The Road to Bodhi

IBDSCL, Nov. 17, 18, 2018, by Nancy Yu

Good morning! Welcome to the International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to today's Dharma talk! Today, we will continue to read Shurangama Sutra. We will listen to the Buddha to talk about the Road of Bodhi. This section is also part of Chapter Eight.

Verse for Opening Sutras

The unsurpassed, profound, subtle and wondrous dharma

Is difficult to encounter even in a hundred, thousand, million kalpas.

Now we see and hear it, and are able to receive and maintain it.

We vow to understand the Tathagata's true meaning.

Na Mo Sakyamuni Buddha! (x3)

"Ananda, each of these categories of beings is replete with all twelve kinds of upside-down states, just as pressing on one's eye produces a variety of flower-like images.

"With the inversion of wonderful perfection, the truly pure, bright mind becomes glutted with false and random thoughts.

"Now, as you cultivate towards certification to the samadhi of the Buddha, you will go through three gradual stages in order to get rid of the basic cause of these random thoughts.

"They work in just the way that poisonous honey is removed from a pure vessel that is washed with hot water mixed with the ashes of incense. Afterwards it can be used to store sweet dew.

"What are the three gradual stages? The first is to correct one's habits by getting rid of the aiding causes; the second is to truly cultivate to cut out the very essence of karmic offenses; the third is to increase one's vigor to prevent the manifestation of karma.

"What are aiding causes? Ananda, the twelve categories of living beings in this world are not complete in themselves, but depend on four kinds of eating; that is, eating by portions, eating by contact, eating by thought, and eating by consciousness. Therefore, the Buddha said that all living beings must eat to live.

"Ananda, all living beings can live if they eat what is sweet, and they will die if they take poison. Beings who seek samadhi should refrain from eating five pungent plants of this world.

"If these five are eaten cooked, they increase one's sexual desire; if they are eaten raw, they increase one's anger.

”Therefore, even if people in this world who eat pungent plants can expound the twelve divisions of the sutra canon, the gods and immortals of the ten directions will stay far away from them because they smell so bad. However, after they eat these things the hungry ghosts will hover around and kiss their lips. Being always in the presence of ghosts, their blessings and virtue dissolve as the days go by, and they experience no lasting benefit.

”People who eat pungent plants and also cultivate samadhi will not be protected by the Bodhisattvas, gods, immortals, or good spirits of the ten directions; therefore, the tremendously powerful demon kings, able to do as they please, will appear in the body of a Buddha and speak dharma for them, denouncing the prohibitive precepts and praising lust, rage, and delusion.

”When their lives end, these people will join the retinue of demon kings. When they use up their blessings as demons, they will fall into the Unintermittent Hell.

”Ananda, those who cultivate for Bodhi should never eat the five pungent plants. This is the first of the gradual stages of cultivation.

”What is the essence of karmic offenses? Ananda, beings who want to enter samadhi must first firmly uphold the pure precepts.

”They must sever thoughts of lust, not partake of wine or meat, and eat cooked rather than raw foods. Ananda, if cultivators do not sever lust and killing, it will be impossible for them to transcend the triple realm.

”You should look upon lustful desire as upon a poisonous snake or a resentful bandit. First hold to the Sound-Hearer’s four or eight parajikas in order to control your physical activity; then cultivate the Bodhisattva’s pure regulations in order to control your mental activity.

”When the prohibitive precepts are successfully upheld, one will not create karma that leads to trading places in rebirth and to killing one another in this world. If one does not steal, one will not be indebted, and one will not have to pay back past debts in this world.

”If people who are pure in this way cultivate samadhi, they will naturally be able to contemplate the extent of the worlds of the ten directions with the physical body given them by their parents; without need of the heavenly eye, they will see the Buddhas speaking dharma and receive in person the sagely instruction. Obtaining spiritual penetrations, they will roam through the ten directions, gain clarity regarding past lives, and will not encounter difficulties and dangers.

”This is the second of the gradual stages of cultivation.

”What is the manifestation of karma? Ananda, such people as these, who are pure and who uphold the prohibitive precepts, do not have thoughts of greed and lust, and so they do not become dissipated in the pursuit of the six external defiling sense-objects.

”Because they do not pursue them, they turn around to their own source. Without the conditions of the defiling objects, there is nothing for the sense-organs to match themselves with, and so they reverse their flow, become one unit, and no longer function in six ways.

”All the lands of the ten directions are as brilliantly clear and pure as moonlight reflected in crystal.

”Their bodies and minds are blissful as they experience the equality of wonderful perfection, and they attain great peace.

”The secret perfection and pure wonder of all the Thus Come Ones appear before them.

”These people then obtain patience with the non-production of dharmas. They thereupon gradually cultivate according to their practices, until they reside securely in the sagely positions.

”This is the third of the gradual stages of cultivation.

”Ananda, these good people’s emotional love and desire are withered and dry, the sense-organs and sense objects no longer match, and so the residual habits do not continue to arise.

”By means of their complete wisdom, they understand that attachments of the mind are false. The bright perfection of their wisdom-nature shines throughout the ten directions, and this initial wisdom is called the ‘stage of dry wisdom.’

”Although the habits of desire are initially dried up, they still have not merged with the Thus Come One’s flow of Dharma-water.

”Then, with this mind centered on the middle, they enter the flow where wonderful perfection reveals itself. From the truth of that wonderful perfection there repeatedly arise wonders of truth. They always dwell in the wonder of faith, until all false thinking is completely eliminated and the middle way is totally true. This is called the Mind that Resides in Faith.

”When true faith is clearly understood, then perfect penetration is total, and the three aspects of skandhas, places, and realms are no longer obstructions. Then all their habits throughout innumerable kalpas of past and future, during which they abandon bodies and receive bodies, appear to them now in the present moment. These good people can remember everything and forget nothing. This is called the Mind that Resides in Mindfulness.

”When the wonderful perfection is completely true, that essential truth brings about a transformation. They go beyond the beginningless habits to reach the one essential brightness. Relying solely on this essential brightness, they progress toward true purity. This is called the Mind of Vigor.

”The essence of the mind reveals itself as total wisdom; this is called the Mind that Resides in Wisdom.

”As the wisdom and brightness are held steadfast, a profound stillness pervades. The stage at which the majesty of this stillness becomes constant and solid is called the Mind that Resides in Samadhi.

”The light of samadhi emits brightness. When the essence of the brightness enters deeply

within, they only advance and never retreat. This is called the Mind of Irreversibility.

”When the progress of their minds is secure, and they hold their minds and protect them without loss, they connect with the life-breath of the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions. This is called the Mind that Protects the Dharma.

”Protecting their light of enlightenment, they can use this wonderful force to return to the Buddha’s light of compassion and to come back to stand firm with the Buddha. It is like two mirrors that are set facing one another, so that between them the exquisite images interreflect and enter into one another layer upon layer. This is called the Mind of Transference.

”With this secret interplay of light, they obtain the Buddha’s eternal solidity and unsurpassed wonderful purity. Dwelling in the unconditioned, they know no loss or dissipation. This is called the Mind that Resides in Precepts.

”Abiding in the precepts with self-mastery, they can roam throughout the ten directions, going anywhere they wish. This is called the Mind that Resides in Vows.

”Ananda, these good people use honest expedients to bring forth those ten minds. When the essence of these minds becomes dazzling, and the ten functions interconnect, then a single mind is perfectly accomplished. This is called the Dwellings of Bringing Forth the Resolve.

”From within this mind light comes forth like pure crystal, which reveals pure gold inside. Treading upon the previous wonderful mind as a ground is called the Dwelling of the Ground of Regulation.

”When the mind-ground connects with wisdom, both become bright and comprehensive. Traversing the ten directions then without obstruction is called the Dwelling of Cultivation.

”When their conduct is the same as the Buddhas’ and they take on the demeanor of a Buddha, then, like the intermediate skandha body searching for a father and mother, they penetrate the darkness with a hidden trust and enter the lineage of the Thus Come One. This is called the Dwelling of Noble Birth.

”Since they ride in the womb of the Way and will themselves become enlightened heirs, their human features are in no way deficient. This is called the Dwelling of Endowment with Skill-in-Means.

”With a physical appearance like that of a Buddha and a mind that is the same as well, they are said to be Dwelling in the Rectification of the Mind.

”United in body and mind, they easily grow and mature day by day. This is called the Dwelling of Irreversibility.

”With the efficacious appearance of ten bodies, which are simultaneously perfected, they are said to be at the Dwelling of a Pure Youth.

”Completely developed, they leave the womb and become sons of the Buddha. This is called the Dwelling of a Dharma Prince.

”Reaching the fullness of adulthood, they are like the chosen prince to whom the great king of a country turns over the affairs of state. When this Kshatriya king’s eldest son is ceremoniously anointed on the crown of the head, he has reached what is called the Dwelling of Anointing the Crown of the Head.

”Ananda, after these good men have become sons of the Buddha, they are replete with the limitlessly many wonderful virtues of the Thus Come Ones, and they comply and accord with beings throughout the ten directions. This is called the Conduct of Happiness.

”Being well able to accommodate all living beings is called the Conduct of Benefiting.

”Enlightening oneself and enlightening others without putting forth any resistance is called the Conduct of Non-Opposition.

”To undergo birth in various forms continuously to the bounds of the future, equally throughout the three periods of time and pervading the ten directions, is called the Conduct of Endlessness.

”When everything is equally in accord, one never makes mistakes among the various Dharma doors. This is called the Conduct of Freedom from Deluded Confusion.

”Then within what is identical, myriad differences appear; the characteristics of every difference are seen, one and all, in identity. This is called the Conduct of Wholesome Manifestation.

”This continues until it includes all the dust motes that fill up empty space throughout the ten directions. In each and every mote of dust there appear the worlds of the ten directions. And yet the appearance of dust motes and the appearance of worlds do not interfere with one another. This is called the Conduct of Non-Attachment.

”Everything that appears before one is the foremost paramita. This is called the Conduct of Veneration.

”With such perfect fusion, one can model one-self after all the Buddhas of the ten directions. This is called the Conduct of Wholesome Dharma.

”To then be pure and without outflows in each and every way is the primary truth, which is unconditioned, the essence of the nature. This is called the Conduct of True Actuality.

“Ananda, when these good men replete with spiritual penetrations, have done the Buddhas’ work, are totally pure and absolutely true, and remain distant from obstacles and calamities, then they take living beings across while casting aside the appearance of taking them across. They transform the unconditioned mind and go toward the path of Nirvana. This is called the Transference of Saving and Protecting Living Beings, while apart from the Appearance of Living Beings.

”To destroy what should be destroyed and to remain far removed from what should be left behind is called the Transference of Indestructibility.

”Fundamental enlightenment is profound indeed, an enlightenment equal to the Buddhas’ enlightenment. This is called the Transference of Sameness with All Buddhas.

”When absolute truth is discovered, one’s level is the same as the level of all Buddhas. This is called the Transference of Reaching All Places.

”Worlds and Thus Come Ones include one another without any obstruction. This is called the Transference of a Treasury of Inexhaustible Merit and Virtue.

”Since they are identical with the Buddha-ground, they create causes which are pure at each and every level. Brilliance emanates from them as they rely on these causes, and they go straight down the path to Nirvana. This is called the Transference of Following in Accord with the Identity of All Good Roots.

”When the true roots are set down, then all living beings in the ten directions are my own nature. Not a single being is lost, as this nature is successfully perfected. This is called the Transference or Contemplating All Living Beings Equally.

”All dharmas are themselves apart from all appearances, and yet there is no attachment either to their existence or to separation from them. This is called the Transference of the Appearance of True Suchness.

”That which is thus is truly obtained, and there is no obstruction throughout the ten directions. This is called the Transference of Unfettered Liberation.

”When the virtue of the nature is perfectly accomplished, the boundaries of the dharma realm are destroyed. This is called the Transference of the Limitlessness of the Dharma Realm.

”Ananda, when these good men have completely purified these forty-one minds, they further accomplish four kinds of wonderfully perfect additional practices.

”When the enlightenment of a Buddha is just about to become a function of his own mind, it is on the verge of emerging but has not yet emerged, and so it can be compared to the point just before wood ignites when it is drilled to produce fire. Therefore it is called the Level of Heat.

”He continues on with his mind, treading where the Buddhas tread, as if relying and yet not. It is as if he were climbing a lofty mountain, to the point where his body is in space but there remains a slight obstruction beneath him. Therefore it is called the Level of the Summit.

”When the mind and the Buddha are two and yet the same, he has well obtained the Middle Way. He is like someone who endures something when it seems impossible to either hold it in or let it out. Therefore it is called the Level of Patience.

”When numbers are destroyed, there are no such designations as the Middle Way or as confusion and enlightenment; this is called the Level of Being First in the World.

”Ananda, these good men have successfully penetrated through to Great Bodhi. Their enlightenment is entirely like the Thus Come One’s. They have fathomed the state of

Buddhahood. This is called the Ground of Happiness.

”The differences enter into identity; the identity is destroyed. This is called the Ground of Leaving Filth.

”At the point of ultimate purity, brightness comes forth. This is called the Ground of Emitting Light.

”When the brightness becomes ultimate, enlightenment is full. This is called the Ground of Blazing Wisdom.

”No identity or difference can be attained. This is called the Ground of Invincibility.

”With unconditioned True Suchness, the nature is spotless, and brightness is revealed. This is called the Ground of Manifestation.

”Coming to the farthest limits of True Suchness is called the Ground of Traveling Far.

”The single mind of True Suchness is called the Ground of Immovability.

”Bringing forth the function of True Suchness is called the Ground of Good Wisdom.

”Ananda, all Bodhisattvas at this point and beyond have reached the effortless way in their cultivation. Their merit and virtue are perfected, and so all the previous positions are also called the Level of Cultivation.

”Then with a wonderful cloud of compassionate protection one covers the Sea of Nirvana. This is called the Ground of the Dharma Cloud.

”The Thus Come Ones counter the flow as the Bodhisattvas thus reach this point through compliance with practice. Their enlightenments intermingle; it is therefore called Equal Enlightenment.

”Ananda, the enlightenment which encompasses the mind of dry wisdom through to the culmination of Equal Enlightenment is the initial attainment of the Vajra Mind. This constitutes the level of Initial Dry Wisdom.

”Thus there are totals of twelve single and grouped levels. At last they reach Wonderful Enlightenment and accomplish the Unsurpassed Way.

”At all these levels they use vajra contemplation of the ten profound analogies for the ways in which things are like an illusion. In Shamatha they use the Thus Come Ones’ Vipashyana to cultivate them purely, to be certified to them, and to gradually enter them more and more deeply.

”Ananda, because they put to use the three means of advancement throughout all of them, they are well able to accomplish the fifty-five stages of the True Bodhi Path.

”This manner of contemplation is called ‘proper contemplation.’ Contemplation other than this

is called ‘deviant contemplation.’”

Then Dharma Prince Manjushri arose from his seat, and in the midst of the assembly he bowed at the Buddha’s feet and said to the Buddha, “What is the name of this sutra and how should we and all living beings uphold it?”

The Buddha told Manjushri, “This sutra is called ‘The Summit, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, and Unsurpassed Precious Seal of the Seal of the Great Buddha, and the Pure, Clear, Ocean-Like Eye of the Thus Comes Ones of the Ten Directions.”

”It is also called ‘The Cause for Saving a Relative’: to rescue Ananda and the Bhikshuni Nature, who is now in this assembly, so that they obtain the Bodhi mind and enter the sea of pervasive knowledge.

”It is also called ‘The Tathagata’s Secret Cause of Cultivation, His Certification to the Complete Meaning.’

”It is also called ‘The Great Pervasive Method, the Wonderful Lotus Flower King, the Dharani Mantra which is the Mother Of All Buddhas Of the Ten Directions.’

”It is also called ‘The Foremost Shurangama, Sections and Phrases for Anointing the Crown of the Head, and All Bodhisattvas’ Myriad Practices.’

”Thus should you respectfully uphold it.”

Amitabha! That’s all for today and the subject of Transmigration in the Six Realms. Chant the name of the Buddha, recite sutras, hold mantra every day. Cultivate diligently without even one day of stopping. Then you sure will obtain something. Hold precept, increase Samadhi power and open the wisdom within! Thank you and wish you all become a Buddha soon!

Verse of Transference (x 3)

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,

Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands;

Repaying four kinds of kindness above,

And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,

All bring forth resolve for Bodhi,

And when this retribution body is over,

Be born together in Ultimate Bliss.

Na Mo Amitabha! (x 3)