**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 6**

**CHAPTER 3**

**The Spiritual Mantra**

H2 On second request he speaks the spiritual mantra.
I1 The entire assembly asks again.
 **Sutra:

Ananda bowed at the Buddha's feet and said, "After I left the home-life, I relied on the Buddha's affectionate regard. Because I sought erudition, I still have not been certified to the unconditioned."

Commentary:**
After Ananda heard this description by Shakyamuni Buddha, he bowed at the Buddha's feet and said, "After I left the homelife, I relied on the Buddha's affectionate regard. I counted on the Buddha's fondness for me, on his special affection. Because I sought erudition, I still have not been certified to the unconditioned. He was always concerned about being better than everyone else. "I wanted to surpass others," and so he had the idea, "You can't recite the sutra from memory, but I can. You can't even explain that sutra, and I remember every word of it." He was always competing to be number one. He decided to use erudition to obtain the first position. True enough, Ananda became foremost in learning, but he still did not certify to the unconditioned. He still had not reached to the fruition of sagehood that was unconditioned. He couldn't obtain the level beyond learning. This was of great harm to him.
 **Sutra:

When I encountered that Brahma Heaven mantra, I was captured by the deviant spell; though my mind was aware, I had no power to free myself. I had to rely on Manjushri Bodhisattva to liberate me. Although I was blessed by the Thus Come One's spiritual mantra of the Buddha's summit and imperceptibly received its strength, I still have not heard it myself.

Commentary:**

"When I encountered that Brahma Heaven mantra, I was captured by the deviant spell; though my mind was aware, I had no power to free myself. I became confused by the deviant spell of the externalist way, by the deviant trick of a demonic dharma. I was physically captured by the spell; my body was confused by it, but my mind was still somewhat clear." His mind was not totally alert, but he wasn't totally muddled, either. He was in a daze, as if he were asleep, and yet he was awake. He was as if drunk, but he hadn't taken anything intoxicating. But the effect was much the same as with drink. When you ask a person who's recovered from a drunken binge what he did while under the influence, he will remember some things and forget others. That's the state Ananda was in. Or he was like a person who is about to drift off to sleep; he isn't quite asleep, and yet he has a dream, or what seems to be a dream. He had no power to free himself. It's like encountering a demonic ghost while you are asleep at night, such as a kumbhanda ghost, which uses a demonic spell to paralyze you. When that happens, you may wake up and stare, but you cannot move. You are held by the demonic power of the ghost. That's what Ananda experienced. Although he was conscious, he was not in control of himself. He could not get free. "I had to rely on Manjushri Bodhisattva to liberate me. The Buddha commanded Manjushri Bodhisattva to come and save me. I depended on the Buddha to have Manjushri Bodhisattva rescue me. He freed me.

"Although I was blessed by the Thus Come One's spiritual mantra of the Buddha's summit and imperceptibly received its strength, I still have not heard it myself. The World Honored One, the Thus Come One, the Buddha, used the spiritual mantra spoken by the transformation Buddha atop the Buddha's summit. And when Manjushri Bodhisattva came to where I was and recited the mantra, I received the benefit invisibly." That means that when Manjushri Bodhisattva got there, he didn't chant the mantra in a loud voice; he merely had to recite it silently to free Ananda. It's all right to recite the mantra loudly when you are before the Buddhas in the temple, but when you are out at other places, you can recite it silently and it is just as effective. If you got out on the streets and start bellowing, "Na Mwo Sa Dan Two Su Chye Dwo Ye!" people are going to think you are crazy. You needn't be attached to some particular ritual and thereby cause people to slander the dharma, which is what they would be doing if they said you were crazy. When they commit slander, they commit offenses. You don't want to say, "If he commits offenses, that's his problem. I'll recite even louder and let him slander even more so that he commits even greater offenses, and he will surely fall into the hells." If you have that kind of attitude and intentionally cause people to commit offenses so that they fall into the hells, then you shouldn't even study the Buddhadharma.

People who study the Buddhadharma are sympathetic and compassionate toward others. Their attitude is to do nothing that would cause anyone else to fall into the hells, even to the point that they would rather go to the hells themselves than cause anyone else to go. That's the way you should be. You cannot think, "He slandered me, let him fall into the hells." Or, "If I have a run-in with someone, I will go after them and recite the Shurangama Mantra, and then when they slander me they will fall into the hells." If you have that kind of thought, then you'd better stop reciting the Shurangama Mantra right this minute and leave off your study of the Buddhadharma. That's because people who study the Buddhadharma must not hate people, must not be jealous of people, must not obstruct people, must not be selfish in these ways. One cannot have the attitude, "I'm fine, to heck with you." The Buddhadharma exists for the sake of rescuing all living beings. It is not designed to cause living beings to commit offenses. You must be clear about this point.

Ananda says, "I imperceptibly received its strength, but I still haven't actually heard it. I got the strength from it, but silently and invisibly. So I've never actually heard it. Although I received the benefit of it, I still don't even know how to recite it. I've never even heard it!"
 **Sutra:

I only hope that the greatly compassionate one will proclaim it again to kindly rescue all the cultivators in this assembly and those of the future who undergo the turning wheel, so that they may become liberated in body and mind by relying on the Buddha’s secret sounds.

Commentary:**

I only hope that the World Honored One, the Greatly Compassionate One will proclaim it again. My one wish is that the Buddha would speak it again so that I can hear it and also to kindly rescue all the cultivators in this assembly. Please speak it also to rescue those of the future who undergo the turning wheel of the six paths, so that they may become liberated in body and mind by relying on the Buddha's secret sounds. Based on the Buddha's secret syllables, they will become free. They will not be upside down or confused.

We recite the Shurangama Mantra every day just to help people stop being upside down and confused and to help them stay away from doing things which they clearly know are wrong. For instance, one knows that taking opium is wrong, that it wastes time and dissipates one's energy, yet, one still insists on smoking it. Clearly knowing that the use of marijuana is a violation of the law, still one "must" try it out. Well aware that killing is not right, one still takes the lives of living beings. Knowing without a doubt that indulging in sexual misconduct is not right, one conducts oneself in this way nonetheless. Knowing full well that it is wrong to steal, one spends all day and night taking things from other people, if it's not a car, it's a tape-recorder or a radio. A thief knows full well he is breaking the law, and that if he is caught the police will take him to jail, but still he goes and does it. That's "doing things which they clearly know are wrong."
 **Sutra:

At that moment, everyone in the great assembly bowed as one and stood waiting to hear the Thus Come One's secret divisions and phrases.

Commentary:**

At that moment, everyone in the great assembly, the huge multitude of beings in that gathering, bowed as one and stood waiting to hear the Thus Come One's secret divisions and phrases. They all bowed together to the Buddha and then stood on tiptoe waiting for the Buddha to speak the secret sections and divisions of the mantra. "Divisions" refers to the five major sections of the mantra. The "phrases" are smaller parts consisting of several lines each, such as "Na Mwo Sa Dan Two / Su Chye Dwo Ye / E La He Di / San Myau San Pu Two Sye." But these divisions and phrases are secret, that is, they are not easy for people to understand. They are "secret" in the sense that people do not share a common knowledge about them. When you recite them, you do not know what advantages you obtain. I do not know what advantages I obtain. Although benefit is obtained, there is no mutual awareness of it among those benefited, nor is there a common understanding of the mantra itself.

I2 The Thus Come One answers again.
J1 He speaks the spiritual mantra.
K1 An appearance of light.
 **Sutra:

At that time, a hundred brilliant rays sprang from the mound of the flesh on the crown of the World Honored One's head. A thousand-petalled precious lotus arose from amidst those rays. Upon the precious flower sat the Thus Come One's transformation.

Commentary:**
At that time, a hundred brilliant rays sprang from the mound of the flesh on the crown of the World Honored One's, Shakyamuni Buddha's, head. A thousand-petalled precious lotus arose from amidst those rays. Upon the precious flower sat the Thus Come One's transformation. A transformation body of the Buddha sat upon the thousand-petalled precious lotus in the midst of the hundred rays of light.
 **Sutra:

From the crown of that Buddha’s head, in turn, ten beams of light shone forth, each composed of a hundred rays of precious light. Every one of those glowing rays shone on lands as many as the sands of ten Ganges Rivers, while throughout empty space there were Vajra Secret Traces spirits, each holding aloft a mountain and wielding a pestle.

Commentary:**
From the crown of that Buddha’s head, in turn, ten beams of light shone forth, each composed of a hundred rays of precious light. "Crown" here refers to the crown of the head of the Thus Come One's transformation. Another ten beams of light issued forth out the top of the head of the transformation-body Buddha. Every one of those glowing rays shone on lands as many as the sands of ten Ganges Rivers. These rays of light shone everywhere, on countless countries, while throughout empty space there were Vajra Secret Traces spirits, each holding aloft a mountain and wielding a pestle. At the same time that the light shone forth, the Vajra Secret Traces dharma protectors held mountains in their bare hands and brandished pestles, like the one Wei Tuo Bodhisattva wields. They were all over the place, filling up all of empty space.

K2 The great assembly respectfully listens.
 **Sutra:

The great assembly, gazing upward, felt fearful admiration and sought the Buddha's kind protection. Single-mindedly they listened as the Thus Come One in the light at the invisible appearance on the crown of the Buddha’s head proclaimed the spiritual mantra:

Commentary:**

The great assembly, gazing upward, felt fearful admiration and sought the Buddha's kind protection. All the great Bodhisattvas, great Arhats, great bhikshus, and all the others in the great gathering, threw back their heads and looked up toward the transformation- body of the Thus Come One atop the crown of the Buddha's head. Some felt fearful when they saw the transformation Buddha. But at the same time, they admired that Thus Come One. They loved him, but not with the emotional love that exists between men and women. What they felt was true love, free of desire or longing. They had both these feelings at the same time, they were awestruck and yet drawn by love. So they hoped the Buddha would take pity on them and also protect them. Single-mindedly they listened as the Thus Come One in the light at the invisible appearance on the crown of the Buddha's head proclaimed the spiritual mantra. They were all of one mind. They all wanted to listen to the Buddha. The mound of flesh on the crown of the Buddha's head is called the "invisible appearance on the crown." It is called the "invisible appearance" because ordinary people cannot see it. Those who saw the hundred rays of light and the transformation Buddha atop the crown of the Buddha's head were sages who had been certified to the fruition. The transformation Buddha that was emitted from the invisible appearance on the crown hovered in space and proclaimed the spiritual mantra.

So, the Shurangama Mantra was not spoken by Shakyamuni Buddha himself in the flesh, but rather it was proclaimed by the transformation-body Buddha he sent out into empty space. As to the mantra, no one understands it. Nor is it possible to explain it syllable by syllable and line by line. But if you want to understand it, I can try to explain it for you. However, this is not the time for that, because we are in the middle of the explanation of the Shurangama Sutra, and the mantra alone couldn't be completely explained in a year, or even in three years, or even ten years. So, at this point it cannot be explained thoroughly. I will simply explain the general meaning of the mantra.

The mantra has five divisions which correspond to the five directions : north, south, east, west, and the middle. The eastern division is the Vajra division, with Akshobhya Buddha as the teaching host. The southern division is the Production-of-Jewels division, with Production-of-Jewels Buddha as the teaching host. The central division is the Buddha division, with Shakyamuni Buddha as the teaching host. The western division is the Lotus division, with Amitabha Buddha as the teaching host. The northern division is the Karma division, with Accomplishment Buddha as the teaching host. There are five divisions, because there are five huge demonic armies in this world. There are demons to the east, south, west, north, and in the center. Since there are these five demon armies, not just five demons, the Buddhas also cover the five directions to suppress the demons. If there were no Buddhas, the demons could appear openly in the world.

Within the five divisions of the mantra there are, in general, more than thirty dharmas, and it has more than a hundred dharmas that can be discussed in detail. There are five major kinds of dharmas:

1) Dharmas of accomplishment. This means that with this dharma, you will be successful in what you seek or in what you vow or wish for.

2) Dharmas of increasing benefit. This means that when you recite this mantra, you can increase benefits which you yourself seek and you can also increase benefits for other people.

3) Dharmas of hooking and summoning. This means, literally, to "hook in" and catch and to call with a command all the weird beings, demons, and ghosts. No matter how far away they might be from you, you can bring them in and capture them. For instance, suppose one of them is harming someone, and when they finish they run away. If one knows how to use the dharma of hooking and summoning, then no matter how far that being may have run, you can arrest him.

4) Dharmas of subduing. Demons also have spiritual penetrations and mantras which they use. When you recite your mantras, they recite their mantras. But if you can use the Shurangama Mantra, you can smash through all their mantras. I've told you before about the section of the mantra which is for smashing the demon kings. It also is effective in destroying their mantras and spells. Although I've taught you this already, it bears repeating here. Those who have not studied this yet can take note of it. Why was it that as soon as the Shurangama Mantra was recited the former Brahma Heaven mantra lost its effectiveness? It was because of the "Five Great Heart Mantras."

Chr Two Ni
E Jya La
Mi Li Ju
Bwo Li Dan La Ye
Ning Jye Li

These five lines are called the "Five Great Heart Mantras." It is the fundamental mantra for destroying the mantras and spells of the heavenly demons and adherents of externalist ways. It doesn't matter what kind of mantra they come up with; you can destroy it with this one. Their mantras will lose their effectiveness. This dharma I've just transmitted could sell for several million dollars, but I do not sell it. Seeing that you have a certain amount of sincerity, I transmit it to you absolutely free.

5) Dharmas of dispelling disasters. Whatever calamity is due to occur can be prevented. For instance, suppose a person was due to fall into the sea and drown, but by reciting the Shurangama Mantra, he avoids the catastrophe. He might fall into the sea, but he doesn't drown. Perhaps you are in a boat that ought to sink, but you recite this mantra and the boat does not go down. Maybe you're in an airplane that is destined to crash, but you recite the Shurangama Mantra and the plane lands without incident. I'll tell you something incredible. I was going from Burma to Thailand, an air route that is particularly dangerous. But during that trip, the plane didn't show the effects of any turbulence. The ride was absolutely smooth. Even the pilot commented, "Why has it been such smooth going on this trip?" He had no idea that during that ride the gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division, as well as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, were on all sides of the airplane guarding and protecting it. That's the way the dharma of dispelling disasters works. When there clearly should be an accident, it can change big disasters to small ones and make small ones never even happen. Usually what happens is there's "alarm but no danger" if you recite the Shurangama Mantra.

In general, the mantra contains dharmas of auspiciousness. This means that when you recite the Shurangama Mantra, everything goes just as you'd like it to. It's really lucky and extremely auspicious.

The advantages of the mantra are so many that one could not even begin to express them in several years time. But at this time, I'll limit my explanation to these few dharmas and meanings.

K3 The five sections of the Spiritual Mantra,
the Shurangama Mantra**:**

Sutra:

I.
na mwo sa dan two
su chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two sye
na mwo sa dan two
fwo two jyu jr shai ni shan
na mwo sa pe
bwo two bwo di
sa dwo pi bi
na mwo sa dwo nan
san myau san pu two
jyu jr nan
swo she la pe jya
seng chye nan
na mwo lu ji e lwo han dwo nan
na mwo su lu dwo bwo nwo nan
na mwo swo jye li two chye mi nan
na mwo lu ji san myau chye dwo nan
san myau chye be la
di bwo dwo nwo nan
na mwo ti pe li shai nan
na mwo syi two ye
pi di ye
two la li shai nan
she pwo nu
jye la he
swo he swo la mwo two nan
na mwo ba la he mwo ni
na mwo yin two la ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
lu two la ye
wu mwo bwo di
swo syi ye ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
nwo la ye
na ye
pan je mwo he san mwo two la
na mwo syi jye li dwo ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
mwo he jya la ye
di li bwo la na
chye la pi two la
bwo na jya la ye
e di mu di
shr mwo she nwo ni
pe syi ni
mwo dan li chye na
na mwo syi jye li dwo ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
dwo two chye dwo jyu la ye
na mwo be tou mwo jyu la ye
na mwo ba she la jyu la ye
na mwo mwo ni jyu la ye
na mwo chye she jyu la ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
di li cha
shu la syi na
bwo la he la na la she ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
na mwo e mi dwo pe ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
e chu pi ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
bi sha she ye
jyu lu fei ju li ye
bwo la pe la she ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
san bu shr bi dwo
sa lyan nai la la she ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
she ji ye mu nwo ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
la dan na ji du la she ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two ye
di pyau
na mwo sa jye li dwo
yi tan pe chye pe dwo
sa dan two chye du shai ni shan
sa dan dwo bwo da lan
na mwo e pe la shr dan
bwo la di
yang chi la
sa la pe
bwo dwo jye la he
ni jye la he
jye jya la he ni
ba la bi di ye
chr two ni
e jya la
mi li ju
bwo li dan la ye
ning jye li
sa la pe
pan two nwo
mu cha ni
sa la pe
tu shai ja
tu syi fa
bwo na ni
fa la ni
je du la
shr di nan
jye la he
swo he sa la rau she
pi dwo beng swo na jye li
e shai ja bing she di nan
na cha cha dan la rau she
bwo la sa two na jye li
e shai ja nan
mwo he jye la he rau she
pi dwo beng sa na jye li
sa pe she du lu
ni pe la rau she
hu lan tu syi fa
nan je na she ni
bi sha she
syi dan la
e ji ni
wu two jya la rau she
e bwo la shr dwo jyu la
mwo he bwo la jan chr
mwo he dye dwo
mwo he di she
mwo he shwei dwo she pe la
mwo he ba la pan two la
pe syi ni
e li ye dwo la
pi li jyu jr
shr pe pi she ye
ba she la mwo li di
pi she lu dwo
bwo teng wang jya
ba she la jr he nwo e je
mwo la jr pe
bwo la jr dwo
ba she la shan chr
pi she la je
shan dwo she
pi ti pe
bu shr dwo
su mwo lu bwo
mwo he shwei dwo
e li ye dwo la
mwo he pe la e bwo la
ba she la shang jye la jr pe
ba she la jyu mwo li
jyu lan two li
ba she la he sa dwo je
pi di ye
chyan je nwo
mwo li jya
ku su mu
pe jye la dwo nwo
pi lu je na
jyu li ye
ye la tu
shai ni shan
pi je lan pe mwo ni je
ba she la jya na jya bwo la pe
lu she na
ba she la dwun jr je
shwei dwo je
jya mwo la
cha che shr
bwo la pe
yi di yi di
mu two la
jye na
swo pi la chan
jywe fan du
yin tu na mwo mwo sye

II.
wu syin
li shai jye na
bwo la she syi dwo
sa dan two
chye du shai ni shan
hu syin du lu yung
jan pe na
hu syin du lu yung
syi dan pe na
hu syin du lu yung
bwo la shai di ye
san bwo cha
na jye la
hu syin du lu yung
sa pe yau cha
he la cha swo
jye la he rau she
pi teng beng sa na jye la
hu syin du lu yung
je du la
shr di nan
jye la he
swo he sa la nan
pi teng beng sa na la
hu syin du lu yung
la cha
pe chye fan
sa dan two
chye du shai ni shan
bwo la dyan
she ji li
mwo he swo he sa la
bwo shu swo he sa la
shr li sha
jyu jr swo he sa ni
di li e bi ti shr pe li dwo
ja ja ying jya
mwo he ba she lu two la
di li pu pe na
man cha la
wu syin
swo syi di
bwo pe du
mwo mwo
yin tu na mwo mwo sye

III.
la she pe ye
ju la ba ye
e chi ni pe ye
wu two jya pe ye
pi sha pe ye
she sa dwo la pe ye
pe la jau jye la pe ye
tu shai cha pe ye
e she ni pe ye
e jya la
mi li ju pe ye
two la ni bu mi jyan
bwo chye bwo two pe ye
wu la jya pe dwo pe ye
la she tan cha pe ye
nwo chye pe ye
pi tyau dan pe ye
su bwo la na pe ye
yau cha jye la he
la cha sz jye la he
bi li dwo jye la he
pi she je jye la he
bu dwo jye la he
jyou pan cha jye la he
bu dan na jye la he
jya ja bu dan na jye la he
syi chyan du jye la he
e bwo syi mwo la jye la he
wu tan mwo two jye la he
che ye jye la he
syi li pe di jye la he
she dwo he li nan
jye pe he li nan
lu di la he li nan
mang swo he li nan
mi two he li nan
mwo she he li nan
she dwo he li nyu
shr bi dwo he li nan
pi dwo he li nan
pe dwo he li nan
e shu je he li nyu
jr dwo he li nyu
di shan sa pi shan
sa pe jye la he nan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
bwo li ba la je jya
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
cha yan ni
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
mwo he bwo su bwo dan ye
lu two la
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
nwo la ye na
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
dan two chye lu cha syi
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
mwo he jya la
mwo dan li chye na
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
jya bwo li jya
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
she ye jye la
mwo du jye la
sa pe la two swo da na
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
je du la
pe chi ni
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
pi li yang chi li jr
nan two ji sha la
chye na bwo di
swo syi ye
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
na jye na she la pe na
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
e lwo han
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
pi dwo la chye
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
ba she la bwo ni
jyu syi ye jyu syi ye
jya di bwo di
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
la cha wang
pe chye fan
yin tu na mwo mwo sye

IV.
pe chye fan
sa dan dwo bwo da la
na mwo tswei du di
e syi dwo na la la jya
bwo la pe
syi pu ja
pi jya sa dan dwo be di li
shr fwo la shr fwo la
two la two la
pin two la pin two la
chen two chen two
hu syin hu syin
pan ja pan ja pan ja pan ja pan ja
swo he
syi syi pan
e mu jya ye pan
e bwo la ti he dwo pan
pe la bwo la two pan
e su la
pi two la
bwo jya pan
sa pe ti pi bi pan
sa pe na chye bi pan
sa pe yau cha bi pan
sa pe chyan ta pe bi pan
sa pe bu dan na bi pan
jya ja bu dan na bi pan
sa pe tu lang jr di bi pan
sa pe tu sz bi li
chi shai di bi pan
sa pe shr pe li bi pan
sa pe e bwo syi mwo li bi pan
sa pe she la pe na bi pan
sa pe di di ji bi pan
sa pe dan mwo two ji bi pan
sa pe pi two ye
la shr je li bi pan
she ye jye la
mwo du jye la
sa pe la two swo two ji bi pan
pi di ye
je li bi pan
je du la
fu chi ni bi pan
ba she la
jyu mwo li
pi two ye
la shr bi pan
mwo he bwo la ding yang
yi chi li bi pan
ba she la shang jye la ye
bwo la jang chi la she ye pan
mwo he jya la ye
mwo he mwo dan li jya na
na mwo swo jye li dwo ye pan
bi shai na bei ye pan
bwo la he mwo ni ye pan
e chi ni ye pan
mwo he jye li ye pan
jye la tan chr ye pan
mye dan li ye pan
lau dan li ye pan
je wen cha ye pan
jye lwo la dan li ye pan
jya bwo li ye pan
e di mu jr dwo
jya shr mwo she nwo
pe sz ni ye pan
yan ji jr
sa two pe sye
mwo mwo yin tu na mwo mwo sye

V.
tu shai ja jr dwo
e mwo dan li jr dwo
wu she he la
chye pe he la
lu di la he la
pe swo he la
mwo she he la
she dwo he la
shr bi dwo he la
ba lyau ye he la
chyan two he la
bu shr bwo he la
pwo la he la
pe sye he la
be bwo jr dwo
tu shai ja jr dwo
lau two la jr dwo
yau cha jye la he
la cha swo jye la he
bi li dwo jye la he
pi she je jye la he
bu dwo jye la he
jyou pan cha jye la he
syi chyan two jye la he
wu dan mwo two jye la he
che ye jye la he
e bwo sa mwo la jye la he
jai chywe ge
cha chi ni jye la he
li fwo di jye la he
she mi jya jye la he
she jyu ni jye la he
mu two la
na di jya jye la he
e lan pe jye la he
chyan du bwo ni jye la he
shr fwo la
yin jya syi jya
jwei di yau jya
dan li di yau jya
je tu two jya
ni ti shr fa la
bi shan mwo shr fa la
bwo di jya
bi di jya
shr li shai mi jya
swo ni bwo di jya
sa pe shr fa la
shr lu ji di
mwo two pi da lu jr jyan
e chi lu chyan
mu chywe lu chyan
jye li tu lu chyan
jye la he
jye lan jye na shu lan
dan dwo shu lan
chi li ye shu lan
mwo mwo shu lan
ba li shr pe shu lan
bi li shai ja shu lan
wu two la shu lan
jye jr shu lan
ba syi di shu lan
wu lu shu lan
chang chye shu lan
he syi dwo shu lan
ba two shu lan
swo fang ang chye
bwo la jang chye shu lan
bu dwo bi dwo cha
cha chi ni
shr pe la
two tu lu jya
jyan du lu ji jr
pe lu dwo pi
sa bwo lu
he ling chye
shu sha dan la
swo na jye la
pi sha yu jya
e chi ni
wu two jya
mwo la pi la
jyan dwo la
e jya la
mi li du
da lyan bu jya
di li la ja
bi li shai jr jya
sa pe na jyu la
sz yin chye bi
jye la li yau cha
dan la chu
mwo la shr
fei di shan
swo pi shan
syi dan dwo bwo da la
mwo he ba she lu
shai ni shan
mwo he bwo lai jang chi lan
ye bwo tu two
she yu she nwo
byan da li na
pi two ye
pan tan jya lu mi
di shu
pan tan jya lu mi
bwo la pi two
pan tan jya lu mi
da jr two
nan
e na li
pi she ti
pi la
ba she la
two li
pan two pan two ni
ba she la bang ni pan
hu syin du lu yung pan
swo pe he.

J2 He speaks of the benefits of the mantra.
K1 The important tool of all Buddhas.
L1 He explains the entire name.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, this cluster of light atop the crown of the Buddha's head, the secret gatha, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, with its subtle, wonderful divisions and phrases, gives birth to all the Buddhas of the ten directions. Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions use this mantra-heart, they realize unsurpassed, proper, and all-pervading knowledge and enlightenment.

Commentary:**

Ananda, this cluster of light atop the crown of the Buddha's head, the secret gatha, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, is again, the great white canopy, which can cover over the entire system of three thousand great thousand worlds to protect all the living beings in it. "Gatha" is a Sanskrit term which means "repetitive verses." The mantra is secret, and since some of its lines are repeated, it is referred to as the "secret gatha." These "divisions and phrases" which comprise the mantra are extremely rare and miraculous. This mantra, with its subtle, wonderful divisions and phrases, gives birth to all the Buddhas of the ten directions. Therefore, the Shurangama Mantra can be called the "Mother of Buddhas."

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions use this mantra-heart, they realize unsurpassed proper and allpervading knowledge and enlightenment. It is by means of the Shurangama Mantra that the Buddhas realize proper and allpervading awareness. "Proper knowledge" means they know that the mind gives rise to the myriad dharmas; "all-pervading knowledge" means that they know that the myriad dharmas come only from the mind.

L2 He states its functions.
 **Sutra:

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions take up this mantra-heart, they subdue all demons and control all adherents of outside ways.

Commentary:**
The "mantra-heart", the Shurangama Mantra, was spoken by a transformation body Buddha seated upon a jeweled lotus amidst a thousand rays of light at the crown of the Buddha Shakyamuni's head. Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions take up this mantra-heart, they subdue all demons and control all adherents of outside ways. It is the heart of mantras, and it is a mantra-heart of the Buddhas. Therefore, what the heavenly demons and adherents of outside ways fear most is the Shurangama Mantra.
 **Sutra:

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions avail themselves of this mantra-heart, they sit upon jeweled lotus flowers and respond throughout countries as numerous as motes of dust.

Commentary:**

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions avail themselves of this mantra-heart. They borrow the mantra; as it were, they ascend the mantra-heart, and they sit upon jeweled lotus-flowers; huge blossoms, and respond throughout countries as numerous as motes of dust. Their response-bodies are able to go throughout lands as numerous as fine motes of dust, due to the power of the Shurangama Mantra-heart.
 **Sutra:

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions embody this mantra-heart, they turn the great dharma wheel in lands as numerous as fine motes of dust.

Commentary:**
When the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions turn the great dharma wheel in lands as numerous as fine motes of dust, they also base themselves on this mantra. They embody this mantra-heart.
 **Sutra:

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions hold this mantra-heart, they are able to go throughout the ten directions to rub beings on the crowns of their heads and bestow predictions upon them. Also, anyone in the ten directions who has not yet realized the fruition, can receive a Buddha's prediction.

Commentary:**

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions hold this mantra-heart, they receive and uphold this mantra-heart, and so they are able to go throughout the ten directions to rub beings on the crowns of their heads and bestow predictions upon them. They bestow predictions of Buddhahood on other living beings. Also, anyone in the ten directions who has not yet realized the fruition, can receive a Buddha's prediction. If you have not realized the fruition, the Buddhas may still rub the crown of your head and bestow a prediction on you.
 **Sutra:

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are based in this mantra-heart, they can go throughout the ten directions to rescue beings from such sufferings as being in the hells, being hungry ghosts, being animals, or being blind, deaf, or mute, as well as from the suffering of being together with those one hates, from the suffering of being apart from those one loves, from the suffering of not obtaining what one seeks, and from the raging blaze of the five skandhas. They liberate beings from both large and small accidents. In response to their recitation, difficulty with thieves, difficulty with armies, difficulty with the law, difficulty with imprisonment, difficulty with wind, fire, and water, and difficulty with hunger, thirst, and impoverishment are all eradicated.

Commentary:**

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are based in this mantra-heart, they can go throughout the ten directions to rescue beings from such sufferings as the eight sufferings:

1. birth,
2. old age,
3. sickness,
4. death,
5. being apart from those one loves,
6. being together with those one hates,
7. being unable to obtain what one seeks,
8. the raging blaze of the five skandhas.

There are also eight difficulties:

1. the difficulty of the hells,
2. the difficulty of hungry ghosts,
3. the difficulty of animals,
4. the difficulty of being blind, deaf, or mute,
5. the difficulty of being in Uttarakuru,
6. the difficulty of being born at a time when there is no Buddha in the world,
7. the difficulty of having worldly intelligence and powers in debate,
8. the difficulty of being reborn in the long-life heavens.

The beings in the northern continent, Uttarakuru, have a very long lifespan. They live an average of a thousand years. Life on that continent is extremely blissful; the difficulty is that the beings there have no opportunity to see the Buddha, hear the Dharma, or meet the Sangha. Therefore, living there is included among the eight difficulties. The same is true for beings in the heavens; although the lifespan is long, they have no chance to encounter the Triple Jewel. So that, too, is a difficulty.

"Having worldly intelligence and powers in debate" refers to different branches of mundane knowledge, such as the fields of science. They try to express principles where there are no principles and to give reasons when there aren't any.

Being in the hells, being hungry ghosts, being animals, or being blind, deaf, or mute, are among the eight difficulties. Then there is the suffering of being together with those one hates. This is when you move to get away from someone you can't stand, only to find that when you get to the new place, there's a person just like him there! There is also the suffering of being apart from those one loves. You love someone especially, but circumstances force you to be apart. Again, there is the suffering of not obtaining what one seeks. When you don't have something that you want, you seek for it. But if you encounter this suffering, you fail to get what you seek. The raging blaze of the five skandhas, form, feeling, thought, activity, and consciousness, the five skandhas, burn like fire.

They liberate beings from both large and small accidents. This can refer to untimely deaths, such as being killed in an automobile accident, being crushed by a falling building, or any other fatal accident. They can also liberate beings from difficulty with thieves, difficulty with armies, difficulty with the law, difficulty with imprisonment, difficulty with wind, fire, and water, and difficulty with hunger, thirst, and impoverishment. In response to their recitation, all these difficulties are eradicated.
 **Sutra:

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are in accord with this mantra-heart, they can serve good and wise advisors throughout the ten directions. In the four aspects of awesome deportment, they make wish-fulfilling offerings. In the assemblies of as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges, they are considered to be great Dharma princes.

Commentary:**
Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are in accord with this mantra-heart, they can serve good and wise advisors throughout the ten directions. They respectfully offer up their services to good and wise advisors. In the four aspects of awesome deportment, they make wish-fulfilling offerings. In the ceremony of offering to the Triple Jewel, their conduct is perfectly appropriate. In the assemblies of as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges, they are considered to be great Dharma princes. They are the foremost disciples of the Buddha.

**Sutra:

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions practice this mantra-heart, they can gather in and teach their relatives in the ten directions. Causing those of the small vehicle not to be frightened when they hear the secret treasury.

Commentary:**

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions practice this mantra-heart, they can gather in and teach their relatives in the ten directions. Buddhas have the six kinds of close relatives, too, and they first gather in and teach those of their relatives who draw near to them. Why was it that when Shakyamuni Buddha became a Buddha he went first to the Deer Wilds Park to take across the five bhikshus? It is because those five bhikshus were his relatives in that present life and had been his relatives in lives past. They can teach them, causing those of the small vehicle, that is, their relatives who have fallen into studying the small vehicle dharmas, not to be frightened when they hear the Secret Treasury. When they hear the treasury of secrets told by the Buddha, the great vehicle dharma they are not afraid.
 **Sutra:

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions recite this mantra-heart, they realize unsurpassed enlightenment while sitting beneath the Bodhi tree, and they enter parinirvana.

Commentary:**

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions recite this mantra-heart. How do the Thus Come Ones in the ten directions become Buddhas? It is also because they recite this mantra-heart. "Recite" means to repeat from memory without looking at the book. They realize unsurpassed enlightenment while sitting beneath the Bodhi tree, and become Buddhas because they recite this mantra. And they enter parinirvana.
 **Sutra:

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions transmit this mantra-heart, those to whom they have bequeathed the Buddhadharma can, after their nirvana, dwell in it completely and uphold it. Being strict and pure about the precepts and rules, they can all obtain purity.

Commentary:**

Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions, transmit this mantra-heart, those to whom they have bequeathed the Buddhadharma can, after their nirvana, dwell in it completely and uphold it. After the Buddhas go to nirvana, people who inherit the dharma from them know how to cultivate and to receive and uphold the Buddhadharma. Being strict and pure about the precepts and rules, they can all obtain purity. It is because of the power of the mantra that they obtain purity and perfection.

L3 Further explanations are endless.
 **Sutra:

If I were to explain this mantra, Bwo Da La, of the cluster of light atop the crown of the Buddha's head from morning till night in an unceasing sound, without ever repeating any syllable or phrase, I could go on for as many kalpas as there are sands in the Ganges and still never finish.

Commentary:**

If I were to explain this mantra, Bwo Da La, of the cluster of light atop the crown of the Buddha's head from morning till night in an unceasing sound, without ever repeating any syllable or phrase. The "mantra Bwo Da La" refers to the Shurangama Mantra, the "durable mantra," the mantra of the great white canopy. I could go on for as many kalpas as there are sands in the Ganges and still never finish. I would never come to the end of my explanation of the Shurangama Mantra-heart's merits and virtues and wonderful functions.

K2 A beneficial reliance for living beings.
L1 Specific explanation of the supreme name.
 **Sutra:

I also will tell you that this mantra is called "The Crown of the Thus Come One."

Commentary:**

I also will tell you that this mantra is called "The Crown of the Thus Come One." That's another name for it.

L2 A thorough discussion of its awesome power.
M1 He first explains that by diligently holding it, cultivators can rely on it.
N1 He explains that recitation of it will keep demons away.
 **Sutra:

All of you with something left to study who have not yet put an end to the cycle of rebirth and yet have brought forth sincere resolve to become arhats, will find it impossible to sit in a Bodhimanda and be far removed in body and mind from all demonic deeds if you do not hold this mantra.

Commentary:**

All of you with something left to study who have not yet put an end to the cycle of rebirth are still caught in the turning wheel of the six paths. And yet you have brought forth sincere resolve to become arhats. You would like to attain the fruition of arhatship. But you will find it impossible to sit in a Bodhimanda and be far removed in body and mind from all demonic deeds if you do not hold this mantra. If you want to become an arhat and yet do not hold this mantra, or if you want to sit in a Bodhimanda and become a Buddha, and yet have part in demonic activities, either physically or mentally, you are attempting the impossible. In other words, you must recite this mantra to be free of demonic doings. If you don't hold this mantra, you cannot sit in the Bodhimanda, nor can you stay away from the deeds of demons.

N2 Writing it out and carrying it is of benefit.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, let any living being of any country in any world copy out this mantra in writing on materials native to his region, such as birch bark, pattra, plain paper, or white cotton cloth, and store it in a pouch containing incense. If that person wears the pouch on his body, or if he keeps a copy in his home, then you should know that even if he understands so little that he cannot recite it from memory, he will not be harmed by any poison during his entire life.

Commentary:**
The functions of the mantra are discussed here. Ananda, let any living being of any country in any world, this means that in this world or another world or in any one of limitless worlds, a person may copy out this mantra in writing on materials native to his region. The person could be American, English, French, German, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Thai, Burmese, Ceylonese, or a citizen of any other country at all. Perhaps he writes on birch bark or on pattra, which are palm leaves, on plain paper, or white cotton cloth. Whether he writes it out on paper or cloth or some other material that can be written on does'nt matter. And he can copy it carefully and respectfully, or write it out casually in longhand. Let him store it in a pouch containing incense. If that person wears the pouch on his body, or if he keeps a copy in his home, then you should know that even if he understands so little that he cannot recite it from memory, he will not be harmed by any poison during his entire life. If the person doesn't have a good memory or if he is muddle-headed and can't recite the mantra well, he can write the mantra out and wear it in a little bag, or he can write it out and hang it on the wall of his house. If someone does that, he will go through his entire life without being poisoned. There are strong and weak poisons, but no matter what kind it is, it cannot harm him.

M2 A detailed account of the ways in which it protects life and aids people on the path.
N1 General mention of these two aspects.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, I will now tell you more about how this mantra can rescue and protect the world, help people obtain great fearlessness, and bring to accomplishment living beings' transcendental wisdom.

Commentary:**

Ananda, I will now tell you more about how this mantra, the Shurangama Mantra, can rescue and protect the world, help people obtain great fearlessness, and bring to accomplishment living beings' transcendental wisdom. It can fulfill any wishes living beings might have, but most importantly, it can reveal their transcendental wisdom.

N2 Detailed listing of its many merits.
O1 Apparent benefit to each living being.
P1 Rescues from calamities.
Q1 Evil situations cannot bring harm.
 **Sutra:

You should know that, after my extinction, if there are beings in the Dharma-ending Age who can recite the mantra themselves or teach others to recite it, such people who recite and uphold it cannot be burned by fire, cannot be drowned by water, and cannot be harmed by mild or potent poisons.

Commentary:**
You should know that, after my extinction, if there are beings in the Dharma-ending Age, this includes you and me, who can recite the mantra themselves or teach others to recite it, such people who recite and uphold it cannot be burned by fire. Perhaps one can recite the mantra from memory or teach others to recite it from memory. People who can recite the mantra from memory or can read it will not be burned by fire, and they cannot be drowned by water, nor can they be harmed by mild or potent poisons.

Q2 Evil beings cannot break through its added protection to cause harm.
 **Sutra:

And so it is in every other case, such that they cannot be possessed by any evil mantra or any heavenly dragon, ghost, or spirit, or by any essence, weird creature, or demonic ghost. These people's minds will attain proper reception, so that any spell, any paralyzing sorcery, any poison or poisoning gold, any poisoning silver, any plant, tree, insect, or snake, and any of a myriad kinds of poisonous vapors will turn into sweet dew when it enters their mouths.

Commentary:**

And so it is in every other case, such that they cannot be possessed by any evil mantra or any heavenly dragon, ghost, or spirit, or by any essence, weird creature, or demonic ghost. All these kinds of ghosts and demons use evil spells. The five phrases of the mantra I told you about recently,

Chr Two Ni
E Jya La
Mi Li Ju
Bwo Li Dan La Ye
Ning Jye Li

represent the five directions, the five divisions, and the five Buddhas. They are known as the "Five Great Heart Mantras." You should not regard them as ordinary. Together they comprise the Heart-mantra of the Buddhas of the five directions. The function of this Heart-mantra is to destroy the mantras and spells of demons. It doesn't matter what kind of evil spell they are weaving; you can smash through it with this mantra. Their mantras lose all their effectiveness.

They are rendered useless. These evil mantras cannot possess you, because the "Five Great Heart Mantras" destroy them. These people's minds will attain proper reception. If you recite the Shurangama Mantra, you can obtain proper concentration, so that any spell, any devious mantra of the heavenly demons or of adherents of externalist ways, cannot harm you. Any paralyzing sorcery. There is a lot of sorcery in southern China, also in Southeast Asia, such as Burma, Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and such places. The kind of sorcery they use, called ku is also based on mantras and spells. If you eat something poisoned by them, you are forever under their spell; you must do as they command. If you don't, you die. In Australia, in the mountain regions, there is a religious sect that uses mantras to shrink people's heads to the size of chicken eggs. And then they put them on display as sorcerer's charms.

In a world as large as this, there's every kind of weird thing imaginable. You shouldn't have the attitude that if you haven't seen it, you don't believe it exists. If you don't believe it, you're just plain stupid. Why do I say that? There are lots of things you've never seen, and if you go on with the idea that you must see them before you believe them, you'll never finish in your entire life. Before America was discovered, before anyone knew it existed, if you had approached someone and tried to convince him that there was, in fact, another continent with mountains and all the rest, he very likely would not have believed you. But, though he may have denied the existence of America, would that have meant that America did not, in fact, exist? Was it there before it was discovered? Whether or not he admitted its existence, it still existed. By the same token, whether or not you believe that the strange things being discussed here exist, they exist nonetheless. So if you deny the existence of a thing just because you haven't seen it yourself, you basically don't have a grasp of the way the world really is.

If someone sinks some ku in you, if they apply their sorcery to you, you are forever their slave. If you oppose them, you die. In addition to ku poison, if any poison or poisoning gold, any poisoning silver, any plant, tree, insect, or snake, or any of a myriad kinds of poisonous vapors enter the mouth of people who recite the Shurangama Mantra, it will turn into sweet dew. "Suppose I test this," you suggest. "Suppose I experiment." You still haven't perfected your recitation of the Shurangama Mantra. When you've got it down to the point that it's efficacious and magical, then you can experiment. Before you reach that stage, don't play around with it.
 **Sutra:

No evil stars, and no ghost or spirit that harbors malice in its heart and that poisons people can work its evil on these people. Vinayaka as well as all the evil ghost kings and their retinues will be led by deep kindness to always guard and protect them.

Commentary:**

The previous section of text said that any kind of poisonous thing that enters the mouth of a person who recites and upholds the Shurangama Mantra will turn into sweet dew. These things are basically poisonous, but their composition changes. And the change comes about because one recites and upholds the Shurangama Mantra. No evil star refers to evil constellations and such things as Tai Sui and the White-tiger Star, which is terrible. And there is the star Sang Men, which is extremely inauspicious and can kill people. But none of these kinds of stars can harm one, nor can any ghost or spirit that harbors malice in its heart and poisons people. Some people say they don't believe in ghosts or spirits. They have never seen a ghost, and so they don't believe there are any. If they saw one, they'd have no way not to believe in it, even if they didn't want to. "Malice" is also a kind of poison, like arsenic. That drug is fatal if more than a little is taken. But someone with even that much poison in his heart still cannot harm a person who recites and upholds the Shurangama Mantra. He cannot work his evil on these people. Rather, the poison in their own hearts is transformed.

Vinayaka was mentioned in the description of setting up the Bodhimanda. He is a protector with the various transformations which often show a boar or an elephant head with a trunk on a human body. In general he is extremely ugly. He as well as the evil ghost kings and their retinues will be led by deep kindness to always guard and protect them. Having been influenced by the profound compassion of the Buddha in the past, these ghost kings and dharma protectors have resolved to always guard and protect those who recite and uphold the Shurangama Mantra. The advantages of reciting the Shurangama Mantra are truly inconceivable.

P2 Aids in accomplishing way karma.
Q1 The value of its recitation.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, you should know that eighty-four thousand nayutas of Ganges' sands of kotis of Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas and their descendants, each with vajra multitudes as retinue, are ever in attendance, day and night, upon this mantra.

Commentary:**

"Nayuta" is one of the fourteen large numbers in Sanskrit. Some say it represents one trillion; others say ten trillion. In general, it's a big number. "Ganges' sands of kotis" is said to be equivalent to a trillion. Not only are the Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas in attendance on the mantra, those of their lineage are also present. And each member of the entire lineage is accompanied by a retinue of Vajra beings. Day and night, they are always present wherever the Shurangama Mantra is being upheld.

These Bodhisattvas are the ones praised in the section above:

Namo Buddhas of the ten directions,
Namo Dharma of the ten directions,
Namo Sangha of the ten directions,
Namo Shakyamuni Buddha,
Namo Foremost Shurangama atop the Buddha's summit,
Namo Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva,
Namo Vajra Treasury Bodhisattvas.

The eighty-four thousand are referred to in the last line. But actually, it's not only the Vajra Treasury Bodhisattvas who are so numerous. The retinues of all Bodhisattvas are that numerous.
 **Sutra:

If living beings whose minds are scattered and who have no samadhi remember and recite the mantra, the Vajra Kings will always surround them. Therefore, good men, that is even more true for those who are decisively resolved upon Bodhi. All the Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas will regard them attentively and secretly hasten the opening of their spiritual consciousness.

Commentary:**

If living beings whose minds are scattered, their thoughts go every which way and are not the least bit concentrated. They also have no samadhi power, but they remember and recite the mantra. They remember the Shurangama Mantra spoken by the Buddha. The Vajra Kings, the Bodhisattvas, will always surround them, that is, those with scattered minds, if they uphold the Shurangama Mantra. Therefore, good men, that is even more true for those who are decisively resolved upon Bodhi. You people who have firmly brought forth the Bodhi mind will also be protected by these Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas, who will regard you attentively and secretly hasten the opening of your spiritual consciousness. With close regard for you, they will help you in hidden ways. What will they do? They will help you increase your wisdom, your spiritual consciousness. Little by little they will help those who have scattered minds to become concentrated. Gradually they will obtain samadhi-power. Invisibly they will help those who hold the mantra to open their wisdom and become single-minded.
 **Sutra:

When that response occurs, those people will be able to remember the events of as many kalpas as there are grains of sand in eighty-four thousand Ganges Rivers, knowing them all beyond any doubt.

Commentary:**
When the Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas invisibly open their spiritual awareness, when that response occurs, those people will be able to remember the events of as many kalpas as there are grains of sand in eighty-four thousand Ganges Rivers, knowing them all beyond any doubt. They know very clearly about everything that took place throughout such a long period of time. They have wisdom that has gone beyond doubt. This means they obtain the penetration of past lives. They know the things that happened in the past.

Q2 Separation from various destinies.
 **Sutra:

From that kalpa onward, through every life until the time they take their last body, they will not be born where there are yakshas, rakshasas, putanas, kataputanas, kumbhandas, pishachas and so forth; where there is any kind of hungry ghost, whether with form or lacking form, or with thought or lacking thought, or in any such evil place.

Commentary:**

From that kalpa onward, through every life until the time they take their last body, that is, when they become a Buddha, they will not be born where there are yakshas. They will be born and die again and again, but they will not be born in bad paths, such as that of the yakshas, "speedy ghosts". Nor will they get born where there are rakshashas, "terrifying ghosts" that eat people.

When a person dies, this kind of ghost uses a mantra to change the flesh of the decaying corpse back into fresh meat and eats it. Nor will they have to be around putanas, "bad-smelling ghosts", which are both evil and foul-smelling. If you encounter such a ghost, you will contract a fever. "Putanas" are also known as "bhutanas." Nor will such people be born where there are kataputanas, "strangesmelling ghosts." The other one smelled bad, but this one smells weird, an odor you've never smelled before, one that is incredibly strong. That's what's referred to by the phrase: "It smelled so strange one could not bear to breathe." If you get a whiff of this odor, it will make you vomit on the spot. It connects with the badsmelling stuff inside you, so that you have to regurgitate. You spit your insides out. It's that strong. This ghost causes fevers to an even greater degree of intensity. Your entire body burns with fevers up to l20 degrees and more; it simply burns your bones to ashes. Violent, wouldn't you say?

They won't be born where there are kumbhandas. Actually, all these ghosts have been mentioned before. The kumbhandas are "barrel-shaped ghosts." These ghosts paralyze people. They come on you in your sleep and paralyze you. You open your eyes to find that you can't move. Nor can you speak. At its fiercest, it can kill people with the paralysis. If a person has yang energy, then the paralysis won't hold. It only is effective on those who have excessive yin energy. What is meant by yang? It means always being happy, truly happy in your self-nature, that is, not just laughing it up on the surface of things, "ha, ha, ha." It refers to the extreme bliss experienced in your inherent nature. If in your selfnature you are always worried and depressed, being afflicted, upset, and distressed all day long, that belongs to yin. Those belonging to yin are the ones that ghosts can possess. Yang belongs to the spirit. Predominance of yang is a spirit; predominance of yin is a ghost. People who cultivate the Buddha Path and have pure yang energy, also have light. But if one is totally yin, there is a black energy present. So, it can be told if a person is good or not just by looking at him or her. Good people have white energy around them; bad people have a mass of black energy, demonic energy. They also will not be born where there are pishachas and so forth. Pishachas are "essence and energy-eating" ghosts. These ghosts sap the energy from things as well as from people. This kind of ghost is terrible and not at all good. For the most part, ghosts are bad, but among the path of ghosts are also Bodhisattvas who compassionately and deliberately manifest as ghost-kings in order to take ghosts across.

Nor will they be born where there is any kind of hungry ghost. There are many types of hungry ghosts. Some have huge stomachs. Some have throats as skinny as needles. Whether with form or lacking form. Some have bodies, and some are invisible, they have no physical form. But, just because you can't see something, don't assume it isn't there. Invisible creatures may lack form, but they have consciousness. You cannot see them with the ordinary eyes but if you have the five eyes and six spiritual penetrations, it is easy to see them. With thought or lacking thought. Some have the capability of thought, while others have no thought; they are like dirt, wood, metal, and stone. But a person who upholds the Shurangama Mantra will not be born in any such evil place. Life after life, they will not be born in places where there are hungry ghosts or where there are any other kinds of evil.

Q3 Always born where there are Buddhas.
 **Sutra:

If these good people read, recite, copy, or write out the mantra, if they carry it or treasure it, if they make offerings to it, then through kalpa after kalpa they will not be poor or lowly, nor will they be born in unpleasant places.

Commentary:**
If these good people read the mantra from a book, or recite it from memory; if they copy it out respectfully, or casually write it out; if they carry it on their person, or treasure it, store it in their homes; if they make offerings to it of all kinds of incense and flowers, lamps, candles, and fruit, the Shurangama Mantra was spoken by a transformation body of the Buddha, so it is worthy of offerings, then through kalpa after kalpa they will not be poor or lowly, nor will they be born in unpleasant places. I've told you that if you can memorize the Shurangama Mantra to the point that it flows forth from your mind and heart, then you have obtained the samadhi of holding the mantra. Once you obtain that, if you can recite it like flowing water which never ceases, then at the very, very least, you can be fabulously wealthy for seven lives. If you continue reciting it in this way for life after life, you can be wealthy for seventy or seven hundred or seven thousand or seven million lives; there's nothing fixed about it. As long as you want to be a wealthy person, you can be one. But some day you may have had your fill, because even billionaires have their problems. You may get disgusted. Then you can become a Buddha. Once you become a Buddha, there are no more problems. At that point,

In a state of unmoving suchness,
You are ever bright and clear.

So, I'll give you a tip ahead of time. Being a billionaire is not as good as becoming a Buddha. People who uphold and venerate the mantra in these various ways will not be born in places that are worrisome and devoid of bliss. You could not go to those places even if you wanted to. Why? The Shurangama Mantra is pulling at you, telling you not to go. It will be impossible for you to go.

**Sutra:

If these living beings have never accumulated any blessings, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions will bestow their own merit and virtue upon these people.

Commentary:**
If these living beings who recite and uphold the Shurangama Mantra, have never accumulated any blessings, they've never done any good deeds or earned any blessings, then the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions will bestow their own merit and virtue upon these people. Why do they do that? Because these people recite the Shurangama Mantra, or read it, copy it, or write it out. They have no blessings, but the Buddhas of the ten directions give them blessings. A real bargain, wouldn't you say? All one must do is recite the Shurangama Mantra.
 **Sutra:

Because of that, throughout asamkhyeyas of ineffable, unspeakable numbers of kalpas, as many as the Ganges' sands, they are always together with the Buddhas. They are born in the same place, due to their limitless merit and virtue, and, like the amala fruit-cluster, they stay in the same place, become permeated with cultivation, and are never parted.

Commentary:**
Because of that, throughout asamkhyeyas of ineffable, unspeakable numbers of kalpas, as many as the Ganges' sands, they are always together with the Buddhas. "The Ganges' sands" indicates a large number. "Asamkhyeya" is also a large number; it means "limitless number" in Sanskrit. This refers to kalpas greater in number than could ever be expressed. They are born in the same place, due to their limitless merit and virtue, and, like the amala fruit-cluster, they stay in the same place, become permeated with cultivation, and are never parted. "Born in the same place" refers not so much to having the same birthplace, as to being born in the same generation. That is, they are always born at a time when there is a Buddha in the world. We are born at a time when there is no Buddha in the world. This is one of the eight difficulties: the difficulty of being born before or after the time of a Buddha. Those who are born when a Buddha is in the world are endowed with limitless merit and virtue. The amala fruit-cluster has three fruits on one stem. The fruits themselves are as if three and yet as if one. They cannot be separated one from the other. So, too, these people reside where the Buddha is and become infused with cultivation. They never have to be apart from the Buddha.

Q4 Various practices are accomplished.
 **Sutra:

Therefore, it can enable those who have broken the precepts to regain the purity of the precept-source. It can enable those who have not received the precepts to receive them. It can cause those who are not vigorous to become vigorous. It can enable those who lack wisdom to gain wisdom. It can cause those who are not pure to quickly become pure. It can cause those who do not hold to vegetarianism to become vegetarians naturally.

Commentary:**
Therefore, it can enable those who have broken the precepts to regain the purity of the precept-source. Even those who have broken the precepts can regain the precepts if they genuinely recite and uphold the Shurangama Mantra every day. Basically, someone who has violated the precepts cannot be saved, but if that person recites the Shurangama Mantra, it's possible for them to regain the purity of the precepts. Reciting doesn't just mean a casual recitation; you have to obtain the samadhi of holding mantras, as I just described. Then the mantra wells up from your heart and returns to your heart. That's what's meant by,

The Mantra-heart,
The Heart of the Mantra.
The Heart of the Mantra,
The Mantra-heart.

The mantra and your heart become one. There is no distinction between them. You cannot forget it; it recites itself. You are not reciting it, but it is being recited; you are reciting it, but it is as if you were not. Even if you don't want to recite it, it goes on being recited. Right now we recite the mantra before the sutra lecture, but that's just a way of preparing the ground for you. It's just pointing out the way for all of you. It's certainly not that it's only appropriate to recite the mantra at lecture time. You can recite it anywhere at any time. To know it by heart and to recite to the point that all other false thoughts and scattered thoughts are wiped away, and all that remains is your mind's recitation of the Shurangama Mantra: that's what is called concentration. The recitation comes together and there are no other thoughts. It's like flowing water that goes on and on, coming from afar and rolling by in wave after wave. It's like the blowing wind which comes up invisibly but makes its presence known.

The water flows, the wind blows
Proclaiming the Mahayana.

The sounds of the water and wind speak the great vehicle dharma; they are all the heart of the Shurangama Mantra.

When recitation reaches that state, it can enable those who have broken the precepts to regain the purity of the precept source. It can cause those who have not received the precepts to obtain them. It can cause those who are not vigorous to become vigorous. People who aren't inclined to progress, who don't investigate the Buddhadharma, can spontaneously give rise to vigor from reciting the Shurangama Mantra over a long period of time. It can enable those who lack wisdom to gain wisdom. Just look at this: it can enable stupid people to open their wisdom. It can caus those who are not pure to quickly become pure.

If you cultivate and yet are not pure; if you violate the precepts, break the practice of pure eating, and get muddled and unclear for a long time; still, if you don't forget the Shurangama Mantra, you can quickly gain purity. Once you want to change, you can very quickly return to purity. For instance, I know there are those among you here who would like to study the Buddhadharma, but whose bodies and minds are not pure. But it doesn't matter if you lack purity; it's just to be feared you won't study. Because if you study, the day will come when you'll suddenly become pure. You will soon understand. But if you don't study, and you say, "I don't want to become pure; I don't want to be vigorous. I like being lazy. I'd rather not know anything" then with that attitude there's nothing that can be done for you. It can cause those who do not hold to vegetarianism to become vegetarians naturally. If you recite the Shurangama Mantra until it comes together in a concentrated recitation, then the wind can't blow through and the rain can't penetrate. Then, even if you don't hold to vegetarianism, you will automatically do so. Why? Because you won't have any false thoughts, you won't have any greed or desires. You won't be thinking about wanting to eat meat or fish or delicious foods. It won't enter your mind.

Q5 All offenses are eradicated.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, if good men who uphold this mantra violated the pure precepts before they received the mantra, their multitude of offenses incurred by violating the precepts, whether major or minor, can simultaneously be eradicated after they begin to uphold the mantra.

Commentary:**

This passage gives a clearer explanation. Ananda, if good men who uphold this mantra violated the pure precepts before they received the mantra, if they uphold the mantra now, but violated the pure precepts in the past, breaking them before they received them, their multitude of offenses incurred by violating the precepts, whether major or minor, can simultaneously be eradicated after they begin to uphold the mantra. All their offenses of breaking the practice of pure eating and of violating the precepts can be eradicated, even the four parajika offenses: "parajika" means "cause for dismissal" meaning that they cannot be repented of. But if you recite the Shurangama Mantra, then all the offenses you have committed, no matter how serious, will be made clean; it is like pouring boiling water over snow.
 **Sutra:

Even if they drank intoxicants or ate the five pungent plants and various other impure things in the past, the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Vajras, gods, immortals, ghosts, and spirits will not hold it against them.

Commentary:**
The "five pungent plants" are leeks, garlic, shallots, scallions, and onions. These are the ones common to our area. Asafoetida, common in India and often found in curries is another pungent plant included in this list. Since these hot, pungent plants have unpleasant odors, they are prohibited in Buddhism for people who hold to pure eating practices. These are unclean kinds of things to eat and cause desire and anger. But, even if they, the holders of the mantra, drank intoxicants or ate the five pungent plants and various other impure things in the past, the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Vajras, gods, immortals, ghosts, and spirits will not hold it against them. If you can constantly recite and uphold the Shurangama Mantra, the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and dharma protectors will not blame you for your former impure habits. "If they won't hold it against me, then I can use these things as I please," you may reason. It's still best not to use them.
 **Sutra:

If they are unclean and wear tattered, old clothes to carry out the single practice and single dwelling, they can be equally pure. Even if they do not set up the platform, do not enter the Bodhimanda, and do not practice the Way, but recite and uphold this mantra, their merit and virtue will be identical with that derived from entering the platform and practicing the Way.

Commentary:**

If they are unclean and wear tattered, old clothes to carry out the single practice and single dwelling, above, when the platform was described, the Buddha said that one should put on new clothes, but here he says one doesn't necessarily have to wear new clothes. If you don't have new clothes, old ones will do. When you go through the three weeks of practice, you can become pure just the same. Because of the power of the mantra, it makes no difference if the clothes you wear are new or old. The purity obtained is the same. You may wonder why he said to wear new clothes in the first place. We wear new clothes to signify our respect, out of utmost reverence and absolute purity. Even if they do not set up the platform, do not enter the Bodhimanda, you don't necessarily have to be inside the Bodhimanda. Any place at any time is a place of practice. If they do not practice the Way, even if they don't cultivate, but recite and uphold this mantra, that's all they are able to do in the way of practice, their merit and virtue will be identical with that derived from entering the platform and practicing the Way. If you can recite the Shurangama Mantra, your merit and virtue are no different from one who can set up the platform and enter the Bodhimanda to practice the Way. There is no distinction. Truly, the virtue of the Shurangama Mantra is inconceivable!
 **Sutra:

If they have committed the five rebellious acts, grave offenses warranting unintermittent retribution, or if they are bhikshus or bhikshunis who have violated the four parajikas or the eight parajikas, such heavy karma as this will disperse after they recite this mantra, like a sand dune that is scattered in a gale, so that not a particle remains.

Commentary:**

If they have committed the five rebellious acts, grave offenses warranting unintermittent retribution, the five rebellious acts are the most serious offenses in all of Buddhism.

They are:

1. killing one's mother;
2. killing one's father;
3. killing an Arhat;
4. causing schisms in the harmonious Sangha;
5. shedding the Buddha's blood.

If you deliberately injure the Buddha's body with a knife or some such weapon, or if in some other way you draw blood on the Buddha's body, you have committed this offense.

"I've never even encountered a Buddha. The Buddha left the world, so I have no chance of committing this offense," you say. Not so, because to deface a Buddha image or break it is also called shedding the Buddha's blood. Even prints and paintings of Buddhas are included in this. To destroy images of the Buddha when he is not in the world is also included in this offense.

"Uninterrupted retribution" refers to the consequence of these offenses. Committing the ten evils brings a bad retribution, but committing the five rebellious acts results in a more severe punishment. If you commit the five rebellious acts, you will certainly fall into the Relentless Hell. This hell has been described before. It's full, whether there is one person in it or many people in it. Therefore, it is also called "unspaced," since there is no space in it. It's called unintermittent because the suffering never slacks off even for a second nor does it ever end. It goes on interminably. If they are bhikshus or bhikshunis who have violated the four parajikas or the eight parajikas. "Bhikshu" has three meanings:

1. mendicant;
2. frightener of Mara;
3. destroyer of evil.

A "bhikshuni" is a female member of the Sangha. The four
parajikas are:

1. sexual misconduct;
2. killing;
3. stealing;
4. making false claims.

These are the four fundamental precepts: "parajikas" in Sanskrit, "causes for dismissal" in English. If you commit any of these four, then you are dismissed from the Sangha of Buddhism. You are cast out of the great sea of the Buddhadharma. And you cannot re-enter. The four parajikas are for bhikshus. Bhikshunis have eight parajikas. They include the four for the bhikshus, plus:

5. touching;
6. the eight things;
7. covering;
8. not following.

The parajika offense of "touching" is described in the vinaya as "making contact with a woman while harboring thoughts of sexual desire." So whether it be a man, a woman, a bhikshu, or a bhikshuni, or a layperson, physical contact between people when there are thoughts of sexual desire is a violation. If one does not have thoughts of sexual desire, there is no violation of the precepts.

The parajika of "the eight things." A bhikshuni must always be in an open public place when she converses. She cannot go to a concealed place to talk or in a room where she would be alone with a man. In general, a man and woman alone cannot be alone together, be they bhikshuni or bhikshu. For a bhikshu this is a lighter offense; for a bhikshuni it is a heavy one. It is forbidden that a bhikshuni talk alone with a man.

"Covering" means concealing another's offenses. You hide someone else's grave offenses and are not frank and open about them. You don't tell anyone. That's also a parajika offense for bhikshunis.

"Not following" refers to the recitation of precepts which takes place twice a month on the first and fifteenth of the lunar calendar. When bhikshus are present in a place where bhikshunis are, the bhikshunis must follow along with the recitation of the precepts by the bhikshus. They cannot recite the precepts themselves and take personal offerings. If they don't accord with this method, they violate this precept of not following. These are the eight parajikas for bhikshunis.

But even for people who have committed such serious violations, such heavy karma as this will disperse after they recite this mantra like a sand dune that is scattered in a gale, so that not a particle remains. Even the five rebellious acts and the four and eight parajikas can be blown away by the recitation of the mantra, just as a strong wind blows away a sand dune so that it totally disappears. Not a hair's breadth of offense remains. This again shows the inconceivable power of the Shurangama Mantra.

Q6 Quick certification to non-production.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, if living beings who have never repented and reformed any of the obstructive offenses, either heavy or light, that they have committed throughout countless kalpas past, up to and including those of this very life, can nevertheless read, recite, copy, or write out this mantra or wear it on their bodies or place it in their homes or in their garden houses, then all that accumulated karma will melt away like snow in hot water. Before long they will obtain awakening to patience with the non-production of dharmas.

Commentary:**
Ananda, if living beings who have never repented and reformed any of the obstructive offenses, either heavy or light, that they have committed throughout countless kalpas past, up to and including those of this very life. They have never had an opportunity to repent of them and reform. "Repent" means to be sorry about one's former offenses. "Reform" means to change so one does not commit the errors again. They can nevertheless read the Shurangama Mantra, or recite it, copy it out, or write it out. Reciting of the mantra must be done over a long term. The Buddha isn't talking about reciting it once or twice. He means over and over for a very long time. Or they wear it on their bodies. When you carry the mantra on your body, you want to wear it above your heart, not below. To wear it above your heart represents respect; if you carry it on the lower part of your body, you are not showing proper respect for the mantra. Not only is there no merit in that, you are actually committing offenses. If you are not respectful to the mantra itself, then the efficacy of the mantra is depleted with regard to you. Or they place it in their homes or in their garden houses.

Then all that accumulated karma from the offenses committed in life after life, as mentioned above, will melt away like snow in hot water. The offenses will disappear just that quickly. Before long they will attain awakening to patience with the non-production of dharmas.

P3 Answers all kinds of wishes.
 **Sutra:

Moreover, Ananda, if women who do not have children and want to conceive can sincerely memorize and recite this mantra or carry the mantra, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, on their bodies, they can give birth to sons or daughters endowed with blessings, virtue, and wisdom.

Commentary:**

"Moreover, Ananda," the Buddha continues, "if women who do not have children and want to conceive", suppose there are women who would like to be mothers. They would like to get pregnant. If they can sincerely memorize and recite this mantra or carry the mantra, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, on their bodies, they can give birth to sons or daughters endowed with blessings, virtue, and wisdom. "Sincerely" means singlemindedly; it means to reach the ultimate point of sincere regard. Perhaps they can remember it or use the book to recite the Shurangama Mantra. Or perhaps they request a high master endowed with virtue in the Way to copy out for them the heart of the mantra, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, and they carry that on their bodies. This phrase of the mantra means a great white canopy, whether you wear the syllables on your person or are mindful of them in your mind, a great, white canopy spreads out in the air above you and protects you. It can fulfill all your wishes. If these women do these things, their wishes can be fulfilled, and quite soon in response to their sincerity they will have children with blessings, virtue, and wisdom. If they want sons, they will get sons; if they want daughters, they will get daughters.
 **Sutra:

Those who seek long life will obtain long life. Those who seek to quickly perfect their reward will quickly gain perfection. The same is true for those who seek something regarding their bodies, their lives, their appearance, or their strength.

Commentary:**
Those who recite the Shurangama Mantra and seek long life will obtain long life. They will get that reward. Those who seek to quickly perfect their reward, whatever good reward it might be they want, will quickly gain perfection. For instance, if a woman hopes to have a good husband in the future, that's a kind of good reward. And she can attain it. The same applies to men. The meaning is that whatever you seek you can have. It's said,

Those who seek wealth and honor, get wealth and honor.
Those who seek long life, obtain long life.
Those who seek sons, get sons;
Those who seek daughters, get daughters.

No matter what it is, you can have your wishes fulfilled and have everything be as you would like it. The same is true for those who seek something regarding their bodies, their lives, their appearances, or their strength. Whatever they seek on behalf of these things, they will obtain it, in the same way one seeks and obtains long life, and the like.
 **Sutra:

At the end of their lives, they will gain the rebirth they hope for in whichever of the countries of the ten directions they wish. They certainly will not be born in poorly endowed places, or as inferior people; even less will they be reborn in some odd form.

Commentary:**
At the end of their lives, they will gain the rebirth they hope for in whichever of the countries of the ten directions they wish. If you want to be reborn in the East, and come before Akshobhya Buddha, or in the West and meet Amitabha Buddha, or in the North, or in the South, it's up to you, you can be reborn in the country of whichever Buddha you would like to draw near to. They certainly will not be born in poorly endowed places, or as inferior people. "Poorly endowed" refers to places where the land is not rich and the people are not educated. If one can recite the Shurangama Mantra, one will not be born in such places; even less will they be reborn in some odd form. As a person, you will not have an inferior rebirth; even less will you be reborn as an animal.

O2 Apparent universal benefit to the land.
P1 All difficulties disappear.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, if there is famine or plague in a country, province, or village, or if perhaps there are armed troops, brigands, invasions, war, or any other kind of local threat or danger, one can write out this spiritual mantra and place it on the four city gates, or on a chaitya or on a dhvaja, and instruct all the people of the country to gaze upon the mantra, to make obeisance to it, to revere it, and to single-mindedly make offerings to it; one can instruct all the citizens to wear it on their bodies or to place it in their homes; and then all such disasters and calamities will completely disappear.

Commentary:**

Ananda, if there is famine or plague in a country, province, or village, this means any country at all, whether as large as an entire continent, or as small as a local area or village. In time of famine, there may have been drought, so that nothing will grow, or at the other extreme there may have been a torrential rain which drowns the crops. When a plague strikes, a violent contagious disease spreads among the population and is fatal if contracted. Or if perhaps there are armed troops, brigands, invasions, war, or any other kind of local threat or danger, in any of these places where there are such difficulties, one can write out this spiritual mantra and place it on the four city gates, or on a chaitya. They can place it on the archway above the gates. "Chaitya" is a Sanskrit word for pagoda, a place which houses the relics of a Buddha or Sage. Or, they can place it on a dhvaja. "Dhvaja" is a Sanskrit word for "banner." Perhaps the mantra is written on a flag and flown high above the city from a watchtower or flagpole.

And one instructs all the people of the country to gaze upon the mantra, to make obeisance to it, to revere it, and to single-mindedly make offerings to it. One can instruct all the citizens of the country to wear it on their bodies or to place it in their homes. People can carry the mantra on their person or put a copy of it in the places where they live, and then all such disasters and calamities will completely disappear. All these misfortunes and evil events will be done away with. The merit and virtue of the Shurangama Mantra is inconceivable. You can't imagine it or think about it; that's where the wonder of it lies.

Some people think that cultivation can consist of nothing but meditation, and so they don't study the sutras. But that is a mistake. Others may think merely reciting mantras and studying the sutras will work and that they don't need to meditate. That's also not the right way. Some may hear how efficacious and powerful mantras are, so they merely recite mantras and do not cultivate in other ways. This is also behavior that is too extreme. In cultivation, no matter what dharma you cultivate, you must find the Middle Way. Don't get carried away. On the other hand, don't fail to go far enough. Too much is the same as not enough. True enough, mantras are efficacious, but you must also develop your samadhi power.

This sutra stresses that the mantra is efficacious, but the most essential point as far as cultivation is concerned is its teaching of the dharma door of turning the hearing back to hear the self-nature, the dharma door of the perfect penetration of the organ of the ear. So even when you recite mantras, you should be turning the hearing back to hear the self nature. You should return the light and illumine within.

When you recite the mantra, the mantra is one's mind and one's mind is the mantra. The two cannot be separated. The mind and the mantra are two and yet not two. Although they are two, they become one. If you can become like that, then whatever you want will be as you wish. You will certainly be able to accomplish what you set out to do. If the mantra and your mind unite as one, then you will obtain the samadhi of Chan. This is something that everyone should be aware of.

P2 The people experience plenty and happiness.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, in each and every country where the people accord with this mantra, the heavenly dragons are delighted, the winds and rains are seasonal, the crops are abundant, and the people are peaceful and happy.

Commentary:**
Ananda, in each and every country where the people accord with this mantra, the heavenly dragons are delighted. No matter what country it may be, if the Shurangama Mantra is there, the heavenly dragons are pleased, and the winds and rains are seasonal. There are no hurricanes or floods which bring harm and destruction. The crops are abundant. There are plentiful harvests of the five grains. The people are peaceful and happy.

P3 Evil omens do not manifest.
 **Sutra:

It can also suppress all evil stars which may appear in any of the directions and transform themselves in uncanny ways. Calamities and obstructions will not arise. People will not die accidentally or unexpectedly, nor will they be bound by fetters, cangues, or locks. Day and night they will be at peace, and no evil dreams will disturb their sleep.

Commentary:**

This passage tells how they will not have the difficulty of evil dreams, either. It also can suppress all evil stars. The mantra can control the influence of ill-omened stars. This is just like a person of genuine wisdom ruling a country in such a way that there are no rebels; all the bad people reform, and all matters are conducted with ease. When one person endowed with virtue in the Way is the leader, an entire country of people of lesser endowment will willingly follow. They will heed his wisdom. Here, the mantra is analogous to the virtuous leader. It can control all inauspicious events. The "evil stars" represent unlucky affairs. These bad stars may appear in any of the directions and transform themselves in uncanny ways. They can bring about terrible, cruel disasters. But calamities and obstructions will not arise. People will not die accidentally or unexpectedly. "Accidental" deaths are untimely, unlucky deaths such as fatal auto accidents, or airplane crashes, or drowning at sea, or deaths by burning. The passage refers to anything that causes people to die when they don't want to, when they aren't prepared. "Unexpected deaths" refers to the death of children. Any death before one is thirty years old is considered unexpected, because one has not lived out one's proper lifespan. Nor will they be bound by fetters, cangues, or locks. Day and night they will be at peace, and no evil dreams will disturb their sleep. No ghosts will come to bully you.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, this Saha world has eighty-four thousand changeable and disastrous evil stars. Twenty-eight great evil stars are the leaders, and of these, eight great evil stars are the rulers. They take various shapes, and when they appear in the world they bring disaster and weird happenings upon living beings.

Commentary:**

Ananda, this Saha world has eighty-four thousand changeable and disastrous evil stars. There are uncountably many evil stars connected with this world we live in. Twenty-eight great evil stars are the leaders. Although these twenty-eight are evil, they can also be good. In China, twenty-eight constellations which rule the four directions are spoken of, with seven constellations in each direction. In Chinese astrology, these constellations rule all divisions of time, even down to the days and hours. One cycle takes twenty-eight days, the typical lunar month. If a person is good, then the-evil stars change to good ones. If the people of a certain place are evil, however, then even the good stars can change to evil ones. So it's not that the stars are inherently evil or good; it's that they respond to the influence of karmic retribution and manifest in good or evil ways. Here they are referred to as evil to show that the Shurangama Mantra can dissolve all calamities and difficulties. Thus, the sutra takes the position at this point that all the stars are evil, that all are inauspicious. If the stars are inauspicious and you as a person don't have any great good roots or any virtuous conduct to your benefit, then of course the whole situation becomes even more inauspicious. But if you can recite the Shurangama Mantra, then even inauspicious events can change to auspicious ones.

The twenty-eight are:



And of these, eight great evil stars are the rulers:

l. "Wood Star," Jupiter
2. "Fire Star," Mars
3. "Earth Star," Saturn
4. "Metal Star," Venus
5. "Water Star," Mercury
6. Rahu (North Node)
7. Ketu (South Node)
8. Comets

Some celestial bodies are terrible and ugly; some are elegant and beautiful to behold. During the change of dynasties in China, a comet appeared in the world. Actually, what was the comet? It was a child wearing a red nightshirt. It went about teaching children to sing. When all the children started singing, the country would come to an end. So it was that whenever the government was about to change hands and a new emperor was about to appear, this evil star would appear in the world. "Weird happenings" refers to things not ordinarily seen. Suddenly some special circumstance arises that is totally out of the ordinary, and always inauspicious. "Happenings" means that things would change and be out of balance and not proper.
 **Sutra:

But they will all be eradicated wherever there is the mantra. The boundaries will be secured for twelve yojanas around, and no evil calamity or misfortune will ever enter in.

Commentary:**
But they will all be eradicated, all inauspicious events, calamities, and disasters, wherever there is the mantra, in every country where the Shurangama Mantra is known. The boundaries will be secured for twelve yojanas around. One secures the boundaries by reciting the mantra in a certain place. For instance, one recites the Shurangama Mantra while facing north, then east, then south, then west. In every direction that one faces while reciting, the boundaries are secured for a distance of twelve yojanas. A small yojana is forty Chinese miles (about thirteen English miles). "Twelve yojanas" here refers to great yojanas, or a total of ninety-six Chinese miles (thirty-two English miles). For that distance all around, the boundaries are secured. Within that range, the demons and weird creatures and ghosts are not permitted to cause accidents or catastrophes. They are not permitted to act up and make trouble. Beyond the thirty-six miles it is a different matter, but within them, no evil calamity or misfortune will ever enter in. Thus, wherever the Shurangama Mantra is found, everyone in the area benefits. In the area where the boundaries are secured, no catastrophe, calamity, accident, or misfortune will be found.

M3 He makes clear with a general exhortation that cultivators will certainly certify.
N1 They will be protected and peaceful.
 **Sutra:

Therefore, the Thus Come One proclaims this mantra as one which will protect those of the future who have just begun to study, as well as all cultivators, so that they can enter samadhi, be peaceful in body and mind, and attain great tranquility.

Commentary:**
Therefore, the Thus Come One, Shakyamuni Buddha, proclaims the Shurangama Mantra as the mantra which will protect those of the future. That refers to us in the present. He says that this mantra will protect those in the future who have just begun to study, as well as all cultivators so that they can enter samadhi. They will obtain samadhi-power, be peaceful in body and mind, and attain great tranquillity. They will be calm and free from troubles.

N2 They will be far apart from demons and enemies.
 **Sutra:

Even less will any demon, ghost, or spirit, or any enemy, calamity, or misfortune due from former lives that reach back to beginningless time, or any old karma or past debts come to vex and harm them.

Commentary:**

Even less will any demon, ghost, or spirit, or any enemy, calamity, or misfortune due from former lives that reach back to beginningless time come to bother one who holds this mantra. Misfortunes due from a former life refer to offenses one created for which one should undergo a retribution. This also is true for any old karma, that is, for deeds done in former lives, karmic obstacles one has created or past debts one owes. For instance, if one has killed a person, one should have to pay back with one's own life. If one eats another's flesh, one has to pay back with one's own flesh. All these debts have to be paid off. But if one can recite and uphold the Shurangama Mantra, these misfortunes due from old karma and past unpaid debts will not come to vex and harm one. Nothing can get at you.

N4 They must keep their minds on their recitation.
 **Sutra:

As to you and everyone in the assembly who is still studying, and as to cultivators of the future who rely on my platform, hold the precepts in accord with the dharma, receive the precepts from pure members of the Sangha, and hold this mantra-heart without giving rise to doubts: should such good people as these not obtain mind-penetration in that very body born of their parents, then the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions have lied!

Commentary:**

As to you, Ananda, and everyone in the assembly who is still studying, and as to cultivators of the future. That includes all of us of the present time. If all of these rely on my platform, if they establish platforms in accord with the method I have described, and hold the precepts in accord with the dharma; if they receive the precepts from pure members of the Sangha, they meet members of the Sangha who are pure and who have not violated the precepts; and if they hold this mantra-heart without giving rise to doubts, they do not have even the slightest doubt about the Shurangama Mantra: should such good people as these rely on my method to cultivate, establish the platform, and meet a pure bhikshu from whom they receive the complete precepts, if such are their causes and conditions; then if in that very body born of their parents, they do not obtain the mind-penetration, that is, if they don't become enlightened and obtain the five eyes and six spiritual penetrations, then the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions have lied! Then the Buddhas of the ten directions are not telling the truth.

I3 The assembly vows to protect it.
J1 The outer assembly protects and holds it.
K1 The multitude of vajra power-knights.
 **Sutra:

When he finished this explanation, measureless hundreds of thousands of vajra power-knights in the assembly came before the Buddha, placed their palms together, bowed, and said, "With sincere hearts we will protect those who cultivate Bodhi in this way, according to what the Buddha has said."

Commentary:**

When he, Shakyamuni Buddha, finished this explanation, measureless hundreds of thousands of vajra power-knights in the assembly came before the Buddha, placed their palms together, bowed, and said to the Buddha, "With sincere hearts we will protect those who cultivate Bodhi in this way, according to what the Buddha has said, according to this dharma-door. We will guard all the sincere good people who are cultivating like this to attain the Bodhi Way."

K2 The venerable hosts of gods.
 **Sutra:

Then the Brahma king, the god Shakra, and the four great heavenly kings all came before the Buddha, made obeisance together, and said to the Buddha, "If indeed there be good men who cultivate and study in this way, we will do all we can to earnestly protect them and cause everything to be as they would wish throughout their entire lives."

Commentary:**

Then the Brahma king, the lord of the Great Brahma Heaven, the god Shakra, Lord God, and the four great heavenly kings also came before the Buddha. They all stood up together and then made obeisance together to the Buddha, and said to the Buddha, "If indeed there be good men who cultivate and study in this say, we will do all we can to earnestly protect them and cause everything to be as they would wish throughout their entire lives. If there really are people who cultivate as you have described just now, Buddha, then with the fullest measure of our sincerity, we will guard and protect them and fulfill their wishes."

K3 The host of the eight divisions.
 **Sutra:

Moreover, measureless great yaksha generals, rakshasa kings, putana kings, kumbhanda kings, pishacha kings, Vinayaka, the great ghost kings, and all the ghost commanders came before the Buddha, put their palms together, and made obeisance. "We also have vowed to protect these people and cause their resolve for Bodhi to be quickly perfected."

Commentary:**

Moreover, measureless great yaksha generals, the "speedy" ghosts; rakshasa kings, the "terrifying" ghosts which are full of devious tricks; putana kings, the "bad-smelling" ghosts which cause fevers; kumbhanda kings, the "barrel-shaped" ghosts which paralyze people; pishacha are another horrible kind of ghost; Vinayaka, the scary, ugly dharma protector; the great ghost kings; and all the ghost commanders came before the Buddha, put their palms together, made obeisance together, and said to the Buddha, "We also have vowed to protect these people and cause their resolve for Bodhi to be quickly perfected."

K4 The ruling assembly of illumining bodies.
 **Sutra:

Further, measureless numbers of gods of the sun and moon, lords of the rain, lords of the clouds, lords of thunder, lords of lightning who patrol throughout the year, and all the retinues of stars which were also in the assembly bowed at the Buddha's feet and said to the Buddha, "We also protect all cultivators, so that their Bodhimandas are peaceful and they attain fearlessness."

Commentary:**

Further, measureless numbers of gods of the sun and moon, lords of the rain, lords of the clouds, lords of thunder, lords of lightning who patrol throughout the year, most people don't realize that for every year there is a governor who monitors the events that take place during it, and all the retinues of stars which were also in the assembly, each star has its retinue, bowed at the Buddha's feet and said to the Buddha, "We also protect all cultivators, so that their Bodhi minds are peaceful and they attain fearlessness. We've also made vows to protect people who cultivate. We set ourselves up in their Bodhimanda and help them be unafraid. They attain the power of fearlessness."

K5 The deities and spirits of the earth.
 **Sutra:

Moreover, measureless numbers of mountain spirits, sea spirits, and all those of the earth, the myriad creatures and essences of water, land, and the air, as well as the king of wind spirits and the gods of the formless heavens, came before the Thus Come One, bowed their heads, and said to the Buddha, "We also will protect these cultivators until they attain Bodhi and will never let any demons have their way with them."

Commentary:**

Moreover, measureless numbers of mountain spirits, sea spirits, and all those of the earth, the myriad creatures and essences of water, land, and the air, all these spirits, too, as well as the king of the wind spirits and the gods of the formless heavens, came before the Thus Come One, bowed their heads, simultaneously making obeisance to the Buddha, and said to the Buddha, "We also will protect these cultivators until they attain Bodhi and will never let any demons have their way with them. We will protect them right up to the time they attain Bodhi and will never let anything demonic happen to them."

J2 The inner sages protect and hold it.
K1 They reveal their origin and their long-term protection.
 **Sutra:

Then Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas in the great assembly, numbering as many as eighty-four thousand nayutas of kotis' worth of sands in the Ganges, arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the nature of our deeds in cultivation is such that, although we have long since accomplished Bodhi, we do not grasp at nirvana, but always accompany those who hold this mantra, rescuing and protecting those in the final age who cultivate samadhi properly."

Commentary:**

Then Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas in the great assembly, numbering as many as eighty-four thousand nayutas of kotis, that is, as many hundreds of millions, worth of sands in the Ganges, arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the nature of our deeds in cultivation is such that, although we have long since accomplished Bodhi, we do not grasp at nirvana, but always accompany those who hold this mantra. The merit and virtue of our cultivation is such that we already realized Bodhi long ago; we have been certified. So why don't we enter nirvana? We always accompany those who hold this mantra. We are intent upon rescuing and protecting those in the Final Age who cultivate samadhi properly. Those who genuinely practice Chan samadhi will be guarded and protected by us."

K2 They assert their protection and maintaining.
 **Sutra:

World Honored One, such people as this, who cultivate their minds and seek proper concentration, whether in the Bodhimanda or walking about, and even such people who with scattered minds roam and play in the villages, will be accompanied and protected by us and our retinue of followers.

Commentary:**

The Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas continue speaking to the Buddha: World Honored One, such people as this, who cultivate their minds and seek proper concentration, who want to obtain genuine samadhi power, whether in the Bodhimanda or walking about. Cultivators sit in meditation and apply effort, but when they get up and walk about, they are still applying effort. When they sit, they develop the skill of dhyana samadhi. When they get up, they cultivate the samadhi of reciting and holding, either by reciting mantras or being mindful of the Buddha. And even such people who with scattered minds roam and play in the villages. The Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas even protect cultivators who are not cultivating samadhi, are not in the Bodhimanda, and are not walking about reciting. Actually, though, even if you're on a holiday to another place, you can still hold the mantra. But even if you get scattered, the Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas say: you will be accompanied and protected by us and our retinue of followers. If you are one who recites and upholds the Shurangama Mantra, and if you have some skill, if you can make it function, then eighty-four thousand Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas and their entire retinue of followers will accompany and protect you wherever you go, just as troops protect their generals. When you enter a room, there will be guards at the door protecting you.
 **Sutra:

Although the demon kings and the god of great comfort will seek to get at them, they will never be able to do so. The smaller ghosts will have to stay ten yojanas' distance from these good people, except for those beings who have decided they want to cultivate dhyana.

Commentary:**

Although the demon kings and the god of great comfort will seek to get at them, they will never be able to do so. They will look for a way in, they will look for a hole, so that they can give the cultivators trouble. But they will not be able to bother them. And the smaller ghosts will have to stay ten yojanas' distance from these good people. Since the demon kings and the god of the Heaven of Great Comfort are unable to disturb them, the little ghosts and spirits will have to behave even more properly. They will have to stay 275 miles away, except for those beings who have decided they want to cultivate dhyana. The only exception is those ghosts who have brought forth the resolve to listen to the sutras, hear the dharma, and to cultivate Chan samadhi. Beings like that can participate in the Bodhimanda and the dharma assemblies and can listen to the sutras if they want to. If they don't want to do those things, they must stay 275 miles away.
 **Sutra:

World Honored One, if such evil demons or their retinues want to harm or disturb these good people, we will smash their heads to smithereens with our Vajra pestles. We will always help these people to accomplish what they want.

Commentary:**

Would you say the dharma-protecting Vajra-Treasury Bodhisattvas are fierce? They say they will smash the heads of demons into fine motes of dust. Can you imagine how much strength that would take? I'll tell you, however, that there is no need for the Vajra pestles of the Vajra-Treasury Bodhisattvas to come in actual contact with the heads of the demons at all. They don't need to really strike a blow in order to smash their heads to smithereens. All they have to do is have the thought to do it, and the deed is accomplished. That's because the strength of the samadhi of the Vajra-Treasury Bodhisattvas is sufficient to obliterate everything that exists. So they call out again: World Honored One, if such evil demons or their retinues want to harm or disturb these good people, we will smash their heads to smithereens with our Vajra pestles. We will always help these people to accomplish what they want.

Just such demons as those mentioned here are behind the brawls and strikes and revolts, the cases of arson, murder, and theft in every major city in the world today. Demon kings stir up these troubles invisibly. Most people don't know that but someone who has cultivated the Buddhadharma to the point that he or she has genuine samadhi-power, someone with good roots who has opened the Buddha eye, can verify that this is so. The problem is that the dharma-tricks of the demons have a lot of power behind them. They pack more of a wallop than the Buddhadharma, in that one must cultivate the dharma for a long, long time, three, five, ten, twenty years, before one obtains a little advantage. But the demons' tricks are mastered very swiftly. They can cultivate and obtain tremendous psychic powers, and they abound throughout the world, causing unrest and instigating trouble. However, if you can recite the Shurangama Mantra, then all the demons throughout the world are forced to behave to some extent. If no one can recite the Shurangama Mantra, they will run rampant. They will recklessly devastate this world.