions, one has not attained the state of having no outflows. Only at fourth stage is that achieved. Having no outflows is extremely important. Why hadn't Ananda reached that level? He had not gotten rid of desire. There were still some things he wanted. He was not yet pure, and so dharma prince Manjushri tells him, "If you don't cultivate and get rid of greed and desire for forms, then you won't have a response with the Buddhadharma. If you merely concentrate on erudition, then you will still err. That's why you encountered the difficulty with Matangi's daughter. If you renounce desire and outflows, you won't have any more difficulties." When we see that such an intelligent person as Ananda still had this fault, we should notice that not only have we not severed desire, we are intent upon pursuing it. It has never occurred to us to get rid of it. Wouldn't you say that is an even greater mistake? At this point, everyone should return the light and examine within. Is it the case that we have desires? Have we gotten rid of them? If not, would we like to get rid of them? If not, then there's nothing else to say. But if you want to get rid of them, then quickly start cultivating the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature. Study Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva's perfect penetration of the organ of the ear.

**Sutra:  
  
You concentrate on learning to uphold the Buddha's Dharma. Why don't you listen to your own hearing?  
  
Commentary:**  
"You concentrate on learning to uphold the Buddha's Dharma. You expend your energy on study of the Buddhadharma," Manjushri Bodhisattva says to Ananda. "With that skill, why don't you listen to your own hearing? Why don't you return the hearing to hear the self-nature? Why don't you cultivate and develop that skill? Why don't you look into yourself?"  
  
O2 He explains how with this dharma one gradually transcends.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Hearing does not spontaneously arise;  
Because of sound it gets its name.  
But when hearing returns and is free of sound,  
What does one call that which is set free?**  
**Commentary:**  
  
Ananda, don't continue to take learning so seriously while neglecting your samadhi power. Hearing does not spontaneously arise. It doesn't happen all by itself. Because of sound it gets its name. Because there is sound, there is hearing. We call the perception of a sound "hearing." But when hearing returns and is free of sound / What does one call that which is set free? We say that there is hearing because there is sound, but is the hearing still there when there is no sound? It is, because the nature of hearing is not subject to production or extinction. Therefore, turn the hearing around. From now on, don't follow out after the six sense-objects with your six sense-organs. Bring them back.  
  
Returning the hearing,  
listen to your nature,  
Till the nature reaches  
the Supreme Way.  
  
What is your self-nature? When you hear it, you will recognize it. Now, before you have heard it, you won't understand even if I tell you. For instance, when I drink this cup of tea, I myself know whether it is hot or cool, but you still don't have any idea. If you want to know, you will have to drink some yourself. If you want to recognize your self-nature, you first have to return the hearing. If you haven't done that, how can you expect to know your own nature?  
  
"When you return the hearing, how do you listen?" you ask. Use your ears. But don't listen to the sounds outside. Don't try to figure out what's happening out in the street, or who is saying what. Turn the hearing inward and listen inside yourself. In this way your own nature will be revealed. That's how you do it. Now do you understand?  
  
When the hearing is turned around, one is set free from external sounds. "What does one call that which is set free?" If you can divorce yourself from sounds, and hear and yet not hear, is this really hearing, then? It is and it isn't. It isn't, yet it is. Hear and yet do not hear. That's what's meant by getting free of sounds. One does hear, but it's not the same as the way one heard before. Even though it is said that ordinary hearing can reach far and near, it still has a limit. If you genuinely attain the state of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature, you can hear throughout the dharma-realm. But you can also choose not to listen to any of the sounds throughout the dharma-realm. You have control. It's like a telegram. If I want to send one, I can send one anywhere at any time. But if I don't want to send the telegram, I don't have to do it. If I want to hear some sound in the dharma-realm, I can tune in on it. You try it. What is that which is free of sound called, then? It doesn't have a name. That which is beyond even the name hearing is true hearing.  
 **Sutra:  
  
As soon as one sense-organ returns to the source,  
The entire six are liberated.  
  
Commentary:**  
When even the name is gone, one can say that that sense-organ is untied. As soon as one sense-organ returns to the source / The entire six are liberated. The "source" is the nature of the treasury of the Thus Come One. When one sense-organ reverts to the nature of the treasury of the Thus Come One, all six come back together. The older brother returns and the younger brothers follow along. But if you don't bring one sense-organ back, none of them will return. They are connected, because they were originally one, but then they divided into six.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Sight and hearing are like an illusory covering.  
The triple realm, a vision of flowers in space.  
When hearing reverts, the cataract is gone.  
The 'dust' gives way to pure and perfect insight.  
  
Commentary:**  
Why don't we become Buddhas? We are tied up by the six sense-organs and six sense-objects. So we must find a method to attain liberation. We are not the only ones bound by the organs and objects; at that time, Ananda also had this problem. We are in the same predicament. Ananda took this path to attain liberation, and we are now very lucky to learn about this method. We, too, can travel this path and get free.  
  
Sight and hearing are like an illusory covering. Seeing and hearing are not something real. They are like an illusion, like a film over the eyes, like clouds in the sky. The triple realm, a vision of flowers in space. The desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm make up the triple realm. We are within it, gazing into emptiness until our staring makes us tired. Then it looks as if there are flowers dancing in space. At the beginning of his verse, Manjushri said,  
  
The emptiness created within enlightenment,  
Is like a single bubble in all the sea.  
  
Emptiness arises out of the vastness of enlightenment and is as insignificant as one bubble in the great ocean. And the triple realm is like a bubble in the sea of emptiness. When hearing reverts, the cataract is gone. When one returns the hearing and hears theselfnature, the film disappears. The 'dust' gives way to pure and perfect insight. When the experiencing of the six sense-objects dissolves, there are no external defiling objects to disturb your self nature. Then your enlightened nature is pure and perfect.  
 **Sutra:  
  
When purity is ultimate, the light is penetrating.  
A stillness shines and includes within it all of emptiness.  
Looking at the world from this point of view,  
Everything that happens is just like a dream.  
Matangi's daughter, too, is part of the dream.  
Who was able, then, to physically detain you?  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Ah, Manjushri Bodhisattva talks tough. He's not the least bit polite. He's downright rude to Ananda here: "When purity is ultimate, the light is penetrating. Once your insight is pure and perfect, then, at the ultimate point, a light pervades. You become enlightened. A stillness shines and includes within it all of emptiness. When you attain this skill, emptiness is found within you. Your own nature is the great enlightened nature. When you return to that nature which was always yours, you include all of space. Looking at the world from this point of view / Everything that happens is just like a dream. As you continue to use this skill, you contemplate the world and find that it is all nothing but a dream. Matangi's daughter, too, is part of the dream / Who was able, then, to physically detain you? She is part of the illusion. Who was able to capture you? You lost face. You wanted to be there. You liked it. If you could reach the level just described, who could restrain you?" Not very polite, wouldn't you say?  
  
O3 He brings up an analogy to relate to the dharma just explained.  
 **Sutra:  
  
It is like a puppeteer who plays with shadows  
And works the dolls to seem as real as people.  
Although one sees them move about freely,  
They are really governed by a set of strings.  
Cease operating the controls and they return to stillness.  
The entire illusion is without a nature.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
It is like a puppeteer who plays with shadows. This refers to the puppet shows of old when the puppets danced and acted behind a screen of framed oil-paper. Behind it puppets made of donkey skin attached to strings are manipulated by the puppeteer, and the audience sees their shadows against the screen. Nowadays we have movies. The puppets look life-like, but actually they are controlled by the puppet-master. They used to fight noisy battles on stage with swords and guns. I remember watching them as a child. He works the dolls to seem as real as people. Dressed as men and women, they cavort on stage. Although one sees them move about freely / They are really governed by a set of strings. It seems like they can move their arms and legs and even their eyes and lips, but it's all mechanical. They are strung up to an apparatus. Nonetheless, people watch transfixed. Cease operating the controls and they return to stillness / The entire illusion is without a nature. There was nothing to it after all. In this section, Manjushri Bodhisattva explains how everything is like an illusion. The previous section made clear how we are in a dream.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The six sense-organs are also thus.  
At first there was one essential brightness.  
Which split into a six-fold combination.  
If but one part ceases and returns,  
All six functions will stop as well.  
In response to a thought, defiling objects vanish,  
Becoming pure and wonderful perfect brightness.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Why does he speak about dreams and illusions? It is because the six sense-organs are like an imaginary play. The six sense-organs are also thus. The six organs are like the play put on by the puppeteer. It's as if a mechanism is controlling them. But if one organ can become pure, the others will be freed as well. At first there was one essential brightness. Originally there was the single brightness of the nature of the treasury of the Thus Come One. It split into a six-fold combination. It divided into eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. If but one part ceases and returns, if the knot is untied, all six functions will stop as well. If one function stops, the others will also cease; they will no longer function. In response to a thought, defiling objects vanish. All the involvement between the six sense-organs and six sense-objects comes to an end, becoming pure and wonderful perfect brightness. They become the everlasting pure nature and bright substance of the treasury of the Thus Come One.  
  
O4 He concludes by telling that the cause and effect are ultimate.  
 **Sutra:  
  
If there is residual defilement, one must still study.  
When the brightness is ultimate, that is the Tathagata.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
If there is residual defilement, one must still study. When ignorance is cut off initially, there remains a subtle ignorance called "appearance of production ignorance." That is what is meant here by "residual defilement." Bodhisattvas must still cut that off. When the brightness is ultimate, that is the Tathagata. That is the basic substance of the Thus Come One.  
  
M4 He urges everyone to diligently cultivate and certify.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Ananda, and everyone in the great assembly,  
Turn yourselves around and revert the hearing.  
Return the hearing and listen to the self nature  
Till the nature reaches the Supreme Way.  
That is what perfect penetration really means.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Ananda, and everyone in the great assembly / Turn yourselves around and revert the hearing. You should cultivate according to this method. Don't let yourselves run outside. Come back. Look within and find yourself. Return the hearing and listen to the self nature / Till the nature reaches the Supreme Way. Your nature can accomplish the unsurpassed path. That is what perfect penetration really means. Why does he select the organ of the ear? It is the easiest to cultivate successfully. I believe that some of you already know how to develop this skill, while others do not. What does it mean to return the hearing to hear the self-nature? It is the skill used in investigating Chan. When you investigate Chan, you don't want to expend all your energy on seeking outside. You want to turn the light around and shine it within. Then you ask yourself, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" "Who?" You want to put the "Who?" in your heart and then listen with your ears. Pursue "Who?" Do this nonstop. Don't let your skill become dispersed. You investigate this topic in everything you do.  
  
Walking, standing, sitting, reclining,  
don't be apart from this.  
If you depart from this,  
you've made a mistake.  
  
What is "this?" It is the question, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" You don't have to ask out loud; ask in your heart and listen with your ears. Listen within, not outside. After you have listened within, your heart and your hearing-nature will eventually merge into one. And then in some unexpected way, at some unexpected moment, you will suddenly open enlightenment. But you definitely must bring your mind and nature together. Don't let them scatter in all directions. Don't let them get dissipated outside. Collect them within. Return the hearing and listen to your own nature.  
  
Eventually and naturally your skill will develop. Investigating a Chan topic and returning the hearing to listen to the self-nature are the same. And now everyone knows that using the organ of the ear in cultivation is the easiest method. So put your energy there and cultivate this dharma-door.  
 **Sutra:  
  
It is the gateway entered by Buddhas as many as dust motes.  
It is the one path to nirvana.  
Thus Come Ones of the past perfected this method.  
Bodhisattvas now merge with this total brightness.  
People of the future who study and practice  
Will also rely on this dharma.  
Through this method I, too, have been certified.  
Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva was not alone in using it.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Now Manjushri Bodhisattva certifies as authentic this dharma he has selected. It is the gateway entered by Buddhas as many as dust motes / It is the one path to nirvana. He says, "Not only was Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva certified through his use of this dharma door, this method of perfect penetration that I am explaining, I, too, Manjushri, gave proof to this doctrine of perfect penetration of the organ of the ear. Not only myself, but in the past countless Buddhas also found this the one path to nirvana. It was by this Way that they reached the fruition of nirvana. Thus Come Ones of the past perfected this method. They became accomplished by means of the perfect penetration derived from returning the hearing to hear the self-nature. Bodhisattvas now merge with this total brightness. Bodhisattvas cultivating right now are on the same road. People of the future who study and practice / Will also rely on this dharma. People of the future who as yet haven't even encountered the Buddhadharma will come to select this method for cultivation. Through this method I, too, have been certified. A long time ago I gave proof to this dharma-door of perfect penetration. Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva was not alone in using it."

M5 He concludes his answer.  
 **Sutra:  
  
As the Buddha, the World Honored One, requested,  
I choose sincerely a skill-in-means,  
One to save those in the final aeon  
Who seek to escape the mundane world,  
And perfect the heart of nirvana:  
The best way is to contemplate the sounds of the world.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
As the Buddha, the World Honored One, requested / I choose sincerely a skill-in-means. Buddha, I speak the truth, I say what is really so. The method which is the one to save those in the final aeon / Who seek to escape the mundane world / And perfect the heart of nirvana. Of the eighteen realms and the seven elements, which dharma-door is the most perfectly penetrating? Which one is most appropriate for living beings in the Dharmaending Age? Some will want to get out of the world and seek transcendence. How can they fulfill their vow to cultivate the Way and reach nirvana? The best way is to contemplate the sounds of the world. Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva, here in the Saha world, got the best response from this method. This method is the most  
appropriate one. It tallies best with the causes and conditions of most people.  
 **Sutra:  
  
All the other kinds of expedients  
Require the awesome spirit of the Buddha.  
In some cases they bring immediate transcendence,  
But they are not the customary means of practice,  
Spoken for those of shallow and deep roots alike.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
All the other kinds of expedients / Require the awesome spirit of the Buddha. In cultivating any of the other expedient dharma-doors besides that of the ear, one needs the Buddha's aid in order to succeed. Without the Buddha's support, one cannot accomplish anything through them. In some cases they bring immediate transcendence / But they are not the customary means of practice / Spoken for those of shallow and deep roots alike. Although some used these methods to get out of the wearisome mundane dust and false thinking, they are not dharmadoors which just anyone can use. In speaking dharma, one must look at the causes and conditions. I must observe the person. For someone with wisdom, one should speak more profound dharma. For stupid people, one should explain simple dharmas. The dharma cannot always be expressed in the same way. Only the organ of the ear is a perfect method which anyone can study. I think this dharma-door is the most perfectly penetrating.  
  
M6 He seeks aid and generally concludes.  
 **Sutra:  
  
I bow to the Ones Come Thus and the Tripitaka,  
And to those inconceivable ones with no outflows,  
Trusting they will aid those in the future,  
So that no one will doubt this dharma-door.  
It is an expedient easy to master;  
An appropriate teaching for Ananda  
And for those immersed in the final age.  
They should cultivate this organ of hearing,  
A perfect penetration that surpasses all others.  
It is the way to the true mind.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
After Manjushri Bodhisattva finished speaking this verse, he made obeisance to the Triple Jewel. I bow to the Ones Come Thus and the Tripitaka. The "Ones Come Thus" are the Buddhas. The "Tripitaka" is the dharma. And to those inconceivable ones with no outflows. "Those" refers to the Sangha. The Bodhisattvas and Arhats with no outflows have attained a state which is inconceivable and ineffable. Their spiritual penetrations and wonderful functions are difficult to comprehend. He bows to the sages and saints of the Sangha, trusting they will aid those in the future / so that no one will doubt this dharma-door. I hope you will help all living beings of the future, so that they won't have any doubts about the dharma-door of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature. It is an expedient easy to master / An appropriate teaching for Ananda. This dharma-door is both easy to cultivate and easy to be successful with. It is the best method for Ananda to use. There is none better. And for those immersed in the final age / They should cultivate this organ of hearing. Not only will this dharmadoor bring a response to Ananda, it is also right for beings who will fall into the Dharma-ending Age. Just use the method of cultivating with the organ of the ear. A perfect penetration that surpasses all others / It is the way to the true mind. This dharma-door of perfect penetration goes beyond the other twenty-four expedient methods. It is a lot easier and brings surpassing results. The true and actual mind found through this dharma-door is as I have explained above.  
  
H3 Based on the instruction, the great assembly becomes enlightened and accomplishes entry.  
I1 Ananda and those like him become enlightened.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Thereupon, Ananda and all in the great assembly experienced a clarity of body and mind. Having attained such profound instruction, they contemplated the Buddha's Bodhi and Parinirvana like someone who, having traveled far on business, knows that he is on the road home, though he has not returned completely.  
  
Commentary:**  
Thereupon, Ananda and all in the great assembly experienced a clarity of body and mind. They had gained tremendous understanding. Having attained such profound instruction, they contemplated the Buddha's Bodhi and Parinirvana. They had received magnificent teaching from both the Buddha and Manjushri Bodhisattva. They looked upon the doctrines of Bodhi and nirvana like someone who, having traveled far on business, knows that he is on the road home, though he has not returned completely. This person has had to go away on business and hasn't arrived back home yet. But he's gone far enough to recognize that he's on the way to his house. The meaning is that although the members of the great assembly and Ananda had not actually been certified as having attained the second, third, or fourth fruitions of arhatship, now at least they understood the theory, the doctrine.  
  
I2 Matangi's daughter and those like her accomplish entry.  
 **Sutra:  
  
Throughout the entire assembly, the gods, dragons, and all the eightfold division, those of the two vehicles who were not yet beyond learning, as well as all the Bodhisattvas of initial resolve, as numerous as the sands in ten Ganges Rivers, found their fundamental mind and, far removed from dust and defilement, attained the purity of the dharma eye.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
Throughout the entire assembly, the gods, dragons, and all the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits: the eightfold division includes gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, and non-humans, as well as the dragons. Those of the two vehicles who were not yet beyond learning refers to the soundhearers and those enlightened to conditions. Together with all the Bodhisattvas of initial resolve, as numerous as the sands in ten Ganges Rivers, they found their fundamental mind. It was not like before, when they didn't even recognize their own mind. They were far removed from dust and defilement, and so they attained the purity of the dharma eye.  
 **Sutra:  
  
The bhikshuni named "Nature" attained arhatship after hearing this verse.  
  
Commentary:**  
  
The bhikshuni named "Nature" was Matangi's daughter. She attained arhatship after hearing this verse spoken by Manjushri Bodhisattva. At this point she surpassed Ananda by being certified to the second stage of arhatship. Ananda was still a first-stage sage.  
 **Sutra:  
  
And limitless beings brought forth a matchless, unequalled resolve for Annuttarasamyaksambodhi.  
  
Commentary:**  
At that time, there were also limitless, boundless, uncountable beings in the dharma assembly who brought forth a matchless, unequalled resolve for Annuttarasamyaksambodhi. There was nothing that could compare with the extent of their resolve. It was totally genuine. "Anuttarasamyaksambodhi" means the "unsurpassed proper and equal right enlightenment." Anuttara is unsurpassed; samyak is proper and equal; and sambodhi is right enlightenment. Their intention was to become Buddhas.