

## **Shurangama Sutra Volume II**

IBDSCL, Feb. 23rd, 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, by Nancy Yu

Na Mo Sakyamuni Buddha!  
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Good morning! Welcome to the International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to today's Dharma talk! Today is Feb 23rd, 2019. Today, we will continue to recite the Shurangama Sutra Vol. II.

### **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.

### **The Sutra of the Foremost Shurangama at the Great Buddha's Summit Concerning the Tathagata's Secret Cause of Cultivation, His Certification to the Complete Meaning and all Bodhisattvas' Myriad Practices**

#### **Vol. II**

Translated during the Tang Dynasty by Shramana Paramiti from Central India.  
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"Ananda, you have told me that you saw my fist of bright light. How did it take the form of a fist? How did the fist become bright? By what means could you see it?"

Ananda replied, "The body of the Buddha is born of purity and cleanness, and, therefore, it assumes the color of Jambu River gold with deep red hues. Hence, it shone as brilliant and dazzling as a precious mountain. It was actually my eyes that saw the Buddha bend his five-wheeled fingers to form a fist which was shown to all of us."

The Buddha told Ananda, "Today the Tathagata will tell you truly that all those with wisdom are able to achieve enlightenment through the use of examples.

"Ananda, take, for example, my fist: if I didn't have a hand, I couldn't make a fist. If you didn't have eyes, you couldn't see. If you apply the example of my fist to the case of your eyes, is the idea the same?"

Ananda said, "Yes, World Honored One. Since I can't see without my eyes, if one applies the example of the Buddha's fist to the case of your eyes, the idea is the same."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You say it is the same, but that is not right. Why? If a person has no hand, his fist is gone forever. But one who is without eyes is not entirely devoid of sight.

"For what reason? Try consulting a blind man on the street: 'What do you see?'

"Any blind man will certainly answer, 'Now I see only black in front of my eyes. Nothing else meets my gaze.'

"The meaning is apparent: if he sees blackness in front of him, how could his seeing be considered 'lost'?"

Ananda said, "The only thing blind people see in front of their eyes is blackness. How can that be seeing?"

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Is there any difference between the blackness seen by blind people, who do not have the use of their eyes, and the blackness seen by someone who has the use of his eyes when he is in a dark room?"

"So it is, World Honored One. Between the two kinds of blackness, that seen by the person in a dark room and that seen by the blind, there is no difference."

"Ananda, if the person without the use of his eyes who sees only blackness were suddenly to regain his sight and see all kinds of forms, and you say it is his eyes which see, then when the person in a dark room who sees only blackness suddenly sees all kinds of forms because a lamp is lit, you should say it is the lamp which sees.

"If it is a case of the lamp seeing, it would be a lamp endowed with sight - which couldn't be called a lamp. And if the lamp were to do the seeing, how would you be involved?

"Therefore you should know that while the lamp can reveal the forms, it is the eyes, not the lamp, that do the seeing. And while the eyes can reveal the forms, the seeing-nature comes from the mind, not the eyes."

Although Ananda and everyone in the great assembly had heard what was said, their minds had not yet understood, and so they remained silent. Hoping to hear more of the gentle sounds of the Tathagata's teaching, they put their palms together, purified their minds, and stood waiting for the Tathagata's compassionate instruction.

Then the World Honored One extended his tula-cotton webbed bright hand, opened his five-wheeled fingers, and told Ananda and the great assembly, "When I first accomplished the Way I went to the Deer Park, and for the sake of Ajnatakaundinya and all five of the bhikshus, as well as for you of the four-fold assembly, I said, 'It is because living beings are impeded by guest-dust and affliction that they do not realize Bodhi or become arhats.' At that time, what caused you who have now realized the holy fruit to become enlightened?"

Then Ajnatakaundinya arose and said to the Buddha, "Of the elders now present in the great assembly, only I received the name 'understanding' because I was enlightened to the meaning of the word 'guest-dust' and realized the fruition.

"World Honored One, it is like a traveler who stops as a guest at a roadside inn, perhaps for the night or perhaps for a meal. When he has finished lodging there or when the meal is finished, he packs his baggage and sets out again. He does not remain there at leisure. The host himself, however, does not go far away.

"Considering it this way, the one who does not remain is called the guest, and the one who does remain is called the host. The word 'guest,' then, means 'one who does not remain.'

"Again, when the sky clears up, the morning sun rises with all resplendence, and its golden rays stream into a house through a crevice to reveal particles of dust in the air. The dust dances in the rays of light, but the empty space is motionless.

"Considering it this way, what is clear and still is called space, and what moves is called dust. The word 'dust,' then, means 'that which moves.'"

The Buddha said, "So it is."

Then in the midst of the great assembly the Thus Come One bent his five-wheeled fingers. After bending them, he opened them again. After he opened them, he bent them again, and he asked Ananda, "What do you see now?"

Ananda said, "I see the Thus Come One's hundred-jeweled wheeled palms opening and closing in the midst of the assembly."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You see my hand open and close in the assembly. Is it my hand that opens and closes, or is it your seeing that opens and closes?"

Ananda said, "The World Honored One's jeweled hand opened and closed in the assembly. I saw the Thus Come One's hand itself open and close; it was not my seeing-nature that opened and closed."

The Buddha said, "What moves and what is still?"

Ananda said, "The Buddha's hand does not remain at rest. And since my seeing-nature is beyond even stillness, how could it not be at rest?"

The Buddha said, "So it is."

Then from his wheeled palm the Thus Come One sent a precious ray of light flying to Ananda's right. Ananda immediately turned his head and glanced to the right. He then sent another ray of light to Ananda's left. Ananda again turned his head and glanced to the left. The Buddha

said to Ananda, "Why did your head move just now?"

Ananda said, "I saw the Thus Come One emit a wonderful precious light which came by my left and right, and so I looked to the left and right. My head moved of itself."

"Ananda, when you glanced at the Buddha's light and moved your head to the left and right, was it your head that moved or your seeing that moved?"

"World Honored One, my head moved of itself. Since my seeing-nature is beyond even cessation, how could it move?"

The Buddha said, "So it is."

Then the Thus Come One told everyone in the great assembly, "Suppose other living beings called what moves 'the dust' and what does not dwell 'the guest'?"

"You noticed that it was Ananda's head that moved; the seeing did not move. You also noticed that it was my hand which opened and closed; the seeing did not stretch or bend.

"Why do you continue to take something moving like your body and its environment to be in substantial existence, so that from the beginning to the end, your every thought is subject to production and extinction?"

"You have lost your true nature and conduct yourselves in upside-down ways. Having lost your true nature and mind, you recognize objects as yourself, and it is you who cling to the flowing and turning of the revolving wheel."

When Ananda and the great assembly heard the Buddha's instructions, they became peaceful and composed both in body and mind. They recollected that since time without beginning, they had strayed from their fundamental true mind by mistaking the shadows of their causally conditioned differentiating minds as something real and substantial. Now on this day they had awakened to such illusions and misconceptions. Like a lost infant who rejoins its beloved mother after a long separation, they put their palms together to make obeisance to the Buddha.

They wished to hear such words from the Thus Come One as to enlighten them to the dual nature of body and mind - what is false and what is real, what is empty and what is substantial, what is subject to production and extinction and what transcends production and extinction.

Then King Prasenajit rose and said to the Buddha, "In the past, when I had not yet received the teachings of the Buddha, I met Katyayana and Vairatiputra, both of whom said that this body is annihilated after death, and that this is Nirvana. Now, although I have met the Buddha, I still have doubts about their words. How much I wish to be enlightened to the ways and means to perceive and realize the true mind, thereby proving that it transcends production and extinction! All those who have outflows also wish to be instructed on this subject."

The Buddha said to the great king, “Now I ask you, as it is now is your physical body like vajra, indestructible and living forever? Or does it change and go bad?”

“World Honored One, this body of mine will keep changing until it eventually becomes extinct.”

The Buddha said, “Great King, you have not yet become extinct. How do you know you will become extinct?”

“World Honored One, although my impermanent, changing, and decaying body has not yet become extinct, I observe it now, and every passing thought fades away. Each new one fails to remain, but gradually perishes like fire turning to ashes. This perishing without cease convinces me that this body will eventually become completely extinct.”

The Buddha said, “So it is.

“Great King, at your present age you are already old and declining. How do your appearance and complexion compare to when you were a youth?”

“World Honored One, in the past when I was young my skin was moist and shining. When I reached the prime of life, my blood and breath were full. But now in my declining years, as I race into old age, my form is withered and wizened and my spirit dull. My hair is white and my face is in wrinkles and I haven’t much time remaining. How can I be compared to how I was when I was full of life?”

The Buddha said, “Great King, your appearance should not decline so suddenly.”

The king said, “World Honored One, the change has been a hidden transformation of which I honestly have not been aware. I have come to this gradually through the passing of winters and summers.

“How did it happen? In my twenties, I was still young, but my features had aged since the time I was ten. My thirties were a further decline from my twenties, and now at sixty-two I look back on my fifties as hale and hearty.

“World Honored One, I am contemplating these hidden transformations. Although the changes wrought by this process of dying are evident through the decades, I might consider them further in finer detail: these changes do not occur just in periods of twelve years; there are actually changes year by year. Not only are there yearly changes, there are also monthly transformations. Nor does it stop at monthly transformations; there are also differences day by day. Examining them closely, I find that kshana by kshana, thought after thought, they never stop.

“And so I know my body will keep changing until it is extinct.”

The Buddha told the great king, “By watching the ceaseless changes of these transformations,

you awaken and know of your extinction, but do you also know that at the time of extinction there is something in your body which does not become extinct?”

King Prasenajit put his palms together and exclaimed, “I really do not know.”

The Buddha said, “I will now show you the nature which is not produced and not extinguished.

”Great King, how old were you when you saw the waters of the Ganges?”

The king said, “When I was three years old my compassionate mother led me to visit the Goddess Jiva. We passed a river, and at the time I knew it was the waters of the Ganges.”

The Buddha said, “Great King, you have said that when you were twenty you had deteriorated from when you were ten. Day by day, month by month, year by year until you have reached sixty, in thought after thought there has been change. Yet when you saw the Ganges River at the age of three, how was it different from when you were thirteen?”

The king said, “It was no different from when I was three, and even now when I am sixty-two it is still no different.”

The Buddha said, “Now you are mournful that your hair is white and your face is wrinkled. In the same way that your face is definitely more wrinkled than it was in your youth, has the seeing with which you look at the Ganges aged, so that it is old now but was young when you looked at the river as a child in the past?”

The king said, “No, World Honored One.”

The Buddha said, “Great King, your face is in wrinkles, but the essential nature of your seeing has not yet wrinkled. What wrinkles is subject to change. What does not wrinkle does not change.

”What changes will become extinct, but what does not change is fundamentally free of production and extinction. How can it be subject to your birth and death? Furthermore, why bring up what Maskari Goshaliputra and the others say: that after the death of this body there is total extinction?”

The King heard these words, believed them, and realized that when the life of this body is finished, there will be rebirth. He and the entire great assembly were greatly delighted at having obtained what they had never had before.

Ananda then arose from his seat, made obeisance to the Buddha, put his palms together, knelt on both knees, and said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, if seeing and hearing are indeed neither produced nor extinguished, why did the World Honored One refer to us as people who have lost their true natures and who go about things in an upside-down way? I hope the World Honored One will give rise to great compassion and wash my dust and defilement away.”

Then the Thus Come One let his golden arm fall so that his wheeled fingers pointed downward, and, showing Ananda, he said, "You see my mudra-hand: is it right-side up or upside down?"

Ananda said, "Living beings in the world take it to be upside down. I do not know what is right-side up and what is upside down."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "If people of the world take this as upside down, what do people of the world take to be right-side up?"

Ananda said, "They call it right-side up when the Thus Come One raises his arm, with the fingers of his tula-cotton hand pointing upward in the air."

The Buddha then held up his hand and said: "Worldly people are doubly deluded when they discriminate between an upright and inverted hand.

"In the same way they will differentiate between your body and the Thus Come One's pure Dharmabody and will say that the Thus Come One's body is one of right and universal knowledge, while your body is upside down.

"But examine your bodies and the Buddha's closely for this upside-downness: what exactly does the term 'upside down' refer to?"

Thereupon Ananda and the entire great assembly were dazed, and they stared unblinking at the Buddha. They did not know in what way their bodies and minds were upside down.

The Buddha's compassion arose and he took pity on Ananda and on all in the great assembly and he spoke to the great assembly in a voice that swept over them like the ocean-tide.

"All of you good people, I have often said that form and mind and all conditions, as well as dharmas pertaining to the mind - all the conditioned dharmas - are manifestations of the mind only. Your bodies and your minds all appear within the wonder of the bright, true, essential, wonderful mind.

"Why do I say that you have lost track of what is fundamentally wonderful in you, the perfect, wonderful bright mind, and that in the midst of your bright and enlightened nature, you mistake the false for the real because of ignorance and delusion?

"Mental dimness turns into dull emptiness. This emptiness, in the dimness, unites with darkness to become form.

"Stimulated by false thinking, the form takes the shape of a body.

"As causal conditions come together there are perpetual internal disturbances which tend to gallop outside. Such inner disturbances are often mistaken for the nature of mind.

"The primary misconception about the mind and body is the false view that the mind dwells in

the physical body.

"You do not know that the physical body, as well as the mountains, the rivers, empty space, and the great earth are all within the wonderful bright true mind.

"It is like ignoring hundreds of thousands of clear pure seas and taking notice of only a single bubble, seeing it as the entire ocean, as the whole expanse of great and small seas.

"You people are doubly deluded among the deluded. Such inversion does not differ from that caused by my lowered hand. The Thus Come One says you are most pitiable."

Having received the Buddha's compassionate rescue and profound instruction, Ananda's tears fell, and he folded his hands and said to the Buddha, "I have heard these wonderful sounds of the Buddha and have realized that the wonderful bright mind is fundamentally perfect; it is the eternally dwelling mind-ground.

"But now in awakening to the Dharma-sounds that the Buddha is speaking, it is my conditioned mind which I use to contemplate them reverently. Having just obtained the mind, I do not acknowledge that it is the fundamental mind-ground.

"I pray that the Buddha will take pity on me and proclaim the perfect sound to pull out my doubts by the roots and enable me to return to the unsurpassed Way."

The Buddha told Ananda, "You still listen to the Dharma with the conditioned mind, and so the Dharma becomes conditioned as well, and you do not obtain the Dharma-nature. It is like when someone points his finger at the moon to show it to someone else. Guided by the finger, that person should see the moon. If he looks at the finger instead and mistakes it for the moon, he loses not only the moon but the finger also. Why? He mistakes the pointing finger for the bright moon.

"Not only does he lose the finger, but he also fails to recognize light and darkness. Why? He mistakes the substance of the finger for the bright nature of the moon, and so he does not understand the two natures of light and darkness. The same is true of you.

"If you take what distinguishes the sound of my speaking Dharma to be your mind, then that mind itself, apart from the sound which is distinguished, should have a nature which makes distinctions. It is like the guest who lodges overnight at an inn; he stops temporarily and then goes on. He does not dwell there permanently, whereas the innkeeper does not go anywhere: he is the host of the inn.

"Likewise, if it is truly your mind, it does not go anywhere. However, in the absence of sound it has no discriminating nature of its own. Can you tell the reason why?

"This, then, applies not only to the distinguishing of sound; in distinguishing my appearance, there is no distinction-making nature apart from the mark of form.

"Thus even when the making of distinctions is totally absent, when there is no form and no emptiness - the obscurity which Goshali and the others take to be the 'profound truth' - in the absence of causal conditions, the distinction-making nature ceases to exist.



"How can we say that the nature of your mind plays the part of host since everything perceived by it returns to something else?"

Ananda said, "If every state of our mind returns to something else as its cause, then why does the wonderful bright original mind mentioned by the Buddha return nowhere? I hold out the hope that the Buddha will shower us with such compassion as to enlighten us on this point."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "As you now see me, the essence of your seeing is fundamentally bright. If the profound bright original mind is compared to the moon, the essence of your seeing is the second moon rather than its reflection.

"You should listen attentively, for I am now going to show you the place of no returning.

"Ananda, this great lecture hall is open to the east. It is flooded with light when the sun rises in the sky. It is dark at midnight during a new moon or when obscured by clouds or fog. Looking out through open doors and windows your vision is unimpeded; facing walls or houses your vision is hindered. Your vision is causally conditioned in such places where there are forms of distinctive features; in dull void, you can see only emptiness. Your vision will be distorted when the objects of seeing are shrouded in dust and vapor; you will perceive clearly when the air is fresh.

"Ananda, observe all these transitory characteristics as I now return each to its place of origin. What are the basic origins? Ananda, among all these transitions, the 'light' returns to the sun. Why? Without the sun there is no light; therefore the reason for light belongs with the sun, and so it can be returned to the sun.

"'Darkness' returns to the new moon. 'Penetration' returns to the doors and windows while 'obstruction' returns to the walls and eaves. 'Conditions' return to distinctions. 'Emptiness' returns to dull emptiness. 'Darkness' and 'distortion' return to the mist and haze. Bright 'purity' returns to freshness, and nothing that exists in this world goes beyond these kinds.

"To which of the eight states of perception will the essence of your seeing return? Why do I ask? The answer lies in the fact that if it is returned to brightness, you will not see darkness when there is no light. Although such states of perception as light, darkness, and the like differ from one another, your seeing remains unchanged.

"That which can be returned to other sources is clearly not you; that which can be returned nowhere is none other than you.

"Therefore I know that your mind is fundamentally wonderful, bright, and pure. You yourself are confused and deluded. You miss what is fundamental, and you are caught in the turning wheel of the six paths, tossing and floating on the stormy sea of birth and death all the time. No wonder the Thus Come One says that you are the most pitiable of creatures."

Ananda said, "I recognize that the seeing-nature does not return to anything, but how can I come to know that it is my true nature?"

The Buddha told Ananda, "Now I have a question for you. At this point you have not yet

attained the purity of no outflows. Blessed by the Buddha's spiritual strength, you are able to see into the first dhyana heavens without any obstruction, just as Aniruddha looks at Jambudvīpa with such clarity as he might an amala fruit in the palm of his hand.

"Bodhisattvas can see hundreds of thousands of realms. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions see everything throughout the pure lands as numerous as fine motes of dust. Living beings' sight does not extend beyond a fraction of an inch.

"Ananda, as you and I now look at the palace where the four heavenly kings reside, and inspect all that moves in the water, on dry land, and in the air, some are dark and some are bright, varying in shape and appearance, yet all are nothing but dust before us - distinctions and obstructions.

"Among them you should distinguish which is self and which is other. I ask you now to select from within your seeing which is the substance of the self and which is the appearance of things.

"Ananda, if you take a good look at everything everywhere within the range of your vision extending from the palaces of the sun and moon to the seven gold mountain ranges, all that you see is not you, but are things of different features and lights. At closer range you will gradually see clouds floating, birds flying, wind blowing, dust rising, trees, plants, rivers, mountains, grasses, animals, people, all of which are not you, but things.

"Ananda, all things, near and far, have the nature of things. Although each is distinctly different, they are seen with the same pure essence of seeing. Thus all the categories of things have their individual distinctions, but the seeing-nature has no differences. This essential wonderful brightness is most certainly your seeing-nature.

"If seeing were a thing, then you should also be able to see my seeing.

"If you say you see my seeing, when we both look at the same thing, then when I am not seeing, why don't you see my not-seeing?

"If you do see my not-seeing, it is clearly not the thing that I am not seeing. If you do not see my not-seeing, then it is clearly not a thing, and how can you say it is not you?

"What is more, if your seeing is a thing, things should also see you when you see things. With substance and nature mixed up together, you and I and everyone in the world are no longer in order.

"Ananda, if, when you see, it is you and not I who see, then the seeing-nature pervades everywhere. Therefore whose is it if it is not yours?

"Why do you have doubts about your own true nature and come to me seeking verification, thinking your nature is not true?.

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, given that this seeing-nature is certainly mine and does not belong to anything else, when the Thus Come One and I regard the palace of the Four Heavenly Kings with its supreme store of jewels and stay at the palace of

the sun and moon, this seeing completely pervades the lands of the Saha world. Upon returning to the sublime abode, I only see the monastic grounds and in the pure central hall I only see the eaves and corridors.

"World Honored One, that is how the seeing is. At first its substance pervaded everywhere throughout the one realm, but now in the midst of this room it fills one room only. Does the seeing shrink from great to small, or do the walls and eaves press in and cut it off? Now I do not know where the meaning in this lies and hope the Buddha will let fall his vast compassion and proclaim it for me thoroughly."

The Buddha told Ananda, "All the aspects of everything in the world, such as big and small, inside and outside, are classed as the dust before you. You should not say the seeing stretches and shrinks.

"Consider the example of a square container in which a square of emptiness is seen. I ask you further: is the square emptiness that is seen in the square container a fixed square shape, or is it not fixed as a square shape?

"If it is a fixed square shape, when it is switched to a round container the emptiness would not be round. If it is not a fixed shape, then when it is in the square container it should not be a square-shaped emptiness.

"You say you do not know where the meaning lies. The nature of the meaning is thus; how can you speak of its location?

"Ananda, if you now wished there to be neither squareness nor roundness, you would only need to take the container away. The substance of emptiness has no shape, and so you should not say that you would also have to take the shape away from the emptiness.

"If, as you ask, your seeing shrinks and becomes small when you enter a room, then when you look up at the sun is your seeing pulled out until it reaches the sun's surface? If you build walls and eaves which can press in and cut off your seeing why then is there no evidence of a joining when you drill a small hole? Therefore, that idea is incorrect.

"From beginningless time until now, all living beings have mistaken themselves for things and, having lost the original mind, are turned around by things. That is why they contemplate bigness and smallness in the midst of all this.

"If you can turn things around, then you are the same as the Thus Come One.

"With body and mind perfect and bright, you are an unmoving place of the Way.

"The tip of a single fine hair can completely contain the lands of the ten directions.

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, if this seeing-essence is indeed my wonderful nature, my wonderful nature is now in front of me. If the seeing is truly me, what, then, are my present body and mind? Yet it is my body and mind which make distinctions whereas the seeing does not make distinctions and does not discern my body.

"If it is really my mind which causes me to see now, then the seeing-nature is actually me, and the body is not me.

"How is this different from the question the Thus Come One asked about things being able to see me? I only hope the Buddha will let fall his great compassion and explain for those who have not yet awakened."

The Buddha told Ananda, "What you have now said - that the seeing is in front of you - is actually not the case.

"If it were actually in front of you, it would be something you would actually see, and then the seeing-essence would have a location. It wouldn't be that there is no evidence of it.

"Now as you sit in the Jeta Grove you look about everywhere at the grove, the ponds, the halls, as far as the sun and moon, with the Ganges River before you. Now, before my lion's seat, point out these various appearances: what is dark is the groves, what is bright is the sun, what is obstructing is the walls, what is clear is emptiness, and so on from the grasses and trees to the finest particle of hair. Their sizes vary, and since they all have appearances, none cannot be located.

"If it is certain that your seeing is in front of you, then with your hand you should with certainty point out what the seeing is. Ananda, if emptiness is the seeing, then how can it remain empty since it has already become your seeing? If a thing is the seeing, how can it be external to you as an object, since it has already become your seeing?

"You can cut through and peel away the myriad appearances to the finest degree in order to distinguish and bring forth the essential brightness and pure wonder of the source of seeing, pointing it out and showing it to me from among all these things, so that it is perfectly clear beyond any doubt."

Ananda said, "From where I am now in this many-storied lecture hall, as far as the distant Ganges River and the sun and moon overhead, all that I might raise my hand to point to, all that I indulge my eyes in seeing, are all things; they are not the seeing. World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said. Not merely myself, who am a shravaka of the first stage who still has outflows, but even Bodhisattvas cannot break open and reveal, among the myriad appearances which are before them, an essence of seeing which has a special self-nature apart from all things."

The Buddha said, "So it is, so it is."

The Buddha said further to Ananda, "It is as you have said. There is no seeing-essence to be found existing separately among all the things. Therefore, all the things you point to are things, and none is the seeing.

"Now I will tell you: you and the Thus Come One sit in the Jeta Grove and look again at the groves and gardens, as far as the sun and moon, and at all the various different appearances, and it is certain that the seeing-essence is not among whatever you point to. You can go ahead and reveal what, among these things, is not your seeing."

Ananda said, "I see clearly all over this Jeta Grove, and I do not know what in the midst of it is not my seeing.

"Why? If trees are not the seeing, why do I see trees? If trees are the seeing, then what becomes of trees? The same is true of everything up to and including emptiness: if emptiness is not the seeing, why do I see emptiness? If emptiness is the seeing, then what becomes of emptiness?

"As I consider it again and reveal the subtlest aspects of the myriad appearances, none is not my seeing."

The Buddha said, "So it is, so it is."

Then all in the great assembly who had not reached the stage beyond learning were stunned upon hearing these words of the Buddha, and could not perceive where the meaning began or ended. They were agitated and taken aback at the same time, having lost what they had adhered to.

The Thus Come One, knowing they were anxious and uneasy in spirit, let pity rise in his heart as he consoled Ananda and everyone in the great assembly. "Good people, what the unsurpassed Dharma King says is true and real. He speaks things as they are. He does not deceive. He does not lie. He is not Maskari Goshaliputra with his four kinds of non-dying theories that are deceptive and confusing. You should consider this attentively. It is no disgrace to pity or to implore."

Then Manjushri, son of the Dharma King, took pity on the four assemblies, rose from his seat in the midst of the great assembly, bowed at the Buddha's feet, placed his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the great assembly has not awakened to the principle of the Thus Come One's two-fold disclosure of the essence of seeing as being both form and emptiness and as being neither of them.

"World Honored One, if the causal form, emptiness and other phenomena mentioned above were the seeing, there should be an indication of its distance; and if they were not the seeing, there should be nothing visible to be seen. Now we do not know what is meant, and this is why we are alarmed and concerned.

"It is not that our good roots from former lives are deficient. We only hope the Thus Come One will have the great compassion to reveal exactly what all the things are and what the seeing-essence is. Is it that there is no question of 'is' or 'is not' in all of this?"

The Buddha told Manjushri and the great assembly, "To the Thus Come Ones and the great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions, who dwell in this samadhi, seeing and the conditions of seeing, as well as the characteristics of thought, are like flowers in space - fundamentally non-existent.

"This seeing and its conditions are originally the wonderful pure bright substance of Bodhi. How can one speak of 'is' and 'is not'?

"Manjushri, I now ask you: take yourself as an example, Manjushri. Is there still another

Manjushri? Is there a Manjushri who is and a Manjushri who is not?"

"So it is, World Honored One: I am truly Manjushri. There is no Manjushri who 'is.' Why? If there were still another Manjushri who 'is' Manjushri, there would be two Manjushris. But it is not that now I am not Manjushri. In fact, neither of the two characteristics 'is' and 'is not' exist."

The Buddha said, "This is not only the case with the seeing, the basic substance of wonderful Bodhi, but also with emptiness and mundane objects.

"They are basically the projections or manifestations of the wonderful brightness of unsurpassed Bodhi, the pure, perfect, true mind. They are falsely taken to be form and emptiness, as well as hearing and seeing.

"Just as with the second moon: which one 'is' the moon and which 'is not' the moon? Manjushri, there is only one true moon, and within it there is not a moon that 'is' or a moon that 'is not.'

"Therefore, now as you contemplate the seeing and the mundane things together, all the things you disclose are called false thoughts. You cannot transcend 'is' and 'is not' from within them.

"With the true essence, the wonderful enlightened bright nature, you can get beyond trying to point out or not point out."

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is truly as the Dharma King has said: the condition of enlightenment pervades the ten directions: clear, everlasting, and by nature neither produced nor extinguished. How does it differ, then, from the first brahma Kapila's teaching of the 'profound truth' or from the teaching of the ascetics who throw ashes on themselves or from the other externalist sects that say there is a 'real self' which pervades the ten directions?

"Also, in the past, the World Honored One gave a lecture on Mount Lanka explaining the principle thoroughly for the sake of Great Wisdom Bodhisattva and others: 'Externalist sects always speak of spontaneity. I speak of causes and conditions which is an entirely different principle.'

"Now as I contemplate the nature of enlightenment as spontaneous, as neither produced nor extinguished, and as apart from all empty falseness and inversion, it seems to have nothing to do with your causes and conditions or the spontaneity advocated by others. Would you please enlighten us on this point lest we should fall into deviant paths, thus enabling us to obtain the true mind, the bright nature of wonderful enlightenment?"

The Buddha told Ananda, "Now I have instructed you with such expedients in order to tell you the truth, yet you do not awaken to it but mistake it for spontaneity.

"Ananda, if it definitely were spontaneous, you should be able to distinguish the substance of the spontaneity.

"Now you look into the wonderful bright seeing. What is its self? Does the seeing take bright light as its self? Does it take darkness as its self? Does it take emptiness as its self? Does it take solid objects as its self?

"Ananda, if its self consists in light, you should not see darkness. Moreover, if it takes emptiness as the substance of its self, you should not see solid objects. Continuing in the same way, if it takes all dark appearances as its self, then when it is light, the seeing-nature is cut off and extinguished, and how can you see light?"

Ananda said, "I am certain that the nature of this wonderful seeing is not spontaneous. Now I discern that it is produced from causes and conditions. But I do not yet have it clear in my mind. I now ask the Thus Come One how this idea is consonant with the nature of causes and conditions."

The Buddha said, "You say it is causes and conditions. I ask you again: because you are now seeing, the seeing-nature manifests. Is it because of light that the seeing exists? Is it because of darkness that the seeing exists? Is it because of emptiness that the seeing exists? Is it because of solid objects that the seeing exists?

"Ananda, if light brings it into existence, you should not see darkness, and if it exists because of darkness, you should not see light. It is the same with emptiness and solid objects.

"Moreover, Ananda, does the seeing derive from the condition of light? Does the seeing derive from the condition of darkness? Does the seeing derive from the condition of emptiness? Does the seeing derive from the condition of solid objects?

"Ananda, if it exists because of the condition of emptiness, you should not see solid objects. If it exists because of the condition of solid objects, you should not see emptiness: it is the same with light and darkness.

"Thus you should know that the essential, enlightened wonderful brightness is due to neither causes nor conditions and it does not arise spontaneously.

"It is not that which is not spontaneous. It is not that it is not; nor is it that it is not not. It is not that which 'is' or 'is not.'

"Any dharma is that which is apart from all characteristics.

"Now in the midst of dharmas, how can you use your mind to make distinctions that are based on worldly sophistries, terms, and characteristics? That is like grasping at empty space with your hand: you only succeed in tiring yourself out. How could empty space possibly yield to your grasp?"

Ananda said to the Buddha, "If the nature of the wonderful enlightenment has neither causes nor conditions, then why does the World Honored One always tell the bhikshus that the nature of seeing derives from the four conditions of emptiness, brightness, the mind, and the eyes? What does that mean?"

The Buddha said, "Ananda, what I have said about all the worldly causes and conditions has

nothing to do with the primary meaning.

"Ananda, I ask you again: people in the world say, 'I can see.' What is meant by seeing? What is not seeing?"

Ananda said, "Due to the light of the sun, the moon, and lamps, people in the world can see all kinds of appearances: that is called seeing. If it were not for these three kinds of light, they would not be able to see."

"Ananda, if it is called 'not seeing' when there is no light, you should not see darkness. If in fact you do see darkness, which is none other than the lack of light, how can you say there is an absence of seeing?"

"Ananda, if, when it is dark, you call it 'not seeing' because you do not see light, then since it is now light and you do not see the characteristic of darkness, it should also be called 'not seeing.' Thus, the two characteristics would both be called 'not seeing.'"

"Although these two characteristics replace one another, your seeing-nature does not lapse for an instant. Thus you can know that there is seeing in both cases. How, then, can you say there is no seeing?"

"Therefore, Ananda, you should know that when you see light, the seeing is not the light. When you see darkness, the seeing is not the darkness. When you see emptiness, the seeing is not the emptiness. When you see solid objects, the seeing is not the solid objects."

"Having realized these four meanings, you should also know that when you see your seeing, the seeing is not the seeing to be seen. Since the former seeing is beyond the latter, the latter cannot reach it. That being the case, how can you say that your absolute intuitive perception has something to do with causes and conditions or spontaneity or that it has something to do with mixing and uniting?"

"You narrow-minded Sound Hearers are so inferior and ignorant that you are unable to penetrate through to the purity of the characteristic of reality. Now I will teach you. You should consider it well, and do not become weary or negligent on the wonderful road to Bodhi."

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is still not clear in my mind what the Buddha, the World Honored One, has explained for me and for others like me about causes and conditions, spontaneity, the characteristic of mixing and uniting, and the absence of mixing and uniting. And now to hear further that to see seeing is not seeing adds yet another layer of confusion."

"Humbly, I hope that with your vast compassion you will bestow upon us the great wisdom-eye so as to show us the bright pure enlightened mind." After saying this he wept, made obeisance, and waited to receive the holy instruction.

Then the World Honored One, out of pity for Ananda and the great assembly, began to explain extensively the wonderful path of cultivation of all samadhis of the Great Dharani.

He said to Ananda, "Although you have a strong memory, it only benefits your wide learning."



But your mind has not yet understood the subtle secret contemplation and illumination of shamatha. Listen attentively now as I explain it for you in detail.

"And may this explanation cause all those of the future who have outflows to obtain the fruition of Bodhi.

Ananda, all living beings turn on the wheel of rebirth in this world because of two upside-down discriminating false views. Wherever these views arise, revolution through the cycle of appropriate karma occurs.

"What are the two views? The first consists of the false view based on living beings' individual karma. The second consists of the false view based on living beings' collective share.

"What is meant by false views based on individual karma? Ananda, it is like a person in the world who has red cataracts on his eyes so that at night he alone sees around the lamp a circular reflection composed of layers of five colors.

"What do you think? Is the circle of light that appears around the lamp at night the lamp's colors, or is it the seeing's colors?

"Ananda, if it is the lamp's colors, why is it that someone without the disease does not see the same thing, and only the one who is diseased sees the circular reflection? If it is the seeing's colors, then the seeing has already become colored; what, then, is the circular reflection the diseased person sees to be called?

"Moreover, Ananda, if the circular reflection is in itself a thing apart from the lamp, then it would be seen around the folding screen, the curtain, the table, and the mats. If it has nothing to do with the seeing, it should not be seen by the eyes. Why is it that the person with cataracts sees the circular reflections with his eyes?

"Therefore, you should know that in fact the colors come from the lamp, and the diseased seeing brings about the reflection. Both the circular reflection and the faulty seeing are the result of the cataract. But that which sees the diseased film is not sick. Thus you should not say that it is the lamp or the seeing or that it is neither the lamp nor the seeing.

"It is like a second moon often seen when one presses on one's eye while looking up into the sky. It is neither substantial nor a reflection because it is an illusory vision caused by the pressure exerted on one's eye. Hence, a wise person should not say that the second moon is a form or not a form. Nor is it correct to say that the illusory second moon is apart from the seeing or not apart from the seeing.

"It is the same with the illusion created by the diseased eyes. You cannot say it is from the lamp or from the seeing: even less can it be said not to be from the lamp or the seeing.

"What is meant by the false view of the collective share? Ananda, in Jambudvīpa, besides the waters of the great seas, there is level land that forms some three thousand continents. East and west, throughout the entire expanse of the great continent, there are twenty-three hundred large countries. In the other, smaller continents in the seas there may be two or three hundred countries, or perhaps one or two, or perhaps thirty, forty, or fifty.

"Ananda, suppose that among them there is one small continent where there are only two countries. The people of just one of the countries together experience evil conditions. On that small continent, all the people of that country see all kinds of inauspicious things: perhaps they see two suns, perhaps they see two moons with circles, or a dark haze, or girdle-ornaments around them; or comets, shooting stars, 'ears' on the sun or moon, rainbows, secondary rainbows, and various other evil signs.

"Only the people in that country see them. The living beings in the other country from the first do not see or hear anything unusual.

"Ananda, I will now go back and forth comparing these two matters for you, to make both of them clear.

"Ananda, in the case of the living being's false view of individual karma by which he sees the appearance of a circular reflection around the lamp, the appearance seems to be real, but in the end, what is seen comes into being because of the cataracts on the eyes.

"The cataracts are the result of the weariness of the seeing rather than the products of form. However, the essence of seeing which perceives the cataracts is free from all diseases and defects. For example, you now use your eyes to look at the mountains, the rivers, the countries, and all the living beings. They are all brought about by the disease of your seeing contracted since time without beginning.

"Seeing and the conditions of seeing seem to manifest what is before you. Originally my enlightenment is bright. The seeing and conditions arise from the cataracts. Realize that the seeing arises from the cataracts: the enlightened condition of the basically enlightened bright mind has no cataracts.

"That which is aware of the faulty awareness is not diseased. It is the true perception of seeing. How can you continue to speak of feeling, hearing, knowing, and seeing?

"Therefore, you now see me and yourself and the world and all the ten kinds of living beings because of a disease in the seeing. What is aware of the disease is not diseased.

"The true essential seeing by nature has no disease. Therefore it is not what we normally call seeing.

"Ananda, let us compare the false views of those living beings' collective share with the false views of the individual karma of one person.

"The individual person with the diseased eyes is the same as the people of that one country. He sees circular reflections erroneously brought about by a disease of the seeing. The beings with a collective share see inauspicious things. In the midst of their karma of identical views arise pestilence and evils.

"Both are produced from a beginningless falsity in the seeing. It is the same in the three thousand continents of Jambudvīpa, throughout the four great seas and in the Saha World and throughout the ten directions. All countries that have outflows and all living beings are the

enlightened bright wonderful mind without outflows. Because of the false, diseased conditions that are seen, heard, felt, and known, they mix and unite in false birth, mix and unite in false death.

"If you can leave far behind all conditions which mix and unite and those which do not mix and unite, then you can also extinguish and cast out the causes of birth and death, and obtain perfect Bodhi, the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished. It is the pure clear basic mind, the everlasting fundamental enlightenment.

"Ananda, although you have already realized that the wonderfully bright basic enlightenment does not by nature come from causes and conditions and is not by nature spontaneous, you have not yet understood that the enlightened source is produced neither from mixing and uniting nor from a lack of mixing and uniting.

"Ananda, now I will once again make use of the mundane objects before you to question you. You now hold that false thoughts mix and unite with the causes and conditions of everything in the world, and you wonder whether certification to Bodhi might arise from mixing and uniting.

"Accordingly, right now, does the wonderful pure seeingessence mix with light, does it mix with darkness, does it mix with emptiness or does it mix with solid objects? If it mixes with light, look further at the light: what place there in the light before you is combined with the seeing? If you can distinguish the characteristic of seeing, what does it look like in combination?

"If it is not the seeing, how can you see the light? If it is the seeing, how can the seeing see itself?

"If it is certain that the seeing is complete, what room will there be for it to mix with the light? If the light is complete, it cannot unite and mix with the seeing.

"If seeing is different from light, then both the nature and the light lose their identity when they combine. Since the combination results in the loss of the light and the nature, it is meaningless to say it mixes with light. The same principle applies to its mixing with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects.

"Moreover, Ananda, as you are right now, once again, does the wonderful pure seeing-essence unite with light, does it unite with darkness, does it unite with emptiness, or does it unite with solid objects?

"If it unites with light, then when darkness comes the characteristic of light is extinguished, how will you be able to see darkness, since the seeing does not unite with darkness? If you do see darkness and yet at that time there is no union with darkness, but rather a union with light, then you would not have seen light. Since you would not have seen light, why is it that, when there is union with light, you are able to know clearly that it is light and not darkness?

"The same is true of its union with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects."

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, as I consider it, the source of this

wonderful enlightenment does not mix or unite with any conditioned mundane object or with the mind's speculation. Is that the case?"

The Buddha said, "Now you say further that the enlightened nature is neither mixed nor united. So now I ask you further: as to this wonderful seeing-essence's neither mixing nor uniting, does it not mix with light? Does it not mix with darkness? Does it not mix with emptiness? Does it not mix with solid objects?"

"If it does not mix with light, then between seeing and light there must be a boundary.

"Examine it further: what place is light? What place is seeing? Where are the boundaries of the seeing and the light?"

"Ananda, if there is no seeing within the boundaries of light, then there is no contact between them, and clearly one would not know where the characteristic of light is. Then how could its boundaries be realized?"

"As to its not mixing with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects, the principle is the same.

"Moreover, as to the wonderful seeing essence's neither mixing nor uniting, does it not unite with light? Does it not unite with darkness? Does it not unite with emptiness? Does it not unite with solid objects?"

"If it does not unite with light, then the seeing and the light are at odds with each other by nature, as are the ear and the light, which do not come in contact.

"Since the seeing does not know where the characteristic of light is, how can it determine clearly whether there is union?"

"As to its not uniting with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects, the principle is the same.

Amitabha! Deep into the sutras and be more wise! Thank you! See you next week!

### **Verse of Transference**

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 the resolve for Bodhi.  
And when this retribution body is over,  
Be born together in ultimate bliss.