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The Absorption That Encapsulates All Merit

Sarvapūnyasamuccayasamādhī

འཕགས་པ་བསོད་ནམས་ཐམས་ཅད་བསྐྱེད་པའི་ཏིང་ངེ་འཛིན་ཅེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa bsod nams thams cad bsdus pa'i ting nge 'dzin ces bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Absorption That Encapsulates All Merit”

Āryasarvaṇyaśamuccayasamādhināmamahāyānasūtra



Toh 134

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SUMMARY

s.1

The Absorption That Encapsulates All Merit tells the story of Vimalatejā, a strongman renowned for his physical prowess, who visits the Buddha in order to compare abilities and prove that he is the mightier of the two. He receives an unexpected, humbling riposte in the form of a teaching by the Buddha on the inconceivable magnitude of the powers of awakened beings, going well beyond mere physical strength. The discussions that then unfold—largely between the Buddha, Vimalatejā, and the bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa—touch on topics including the importance of creating merit, the centrality of learning and insight, and the question of whether renunciation entails monasticism. Above all, however, Vimalatejā is led to see that the entirety of the Great Vehicle path hinges on the practice that forms the name of the sūtra, which is nothing other than the mind of awakening (*bodhicitta*).

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INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 Like a number of other Great Vehicle sūtras, *The Absorption That Encapsulates All Merit* consists of a rich and at times disjointed amalgam of stories, teachings, and conversations. Although the sūtra begins in a seemingly historical setting in the vicinity of Vaiśālī, in the course of the narration we travel throughout our world system in times past, present, and future, as well as other world systems presided over by their respective awakened beings. Beginning in the voice of a general narrator who returns to describe supernatural events from a bird’s-eye view—earthquakes, cascading flowers, flashes of light, and the like—the text for the most part unfolds as a discussion, and thus emerges from the mouths of a cast of characters with whom we are gradually acquainted. Some of these characters are familiar: the Buddha, of course, and bodhisattvas like Mañjuśrī and Nārāyaṇa, as well as the śrāvakas Maudgalyāyana and Ānanda, who make brief guest appearances in what is largely a Great Vehicle ensemble.

The central plot surrounds the conversion and awakening of a newcomer, a “strongman” named Vimalatejā. The sūtra’s structure is framed loosely around an instruction by the Buddha that successfully converts Vimalatejā, and this instruction is the basis for the sūtra’s name.

i.2 The text commences in a typical way, with the description of a setting in India—a mansion in Āmrāpālī’s grove in the area of Vaiśālī, where the Buddha is residing with his entourage of countless human and nonhuman beings. The Buddha gives a teaching that is not spelled out in the text, but which apparently is impressive enough to prompt Nārāyaṇa to rise up and praise its orator. Nārāyaṇa, who will serve as the major interlocutor for the remainder of the text, then exhorts the Buddha to expound further; first he presents a series of supplications to the Buddha, and subsequently a series of questions.

i.3 The supplications are noteworthy in that aside from purely soteriologically oriented prayers, they also include prayers for the preservation and sustained high reputation of the Buddhist community, indicating concerns from within the tradition about the place of Buddhists within society. The twenty-three questions that follow effectively span the entirety of what is involved in bodhisattva praxis. As a response to Nārāyaṇa’s extensive list of questions, the Buddha hints at a teaching that would constitute a complete answer to each and every one of Nārāyaṇa’s inquiries, and this teaching provides the sūtra’s name. Although the Buddha says nothing more about the teaching at this point, the exchange grounds the text thematically in the topic of merit, suggesting as it does that the entire bodhisattva spiritual path stands and falls with it.

i.4 The setting of the narrative then changes from Āmrāpālī’s grove to a nearby place in the town of Vaiśālī, where the sūtra’s chief protagonist, Vimalatejā, is dwelling. Through the omnipresent narrator, we zoom in on this strongman as he is indulging in a bout of self-aggrandizement concerning his stature as a strong and powerful human being. He almost comes to the conclusion that there could be no one mightier than him in the world, before he remembers having heard of a special person named Gautama. Gautama is of course said to possess the ten strengths of an awakened being, which, if true, would certainly eclipse the merely physical and worldly might that Vimalatejā possesses. So he resolves to visit the Buddha to clear away his doubts. This sets up another major theme of the text, a playful inquiry into what it really means to be “strong.”

- i.5 On this note, the story segues back to the Buddha’s encampment in Āmrāpālī’s grove, where Vimalatejā arrives with his nose in the air. Noticing Vimalatejā’s presence and haughty attitude, the Buddha ventures into a lengthy, rather pertinent dialogue on the topic of power; although this discussion is carried out with Maudgalyāyana, it is directed entirely at Vimalatejā. The discussion consists of a set of progressively more astounding comparative descriptions that reveal the inimitable quality of the buddhas’ and bodhisattvas’ power which, as we—and Vimalatejā—come to see, is literally unrivalled in the world. Humbled and inspired to expand the scope of his own strength, which he had previously thought to be matchless, Vimalatejā then takes refuge in the Three Jewels and forms the resolve of a bodhisattva.
- i.6 This leads us back to where the previous scene left off, before it was interrupted by the arrival of the self-inflated visitor. Nārāyaṇa, the interlocutor, returns to the questions he had asked the Buddha, and reminds him that he had not yet explained exactly what was referred to by the term *the absorption that encapsulates all merit*. The Buddha graciously bestows a reply, at which point we discover that the term refers to nothing other than the mind of awakening (*bodhicitta*).
- i.7 The Buddha’s explanation then takes the form of four “introductions” to the topic at hand. These consist of another set of characteristically mind-boggling, evocative comparisons that build up to the conclusion that nothing—even within the powers of the gods Śakra and Brahma—could truly be more meritorious than engendering the mind of awakening. This effectively makes a link in very simple terms (it is fair to say that this sūtra is addressed to, and comprehended by, nonspecialists) between power, merit, and the bodhisattva endeavor. After a series of miracles, at which a huge portion of the audience forms the resolve set on awakening, an apparent first chapter comes to a close—apparent because, although all Kangyurs contain at this point the mention of a first chapter being concluded, some catalogues state that this may be an error of transcription with no thematic significance, corresponding as it does with a change of fascicles. No mention is made of subsequent chapters, as would usually be the case.¹
- i.8 Chapter 2, or the second fascicle, begins with a long dialogue between the Buddha and Vimalatejā, in which the Buddha sets out to elaborate further on the principle of merit and how it is accumulated. This discussion centers around three practices identified by the Buddha as being ideal for the accumulation of merit: generosity, discipline, and learning. These provide a systematic framework for the expression of numerous Buddhist ethical and soteriological principles, and thus this passage could be said to be the weightiest in terms of religious doctrine.
- i.9 Although the ideas within this passage are presented in fairly straightforward terms and largely in the form of mnemonic lists, they also extend beyond mere ethical behavior and delve into the Great Vehicle notion of insight (*prajñā*) into the empty nature of things. Bodhisattvas are exhorted, for instance, to become free of dualism, and such a nonconceptual mind-state will allow them to practice generosity with their own bodies. This is compared, in an evocative simile, to the way a tree allows its parts to be taken for various uses. This emphasis on insight will later be reinforced by the Buddha’s categorical statement that learning is the most crucial of the three endeavors.
- i.10 Prior to this, however, the section on the accumulation of learning in chapter 2 is noteworthy in that it provides another layer in both the plotline and thematic content of the sūtra. This occurs when the Buddha recounts a story from his past life as Great Supreme Sage, who sacrificed his own body in order to receive spiritual instruction. The recitation of this selfless action is potent enough to summon Immaculately Renowned King, a buddha from an entirely different world system, who proceeds to expound, coincidentally, on the teaching known as *the absorption that encapsulates all merit*. Thus is introduced another major theme of the text, namely the importance of undergoing hardship for the sake of the Dharma.
- i.11 The remainder of Buddha Immaculately Renowned King’s sermon is made up of another short set of mnemonic lists. After recounting these, the Buddha then articulates the moral of the story regarding the importance of fortitude in pursuing the Dharma, while also making an interesting comment about the presence of “Dharma treasures” hidden in various “mountains, mountain caverns, and trees,” which are awaiting revelation.
- i.12 The Buddha then concludes the general discussion on the three practices, identifying learning as the most crucial practice. The conversation between Vimalatejā and the Buddha, which is now firmly grounded in the topic of insight and its pursuit, then turns to the notion of “acceptance that phenomena are unborn” (*anutpattikadharmakṣānti*) and what leads to it. This could be said to be the buildup to the major turning point in the sūtra’s storyline: at the conclusion of the discussion, Vimalatejā has an epiphany that leads him to levitate high up in the air, which in turn induces the Buddha to display a

- cosmic smile that illuminates the universe. Afterward the Buddha, prompted by Ānanda, relates the key moments in Vimalatejā's past lives that brought him to where he is now, and furthermore prophesies Vimalatejā's future awakening.
- i.13 The arc of the story then segues again as Vimalatejā makes his debut as a teacher in response to a series of questions by Nārāyaṇa. In his answers, Vimalatejā demonstrates a remarkable, sudden penetration of profound Buddhist ideas, carrying the course of the discussion into the nature of nonduality and the imminence of awakened qualities within all beings. He is even led by Nārāyaṇa to comment on several challenging statements from other sūtras, such as the line, "Rely on the true meaning; do not rely on the words." Vimalatejā answers these questions with ease and is commended by the Buddha. A conversation between Nārāyaṇa and Mañjuśrī now follows, in which the latter expounds on similar themes.
- i.14 The final section shifts into a loose, communal atmosphere of shared insights, as various characters, including several new ones, chime in whenever they are inspired to make comments. First a god named Free of Demons delivers an oration that is notable for its exhortation that bodhisattvas should engage in seemingly unethical practices as part of their spiritual endeavor—even "demonic" ones—if they can do so without being polluted by them. This sets the stage for a long string of abstract and often paradoxical statements regarding bodhisattva practice that come in turn from the mouths of the Buddha, Mañjuśrī, and others. Mañjuśrī later makes a comment on the irrelevance of monasticism to the bodhisattva endeavor, reiterating that true insight should be regarded as the decisive factor as to whether or not a bodhisattva is considered a "renunciant." This would seem to suggest that the sūtra's expected audience may indeed have consisted of—or at least included—laypeople. It also suggests that the sūtra emerged from a milieu in which lay spirituality was encouraged and considered respectable. Finally the text concludes with an explanation by the Buddha on the way in which merit creates what are known as the *marks of one hundred merits*, as well as his announcement that his life will soon end.
- i.15 In this way, *The Absorption That Encapsulates All Merit* presents a relatively simplified sampling of the rich philosophy and atmosphere of Great Vehicle Buddhism, while at the same time constituting a literary work that functions on several levels. On the narrative level, it is the story of a seemingly uneducated outsider named Vimalatejā, who has a spiritual awakening and then impresses the Buddhist establishment. On another level, it is a commentary on the nature of human power and merit, which we progressively come to see are rooted in insight. It also displays evidence from within the Buddhist tradition that its adherents were concerned about the preservation and positive reputation of their cultural institution. All of this unfolds in Āmrāpālī's grove near Vaiśālī where the Buddha timelessly dwells, and the Great Vehicle teachings emerge in constant revelation.
- i.16 *The Absorption That Encapsulates All Merit* is extant in Tibetan and in two Chinese translations, but no Sanskrit version is known to have survived. The Tibetan version was translated from Sanskrit by Prajñāvarman, Śīlendrabodhi, Yeshé Dé, "and others," in the late eighth or early ninth centuries. Although it is not one of the best known sūtras, it is quoted in at least two Indian treatises in the Tengyur, and citations of several different passages appear in a number of Tibetan commentaries.

THE TRANSLATION

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra

The Absorption That Encapsulates All Merit

Chapter 1

- 1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!
- 1.2 Thus have I heard at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling in Vaiśālī in the mansion in Āmrāpālī's great grove, together with a great assembly of ten thousand monks. All these monks were foe-destroyers whose defilements were exhausted. They were without afflictions and controlled. Their minds were perfectly free, their insight perfectly liberated. They were noble beings, great elephants, successful and accomplished. They had laid down their burden and fulfilled their aims. They had eliminated the bondages of existence and, thanks to their correct knowledge, their minds were perfectly liberated. They had obtained supreme perfection in mastering all mental states.
- 1.3 There were also twenty thousand bodhisattvas, all of whom were nonreturners. These bodhisattvas had accomplished retention and were unhindered in their eloquence. They had attained the superknowledges and were adept in the practice of absorption. They had perfect mastery, moreover, in mindfulness, intelligence, realization, steadfastness, insight, and method. Foremost among these twenty thousand were the bodhisattva great being Caryamati, the bodhisattva great being Simhamati, the bodhisattva great being Uttaramati, the bodhisattva great being Viśeṣamati, the bodhisattva great being Vardamānamati, [F.71.a] the bodhisattva great being Anantamati, the bodhisattva great being Dharmamati, the bodhisattva great being Maitreya, the bodhisattva great being Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, and the bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa. Together with them were forty thousand gods, all of whom were thoroughly immersed in the Great Vehicle, as well as Śakra, Brahmā, and many world protectors. Surrounded and revered by this retinue of many hundreds of thousands, the Blessed One taught the Dharma. On this occasion, the Blessed One's teaching was particularly pithy and overwhelmed the masses of non-Buddhists.
- 1.4 Afterward the bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa rose up from his seat, draped his shawl over one shoulder, and knelt on his right knee. With his palms together, he bowed toward the Blessed One and supplicated him as follows.
“Blessed One, this teaching of yours is exceedingly pithy. It is exquisite indeed, and overwhelms everyone, including misguided non-Buddhists, the countless wandering mendicants, and the naked ascetics. Accordingly, Blessed One, please take the bodhisattva great beings under your care, please give your aid to the bodhisattva great beings, and please keep the bodhisattva great beings in your protection. Please arouse the bodhisattva great beings' roots of goodness. Please exalt the bodhisattva great beings, delight them, and instruct them thoroughly. Please look after the Buddha's legacy, the continuity of the bodhisattva great beings' spiritual tradition. [F.71.b]
- 1.5 “Please do not forsake sentient beings. Please show the path by which, with the aid of the teachings, one may pass beyond suffering. Please ensure that even though the thus-gone ones pass beyond suffering, the bodhisattva great beings do not stray from unsurpassed and perfectly complete awakening—that they do not stray at all. Please ensure that they always meet the Buddha, that they hear the Dharma, and that

- the Saṅgha is honored. Please ensure that they have mindfulness so as to not become forgetful, that they have intelligence so as to realize the intended meaning of the teachings, and that they become realized so as to accomplish realization of the truth. Please ensure that they have a sense of conscience in order to purify their minds, and that they have the keen sense of modesty they need in order to give up all negative actions. Please ensure that they have the steadfastness necessary for perfect conduct and religious observance. Please ensure that they have the bravery with which to eradicate their afflictions, and that they have the fortitude to be free of anxiety in the midst of any assembly.
- 1.6 “Blessed One, how come the bodhisattva great beings do not diminish in merit, in spirituality, in insight, and in wisdom? How do they become sufficiently stable in their altruism to prevent their mind of awakening from decreasing? How do they keep a solid sense of kinship with beings all the way through until they finally pass beyond suffering? How do they practice what they preach? How do they live for the sake of practicing the Buddha’s teachings in all their completeness, and thus without deceiving beings? How can they engage in every type of giving, and thus attain the untaught generosity? How can they live by the purity of the three sets of vows, and thus attain the untaught discipline? [F.72.a]
- 1.7 “How can they, with no malevolence in their minds, remain impartial toward all beings, and thus attain the untaught patience? How can they accomplish all their aims with an indefatigable attitude, and thus attain the untaught diligence? How can they become skilled in mindfulness and vigilance, and, without dwelling in any type of concentration, absorption, or equipoise, attain the untaught concentration? How can they be free of any viewpoint, and, as they attain illumination regarding all the Buddha’s teachings, achieve the untaught wisdom? How can they exert themselves unrelentingly in attracting beings using the four means of drawing them in, and thus become exceedingly magnetizing? How can they endeavor to engage mentally with the transience of the life of gods and humans, and thus become free of expectations? How can they be as steadfast as a doorsill as they set their minds on omniscience itself and stay free of the wish to be a śrāvaka or solitary buddha?
- 1.8 “How can they stay under the influence of the Dharma and not the influence of their desires? How can they strive for the dominion of the Dharma rather than the dominion of humans and gods? How do they expound on the teachings using the words prescribed by the Buddha? How can they sustain themselves on the Dharma and not on material things? How can they become free of desire to possess anything? How can they be without enmity toward any being and thus become free of anger? How can they free themselves from the darkness of delusion regarding all phenomena and thus become free of delusion? How can they free themselves of the subsidiary disturbing emotions and thus genuinely transcend all demons? How can they become skilled in all the various ways of dedicating merit and thus gain skill in methods?”
- 1.9 The Blessed One then answered the bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa, lord of the trichiliocosm, “Excellent, Nārāyaṇa, excellent. It is excellent of you to have thought to ask such a question of the Thus-Gone One for the sake of the bodhisattvas. [F.72.b] Accordingly, Nārāyaṇa, you should listen carefully and keep in mind what I am about to say. I will now explain how the bodhisattva great beings can attain all these particular qualities as well as others.”
- The bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa said, “Wonderful, Blessed One!” He then listened attentively, as the Blessed One had advised him.
- 1.10 The Blessed One began, “Nārāyaṇa, there is something known as the bodhisattva great beings’ *absorption that encapsulates all merit*. Based on it, bodhisattva great beings’ merit will not be depleted, their dharmas will not diminish, their insight will not diminish, and their wisdom will not diminish. They will always meet the Buddha, hear the Dharma, and the Saṅgha will be honored. Based on it, they will be able to exert themselves in the four means of magnetizing, live by not forsaking any being, and become skilled in the various ways of dedicating merit, thus gaining skill in method. These and other special qualities will they attain.”
- In this way, the Blessed One merely uttered the phrase *absorption that encapsulates all merit*, but did not describe it any further.
- 1.11 Living in Vaiśālī at that time was a mighty strongman named Vimalatejā. Now he began to think to himself, “I am someone who has the great strength that comes with being a mighty and powerful strongman. Among the beings in this world, there does not seem to be anyone who rivals me in power or vigor, so who could be superior to me, I wonder?”

He continued to ponder, “The monk Gautama is said to have a great deal of power. It is said that his power consists of the ten strengths, and that he has a body like that of Nārāyaṇa.” He then thought, “I should go find this monk Gautama. [F.73.a] That way I can really make a comparison of this ‘Blessed One’ and myself, and resolve my doubts.”

1.12 So the mighty strongman Vimalatejā left the great city of Vaiśālī and went to the mansion in Āmrāpālī’s great grove. There was the Thus-Gone One, the foe-destroyer, the completely perfect Buddha, surrounded and revered by his hundred-thousandfold retinue. Vimalatejā saw the great power with which the Buddha taught the Dharma. In his magnificent beauty the Buddha seemed like the lofty king of mountains in the midst of the ocean, and Vimalatejā could not stop looking at him. As soon as he laid eyes on the Blessed One, he felt pleased, delighted, and overjoyed. In this state, he touched the Blessed One’s feet, circled him, and then sat off to one side. He bowed—though to the Blessed One only—and with his palms together at his head, sat there with his attention on the Blessed One.

1.13 The Blessed One realized that the mighty strongman Vimalatejā’s state of mind was sincere. In order to tame Vimalatejā’s pride, self-importance, and arrogance, he asked the elder, great Maudgalyāyana, “Go and fetch me the arrow I shot for the sake of the Śākya maiden Gopā when I was a bodhisattva.”

The venerable Maudgalyāyana then replied to the Blessed One, “Where is that arrow? I do not see it.”

1.14 At that moment the Blessed One emitted a light known as *Illumination* from his right hand. This light illuminated the entire great trichiliocosm, and then it lit up the place where the arrow was, at the outer periphery of this buddhafiield. [F.73.b]

The Blessed One said to the venerable great Maudgalyāyana, “Do you see that arrow at the outer periphery of the world system?”

He replied, “Blessed One, yes, I do see it.”

“So, Maudgalyāyana, go and fetch it.”

“Certainly, Blessed One,” he replied.

1.15 Following the Blessed One’s orders, the venerable great Maudgalyāyana vanished in front of the entire assembly. And immediately, in one instant, one moment—like the span of time it takes a strong person to stretch out and retract his arm—he had retrieved the arrow from the outer periphery of the world system. He gave it to the Blessed One, and asked, “Blessed One, was the strength with which the Bodhisattva shot this arrow hereditary or miraculous?”

The Blessed One said, “Maudgalyāyana, the strength with which I shot it was hereditary; it was not shot with any miraculous strength. If it had been shot with miraculous power, Maudgalyāyana, it could have traveled infinitely to any of the countless universes.”

1.16 Maudgalyāyana said, “Blessed One, please describe the hereditary strength you had as a bodhisattva great being, which emerged out of the ripening of your merit.”

The Blessed One explained, “Maudgalyāyana, the strength of ten men is the same as the strength of one ox. The strength of ten oxen is the same as the strength of one blue ox. The strength of ten blue oxen is the same as the strength of one ordinary elephant. The strength of ten ordinary elephants is the same as the strength of one fearsome elephant. The strength of ten fearsome elephants is the same as the strength of one elephant akin to a female elephant. The strength of ten elephants akin to female elephants is the same as the strength of one wild elephant. [F.74.a] The strength of ten wild elephants is the same as the strength of one elephant from the Vindhya Mountains. The strength of ten elephants from the Vindhya Mountains is the same as the strength of one blade-claw elephant. The strength of ten blade-claw elephants is the same as the strength of one Īśādhāra elephant.

1.17 “The strength of ten Īśādhāra elephants is the same as the strength of one collyrium-colored elephant. The strength of ten collyrium-colored elephants is the same as the strength of one battle elephant. The strength of ten battle elephants is the same as the strength of one blue elephant. The strength of ten blue elephants is the same as the strength of one yellow elephant. The strength of ten yellow elephants is the same as the strength of one red elephant. The strength of ten red elephants is the same as the strength of one gray elephant. The strength of ten gray elephants is the same as the strength of one white water-lily elephant. The strength of ten white water-lily elephants is the same as the strength of one white-lotus elephant. The strength of ten white-lotus elephants is the same as the strength of one red-lotus elephant. The strength of ten red-lotus elephants is the same as the strength of one elephant in rut. The strength of ten elephants in rut is the same as the strength of one great elephant in rut.

1.18 “The strength of ten great elephants in rut is the same as the strength of one clever maned lion. The strength of ten clever maned lions is the same as the strength of one strongman. The strength of ten strongmen is the same as the strength of one mighty strongman. The strength of ten mighty strongmen is

the same as the strength of one man of supreme might. The strength of ten men of supreme might is the same as the strength of one man of incredibly supreme might. The strength of ten men of incredibly supreme might is the same as the strength of one dominant man. [F.74.b] The strength of ten dominant men is the same as the strength of one incredibly dominant man. The strength of ten incredibly dominant men is the same as the strength of one celestial god. The strength of ten celestial gods is the same as the strength of one god who dwells in the immeasurable palace. The strength of ten gods dwelling in the immeasurable palace is the same as the strength of one Īṣādhāra god. The strength of ten Īṣādhāra gods is the same as the strength of one Garland Bearer god.

1.19 “The strength of ten Garland Bearer gods is the same as the strength of one Ever Ecstatic god. The strength of ten Ever Ecstatic gods is the same as the strength of one god from the classes of the Four Great Kings. The strength of all gods from the classes of the Four Great Kings is the same as the strength of one Kubera. The strength of ten Kuberas is the same as the strength of one god from the Heaven of the Thirty-three. The strength of ten gods from the Heaven of the Thirty-three is the same as the strength of one Śakra, lord of the gods. The strength of ten Śakras, lord of the gods, is the same as the strength of one god from the Heaven Free of Strife.

1.20 “The strength of all the gods from the Heaven Free of Strife is the same as the strength of one god from the Heaven Entirely Free of Strife. The strength of ten gods from the Heaven Entirely Free of Strife is the same as the strength of one god from the Joyous Heaven. The strength of all the gods in the Joyous Heaven is the same as the strength of one of the kings of the gods in the Wholly Joyous Heaven. The strength of ten of the kings of gods in the Wholly Joyous Heaven is the same as the strength of one god from Delighting in Emanations. The strength of all the gods in Delighting in Emanations is the same as the strength of one of the kings of the gods in Supreme Emanations. The strength of ten of the kings of the gods in Supreme Emanations is the same as the strength of one god in Mastery Over Others’ Emanations. The strength of all the gods in Mastery Over Others’ Emanations is the same as the strength of one Vaśavartin.

1.21 “The strength of ten Vaśavartins is the same as the strength of one god of the demonic legions. [F.75.a] The strength of all the gods of the demonic legions is the same as the strength of one Wicked Demon. The strength of ten Wicked Demons is the same as the strength of one half-Nārāyaṇa. The strength of ten half-Nārāyaṇas is the same as the strength of one Nārāyaṇa. The strength of ten Nārāyaṇas is the same as the strength of one great Nārāyaṇa. The strength of ten great Nārāyaṇas is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for one hundred eons. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for one hundred eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for one thousand eons. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for one thousand eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for ten thousand eons. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for ten thousand eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for one hundred thousand eons. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for one hundred thousand eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for one million eons.

1.22 “The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for one million eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for ten million eons. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for ten million eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for one hundred million eons. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for one hundred million eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for one billion eons. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for one billion eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for ten billion eons. [F.75.b] The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for ten billion eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for one hundred billion eons. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for one hundred billion eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for one trillion eons. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for one trillion eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for ten trillion eons.

1.23 “The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for ten trillion eons is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who has been definitively emerged for one hundred trillion eons. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have been definitively emerged for one hundred trillion eons is the same

- as the strength of one bodhisattva who has achieved acceptance that phenomena are unborn. The strength of ten bodhisattvas who have achieved acceptance that phenomena are unborn is the same as the strength of one bodhisattva who dwells on the levels and has taken his or her last existence.
- 1.24 “Maudgalyāyana, with that sort of strength, as soon as such a bodhisattva great being takes birth, he or she will take seven steps. Maudgalyāyana, if the blessed buddhas who dwell in other universes did not consecrate the worlds where those bodhisattvas live with an adamant nature, the uppermost 68,000 leagues of the earth’s surface in those world systems would be demolished when the bodhisattva took those seven steps after being born. Moreover, a surge from the body of water below, the size of a chariot axle, would bore through the earth and spring up above. Through the buddhas’ power, nonetheless, the earth is not destroyed, and no being is harmed. Such is the power, speed, strength, and ability of a bodhisattva great being in his or her last existence, immediately after birth. [F.76.a]
- 1.25 “Maudgalyāyana, the strength of a bodhisattva great being in his or her last existence, immediately after birth, multiplied by ten, is the strength of a bodhisattva great being who has reached the prime of youth. A bodhisattva great being who possesses such strength then travels to the seat of awakening in order to awaken to complete buddhahood. As much power as that bodhisattva great being has before going to the seat of awakening, it is one hundred thousand times greater once he or she goes there, and through such power enters the seat of awakening.
- 1.26 “However, even greater than that is the limitless, immeasurable, indescribable, and inconceivable power with which he or she then truly and fully awakens to unsurpassed and perfectly complete buddhahood. Maudgalyāyana, say every being in every universe had the wish to awaken to complete buddhahood and that they all had the power of bodhisattvas. Such combined power would not measure up to a hundred thousandth of a single instance of the power that the thus-gone ones have to understand what is true or false. Indeed no analogy could be given for that power. It is by attaining such power that one becomes a thus-gone one, a foe-destroyer, a completely perfect buddha in possession of the ten powers.
- 1.27 “Maudgalyāyana, a bodhisattva’s power is comprised of the ripening of his or her roots of virtue from the past, no less and no more. It is neither miraculous nor magical. What sort of miraculous power does a bodhisattva great being possess? It is such that the bodhisattva is able to fit as many countless, infinite worlds as there are grains of sand in the Ganges into a single pore of skin on his big toe, without squashing even a single being. The bodhisattva great beings’ magical and miraculous powers, in this way, are truly boundless, inconceivable, unparalleled, and innumerable. The thus-gone ones are incomparable. [F.76.b]
- 1.28 “Maudgalyāyana, if the powers of the thus-gone ones were displayed, even you would not believe them, let alone other people. Maudgalyāyana, when a bodhisattva ventures to the seat of awakening, the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind become one and are consecrated as the element of space. Therefore the earth is not damaged, nor are any beings harmed.”
- 1.29 The mighty strongman Vimalatejā was astounded upon hearing what the Thus-Gone One had said about the bodhisattvas’ hereditary power; he was amazed and so delighted that he got goosebumps. Rising from his seat, he draped his shawl over one shoulder and knelt on his right knee. With his palms together, he bowed toward the Blessed One.
- He said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, upon hearing from the Blessed One about the power of the bodhisattvas, my pride and arrogance were humbled; indeed they have vanished entirely. Blessed One, I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha of monks. I set my mind as well on unsurpassed and perfectly complete awakening for the aid and welfare of all sentient beings. May I also attain precisely the same ten powers as the thus-gone ones, the foe-destroyers, the completely perfect buddhas.”
- 1.30 Upon hearing the mighty Vimalatejā utter these words, ten thousand gods set their resolve on unsurpassed and perfectly complete awakening, saying, “Blessed One, on this occasion, may we, too, come to possess precisely the same powers as the thus-gone ones, the foe-destroyers, the completely perfect buddhas.”
- 1.31 The bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa now asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, what is this *absorption that encapsulates all merit*, of which you uttered the name but said nothing more? [F.77.a] Blessed One, please explain this *absorption that encapsulates all merit* so that bodhisattvas can indeed attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.”

- 1.32 The Blessed One then answered the bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa, lord of the trichiliocosm, “Nārāyaṇa, there is no bodhisattva great being who forms the resolve toward unsurpassed and perfectly complete awakening without also taking possession of this absorption that encapsulates all merit. How is this? Because the arousal of the mind of awakening gathers together and includes all that is meritorious. Nārāyaṇa, consider how every spring, pool, pond, river, stream, lake, and waterhole is gathered together and included in the ocean. In the same way, Nārāyaṇa, everything that could possibly be meritorious—whether it comes about through generosity, through discipline, or through meditation, whether it is defiled or undefiled, mundane or transcendent, the meritorious actions of gods or humans—all of these are gathered together and included within the mind of awakening. Therefore, Nārāyaṇa, the son or daughter of noble family who wishes to gain possession of everything meritorious should arouse the mind of unsurpassed and perfectly complete awakening.
- 1.33 “Nārāyaṇa, consider the trichiliocosm. It gathers together and includes all the great jewel mountains, Meru and Mahāmeru, Mucilinda and Mahāmucilinda, Cakravāla and Mahācakravāla, [F.77.b] as well as black mountains, grasses, shrubs, herbs, forests, villages, cities, towns, countries, kingdoms, royal palaces, the continent of Jambudvīpa, the eastern continent of Videha, the western continent of Godānīya, the northern continent of Uttarakuru, four-continent world systems, thousandfold world systems, millionfold world systems, great billionfold world systems, the desire realm, the form realm, the formless realm, the moon, the sun, the planets, and the stars, all of this, up to and including the billionfold four-continent world systems.
- 1.34 “In the same way, Nārāyaṇa, the initial moment a bodhisattva great being arouses the mind of awakening gathers together and includes every possible merit—the merit of ordinary beings, the merit from training, the merit not from training, the merit of solitary buddhas, and the merit of bodhisattvas. From these descriptions, Nārāyaṇa, you should understand how those beings who form the resolve toward unsurpassed and completely perfect awakening come to possess all merit.
- 1.35 “Nārāyaṇa, aside from those who have genuinely entered the Great Vehicle, the wheel-bearing monarch is said to have the most superior merit and insight among the beings in the world system of four continents. Imagine, Nārāyaṇa, that every being in the four-continent world system were now to acquire as much merit as a wheel-bearing monarch. If each and every being acquired precisely the same amount of merit as the wheel-bearing monarch, [F.78.a] Nārāyaṇa, what do you think? Which quantity of merit is greater?”
- Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa then replied, “Blessed One, if a single wheel-bearing monarch’s quantity of merit is indeed so immense, what can I possibly say about that of all those innumerable beings?”
- 1.36 The Blessed One continued, “Nārāyaṇa, imagine you brought together as many beings as there are in a great trichiliocosm, and that each and every one acquired a wheel-bearing monarch’s quantity of merit. Or, let alone as many beings as there are in a great trichiliocosm acquiring a wheel-bearing monarch’s quantity of merit, Nārāyaṇa, what if all the beings in as many great trichiliocosms as there are grains of sand in the Ganges acquired a wheel-bearing monarch’s quantity of merit? What do you think, Nārāyaṇa? Would those beings have an even greater quantity of merit?”
- The bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa responded, “Blessed One, if the merit of even one being with a quantity of merit on par with a wheel-bearing monarch is immeasurable and fathomless, what can I possibly say about innumerable beings who all have a wheel-bearing monarch’s quantity of merit?”
- 1.37 The Blessed One then said, “Nārāyaṇa, please pay heed and understand this well. The quantity of merit that a bodhisattva who arouses the mind of awakening for the first time comes to possess is far greater still, immeasurably greater. A wheel-bearing monarch’s quantity of merit is not even a hundredth the amount of that, in fact not even a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, a billionth, a ten billionth, or even a trillionth. Such a bodhisattva’s quantity of merit defies any description in terms of number, fraction, quantity, analogy, or causality. Nārāyaṇa, this was the first introduction to the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 1.38 “Furthermore, Nārāyaṇa, say that Brahmā, [F.78.b] lord of the thousandfold universe, extended love throughout the thousandfold universe. What do you think, Nārāyaṇa? Say, on the other hand, some people made a gift of the seven precious substances filling the entire thousandfold universe. Which quantity of merit is greater—the amount of merit from such a gift, or that of Brahmā from engendering such love?”
- Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa answered, “Blessed One, Brahmā’s quantity of merit is much greater. Forget about the merit from the gift.”

- 1.39 “Nārāyaṇa, set aside the quantity of merit of Brahmā, lord of the thousandfold universe. Consider this, Nārāyaṇa. Imagine that Brahmā as lord of a millionfold universe extended love throughout that millionfold universe. On the other hand, Nārāyaṇa, say some people made a gift of the seven precious substances filling an entire millionfold universe. Which quantity of merit would be greater—the amount of merit from such a gift, or that of Brahmā?”
- Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa replied, “Blessed One, the quantity of merit associated with the love of Brahmā, lord of the millionfold universe, would be much greater. Forget about the merit from the gift.”
- 1.40 “Nārāyaṇa, set aside the quantity of merit of Brahmā, lord of the millionfold universe. Consider this, Nārāyaṇa. Imagine that Brahmā as lord of a great billionfold universe extended love throughout that billionfold universe. On the other hand, Nārāyaṇa, say some people made a gift of the seven precious substances filling that entire great billionfold universe. Nārāyaṇa, which quantity of merit would be greater—that of the gift, or Great Brahmā’s love?”
- The bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa replied, “Blessed One, the quantity of merit made through the gift does not match even one hundredth of the amount of merit made by Great Brahmā in engendering such love. Indeed it bears no comparison.” [F.79.a]
- 1.41 The Blessed One said, “Nārāyaṇa, set aside the quantity of merit made by Great Brahmā, lord of the great billionfold universe, in engendering love. Say you brought all the beings in the great trichiliocosm together, and all of them had the quantity of merit made by engendering the meditation of Great Brahmā’s love. The amount of merit of all those beings would still be far less than the quantity of merit made by a bodhisattva who first aroused the mind of awakening, and then, embracing an attitude of altruism, strove to liberate all beings, while practicing great love and great compassion without hypocrisy or pretense. In that case, Brahmā’s quantity of merit would not match even one hundredth of that of the bodhisattva; it does not even bear comparison. Nārāyaṇa, in this way, the quantity of merit of bodhisattva great beings who first give rise to the mind of awakening is unfathomable.
- “From these descriptions, too, Nārāyaṇa, you should understand how a son or daughter of noble family who has set—or will set—their resolve on unsurpassed and perfectly complete awakening gathers together all merit. This, Nārāyaṇa, was the second introduction to the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 1.42 “Nārāyaṇa, tell me, how many world systems are there in the eastern direction? In the southern direction? The western? The northern? Below? Above? How many world systems are to be found in all ten directions?”
- The bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa replied, “Blessed One, the amount is unfathomable. Blissful One, it is unfathomable. The number of world systems in the ten directions could not be expressed or conveyed.” [F.79.b]
- 1.43 The Blessed One said, “Nārāyaṇa, even if we had one hundred thousand eons to try, using analogies, to demonstrate how many world systems there are in all ten directions, it would not be easy. Nonetheless, Nārāyaṇa, I will use an analogy in order to communicate this point, and in order that the absorption that encapsulates all merit may be brought to perfection, and in order that beings who desire merit may be granted a basis for obtaining that, and in order that the great diligence of beings on the vehicle of bodhisattvas may be brought to perfection.
- 1.44 “Nārāyaṇa, say that some people filled this great trichiliocosm—from the mass of water up to the summit of existence—with mustard seeds. Next, Nārāyaṇa, imagine that you then passed through as many world systems toward the east as there are mustard seeds. Each time you did that, you would remove one mustard seed. Even if in this way you finished all the mustard seeds, you still would not reach the limit of the world systems in the eastern direction. We could say the same about the southern direction, the western direction, the northern direction, the direction below, above, or indeed any of the ten directions.
- 1.45 “Nārāyaṇa, say that the same number of world systems as there are grains of sand in the Ganges were all filled with mustard seeds, and that some people took those individual seeds and split each single one into as many pieces as there were seeds. What do you think, Nārāyaṇa, could you count those seed fragments until you arrived at the total number?”
- Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa replied, “Blessed One, even if the beings on all four continents became like Śāriputra and had an eon in which to count them, they would not be able to arrive at the total number of pieces of one single seed, no need to mention the pieces of all the seeds.”

- 1.46 “Nārāyaṇa, imagine now that some people were to remove one piece of a mustard seed each time one of these people would pass through as many world systems in the eastern direction as there are pieces of a mustard seed. [F.80.a] Nārāyaṇa, even if in this way they finished all the seed pieces, they still would not reach the total number of world systems in the eastern direction. We could say the same about the southern direction, the western direction, the northern direction, below, above, or indeed any of the ten directions.
- 1.47 “Nārāyaṇa, imagine similarly that some people filled the entirety of space that pervades all the world systems in the ten directions with the seven precious items, and made a gift of them. What do you think, Nārāyaṇa—based on that, would those people create a lot of merit?”
Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa answered, “Blessed One, it would be unfathomable. Blissful One, it would be unfathomable.”
- 1.48 The Blessed One declared, “Nārāyaṇa, the gathered amount of merit produced through such a gift, as much as it may be, is still not even one hundredth of, and bears no comparison to, the amount of merit amassed by a bodhisattva great being who has first given rise to the mind of awakening and then, with a perfectly altruistic attitude free of hypocrisy or pretense, practices great love and compassion in pursuit of the liberation of all beings. Nārāyaṇa, just like the space element pervades everything that has material form, in the same way, Nārāyaṇa, the bodhisattva’s love pervades the world systems in all ten directions, as well as all buddha realms, as many as there are. The bodhisattva’s love extends out as well to all the beings present in those world systems.
- 1.49 “Now, say you took all the beings in those realms together, and each possessed a wheel-bearing monarch’s quantity of merit, or otherwise the amount of merit possessed by Śakra or Brahmā. [F.80.b] Still far greater than this is the quantity of merit gathered when the seven steps are taken by a bodhisattva who is immersed in altruism, without hypocrisy or pretense, striving to liberate beings, engrossed in great compassion, and established in great love. Even if all beings possessed the amount of merit of a wheel-bearing monarch, or Śakra or Brahmā, it would not be on a par with this. Nārāyaṇa, this was the third introduction to the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 1.50 “Moreover, Nārāyaṇa, even if all beings included in the great billionfold universe had the same amount of merit as a wheel-bearing monarch, their collected merit would still not match one hundredth of the quantity of merit possessed by Śakra; it would not even bear comparison. Nārāyaṇa, even if all beings included in the great billionfold universe had the same amount of merit as Śakra, their collected merit would still not match one hundredth of the amount of merit possessed by Great Brahmā; it would not even bear comparison. Nārāyaṇa, even if all beings contained in the great billionfold universe had the same amount of merit as Great Brahmā, their collected merit would still not match one hundredth of the amount of merit possessed by Layman Kṛṣṇa; it would not even bear comparison. Nārāyaṇa, even if all beings contained in the great billionfold universe had the same amount of merit as Layman Kṛṣṇa, their collected insight, wisdom, and merit would still not match one hundredth of the amount possessed by Śāriputra; it would not even bear comparison.
- 1.51 “Nārāyaṇa, even if all beings contained in the great billionfold universe [F.81.a] had the same amount of insight, wisdom, and merit as Śāriputra, their collected insight, wisdom, and merit would still not match one hundredth of the quantity possessed by a solitary buddha; it would not even bear comparison. Nārāyaṇa, even if all beings contained in the great billionfold universe had as much insight, wisdom, and merit as a solitary buddha, their collected insight, wisdom, and merit would still not match one hundredth of the amount possessed by a bodhisattva great being who has been definitively emerged for five hundred eons; it would not even bear comparison. We could continue this way. Nārāyaṇa, this was the fourth introduction to the absorption that encapsulates all merit.”
- 1.52 As this sermon was expounded, 32,000 people formed the resolve set on unsurpassed and completely perfect enlightenment. The great trichiliocosm system also shook in six ways. The music of human and divine instruments sounded, and a shower of human and divine flowers fell in clouds, until the whole earth was knee-deep in those clouds of flowers. And in unison, gods, humans, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, demigods, garuḍas, kimnaras, mahoragas, Śakra, Brahmā, and the world protectors, all spoke these words:
- 1.53 “Blessed One, we are outdone by those sons or daughters of noble family who have formed, who form, and those who will form the resolve set on unsurpassed and perfectly complete awakening. Blessed One, we will work for the sake of those beings. According to our understanding of what the Blessed One has

said, anyone who does not set out toward unsurpassed and completely perfect awakening [F.81.b] will not manifest out of the absorption that encapsulates all merit, nor will any of them genuinely immerse themselves in that absorption that encapsulates all merit. On the other hand, Blessed One, anyone who forms the resolve set on unsurpassed and completely perfect awakening will certainly manifest out of the absorption that encapsulates all merit, and become genuinely immersed in that absorption that encapsulates all merit.”

This concludes the first chapter. [B.2]

Chapter 2

- 2.1 Then the mighty strongman Vimalatejā inquired of the Blessed One, “Blessed One, what are the instructions for attaining this absorption that encapsulates all merit?”
- The Blessed One replied to the mighty strongman Vimalatejā, “Son of noble family, there is one single instruction for attaining this absorption that encapsulates all merit. What is it? It is to not forsake the omniscient mind. Son of noble family, through this instruction alone will one attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 2.2 “Son of noble family, there could also be said to be two instructions for attaining the absorption that encapsulates all merit. What are these two? They are to be unrelenting in seeking out oral instructions, and to assimilate those instructions correctly, just as one hears them. Son of noble family, through these two instructions will one attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 2.3 “Moreover, son of noble family, there could be said to be three instructions for attaining the absorption that encapsulates all merit. What are these three? They are to give up negativity, to bring about positive qualities, and to be skilled in dedicating merit. Son of noble family, through these three instructions [F.82.a] will one attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 2.4 “Son of noble family, there could also be said to be four instructions for attaining the absorption that encapsulates all merit. What are these four? Purity in discipline, purity in view, purity in mind, and purity in insight. Son of noble family, through these four instructions will one attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 2.5 “Son of noble family, there could also be said to be five instructions for attaining the absorption that encapsulates all merit. What are these five? To embrace awakening altruistically; to speak honestly always; to be without hypocrisy; to be free of envy; and to have an attitude of impartiality toward all beings. Son of noble family, through these five instructions will one attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 2.6 “Son of noble family, there could also be said to be six instructions for attaining the absorption that encapsulates all merit. What are these six? To study under a spiritual guide; to give up negative companions; not to be a community leader; to dwell in isolated places; not to give up great love; and to engender great compassion toward all beings. Son of noble family, through these six instructions will one attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 2.7 “Son of noble family, there could also be said to be seven instructions for attaining the absorption that encapsulates all merit. What are these seven? To exert oneself in tranquility; to be skilled in insight; to have comprehension of causes; to be expert in dependent origination; to reach genuine accomplishment; to exert oneself in the path of accumulations; and to be assiduous in training on the path. Son of noble family, through these seven instructions will one attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 2.8 “Son of noble family, [F.82.b] there could also be said to be eight instructions for attaining the absorption that encapsulates all merit. What are these eight? To make one’s body pliable; to make one’s mind pliable; to have discernment of sensations; to scrutinize phenomena; to avoid giving rise to negative and unwholesome qualities; to give up the negative and unwholesome qualities that have already come

- about; to engender wholesome qualities that have not yet come about; and to constantly maintain and refine wholesome qualities that have come about. Son of noble family, through these eight instructions will one attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 2.9 “Son of noble family, there could also be said to be nine instructions for attaining the absorption that encapsulates all merit. What are these nine? To discern the unending nature of the past, the unending nature of the future, and the unending nature of what is occurring in the present; to discern illusory phenomena; to comprehend the sameness of the three times; to gain spiritual acceptance of how phenomena truly are; not to abandon emptiness; to familiarize oneself with the absence of marks and thereby become free of expectations; and to take rebirth intentionally. Son of noble family, through these nine instructions will one attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 2.10 “Son of noble family, there could also be said to be ten instructions for attaining the absorption that encapsulates all merit. What are these ten? To have interest in the absence of self; to accept the absence of a soul; to be fully convinced about the absence of persons; to have trust in impermanence; to perceive all rebirths as though they were hellish states; to perceive the aggregates as though they were executioners; to perceive the elements as though they were poisonous snakes; to perceive the sense bases as though they were vacant cities; to perceive existences with an attitude of renunciation; and to perceive the gateways to liberation with a sense of familiarity. Son of noble family, through these ten instructions [F.83.a] will one attain the absorption that encapsulates all merit.”
- 2.11 The mighty strongman Vimalatejā then said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, those bodhisattva great beings who seek to gather an accumulation of merit correctly will listen to this absorption that encapsulates all merit. Those bodhisattva great beings who seek to increase their merit will listen to this absorption that encapsulates all merit. Those bodhisattva great beings who seek to attain an inconceivable amount of merit will listen and devote themselves to this absorption that encapsulates all merit. Those bodhisattva great beings who seek to attain inexhaustible merit will exert themselves in this absorption. Those bodhisattva great beings who seek to attain an ocean of merit will take up this absorption; they will uphold it, read it, and explain it. Those bodhisattva great beings who seek to acquire the ‘marks of one hundred merits’ will exert themselves in the practice of meditating on this absorption.”
- 2.12 The mighty strongman Vimalatejā then continued his questions to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, how is it that a bodhisattva great being should endeavor in order to perfect such qualities as these—inexhaustible merit, ocean-like merit, inconceivable merit, the accumulation of merit, and the marks of one hundred merits?”
- The Blessed One answered the strongman Vimalatejā, “Son of noble family, there are three things that constitute the foundation of merit, the accumulation of merit, [F.83.b] the gathering of merit, the expansion of merit, the inexhaustibility of merit, inconceivable merit, and ocean-like merit. What are these three? They are the accumulations of generosity, discipline, and learning.
- 2.13 “Son of noble family, how should bodhisattva great beings endeavor in accumulating generosity, you ask? Son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should not accept anything unless they can imagine giving it away and have an attitude of generosity toward it. They should not keep any possession unless they are willing to give it away. They should not keep any attendants or any retinue that creates a feeling of attachment when others ask for it. Bodhisattvas should not accept a kingdom that they would be unable to give away when others ask for it. They should not accept any such things, whether enjoyments, wealth, material objects, or precious items, whatever they may be.
- 2.14 “Furthermore, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should think in this way: ‘I will give this very body of mine away to all beings, and if I can give this away, what need to mention external, material things?’ And also: ‘If there is anyone who could make use of anything I have, I will give that thing to that being, without any resentment or regret. I will give my arms to those who want arms, my legs to those who want legs, and my eyes to those who want eyes. I will give away my flesh to those who want flesh, my blood to those who want blood, my marrow to those who want marrow, all parts of my body to those who want them, and even my head to those who want a head. Of course the same thing goes for physical possessions such as my wealth, [F.84.a] grain, gold, silver, gems, jewelry, horses, elephants, chariots, riding mounts, villages, cities, towns, countries, kingdoms, palaces, marketplaces, mountain hamlets, male and female servants, employees, sons, daughters, wives, or retinue.

- 2.15 “Furthermore, if there is anyone whose aims could be met with anything that I may have, I will give it to that being; I will give it away without any sense of resentment or regret, nor any hope for reward. I will do so no matter what. Beyond this, I will do nothing but help beings, be compassionate and loving to them, and work to bring them together. May I reach awakening, and then do everything so that these beings realize all dharmas.’ Son of noble family, any bodhisattva who arouses such an attitude is truly a bodhisattva.
- 2.16 “In addition, son of noble family, bodhisattvas have no concern for life or limb. Even at the cost of their lives, they will not become involved with any negative actions. They will not sustain themselves through any sort of wicked sustenance in order to nourish their physical bodies. They will not become angry with anyone, even at the cost of their lives. They will not become involved in anything unwholesome for the sake of valuables. They will not instigate fights and quarrels for the sake of attendants and retinue. They will not deceive others for the sake of their wives, sons, or daughters. They will not develop a covetous or greedy attitude toward others’ valuables. Since they have few desires, they do not give rise to even one moment of an unwholesome mind-state, let alone many moments.
- 2.17 “Endeavoring in this way, they leave behind intense desire and attachment. Leaving behind intense desire and attachment, they stop pursuing ambitions. [F.84.b] When they do not pursue ambitions, they strive in what is genuine. Striving in what is genuine, they attain genuine progress. Once they make genuine progress, they will remain in genuine practice. When they abide in the genuine, they will please the genuine spiritual guides, so that they can follow, keep company with, and serve them. Following, keeping company with, and serving the spiritual guides in this way, they learn from them the teachings of genuine certainty. Learning these teachings, moreover, they will put them into practice. Then, having entered into the genuine Dharma, they can help all beings who are immersed in mistaken practices. Endeavoring to help beings, they will no longer fall into mistakenness. Once they are immersed in what is right, they will become expert in beings’ various superior and inferior capacities, and correct and incorrect ways of understanding. Son of noble family, in this way, bodhisattvas who engage in the accumulation of generosity will attain extraordinary qualities of this kind.
- 2.18 “Furthermore, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should perceive inner and outer phenomena as one, and not perceive them dualistically. There is no duality between what constitutes the element of earth internally and what constitutes the earth element externally; it should not be dualized. How so, you may ask? This body is like grass, a tree, a wall, or the scenery along a road: it is inactive, actionless, inanimate, insubstantial, and composed of elements. If someone were to cut it, chop it, or strike it with a cudgel, sword, stick, or lump of dirt, one should not give rise to the idea, ‘I am experiencing this.’ One should not be concerned about one’s body, nor attached to one’s life. Moreover, not only should one keep the resolve not to have harsh or angry feelings toward such beings, [F.85.a] one should have an attitude of loving kindness for them as well.
- 2.19 “Son of noble family, take the analogy of a medicinal tree. Say a part of its roots are taken, or its trunk, or branches, or bark, or leaves, or flowers, or fruits, or core. It does not have such thoughts as, ‘You can take from my roots but not my trunk,’ or ‘You can take from my trunk but not my roots,’ or ‘You can take from my branches but not my leaves,’ or ‘You can take from my leaves but not my branches.’ Nor does it think, ‘You can take from my twigs, flowers, fruits, bark, and core, but not from what is not my core,’ or ‘You can take from what is not my core, but not from my core.’ Indeed the medicinal tree forms no such thoughts whatsoever.
- 2.20 “Nonetheless, while being free of concepts, the medicinal tree heals people from grave, medium, or lesser maladies. In the same way, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should see their bodies, made of the four major elements, as being like medicinal trees: whatever any being needs, they should let them take it. They let those in need of arms take their arms, those in need of legs take their legs, those in need of eyes take their eyes, those in need of meat take their flesh, those in need of blood take their blood, those in need of bones take their bones, those in need of marrow take their marrow, those in need of a head take their head, or those in need of all their limbs and organs take them all.
- 2.21 “Son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings who think in this way, with such an accumulation of generosity, emerge definitively through their inexhaustible merit. When these bodhisattva great beings give something, they dedicate the act entirely so that miserly beings may develop consummate generosity. They dedicate it entirely so that destitute beings may achieve great prosperity. [F.85.b] When they give away all their limbs and organs, they dedicate the merit so that all beings might possess all their limbs and organs intact.

- 2.22 “There are, nonetheless, three things to which they will never dedicate an act of generosity. What are these three? They will never dedicate it toward attaining the gratification of desire, political gain, wealth, or power. They will never dedicate it so that they themselves may acquire merit. They will never dedicate it in order to attain the state of a śrāvaka or a solitary buddha.
- 2.23 “When they practice generosity, they dedicate the act of giving toward perfecting four types of purification. What are these four types of purification to be perfected? They dedicate their generosity toward the purification of the buddhafi elds. They dedicate it to the purification of the community of bodhisattvas. They dedicate it toward bringing all beings to maturity. They dedicate it toward purifying omniscient wisdom. That is how bodhisattva great beings dedicate their generosity toward the perfection of four types of purification.
- 2.24 “Furthermore, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings stabilize their generosity and do not let it become exhausted. How might the bodhisattvas’ generosity become exhausted, you ask? Son of noble family, the generosity of bodhisattvas will become exhausted if it is associated with four traits. What are these four? Not dedicating; lacking skill in method; aiming for lower rebirths; and associating with negative companions. Son of noble family, the generosity of bodhisattvas will become exhausted if it is associated with these four traits.
- 2.25 “On the other hand, son of noble family, [F.86.a] if the generosity of bodhisattva great beings is associated with four other traits, it will be stabilized and not become exhausted. What are these four? To fully dedicate the act toward unsurpassed and completely perfect awakening; to be skilled in method; to strive for spiritual dominion; and to follow a spiritual guide. Son of noble family, the generosity of bodhisattva great beings will be stabilized and not become exhausted if it is associated with these four traits.
- 2.26 “Moreover, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings practice generosity while actualizing four things. What are these four? Not to give up the mind of awakening; to be loving to beings; not to go against the word of the thus-gone ones; and not to hope for a reward from the ripening of one’s spiritual or material generosity. Son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should practice generosity while actualizing these four things.
- 2.27 “Furthermore, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should practice generosity to establish beings in three things. What are these three? To establish all beings in awakening; to establish them in the Dharma teachings; and to establish all beings in unsurpassed happiness. Son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should practice generosity to establish beings in these three things.
- 2.28 “In addition, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should practice generosity in pursuit of two things. What are these two? Great prosperity and a generous attitude. Bodhisattva great beings should practice generosity in pursuit of these two things.
- “Moreover, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should practice generosity to abandon two things. What are these two? Attachment [F.86b] and stinginess. Son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should practice generosity to abandon these two things.
- 2.29 “Furthermore, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should practice generosity in order to perfect two things. What are these two? Insight and wisdom. Son of noble family, in order to perfect these two things should bodhisattva great beings practice generosity.
- “Moreover, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should practice generosity in order to attain two things. What are these two? Knowledge of extinction, and knowledge of nonarising. Son of noble family, in order to attain these two things should bodhisattvas practice generosity.
- 2.30 “In addition, son of noble family, any act of generosity carried out by a bodhisattva may be of four kinds. What four? Generosity with an impartial attitude; generosity without expecting reward in the form of ripening; generosity dedicated to awakening; and generosity that perfects gentleness, calmness, and tranquility. Son of noble family, these four ways of giving constitute the bodhisattva great beings’ ways of generosity.
- “Therefore, son of noble family, a bodhisattva who wishes to manifest inexhaustible merit should endeavor in these sorts of accumulations of generosity.”
- 2.31 The mighty strongman Vimalatejā then said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, the way the Thus-Gone One has expounded on the accumulation of generosity so that others can apprehend all buddhadharmas is truly marvelous. Blessed One, those bodhisattva great beings who possess such an accumulation of generosity as this will not diminish in merit, will not diminish in wisdom, [F.87.a] nor will they diminish in insight.”

- 2.32 The Blessed One replied, “Indeed, son of noble family. It is just as you have said. Those bodhisattva great beings who possess such an accumulation of generosity as this manifest inexhaustible and ocean-like merit. Since they possess noble qualities, they will not fall destitute. Since they possess the lineage of Dharma, they will also be prosperous. Since they possess the seven riches, they will also be wealthy. Since they have the marks of one hundred merits, they possess great merit as well. Since they nurture all beings, they are also a field of merit.”
- 2.33 The Blessed One then continued to address the mighty strongman Vimalatejā, “Son of noble family, what is the bodhisattvas’ accumulation of discipline, you ask? It is not to let discipline deteriorate and not to give up the training. It is to have compassion for those with faulty discipline, and sincere respect for those who are disciplined. It is to carry out and follow the path of the ten virtuous deeds correctly—with purity in regard to the three physical disciplines, with purity in regard to the four verbal disciplines, and with purity in regard to the three mental disciplines—as well as leading others to this path and establishing others in it.
- 2.34 “It is not to praise oneself; not to belittle others; to embody the various types of discipline; not to be conceited about one’s discipline; not to lose one’s endeavor; not to stray from the qualities of an ascetic or from having few possessions; to preserve the lineage of the noble ones; to guard one’s mind; not to find fault in others’ confusion; not to do anything negative; to feel aversion for the unfolding of existence; to lead others into the roots of virtue; [F.87.b] to rejoice in others’ deeds; not to have the character of a pleasure-seeker; not to abandon life in solitude; to assist those who are unwell and be pleased and joyous to do so; to follow one’s words with actions; to be tolerant of those who are disrespectful; and not to become full of oneself when people are respectful, nor arrogant or discouraged when meeting with gain or loss, fame or disrepute, praise or slander, pleasure or pain.
- 2.35 “It is to give up attachment and anger; not to hold grudges; to stay loving at all times without ever stopping; to keep an impartial attitude toward both friends and enemies; not to cling to the component of discipline as supreme; not to dedicate one’s merit toward other vehicles; not to pay homage to other gods; to be free of any type of view; to quell both latent and manifest afflictions; to give up regret; to be free of remorse; to delight in giving everything away; to be free from attachment to any mode of birth; to take rebirth in existence intentionally; to be tolerant of the unpleasant; to apply diligence; to take hold of the mind; to be undistracted from the object of one’s observation; to be accepting of and not intimidated by the unborn nature of phenomena. Son of noble family, such is the bodhisattvas’ accumulation of discipline.
- 2.36 “With this accumulation of discipline as a foundation, they do not lapse in their training, even if it costs them their lives. They do not maintain discipline for the sake of gaining political authority. They do not maintain discipline to reach the higher realms, the state of Śakra, or the state of Brahmā; not for wealth, not for power, not for caste, not for fame, not for renown, acclaim, or to be eulogized; [F.88.a] not to gain anything, not to garner respect, not to prolong their lives, not for clothing, not for food, not for bedding or cushions, not to be cured of an ailment, and not for medicines. They do not maintain discipline based on the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or body. They do not maintain discipline based on form, sound, smell, taste, texture, or mental phenomena. They do not maintain discipline based on form, feeling, perception, formation, or consciousness.
- 2.37 “They do not maintain discipline based on the desire realm. They do not maintain discipline based on the form realm. They do not maintain discipline based on the formless realm. They do not maintain discipline out of fear of becoming a hell being. They do not maintain discipline out of fear of taking birth as an animal. They do not maintain discipline out of fear of, and to seek a refuge from, the world of the Lord of Death. They do not maintain discipline out of fear of being a poor human being. They do not maintain discipline out of fear of being a poor god, or being a poor nāga, yakṣa, divine spirit, demigod, garuḍa, kimnara, or mahoraga.
- 2.38 “They do, however, maintain discipline in order to preserve the Buddha’s tradition. They maintain discipline to preserve the lineage of the Buddha, to preserve the lineage of the Dharma, and to preserve the lineage of the Saṅgha. They maintain discipline in order to transcend birth, aging, sickness, death, pain, lamentation, suffering, mental dissatisfaction, and strife. They maintain discipline out of the wish to liberate all beings. [F.88.b] They maintain discipline out of the wish to bring aid, happiness, fulfillment, and welfare to all beings. They maintain discipline out of the wish to preserve the Buddha’s teachings. They maintain discipline out of the wish that the wheel of Dharma be turned. They maintain discipline out

- of the wish that the Saṅgha of noble ones be assembled. They maintain discipline wishing that the lineage of the Buddha be unbroken, wishing that the lineage of the Dharma be unbroken, and wishing that the lineage of the Saṅgha be unbroken.
- 2.39 “They maintain discipline out of the wish to participate in the lineage of noble ones. They maintain discipline out of the wish for divine superknowledge, out of the wish for absorption, out of the wish for insight, out of the wish for liberation, and out of the wish to perceive the wisdom of liberation. They maintain discipline out of the wish for miraculous powers, and out of the wish for magical powers. This type of discipline is unimpaired, undamaged, uncorrupted, undistorted, stable, self-reliant, perfected, well considered, unsullied, unblemished, immaculate, fragrant, extolled by the wise, praised by all buddhas, free of defect, and constitutes the essential spiritual practice in accord with the Dharma.
- 2.40 “In possession of this component of discipline, there are ten things from which they will not fall away. What are those ten things? They will not fall away from the dominion of the wheel-bearing monarch, while at the same time conscientiously striving for awakening. They will not fall away from the state of Śakra, while at the same time conscientiously striving for awakening, and wishing only to behold the buddhas. They will not fall away from the state of Brahmā, while still conscientiously striving for awakening. They will not fall away from beholding the Buddha, as they have attained faith based on understanding. [F.89.a] They will not fall away from hearing the Dharma, as they put the teachings into practice assiduously just as they have learned them. They will not fall away from understanding of the bodhisattva vow. They will not fall away from unabated confidence, as they seek to understand everything with regard to the roots of virtue. They will not fall away from concentration. They will not fall away from being extolled by all the buddhas, solitary buddhas, śrāvakas, and bodhisattvas. They will not fall away from attaining swift superknowledge and perfecting the wisdom of omniscience. Bodhisattva great beings who possess this component of discipline will not fall away from these ten things.
- 2.41 “Bodhisattva great beings who are established in the component of discipline in this way are forever revered by the gods, always extolled by nāgas, perpetually honored by yakṣas, always worshipped by gandharvas, and constantly venerated by the lord of nāgas and by demigods. They are always respected by the ruling caste, priests, merchants, and householders. The wise always hasten to their presence. The buddhas always keep them in mind. The whole world, including the gods, forever reveres them as teachers. And they have constant love for all beings.
- 2.42 “Bodhisattva great beings who genuinely uphold the component of discipline in this way will not migrate into four states. Which four states? They will not migrate to the unfree states, unless it is in order to bring beings to maturity. They will not migrate to states in buddhafiels where no buddha dwells. They will not migrate to states of birth in families that have wrong views. [F.89.b] They will not migrate to any of the lower states. It is thus that bodhisattva great beings who genuinely and properly uphold the component of discipline will not migrate to these four states.
- 2.43 “Moreover, bodhisattva great beings who genuinely uphold the component of discipline in this way will not deviate from four things. What are those four things? They will not deviate whatsoever from the mind of complete awakening. They will not deviate from recollecting the Buddha. They will not deviate whatsoever from the Dharma, which they have learned and mastered. They will not deviate whatsoever from remembering the incalculable eons. In this way, bodhisattva great beings who genuinely uphold the component of discipline will not deviate from these four things.
- 2.44 “Furthermore, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings who genuinely uphold the component of discipline in this way will not end up in four dangers. What four dangers? They will not end up in danger related to the sacred Dharma. They will not end up in the intermediate eon of weapons. They will not end up in the intermediate eon of famine. They will not end up in the intermediate eon of disease. In this way, son of noble family, the bodhisattva great beings who genuinely uphold the component of discipline will not end up in these four dangers.
- 2.45 “In addition, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings who abide by the component of discipline in this way will attain four exalted states. Which four states? Freedom from deception with regard to the blessed ones, the buddhas; freedom from deception with regard to gods; freedom from deception with regard to sentient beings; and freedom from deception with regard to their own mind. Thus will bodhisattva great beings who abide by the component of discipline attain these four exalted states. [F.90.a]
- 2.46 “Moreover, son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings who abide by the component of discipline in this way will pass genuinely beyond ten dangers. Which ten dangers? They will pass genuinely beyond the danger of ending up as hell beings. They will pass genuinely beyond the danger of taking birth as animals.

- They will pass genuinely beyond the danger of the world of the Lord of Death. They will pass genuinely beyond the danger of being destitute. They will pass genuinely beyond the danger of not being extolled, renowned, famous, acclaimed, and eulogized. They will pass genuinely beyond the danger of being ensnared by demons. They will pass genuinely beyond the danger of the convictions of a śrāvaka or solitary buddha. They will pass genuinely beyond the danger of gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, demigods, garuḍas, kimnaras, mahoragas, kumbhāṇḍas, and rākṣasas. They will pass genuinely beyond dangers related to poison, weapons, fire, and water. They will pass genuinely beyond dangers related to lions, tigers, snakes, bears, hyenas, leopards, dogs, foxes, sea monsters, crocodiles, alligators, wildcats, rats, scorpions, centipedes, venomous snakes, kings, and robbers. In this way, bodhisattva great beings who abide by the component of discipline will pass genuinely beyond these ten dangers.
- 2.47 “Son of noble family, discipline is the foundation of a buddha’s qualities. The qualities of awakening and buddhahood have their basis in the component of discipline. Whoever has discipline also has absorption. Whoever has discipline also has insight. Whoever has discipline also has liberation. Whoever has discipline also has perceived the wisdom of liberation.
- 2.48 “Son of noble family, [F.90.b] what is the discipline that pacifies the afflictions? And why are the afflictions so called? Because of the way they afflict, and since they afflict beings in the three realms in this way, they are called afflictions. What, then, constitutes their pacification? When there is no thinking, no conceptualization, no imputation, no movement, no arising, no ideation, no mental involvement—this is the pacification of the afflictions.
- 2.49 “Son of noble family, those bodhisattva great beings who do not know how to pacify the afflictions do not have a component of discipline that is utterly pure. Why is that? Because they might be able to end up in the realm of Brahmā, but still will be left with afflictions. They might be able to end up at the summit of existence, but they still will be left with afflictions. Therefore, son of noble family, you should understand through these descriptions that, in this way, anyone who is without the afflictions of the three realms also has a pure component of discipline.”
- 2.50 Then the mighty strongman Vimalatejā inquired of the Blessed One, “Blessed One, if it is indeed the case that one who lacks the afflictions of the three realms has a pure component of discipline, then, Blessed One, how is it that a bodhisattva who is free of afflictions aspires to the three realms?”
- 2.51 The Blessed One answered the mighty strongman Vimalatejā, “Son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings do not aspire to the three realms in order to become afflicted. Son of noble family, certain beings who are not truly afflicted in their nature will nevertheless undergo the process of affliction in the three realms in order to bring beings to maturity; this is the bodhisattvas’ method. It is like this, son of noble family: [F.91.a] imagine someone trying to paint an array of vivid images in the air. What do you think, son of noble family, would it involve some difficulty for that person to do so?”
- 2.52 Vimalatejā replied, “Indeed it would, Blessed One. Indeed it would, Bliss-Gone One. Such a person would indeed have difficulty in doing that.”
- 2.53 The Blessed One continued, “Son of noble family, certain bodhisattvas who are not truly afflicted in their nature will nevertheless undergo the process of affliction in the three realms in order to bring beings to maturity. While they bring those beings to maturity, they teach the three vehicles. This involves far more difficulty.”
- 2.54 Vimalatejā replied, “Blessed One, those bodhisattva great beings who have perceived the gate of liberation, yet out of their love for beings remain in the three realms, must indeed have great compassion. It is analogous, Blessed One, to a person who first escapes his own threatened execution and then returns to the place where execution was threatened, telling the executioners, ‘Don’t kill anyone else! Kill me instead!’ Blessed One, in this analogy the place where execution was threatened represents the three realms. Being executed represents remaining in the world.² The threatening executioners represent the formations. Being rid of the threat of execution represents the bodhisattva great beings being free from the three realms, while in fact, in order to bring all beings to maturity and in order to liberate all beings, they continue to do nothing but roam in those three realms.
- 2.55 “Blessed One, by engendering a mindset of great compassion, bodhisattva great beings outshine all the śrāvakas and solitary buddhas. On what account? Blessed One, on account of the fact that the śrāvakas and solitary buddhas do not have such great compassion, nor such expertise in methods.” [F.91.b]

- 2.56 The Blessed One now said to the mighty strongman Vimalatejā, “Son of noble family, how should bodhisattva great beings exert themselves in the accumulation of learning? And how should they strive in learning? Son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings should humble their pride before their preceptors and instructors, and compliantly engender a mindset of revering, respecting, admiring, and cherishing the teacher. In this way, they should regard the teachings as medicine. They should regard their preceptors and instructors as consultants. They should regard themselves as sick people. They should regard the one who bestows the Dharma instructions as a doctor. They should regard all beings as being ill.
- 2.57 “In pursuit of the Buddha’s teachings, they should have no concern for their physical well-being, nor should they have any special attachment to their lives. They should regard various possessions as utter encumbrances. They should not develop attachment for being wealthy. They should focus on the Dharma and give up all valuables. They should forsake all worldly people in order to apprehend the sacred teachings and their meaning. Seeking only spiritual achievement, they should forsake gain, respect, and eulogy. Seeking only spiritual dominion, they should forsake political authority. They should seek to give up all afflictions and exert themselves in pursuing the sacred Dharma. Bodhisattva great beings who uphold the sacred Dharma gain possession of all roots of virtue. Therefore, son of noble family, those who seek awakening, who wish to awaken fully to completely perfect buddhahood, [F.92.a] and who wish to erect the pillars of insight, should exert themselves in learning.
- 2.58 “Son of noble family, it is like this. Consider the way that due to the pillars that support the Palace of Victory, the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-three have a gathering place. In the same way, son of noble family, the pillars of insight are upheld through the strength of learning, making a gathering place for the whole world, including bodhisattva great beings and gods. Son of noble family, bodhisattvas who form the resolve set on awakening vow to be a bodhisattva, saying, ‘May I become a buddha.’ However, unless they exert themselves in pursuit of learning, they will be participating in the distortion of all beings’ insight.
- 2.59 “Son of noble family, when a bodhisattva great being endeavors to exert himself in the pursuit of learning, it becomes a support for all beings to perfect their insight. On these occasions, even the gods delight and rejoice in it, proclaiming, ‘Ah! This sublime being—with his mind purified through learning, diligence, and insight—will be able to achieve the ten powers! Ah! This sublime being will be able to cut entirely through the whole incessant web of affliction with the sword of insight. Ah! This sublime being will be able to teach the Dharma so that all beings may be rid of their afflictions. Ah! This sublime being will be able to dwell at the seat of awakening, where the victorious ones of the past resided. Ah! This sublime being will be able to vanquish the hordes of demons, and even their mounts. Ah! This bodhisattva will be able to turn the Dharma wheel with its twelve aspects!’
- 2.60 “Son of noble family, when a bodhisattva exerts himself in learning the Dharma, then, son of noble family, the abodes of the demons fall into gloom. At the same time, all the evil demons and deities of the demonic legions throughout the great trichilocosm [F.92.b] experience pain and despondency, thinking, ‘This being is not in our control. We have no power over him. He will totally destroy us. He has control over us.’
- 2.61 Why is this? Because with such learning, son of noble family, one develops insight. With insight, the afflictions are pacified. Without afflictions, demons have no ingress. With learning comes understanding. With understanding, one pursues the Dharma in the correct way. When one exerts oneself in genuine pursuit of the Dharma, evil demons will have no ingress. With learning, one is freed of wrong views and engenders the genuine view. When one is immersed in what is genuine, demons have no ingress. Immersed in what is genuine, one comes to understand the meaning and becomes invulnerable. Seeking the true, one genuinely pursues that truth.
- 2.62 “Son of noble family, you should understand from these descriptions how bodhisattva great beings, who exert themselves in extensive learning, become able to vanquish the four demons. What are the four demons? The demon of the aggregates, the demon of the afflictions, the demon of the lord of death, and the demon of the god—these are the four demons will they be able to vanquish.
- 2.63 “Moreover, son of noble family, let me relate to you just a little of the way bodhisattvas of the past, who strove for and pursued the Dharma, endeavored in learning. Son of noble family, once, an immeasurably and inconceivably long time ago—immeasurably further back than an incalculable eon—there lived a great sage by the name Supreme One. He was an eminent sage who dwelt in the forests, woods, and mountains, possessed the five superknowledges, and lived his life totally out of love and compassion. [F.93.a]

- 2.64 “One day, as he was staying in the woods, he began to ponder, ‘The fact that I live my life by love does not seem to make anyone happy. It seems love cannot pacify the attachment, anger, or delusion of beings, nor any of the afflictions they have accrued over the course of infinite eons. Love does not seem to lead to the genuine view of the noble ones.’ He then continued to wonder, ‘So where does the genuine view of the noble ones come from?’ And then the idea came to him: ‘There seem to be two causes, two conditions that lead to the genuine view of the noble ones. What are those two factors? Others’ words, and one’s own correct mental engagement. These must be the two causes, the two conditions that lead to the genuine view of the noble ones.’ He then resolved to exert himself in quest of the Dharma, with the thought, ‘Now, where will I find the sublime teachings?’
- 2.65 “His ardent spiritual quest for the Dharma led him throughout many villages, cities, towns, countries, kingdoms, and palaces. Despite his efforts, he could not find anyone preaching the Dharma. Then there appeared before him a god from the demonic legions. Advancing directly in front of the sage, the god announced, ‘I have in my possession a verse about the names of the Buddha, which was spoken by one buddha among the blessed buddhas.’
- “Then speak it,’ the sage answered.
- “The god replied, ‘For that you will have to peel off your own skin and dry it in the sun to make paper out of it. Then create an ink formed from your blood, and a pen from one of your bones. If you can do that, you may request from me this verse spoken by the Buddha, and I will bestow it on you.’
- 2.66 “Son of noble family, then the great sage Supreme One thought to himself, ‘Since time immemorial in cyclic existence, [F.93.b] for hundreds of thousands of eons, this body of mine has committed faults one rebirth after the next, taking all kinds of birth. And how many hundreds of thousands of hardships have I had to endure—at the hands of enemies and murderers, or by thieves and royal henchmen, having all my body parts sliced and chopped into many pieces with sharp knives, and having been slashed, bound, beaten, and menaced, all for the sake of desire or greed. And through all this, all of these bodies and all of these experiences I have undergone have done nothing to benefit even a single being. Now that with this worthless body I may acquire the Dharma—what a wonderful opportunity I have!’
- 2.67 “Delighted and full of joy, he engendered the perception of that god as his instructor, and with a sharp knife skinned his own body and dried it in the sun to make paper. He drew blood from his own body and used it to concoct ink. Finally he fashioned a pen from one of his bones, and then with his palms together addressed the god: ‘Divine being, please tell me the verse spoken by the Buddha that summarizes the names of the Buddha. I have done whatever you commanded. I have skinned my own body and dried it to make paper. I have concocted ink from my own blood. I have fashioned a pen from my own bones.’
- “At that moment, son of noble family, faced with the great sage Supreme One’s devotion and eagerness, that god of the demonic legions became ashamed and vanished on the spot.
- 2.68 “Son of noble family, witnessing the god vanish at that moment, the great sage Supreme One thought to himself, ‘Although I have not been able to hear that verse, it was to be able to hear it that, out of devotion to the Dharma, I peeled the skin from my own body, dried it to make paper, concocted ink from my own blood, and pulled out one of my own bones to make a pen. The root of virtue garnered through such an act of devotion to the Dharma will not be wasted; it will not fail. [F.94.a] I did not succeed, but out of altruism and without hypocrisy, I engendered compassion for beings and made paper of my own skin, ink from my blood, and a pen from my bone without concern for life and limb. Thus, through whatever truth and honest words may be in my devotion to the Dharma, through such truth and honest words, may all the great beings who teach and expound on the Dharma, whether in this world or another, please reveal themselves to me, and allow me to hear the Dharma!’
- 2.69 “Son of noble family, as soon as the great sage Supreme One had said this, at that very moment, at that very instant, at that very second, his words were known in a world system thirty-two buddhafi elds below this one known as Totally Immaculate. There dwelt the Thus-Gone One, the foe-destroyer, the completely perfect Buddha Immaculately Renowned King. He lived there, flourished there, and taught the Dharma. Knowing the great sage Supreme One’s pure intentions and perceiving, too, the maturity of the beings in this world, the Thus-Gone One Immaculately Renowned King immediately vanished from that realm along with five hundred bodhisattvas.
- 2.70 “At that very moment, in that very instant, in that very second, as quickly as a strong person can stretch out his arm and draw it in, they appeared before the great sage Supreme One. As soon as the Blessed One, thus-gone one, the foe-destroyer, the completely perfect Buddha Immaculately Renowned

- King appeared there, the woods were instantaneously filled with an immense glow, and a rain of flowers fell. At the same time, the sound of Dharma teachings rang out from all the branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits in the forest. [F.94.b] At the same time, many trillions of gods assembled.
- 2.71 “As soon as the glow from the Blessed One, the thus-gone one Immaculately Renowned King struck the great sage Supreme One, his wounds and gashes disappeared, and his body and complexion were restored to their normal state. Then the great sage Supreme One bowed his head to the feet of the Blessed One, the thus-gone one, the foe-destroyer, the completely perfect Buddha known as Immaculately Renowned King. He circumambulated the Blessed One three times and then, putting his palms together above his head, all ten fingers touching each other, he said to the Thus-Gone One Immaculately Renowned King, ‘I take the Blessed One as my guide. I take the Blissful One as my guide. I take refuge in the Blessed One, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha of monks. Blessed one, please teach me the Dharma, and by any means, I will learn it and thereby dispel the darkness of wrong views of misguided beings with faulty views, becoming myself a teacher of the Dharma of the genuine view. Blissful One, please teach me the Dharma!’
- 2.72 “It was then, son of noble family, that the Thus-Gone One Immaculately Renowned King gave a teaching that commenced with this absorption that encapsulates all merit for those gods and bodhisattvas, with the great sage Supreme One at their head. Among the audience of gods, there were eight thousand who had previously refined the roots of virtue, who now formed the resolve set on unsurpassed and completely perfect awakening. The great sage Supreme One himself felt tremendous happiness, delight, and elation, and achieved indestructible courage. Such was the teaching that was given. [B.3]
- 2.73 “That Blessed One then also taught the following eight adamant statements: [F.95.a]
- ‘All phenomena are devoid of afflictions and thus pure.
- ‘All phenomena are completely bereft of all defilements and thus undefiled.
- ‘All phenomena are genuinely beyond any basis and thus baseless.
- ‘All phenomena are nondual and thus without gateway.
- ‘All phenomena have been shown in all ways to be gateways to liberation and are thus gateways in all ways.
- ‘All phenomena are without going and thus without transference.
- ‘All phenomena are entirely bereft of all going and thus without going.
- ‘All phenomena are indivisible into past, present, and future, and thus are the equality of the three times.’
- “The blessed one Immaculately Renowned King taught these eight adamant statements so that all phenomena may be ascertained.
- 2.74 “Similarly excellent are these eight statements on the gateways to dharmas so that bodhisattva great beings do not become dullwitted:
- ‘Naming them is a gateway to all phenomena, because it establishes all kinds of gateways.
- ‘Words are a gateway to all dharmas because they are uttered by different voices.
- ‘Signs are a gateway to all dharmas because all phenomena are beyond fixation.
- ‘Their cognition is a gateway to all dharmas because they are hollow, empty, and void.
- ‘Their essential self-existence is a gateway to all dharmas because they have no essential self-existence.
- ‘Their exhaustion is a gateway to all dharmas because it is the absence of anything.
- ‘Imputations are a gateway to all dharmas because imputations do not arise.
- ‘Their sameness is a gateway to all dharmas because it is their single taste.’
- “These supreme statements on the gateways to dharmas are taught so that bodhisattva great beings do not become dullwitted.
- 2.75 “Similarly excellent are these eight seed phrases, which lead to inexhaustible eloquence:
- ‘The seed phrase *Supreme a* teaches how all phenomena are primordially [95b] non-originating.

- ‘The seed phrase *supreme pa* teaches all phenomena from the ultimate perspective.
- ‘The seed phrase *supreme na* teaches the comprehension of the name and form of all phenomena.
- ‘The seed phrase *supreme da* teaches the calming and pacification of all phenomena.
- ‘The seed phrase *supreme sa* teaches transcendence of all phenomena.
- ‘The seed phrase *supreme ta* teaches the indivisibility of all phenomena within suchness.
- ‘The seed phrase *supreme ka* teaches the exhaustion of all phenomena.
- ‘The seed phrase *supreme ma* teaches the way all phenomena are bereft of middle and extremes.’
- “These eight supreme seed phrases lead to inexhaustible eloquence.
- 2.76 “Thus one should endeavor in equanimity and with mindfulness and awareness to apply these eight seed phrases, eight statements on the gateways to dharmas, and eight adamantine statements. One should endeavor in correct discernment with behavior that is never frivolous. And one should endeavor always to seek and pursue what is wholesome.
- 2.77 “Son of noble family, this was the way the Blessed One, the thus-gone one Immaculately Renowned King responded to the request for statements about the Dharma. In doing so, he illuminated and sent tremors through the world system. He then vanished along with the bodhisattvas, only to reappear at the same moment, the same instant, the same second, in his own buddhfield. There was no sign of him leaving from or arriving in those buddhfields.
- 2.78 “Son of noble family, on that occasion, the great sage Supreme One achieved indestructible eloquence. Attaining perfect recall as well, he obtained the protection of the deities. Protected by the deities, he was able to subdue hostile demonic forces. And so he traveled through various villages, cities, towns, countries, kingdoms, and palaces, teaching the Dharma to others. [F.96.a] In this way, he elucidated and expounded extensively on this absorption that encapsulates all merit.
- 2.79 “For one thousand years he taught the Dharma. He matured 84,000 beings to the level of śrāvaka, 84,000 beings to the level of solitary buddha, 84,000 beings to the level of unsurpassed and completely perfect awakening, 84,000 beings to the level of wheel-bearing monarch, 84,000 beings to the level of Śakra, and 84,000 beings to the level of Brahmā. He established 84,000 beings in the meditation of love, 84,000 beings in the meditation of compassion, 84,000 beings in the meditation of joy, and 84,000 beings in the meditation of equanimity. He led an unfathomable number of beings to advance to the higher realms. Eventually, when the great sage Supreme One passed away, he and 84,000 gods were reborn together in the Totally Immaculate world system, the buddhfield of the thus-gone one, the foe-destroyer, the completely perfect buddha Immaculately Renowned King.
- 2.80 “Son of noble family, in case you have hesitations, reservations, or doubt that Great Supreme Sage might be someone else, do not harbor them. Because it was I who at that time, in those days, was the great sage Supreme One. It was through the blessing of my truthful resolve—my desire and devotion for the Dharma—that the blessed one, the thus-gone one Immaculately Renowned King was invoked from that buddhfield below.
- 2.81 “Vimalatejā, you should understand through such accounts that for bodhisattva great beings who yearn for the Dharma, the thus-gone ones do not pass beyond suffering, nor does the sacred Dharma ever disappear. [F.96.b] How is that? Vimalatejā, bodhisattva great beings who yearn for the Dharma with perfect motivation and devotion cause the blessed buddhas to manifest and teach the Dharma, even though they may dwell in a different world system. Vimalatejā, the Dharma treasures of bodhisattva great beings who yearn for the Dharma are found within mountains, mountain caverns, and trees. They contain incantations and infinite gateways to the doctrine laid out in tomes yet to be discovered.
- 2.82 “Vimalatejā, to bodhisattva great beings who yearn for the Dharma, divine beings who have beheld previous buddhas grant courage. Vimalatejā, when the lifespan of bodhisattva great beings who yearn for the Dharma comes to an end, the blessed buddhas and gods can grant them lifespan and power. If they wish, through the buddhas’ and gods’ blessings, they can live for a thousand years, or even two, three, four, or five hundred thousand years—or even for an eon, or longer than an eon, for as long as they might desire.

- 2.83 “Vimalatejā, for bodhisattva great beings who have engendered devotion to the Dharma, the blessed buddhas even eliminate aging and sickness. They endow them with recollection, and endow them with realization and eloquence as well. The blessed buddhas also eradicate any viewpoints that bodhisattva great beings who have engendered devotion to the Dharma might have, and endow them with the genuine view instead. Vimalatejā, bodhisattva great beings who have engendered devotion to the Dharma cannot be harmed in any way by others. [F.97.a]
- 2.84 “In the light of this, Vimalatejā, bodhisattva great beings should endeavor to gain expertise in the accumulation of learning. Bodhisattva great beings who endeavor to gain expertise in the accumulation of learning will attain such extraordinary qualities as these—or even greater and better than these.
- 2.85 “Vimalatejā, these three practices constitute the foundation of merit, the accumulation of merit, the emergence of merit, the expansion of merit, the outflow of merit, inexhaustible merit, inconceivable merit, an ocean of merit. The magnitude or measure of the merit of those bodhisattva great beings who live by them is beyond comprehension. Vimalatejā, the magnitude or measure of the drops of water in the ocean could indeed be reached. However, the quantity of merit of bodhisattva great beings’ accumulation of generosity, discipline, and learning defies comprehension in terms of magnitude and measure. Vimalatejā, one could reach and identify the magnitude and measure of the weight of all the mountains, trees, forests, and grass on earth within the trichiliocosm. However, I assure you that the quantity of merit gathered in the bodhisattva great beings’ accumulation of generosity, discipline, and learning could not be measured.”
- 2.86 At that point, the mighty strongman Vimalatejā asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, of these three accumulations—the accumulation of generosity, the accumulation of discipline, and the accumulation of learning—which is superior, which is foremost?”
- The Blessed One replied, “Vimalatejā, [F.97.b] of the three accumulations—of generosity, discipline, and learning—it is the accumulation of learning alone that is regarded as superior, eminent, preeminent, consummate, foremost, extraordinary, paramount, unsurpassed, unexcelled, and the most prominent of all. Son of noble family, you can think of the accumulations of generosity and discipline as analogous to a mustard seed, and the accumulation of learning as having the size of Mount Meru, king of mountains. Son of noble family, you can also consider the accumulations of generosity and discipline as analogous to the trails of birds in the sky, while the accumulation of learning is like the limitless sky throughout the ten directions.
- 2.87 “Son of noble family, the accumulation of generosity fulfills two functions. What are those two functions? It alleviates poverty and creates prosperity. The accumulation of discipline also fulfills two functions. What are those two functions? It counteracts the lower states and brings about the higher states. The accumulation of insight fulfills two functions as well. What are those two functions? It eliminates any views and brings about insight. Son of noble family, the accumulation of generosity involves defilement and grasping, and ripens in the aggregates. Son of noble family, the accumulation of discipline, too, involves defilement and grasping, and ripens in the aggregates. Son of noble family, the accumulation of learning is undefiled, devoid of grasping, and does not ripen in the aggregates. Therefore, son of noble family, those bodhisattva great beings who strive to be diligent should exert themselves in the accumulation of learning.” [F.98.a]
- 2.88 On the occasion of this teaching on the accumulations of generosity, discipline, and learning, three thousand beings who had previously engendered roots of virtue formed the resolve set on unsurpassed and completely perfect awakening. Five thousand gods purified their Dharma eyes regarding phenomena so that they became cleared of dust, and immaculate. The mighty strongman Vimalatejā, too, achieved acceptance of the Dharma accordingly.
- 2.89 Subsequently the mighty strongman Vimalatejā asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, what qualities should a bodhisattva great being possess in order to swiftly achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn?”
- 2.90 The Blessed One replied, “Son of noble family, there are four qualities that a bodhisattva great being should possess to achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn. What are those four? To have the conviction that the body is like a reflection; to have the conviction that the voice is like an echo; to have the conviction that the mind is like an illusion; and to have the conviction that all phenomena are the inexhaustible true nature. Son of noble family, a bodhisattva great being who possesses these four qualities will swiftly achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn.

- 2.91 “Moreover, son of noble family, there are four other qualities that a bodhisattva great being should possess to achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn. What are those four? To extend love to all beings, while at the same time not having the idea of ‘beings’; to have the conviction that all phenomena are empty and impermanent, while not making them into a ‘ground’; to perceive all buddhas, while having no fixation with regard to the physical eye; and to be skilled in discerning the mind, while not focusing on the mind as being a ‘mind.’ Son of noble family, a bodhisattva great being who possesses these four qualities will swiftly achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn.
- 2.92 “Furthermore, son of noble family, [F.98.b] there are four further qualities that a bodhisattva great being should possess to achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn. What are those four? To give up everything as a way to renounce views; to have pure discipline as a means to quell all the afflictions; to engender the strength of patience in order to progress in the Dharma; and to foster diligence in order to gain liberation by virtue of solitude. Son of noble family, a bodhisattva great being who possesses these four qualities will swiftly achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn.
- 2.93 “Son of noble family, there are four additional qualities that a bodhisattva great being should possess to achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn. What are those four? To achieve concentration but not depend on concentration; to analyze with insight yet be without concepts; to acquire skill in methods while magnetizing beings; and to be unhindered in all actions while gaining realization. Son of noble family, a bodhisattva great being who possesses these four qualities will swiftly achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn.
- 2.94 “Moreover, son of noble family, there are four more qualities that a bodhisattva great being should possess to achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn. What are those four? Through great love, to protect beings; through great compassion, not to become weary with cyclic existence; through great joy, to take joy and great delight in the Dharma; and through great equanimity, to give up attachment and anger. Son of noble family, a bodhisattva great being who possesses these four qualities will swiftly achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn.
- 2.95 “In addition, son of noble family, there are again four more qualities that a bodhisattva great being should possess to achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn. What are those four? To realize directly the three gates of liberation; [F.99.a] to comprehend the three times; to transcend the three realms; and to have trust in the fact that all phenomena are inherently without birth. Son of noble family, a bodhisattva great being who possesses these four qualities will swiftly achieve acceptance that phenomena are unborn.”
- 2.96 At that explanation of these fourfold enumerations of qualities for accomplishment, the mighty strongman Vimalatejā achieved acceptance that phenomena are unborn. He felt joy and elation, and simply through that he ascended into the air to the height of seven palm trees. The trichilocosm shook in six ways. Hundreds of thousands of human and divine instruments sounded. A rain of lotus flowers fell, and the whole world was filled with an immense glow.
- 2.97 The Blessed One then smiled. As is an attribute of the thus-gone ones, when he smiled an assortment of blue, yellow, red, white, crimson, crystal, and silver-colored light rays emanated from his mouth. These lights filled the universe with an infinite, limitless radiance that eclipsed that of the sun and moon and reached even the Brahmā realm, before returning to dissolve into the crown of the Blessed One’s head.
- 2.98 At that moment, venerable Ānanda rose from his seat, draped his shawl over one shoulder, and knelt on his right knee. With his palms together, he bowed toward the Blessed One and asked him, “Blessed One, since the blessed buddhas do not smile in the absence of causes and conditions, what are the causes for this smile, and what are the conditions?”
- 2.99 He also expressed this in verse: [F.99.b]
- “You who have attained supreme wisdom and have vast, pure vision,
With senses calm, you have achieved sublime, transcendent tranquility;
Your body shines with divine light, radiant like a golden mountain.
Why is it you displayed this smile, O Blessed One?
- 2.100 “While your intelligence understands the three times as they are,
As well as the mental doings of gods and men,
You are perpetually free of ideas, in attainment of supreme wisdom—

Please explain the meaning of your moon-like face's smile.

- 2.101 “As many buddhas as have come in the past, or will in the future,
As well as those dwelling now—you are their equal.
You who know how beings engage in various good deeds,
Please divulge everything, by way of a prophecy.
- 2.102 “Your body pervades this entire buddhafield,
Your speech resounds widely through numerous buddhafields,
Your mind has love for all beings within them.
Victorious One, your wisdom is infinite—please explain why.
- 2.103 “You have understood that things are void, like a moon in water,
Fleeting as an illusion, fundamentally a dream,
Ephemeral as clouds, and transient by nature.
Lion among Men, please divulge the reason for your smile.
- 2.104 “Realizing emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness, you are free,
Your mind always gentle, expert in the very nature of phenomena;
While a tempest rages in the sky, you seem free of elaboration.
Why did you smile? Pray tell, what was the reason?
- 2.105 “I bow today before the one whose mind is the supreme wisdom of awakening;
Today you have conquered the demons at the foot of the king of trees.
You who have ascended the throne of the sublime victorious ones,
Supreme Leader of men, please say why it was you smiled.
- 2.106 “This is not a place of the Victorious One's śrāvakas,
Nor is it the domain of the solitary buddhas;
This is the domain of the ocean-like qualities of buddhahood.
Please explain the reason why the Chief of the World has smiled.”
- 2.107 The Blessed One then answered Venerable Ānanda, “Ānanda, [F.100.a] did you see the way the mighty strongman Vimalatejā ascended into midair to the height of seven palm trees?”
Ānanda said, “Indeed I saw it, Blessed One. I saw it indeed, Blissful One.”
- 2.108 The Blessed One continued, “Ānanda, over the course of a hundred thousand cycles of three incalculable eons, the mighty strongman Vimalatejā will fully awaken to unsurpassed and completely perfect buddhahood. In the eastern realm known as Utterly Purifying, in the eon known as Praised by Brahmā, he will appear in the world as a thus-gone one, a foe-destroyer, a completely perfect buddha. He will be someone who is knowledgeable and virtuous, a blissful one, someone who knows the world, a charioteer to guide beings, an unsurpassed being, a teacher of gods and men, a blessed buddha known as King of Many Arrangements. Ānanda, that buddha realm known as Utterly Purifying of the Thus-Gone One, the foe-destroyer, the completely perfect Buddha King of Many Arrangements will be filled with prosperity, abundance, happiness, plentiful harvests, and gaiety, and will have many human and other inhabitants. As an analogy, Ānanda, the riches and enjoyments of beings in the realm of the Utterly Purifying buddhafield will be on a par with those of the gods in the Joyous Heaven.
- 2.109 “In order to gather bodhisattvas, the Thus-Gone One King of Many Arrangements will teach only the bodhisattva collection without expounding anything else. The words *śrāvaka* and *solitary buddha* will not even exist there. The only community that will emerge will be the great bodhisattva saṅgha that consists of bodhisattva great beings who have achieved acceptance. [F.100.b] That Thus-Gone One will live for a fathomless span of time. In his buddhafield, the eight unfree states will not exist. Demons and hostile forces will be vanquished. There will be no extremists. The buddhafield will be made of beryl and be adorned with lotus flowers of gold from the Jāmbū River.”
Eventually the mighty strongman Vimalatejā descended from midair. He bowed at the feet of the Blessed One, requested ordination from the Blessed One, and was ordained in the teachings of the Thus-Gone One.

- 2.110 The bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa now said to the Blessed One, “The way that the Blessed One has expounded on the doctrine of discipline, Blessed One, is indeed marvelous. Blissful One, it is indeed marvelous. Even those who visit the Thus-Gone One to denigrate him, pick out his faults, make trouble, or ridicule him feel deeply pleased, delighted, and overjoyed as soon as they see the Thus-Gone One. Their pride, conceit, and arrogance are utterly subdued. They bow solely to the Thus-Gone One, and prostrate themselves solely to the Thus-Gone One with their palms joined. Blessed One, that was how the mighty strongman Vimalatejā arrived, with immense pride, conceit, and arrogance. Yet he has heard the teaching in this way and has achieved the state of a great being. He will teach the Dharma to eradicate the pride, conceit, and arrogance of an unfathomable, countless number of beings. Blessed One, toward how many thus-gone ones, foe-destroyers, completely perfect buddhas in the past did the mighty strongman Vimalatejā engender the roots of virtue in pursuit of completely perfect awakening, such that now he has attained the superknowledges so swiftly?” [F.101.a]
- 2.111 The Blessed One said to the bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa, “Nārāyaṇa, in the past, the mighty strongman Vimalatejā, longing for unsurpassed and completely perfect awakening, engendered the roots of virtue toward six billion, two hundred million buddhas. Subsequent to that, he served an unfathomable, countless number of blessed buddhas; he took them as his teachers, venerated and worshiped them, and in doing so practiced chastity.”
- 2.112 Nārāyaṇa then asked, “Blessed One, what roots of nonvirtue led him to be lacking in the mind of awakening, such that he arrived before the Thus-Gone One with the intention to quarrel, full of pride, conceit, and arrogance?”
- The Blessed One replied to the bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa, “Nārāyaṇa, there are four traits with which a bodhisattva will neglect the mind of awakening. What are those four traits? Immense pride, disrespect for the Dharma, deprecating the spiritual guide, and speaking falsehoods. Nārāyaṇa, a bodhisattva who has these four traits will neglect the mind of awakening.
- 2.113 “Moreover, Nārāyaṇa, there are four more traits with which a bodhisattva will also neglect the mind of awakening. What are those four? To associate with the practitioners of the Vehicle of Solitary Buddhas; to have inclinations toward the Lesser Vehicle; to denigrate and be hostile toward bodhisattvas; and to be a tight-fisted instructor with respect to giving teachings. Nārāyaṇa, a bodhisattva who has these four traits will neglect the mind of awakening.
- 2.114 “Furthermore, Nārāyaṇa, [F.101.b] there are four more traits with which a bodhisattva will neglect the mind of awakening. What are those four? To be pretentious; to have deceit in the way one serves beings; to be two-tongued toward spiritual guides; and to be overly fixated on gain and respect. Nārāyaṇa, a bodhisattva who has these four traits will neglect the mind of awakening.
- 2.115 “Nārāyaṇa, there are four additional traits with which a bodhisattva will neglect the mind of awakening. What are those four? Not to recognize the workings of demons; to be obscured by the veil of karma; to be weak in altruism; and to lack insight and method. Nārāyaṇa, a bodhisattva who has these four traits will neglect the mind of awakening.
- 2.116 “Nārāyaṇa, why was it that the mighty strongman Vimalatejā neglected the mind of awakening? Let me tell you. Once, in the distant past of this Excellent Eon, there appeared in the world a thus-gone one, a foe-destroyer, a completely perfect buddha, one who was knowledgeable and virtuous, a blissful one, one who knew the world, a charioteer to guide beings, an unsurpassed being, a teacher of gods and men, a blessed buddha known as Krakucchanda. During the period of his teachings, there was a priest named Wealthy as the Great Sal Tree. Misled by demons, this priest developed immense pride, and so he did not make visits to the Thus-Gone One. On top of this, so overcome was he with pride, he would stay around spiritual teachers, both priests and laypeople, to fight, quarrel, and dispute with them. He was disrespectful to the Dharma as well as to Dharma teachers.
- 2.117 “At that time, he lacked five things. What five? He had not met the Buddha, not heard the Dharma, [F.102.a] had not had various discussions with bodhisattva great beings who had entered the Great Vehicle, had not dedicated the roots of virtue, and had not stabilized the mind of awakening. Thus he had taken up negative qualities, while not taking up the mind of awakening, and thereby, Nārāyaṇa, did he lack these five things.
- 2.118 “Nārāyaṇa, if by any chance you have hesitations, reservations, or doubts that the brahmin priest Wealthy as the Great Sal Tree at that time, in those days, might be someone else, do not harbor them. For at that time, in those days, it was the mighty strongman Vimalatejā who was the brahmin Wealthy as the Great Sal Tree. Due to his pride, he neglected the mind of awakening. Yet he was protected by his previous

roots of virtue and saved only by the mind of awakening; thus he was not reborn in the lower states. He was inflated with pride and had the strength of a mighty strongman, yet through the Buddha's power, he could not avoid meeting the Buddha. Overwhelmed by the powerful force of the Thus-Gone One, he came here, and he heard of the powerful strength of the Thus-Gone One and the bodhisattvas. Thereby all his pride, conceit, and arrogance were eliminated. Since he did nothing harmful, he met the Thus-Gone One. This was a root of virtue that manifested from causes in the past; thus was he able to swiftly attain acceptance of the superknowledges."

2.119 Then the bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa asked the mighty strongman Vimalatejā, "Son of noble family, what qualities have you engendered to achieve such acceptance?"

To this Vimalatejā answered, "I have engendered all the qualities of an ordinary being."

Nārāyaṇa continued, "How did you engender them?"

Vimalatejā responded, "Just as they do not come into being and just as they do not perish, that is how I engendered them. Just as they cannot be grasped [F.102.b] and just as they are unborn, that is how I engendered them."

2.120 Nārāyaṇa asked, "Son of noble family, what is the difference between the qualities of ordinary beings and the qualities of buddhas? What distinguishes them?"

Vimalatejā responded, "They are distinguished in name, though in fact there is no real distinction."

Nārāyaṇa then inquired, "Vimalatejā, what is truly meant by the qualities of ordinary beings?"

Vimalatejā said, "They have no true meaning; there is nothing designated and no concept."

2.121 Nārāyaṇa asked, "Vimalatejā, what does the true meaning eliminate? What does the true meaning establish?"

Vimalatejā replied, "Nārāyaṇa, the true meaning eliminates the qualities of ordinary beings and establishes the qualities of the buddhas."

Nārāyaṇa continued, "Vimalatejā, what is truly meant by the qualities of the buddhas?"

Vimalatejā answered, "Nārāyaṇa, the true meaning of the qualities of the buddhas is nonduality."

2.122 Nārāyaṇa then said, "The Thus-Gone One has declared, 'Son of noble family, rely on the true meaning, do not rely on the words.' He has also stated, 'There are two causes and circumstances for the correct view to arise, namely other's words, and one's own correct mental engagement.' So how would you explain what are *words* and what is *meaning*?"

2.123 Vimalatejā responded, "Nārāyaṇa, a bodhisattva relying on the true meaning does not reduce his words. Moreover, that words have no reference point is their true meaning. Their true meaning is the true meaning that is inexpressible. For one relying on the true meaning, there are no phenomena whatsoever, and also no true meaning. Why is that? It is because all phenomena are inexpressible, worthless, not dwelling in any place or direction, remaining in themselves [F.103.a] and ceasing in themselves.³ The Blessed One has also stated, 'The definition of the true meaning is perpetual cessation.' Therefore, Nārāyaṇa, one who relies on the true meaning does not proliferate or elaborate on anything. That which is not proliferated or elaborated is the true meaning."

2.124 Nārāyaṇa then asked, "Son of noble family, is there a system according to which relying on the true meaning is to rely on all phenomena?"

Vimalatejā answered, "There is, Nārāyaṇa. It is in the sense that all phenomena are empty, that all phenomena are void. It is precisely in the sense that they are empty that they are to be relied on. It is precisely in the sense that they are void that they are to be relied on. In this way, Nārāyaṇa, the one who relies on the true meaning relies on all phenomena."

2.125 Nārāyaṇa declared, "Therefore, Vimalatejā, all phenomena are dependent."

Vimalatejā then replied, "Precisely, Nārāyaṇa. It is just as you have said. All phenomena depend on the ultimate truth. They have their gateway in the ultimate truth. We should pursue them within the ultimate truth. We should pursue them in the sense that just as phenomena are not established, nor is the absence of phenomena established. The noble ones' pursuit is a nondualistic pursuit. This pursuit does not involve doing anything. In this pursuit, there is nothing to be done, nothing to be carried out. The pursuit is taking place when there is nothing being done, nothing being carried out. As long as one does not go against the true meaning, it is appropriate to strive."

2.126 As the mighty strongman Vimalatejā expounded on the true meaning, the minds of five hundred monks became freed of defilement and without grasping. Eight thousand gods purified the eye of Dharma regarding phenomena so that it became cleared of dust and immaculate.

- 2.127 The bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa then told Vimalatejā, [F.103.b] “Vimalatejā, the Thus-Gone One declared, ‘Rely on the true meaning. Don’t rely on the words.’ This is because beings lack skill in the true meaning and experience things dualistically. They also lack skill concerning words, misinterpreting them and failing to understand their true meaning. Thus the Thus-Gone One advised them to rely on the true meaning and not on the words. That way, by relying on the true meaning, they will understand that the very nature of words is sameness, and they will then transcend words altogether.
- 2.128 “Son of noble family, those who assume that absorption alone is sufficient and do not learn the teachings of the vinaya will not become free of cyclic existence, since their attitude is pretentious by nature. The Thus-Gone One’s statement that there are two causes or circumstances that lead to the genuine view is thus intended to draw such people who are pretentious by nature into extensive learning. If they then learn the teachings and practice them correctly, their pretense will go away. With those on the path in mind, the Blessed One declared:
- 2.129 “Through learning, one will comprehend dharmas.
Through learning, one will not do evil.
Through learning, one will give up harm.
Through learning, one will gain nirvāṇa.’ ”
- 2.130 The bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa then asked, “Son of noble family, how should a monk practitioner engage with the Dharma in a genuine way?”
Vimalatejā replied, “If one never engages with the Dharma and is never separate from it, that is the way to genuinely engage with the Dharma. Nārāyaṇa, *genuine engagement with the Dharma* refers to an absence of engagement. Furthermore, Nārāyaṇa, when a monk does not engage, he does not activate any faults, nor does he activate the self: this is genuine engagement. When we analyze in terms of beginning and end, then the one being spoken to, the topic of discussion, [F.104.a] the understanding aimed at in the discussion, and explanations of what should be abandoned, what should be realized, and what meditation should be done, are all found not to have a past cause, a future cause, or a present cause—that is genuine engagement.
- 2.131 “When one sees that all phenomena have essentially ceased, that is genuine seeing. When one sees that all phenomena are naturally at peace and naturally in a state of union, that is genuine seeing. When one sees that all phenomena have never originated, that is genuine seeing. When one sees that all phenomena have never originated nor arisen, and sees that they are entirely beyond suffering, and one does not see one who is seeing and something seen, and does not see them as they are, and does not see them at all—when one so sees, that is genuine seeing.”
- 2.132 At this, the Blessed One said to the mighty strongman Vimalatejā, “Excellent. Excellent, son of noble family, excellent. If something is taught or to be taught, it should be taught in this way. To exert oneself in the correct way is to become undeluded about everything. To exert oneself in the correct way is to be unobscured about everything. To exert oneself in the correct way is to be beyond bondage and liberation. How is this? It is because correct exertion involves no effort to abandon or be rid of anything. To see all phenomena genuinely, to see them as they truly are, is genuine vision.
- 2.133 “What does it mean to see phenomena as they truly are? It is non-seeing alone. *Non-seeing* is a reference to *non-origination*. Non-origination is a reference to non-arising. [F.104.b] *Non-arising* is a reference to non-seeing. It was because I had this in mind that you declared, ‘When all phenomena are not originating and not seen, one will penetrate flawless reality.’ This is genuine vision—to penetrate flawless reality. Why do we use the phrase *penetrate flawless reality*? That which is the sameness of self is the sameness of non-self. That which is the sameness of non-self is the sameness of all phenomena. Hence the expression *penetrate flawless reality*.”
- 2.134 The bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa then said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, a bodhisattva may correctly understand this Dharma discourse regarding how all phenomena have such characteristics, and how they are inherently and entirely beyond suffering; upon hearing it, he or she may then believe and be convinced of it. That he or she nevertheless does not pass beyond suffering in the interval period⁴ is indeed marvelous, Blessed One. Bliss-Gone One, it is indeed marvelous.”

- 2.135 The Blessed One replied, “Nārāyaṇa, such is the skill in method of these bodhisattvas. Being so skilled in methods, they suffuse every mind-state they have with four things. What are those four things? Great love, great compassion, omniscient wisdom, and the uninterrupted preservation of the spiritual tradition after the Buddha has appeared.
- “Nārāyaṇa, they apply these four to everything. They perfectly understand how all phenomena are inherently beyond suffering. They have belief and conviction in what they have heard. Yet still they do not pass beyond suffering in the interval period. They learn the teachings of the vinaya for the sake of beings. Their certainty in understanding and seeing is one of non-seeing. Why is that? [F.105.a] Because they do not give up on any being.”
- 2.136 Then the mighty strongman Vimalatejā asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, what faults do bodhisattvas have, those whom the Blessed One described as *certain to fall*?”
- 2.137 The Blessed One replied, “Son of noble family, I do not at all regard bodhisattvas as having any faults, and do not have any such concepts whatsoever. Nevertheless, they may focus on the vehicle of the śrāvakas instead of focusing on all sentient beings, instead of focusing on the lineage of the Buddha, the lineage of the Dharma, the lineage of the Saṅgha, and the Great Vehicle. They may neglect and disregard the state of omniscience. They may fail to make aspirations to completely and perfectly awaken. Developing aversion to everything that is composite, they might enter the faultlessness of the śrāvakas.
- 2.138 “Bodhisattva great beings should keep their focus on all beings; they should keep their focus on the lineage of the Three Jewels and on the Great Vehicle, and thereby look to the wisdom of omniscience, and have no regard for life and limb. They should understand the single characteristic of all phenomena, and yet not enter faultlessness. Out of their regard for beings, they should familiarize themselves with concentration. And they should not let themselves enter the faultlessness of śrāvakas. Son of noble family, you should understand through this description the way in which bodhisattvas are free of faults, and yet do not enter faultlessness.”
- 2.139 The mighty strongman Vimalatejā then said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, this marvelous doctrine of the bodhisattva great beings is not to be found among the śrāvakas and solitary buddhas; how wonderful!”
- 2.140 On this occasion, since Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta was present in the gathering, [F.105.b] the bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa mentioned to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, on this occasion of the absorption that encapsulates all merit, Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta has not presented a talk.”
- 2.141 Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta then said to the bodhisattva great being Nārāyaṇa, “Son of noble family, bodhisattvas do not carry out the practices toward awakening out of a desire for merit. They do not carry out the practices toward awakening out of a desire for gain, praise, or eulogy, nor for the higher states, wealth, followers, fame, renown, or honor.”
- 2.142 Nārāyaṇa then asked, “So, Mañjuśrī, why do bodhisattvas carry out the practices toward awakening?”
- Mañjuśrī answered, “Son of noble family, bodhisattvas carry out the practices toward awakening out of compassion for all beings. Bodhisattvas carry out the practices toward awakening out of their longing for the Dharma, their wish to eliminate all beings’ suffering, their wish to eradicate the mistaken afflictions, and their wish to experience a similar suffering themselves;⁵ they do not carry out these practices out of a wish for gratitude. Therefore, son of noble family, bodhisattvas carry out the practices toward awakening without regard for body or mind, without any clinging, in an unflagging manner without fixation, concepts, or mental engagement. They are undeterred and cannot be stopped, nonconceptual, steadfast, and without attachment or anger. They are exceedingly brave, invincible, unexcelled, unafraid, fearless, intrepid, humble, unabashed, stable, [F.106.a] and unwavering. They arise from detachment, with a single aim, a single principle, reduced to a single thing, remaining in a single principle, striving with a single conviction, wishing all beings to be free, with that single wish, that very wish.”
- 2.143 Nārāyaṇa asked, “Mañjuśrī, how does a bodhisattva carry out the bodhisattva practices?”
- Mañjuśrī replied, “Son of noble family, whenever a bodhisattva no longer practices awakening to come to an end, to be born, not to come to an end, or not to be born, nor with the conceit of being perpetually at an end or unending, nor disturbed at being perpetually unborn, then a bodhisattva who so practices is carrying out the bodhisattva practices.
- 2.144 “In addition, Nārāyaṇa, a bodhisattva tells himself that the mind of the past has ended, and does not become involved; that the mind of the future, has not yet come, and does not become involved; and that the mind of the present will not remain, and does not become involved. The bodhisattva great being who

- practices in this way—without getting attached to the mind of the past, future, or present—is carrying out the bodhisattva practices.
- 2.145 “Moreover, Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas experience generosity and awakening, sentient beings and thus-gone ones, all in a nondualistic way. They experience discipline and awakening, sentient beings and thus-gone ones, all in a nondualistic way. They experience patience and awakening, sentient beings and thus-gone ones, all in a nondualistic way. They experience diligence and awakening, sentient beings and thus-gone ones, all in a nondualistic way. They experience concentration and awakening, sentient beings and thus-gone ones, all in a nondualistic way. They experience insight and awakening, sentient beings and [F.106.b] thus-gone ones, all in a nondualistic way. Whenever bodhisattvas practice the perfections in this way, it is said that simply by virtue of the fact that they are not in conflict with the characteristics or essence of the practice, those bodhisattvas are carrying out the practices of awakening.
- 2.146 “Furthermore, Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas do not tell themselves that forms are empty. Forms are empty by themselves. In the same way, they do not tell themselves that feelings, perceptions, formations, or consciousness are empty. Consciousness is empty by itself. Form is not brought to an end by emptiness; it is simply that form, since its very nature is emptiness, has always been at an end. Likewise feelings, perceptions, formations, and consciousness are not brought to an end by emptiness; it is simply that consciousness, since its very nature is emptiness, has always been at an end. All phenomena are at an end simply because they are at an end by their very nature; it is not because form is at an end that all phenomena are at an end. Nor is it because feelings are at an end, or because perceptions are at an end, or because formations are at an end, or because consciousness is at an end, that all phenomena are at an end. The bodhisattvas who practice in this way are carrying out the bodhisattva practices.
- 2.147 “In addition, Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas do not try to get rid of the traits of ordinary beings, nor do they practice in order to give rise to the qualities of buddhahood. They do not practice in order to go beyond cyclic existence, nor in order to perfect the state of transcendence of suffering. They do not see unwholesome qualities as fully established, yet neither do they see wholesome qualities as truly established. They do not truly see any knowing apart from what is known. Bodhisattvas are those who, inseparably from the realm of phenomena, are disposed to the practice. Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas who practice in this way are carrying out the bodhisattva practices.
- 2.148 “Furthermore, Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas determine that the realm of sentient beings [F.107.a] is limitless, as is the realm of phenomena. Yet they do not practice in order to bring the realm of sentient beings to an end and eliminate it. Why? Because the realm of sentient beings and the realm of phenomena are not two things and they cannot be separated, because they are devoid of characteristics. The realm of phenomena neither increases nor decreases, and nor does the realm of sentient beings either increase or decrease. All characteristics of the realm of phenomena are also the characteristics of the realms of sentient beings.
- 2.149 “Moreover, Nārāyaṇa, because bodhisattvas know that all phenomena lack characteristics, they do not practice in order to put an end to the realm of phenomena and the realm of sentient beings, nor do they practice in order to increase them. They practice in order to know how the afflictions come about within them due to mistaken imputation, how they come about due to error, and how they remain once they have manifested. They do not practice in order to destroy the harms in cyclic existence, nor to destroy the self, sentient beings, living beings, or individuals. Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas who practice in this way are carrying out the bodhisattva practices.” [B4]
- 2.150 When Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta bestowed this Dharma teaching, the discourse on practice, sixteen gods who were genuinely immersed in the Great Vehicle achieved acceptance that phenomena are unborn.
- 2.151 Then the mighty strongman Vimalatejā, in order to make reverence to this Dharma discourse and to uphold it, made the solemn promise, “Blessed One, I will assist those beings who are devoted to this Dharma discourse to accomplish all their goals.”
- 2.152 Finally the god named Free of Demons addressed Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, “Mañjuśrī, I, too, [F.107.b] have been inspired to speak about the way in which bodhisattva great beings carry out the bodhisattva practices.”
- 2.153 Mañjuśrī replied, “God, if you know it is the right time, then express your inspiration.”
- The god then proceeded, “Mañjuśrī, any practice related to any phenomenon constitutes bodhisattva practice. Any practice related to any demon constitutes bodhisattva practice. Any practice of any being constitutes bodhisattva practice. Any practice related to training or nontraining constitutes bodhisattva

- practice. Any practice of any solitary buddha constitutes bodhisattva practice. Any practice of any buddha constitutes bodhisattva practice. Why? Because bodhisattva great beings must train in everything.”
- 2.154 Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa asked the god Free of Demons, “God, how do bodhisattva great beings carry out this type of practice of everything?”
- The god responded, “Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattva great beings should train in all the 84,000 kinds of conduct of sentient beings. These consist of the 21,000 kinds of conduct related to attachment, the 21,000 kinds of conduct related to anger, the 21,000 kinds of conduct related to delusion, and the 21,000 kinds of conduct in which all three come together. Bodhisattva great beings should engage in all of these kinds of conduct of sentient beings. They should engage in conduct related to attachment, and be free of attachment. They should engage in conduct related to anger, and be free of anger. They should engage in conduct related to delusion, and be free of delusion. They should engage in conduct related to every type of fault, and be free of every type of fault. While bodhisattvas engage [F.108.a] in every type of conduct, they should not be tainted by that conduct. In order to bring beings to maturity, bodhisattvas appear to be carrying out all types of conduct—this is bodhisattva practice.”
- 2.155 Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa then asked, “God, how is it that any practice related to any demon constitutes bodhisattva practice?”
- The god answered, “Bodhisattvas should view all kinds of demonic conduct within the mental processes, yet they should avoid becoming caught up in any of the workings of demons. They should not initiate the workings of demons. They should apply this engaging in all types of conduct. They should demonstrate conviction in demons alone, yet they should not fall under their power. They should learn the ripening of demons, yet be free of the workings of demons.”
- 2.156 Nārāyaṇa then asked, “God, how is it that any practice related to training, to nontraining, or to any solitary buddha constitutes bodhisattva practice?”
- The god answered, “Son of noble family, it is in this way that bodhisattvas connect to those who have interest in the practice that is the lack of essential nature of all practices, the practice that has no ripening, the practice that has no dwelling, the practice that has no transference, the practice that has no birth.”
- 2.157 Having spoken this teaching, the god Free of Demons said to Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, “Mañjuśrī, this is the extent of my inspiration. Starting with what I have said about practice, please expand on it, and express it in your own way.”
- Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, in answer to the god’s request, said, “God, bodhisattva practice entirely transcends all domains. How? Such practice cannot be considered within the domain of the eyes and visual form. Likewise it cannot be considered within the domain of the ears and sound, the nose and scent, the tongue and taste, the body and touch, or that of the mind and mental objects. God, you should understand from this description [F.108.b] how sublime beings’ experience entirely transcends all these domains. Moreover, god, no matter what practices bodhisattvas are involved in, they never displease the blessed buddhas. Bodhisattvas who act in this way are carrying out bodhisattva practice.”
- 2.158 The god then said, “Mañjuśrī, what do bodhisattvas do to please the blessed buddhas?”
- Mañjuśrī answered, “God, the thus-gone ones have fully and perfectly awakened to the true emptiness of all things. So if bodhisattvas become fixated on some viewpoint, even if it is the Buddha’s teachings, or the view of the transcendence of suffering, they disappoint the thus-gone ones. God, the thus-gone ones have fully and perfectly awakened to the true signlessness of all things. So if bodhisattvas characterize something, or habituate themselves to characteristics, they disappoint the thus-gone ones.
- 2.159 “The thus-gone ones have fully and perfectly awakened to the true wishlessness regarding all things. The thus-gone ones have fully and perfectly awakened to all things’ uncompoundedness, lack of existence, lack of occurrence, lack of origination, lack of emergence, absence of marks, and absence of characteristics. They know that no phenomenon comes, goes, or remains. They know that phenomena are inherently pure, inherently luminous, inherently beyond suffering, and like space. So if bodhisattvas apprehend some phenomenon or the essential nature of some phenomenon, they disappoint the thus-gone ones, the foe-destroyers, the completely perfect buddhas.
- 2.160 “God, if on the other hand bodhisattvas understand that all views are encapsulated in the view of emptiness, that all views are encapsulated in the view of signlessness, [F.109.a] that all views are encapsulated in the view of wishlessness, and that all views are entirely beyond the three realms, then they will understand all things’ uncompoundedness, lack of existence, lack of occurrence, lack of origination, lack of emergence, absence of marks, and absence of characteristics. They will understand that no

- phenomenon comes, goes, or remains. They will understand that phenomena are inherently pure, inherently luminous, inherently beyond suffering, like space, and inherently free of affliction. In this way, bodhisattva great beings do not disappoint the blessed buddhas.”
- 2.161 The Blessed One, bestowing his approval on what Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta had explained, said “Excellent, Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, excellent. You have put it excellently. Bodhisattvas who practice in this way are indeed carrying out bodhisattva practice. They will also swiftly receive their prophecy. Mañjuśrī, I know this clearly. Previously, during the time of the Thus-Gone One Dīpaṃkara, there was no virtuous practice I had not already performed. However, I did not receive my prophecy. And why was that? Because I was practicing in a conceptual manner; I was practicing with effort, and practicing in an apprehending manner. But then, when I met the Thus-Gone One, the foe-destroyer, the completely perfect Buddha Dīpaṃkara, I transcended all practices. Just upon seeing him, and witnessing the Blessed One’s conduct, I attained that conduct as well, and realized the fact that all phenomena are inherently unborn. It was on this occasion that the Blessed Thus-Gone One Dīpaṃkara prophesied, ‘In the future, you will be the thus-gone one, the foe-destroyer, the completely perfect buddha Śākyamuni.’ It was at this time, too, that I attained acceptance that all phenomena are unborn. [F.109.b]
- 2.162 “Therefore, Mañjuśrī, those bodhisattva great beings who wish to swiftly attain acceptance that all phenomena are unborn should devote themselves to nonapprehension and effortlessness as described in this discourse on practice; they should apply themselves to liberation.”
- 2.163 Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta then asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, in order to attain what achievements is acceptance attained?”
- 2.164 The Blessed One answered, “Mañjuśrī, it is in order to attain the aggregates, the elements, and sense sources that acceptance is attained. Moreover, Mañjuśrī, it is in order to attain all phenomena that acceptance is attained. Mañjuśrī, what is called attaining acceptance is to attain their unending true nature. Mañjuśrī, what is called attaining acceptance is a reference to what is genuinely true. Mañjuśrī, attaining acceptance is not to involve oneself in mundane things. It is to be uninvolved in the phenomena of ordinary beings; the qualities of training and of nontraining; or the qualities of solitary buddhas, of bodhisattvas, or of buddhas. In fact it is called attaining acceptance because there is no involvement with any phenomena. Acceptance is so called because it is not just momentary, in terms of the characteristics of all phenomena and their apprehension. This acceptance has nothing whatsoever that can be considered to do with the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind. It has nothing to do with pretense. Not only is it unending, that acceptance also has no end. Not only does that acceptance have no object, it is also not without an object. That is why it is called acceptance.”
- 2.165 When this teaching on acceptance was given, five hundred bodhisattvas attained acceptance that all phenomena are unborn, and declared, “We will strive to preserve this absorption that encapsulates all merit. [F.110.a] We will perfect all its incomparable qualities. Blessed One, bodhisattvas should respectfully learn all its profound topics and put them into practice.”
- 2.166 Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa then asked Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, “Mañjuśrī, how do bodhisattva great beings become trained in these profound teachings?”
- Mañjuśrī responded, “Nārāyaṇa, when bodhisattvas know that all phenomena are uncreated and unchanging, simply by so knowing, Nārāyaṇa, those bodhisattvas have become trained in these teachings. When they know that all phenomena are uncompounded, and have no regret about what they have done or confusion about what they have not done, those bodhisattvas have become trained in these profound teachings. They have become trained when they carry out their activities, when they acknowledge what they have done instead of failing to acknowledge it, when they do not become elated if respected, or disheartened if disrespected, and when they do not apprehend a doer or someone who experiences. They have become thoroughly trained when they give generously and then dedicate that generosity toward awakening. They have become trained when they do not apprehend generosity, awakening, a self, or another. They have become trained, too, when they maintain discipline, practice patience, foster diligence, apply concentration, cultivate insight, and dedicate these toward awakening, yet do not apprehend that insight or the other. Thus should you understand that bodhisattvas, when they do not apprehend awakening, a self, or another, have become trained. [F.110.b] Bodhisattvas who do not apprehend their physical, verbal, and mental virtue, also, have become trained. Bodhisattvas who do not apprehend their skill in the physical, verbal, and mental accumulations, too, have become trained.”

- 2.167 Then Bodhisattva Constant Stable Diligence said to Mañjuśrī, “Mañjuśrī, I too have become inspired to speak about how bodhisattvas become thoroughly trained.”
- Mañjuśrī replied, “Son of noble family, if you know it is the right time, please express your inspiration.”
- 2.168 Bodhisattva Constant Stable Diligence then proceeded, “Mañjuśrī, bodhisattvas have become trained when they cause even one being to enter the Buddha’s teachings. If a bodhisattva is eating food with someone, accepting something from someone, or giving something to someone, and draws that person toward awakening, then both of them receive the bodhisattva’s pure benefit. If a bodhisattva draws someone into spiritual practice, then both the giver and recipient receive the bodhisattva’s pure benefit. The root of virtue is always shared with others whenever a bodhisattva proclaims the words *Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha* to others; or when he brings the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha to mind while making a gift; or when he mentally cultivates generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, concentration, or insight; or when he proclaims these six perfections to others and causes those beings to reflect on them. If he carries all this out and then dedicates it toward awakening, the bodhisattva has become trained, [F.111.a] and that food has become suitable for consumption.
- 2.169 “When practicing patience, bodhisattvas do not become disturbed, even if thieves and brutes insult and revile them. They do not harbor ill will, either, and in order to make such beings happy, they cultivate diligence and give rise to strength, diligence, and great power. One should understand that in doing so, they have become trained in bodhisattva practice.
- “Though someone may try to entice them by giving them a billion gold coins, or even a four-continent world system filled with gold coins, bodhisattvas will remain vigilant and not tell lies. If someone should request a teaching, they will not respond with deceptive statements. Nor, if someone should denigrate the Dharma, will they respond in a nonspiritual manner. One should understand that bodhisattvas who act in these ways have been trained.
- 2.170 “If bodhisattvas have been fasting for seven days, though someone may offer them a meal, they will only maintain the mind of omniscience, and will actualize the mind of awakening, which is solely in order to liberate all beings. One should understand that these bodhisattvas have then become thoroughly trained.
- “Furthermore, Mañjuśrī, in order to hear the Dharma, bodhisattvas are ready to cross the entire earth, even if it were covered with swords or filled with fire, with no concern for life or limb. They would reflect, ‘Aggregates, elements, and sense sources are easy to acquire, but it is not easy to encounter the blessed buddhas. It is not easy to find a Dharma teacher, and not easy to find beings who respect the Dharma.’ With this in mind, they would train accordingly. One should understand that when bodhisattvas have espoused this kind of tenacity, they have become thoroughly trained. [F.111.b]
- 2.171 “In addition, Mañjuśrī, one should understand that bodhisattvas have become thoroughly trained when to have one four-line verse, a summary, or a spiritual instruction makes them extremely joyful, but to have a wheel-bearing monarch’s royal dominion brings them no joy. Or when sharing a four-line verse of scripture with even a single being makes feel extremely joyful, but attaining the state of Śakra has no such effect.
- “Also, Mañjuśrī, one should understand that bodhisattvas have become thoroughly trained when being generous to a being who has taken rebirth as an animal, such as a dog, makes them extremely joyful, but achieving the state of Brahmā does not.
- 2.172 “Moreover, Mañjuśrī, one should understand that bodhisattvas have become thoroughly trained when dedicating what they have discovered through learning toward the state of omniscience makes them extremely joyful, yet an unfathomable quantity of jewels does not. Or when the mind of omniscience makes them extremely joyful, yet a great trichilocosm filled with the seven precious materials does not. Or when mentally dedicating one root of virtue toward awakening—focusing on awakening while dedicating it to the aid and happiness of all beings—makes them extremely joyful, but gain, honor, and eulogy in any regard do not.
- 2.173 “Furthermore, Mañjuśrī, bodhisattvas should always strive to bring beings to maturity. Bodhisattvas should have the firm fortitude necessary to pursue extensive knowledge. Bodhisattvas [F.112.a] should have the fortitude to give up every part of their bodies. Bodhisattvas should accept worldly things cheerfully. Bodhisattvas should never give up their training, even at the cost of their lives; they should be intelligent in their conduct. Bodhisattvas should have the strength of patience and maintain a tolerant disposition in the face of offensive words. Bodhisattvas should be without laziness, keeping the perfectly pure buddhfields in mind. Bodhisattvas should have the one-pointed determination never to be apart

- from the mind of awakening. Endeavoring in the six perfections, bodhisattvas should never forget the mind of awakening. Bodhisattvas should be unflagging in persistence in their own objectives, in not forsaking any being, and in distinguishing the circumstances of all beings.
- 2.174 “Bodhisattvas should be steadfast in their vow to preserve the Buddha’s lineage. Bodhisattvas should be completely honest in body, speech, and mind, avoiding deceit in every respect. Bodhisattvas should be intent solely on what is wholly virtuous in order to safeguard those beings who come for refuge. Bodhisattvas should have no attachment and concern for their bodies and lives. Bodhisattvas should be gentle and welcoming to visitors. Bodhisattvas should speak sincerely without frowning. Bodhisattvas should be like the earth, without attachment or anger. Bodhisattvas should be easy to be with and gentle. Bodhisattvas should be agreeable and eloquent. Bodhisattvas should bow before all beings and overcome their pride. [F.112.b] Bodhisattvas should have humbled their pride, like dogs. Bodhisattvas should be undeceiving, fulfilling the promises they made in the past. Bodhisattvas should be impartial toward all beings. Bodhisattvas should have a loving mindset toward all beings. Bodhisattvas should have great compassion, striving for the aims of all beings. Bodhisattvas should take pleasure in endeavoring to pursue the Buddha’s teachings and all roots of virtue. Bodhisattvas should maintain equanimity, without any regard for the joys and delights of sensual pleasures.
- 2.175 “Bodhisattvas should be without stinginess, giving up their bodies and lives entirely. Bodhisattvas should be free of clinging to material possessions as their own. Bodhisattvas should be intent on giving up all concepts and views. Bodhisattvas should be rich in the great wealth of the seven riches. Bodhisattvas should be steadfast and grounded in practice. Bodhisattvas should be insatiable in pursuit of the infinite qualities of buddhahood. Bodhisattvas should be replete with the perfections.
- 2.176 “Bodhisattvas should have the heroism that comes from conquering the four demons. Bodhisattvas should be the foremost physicians, skilled in healing all beings of their maladies, the afflictions. Bodhisattvas should be objects of veneration, never apart from the mind of awakening. Bodhisattvas should be fields of merit in their concern for all beings. Bodhisattvas should be like lotuses, unstained by the mud of mundane things. [F.113.a] Bodhisattvas should be like boats, bringing all beings to freedom. Bodhisattvas should be like bridges, with no contempt for anyone, high, medium, or low. Bodhisattvas should be like springs, lakes, pools, and ponds, resolved to make the water of the sublime teachings inexhaustible. Bodhisattvas should be as insatiable as the ocean in their one-pointed desire to learn. Bodhisattvas should be as immovable as the central mountain. Bodhisattvas should be as utterly stable as a doorsill. Bodhisattvas should be particularly free of attachment to luxuries.
- 2.177 “Bodhisattvas should be powerful, skilled in transforming minds. Bodhisattvas should be like kings, with a vast orientation. Bodhisattvas should be like Śakra, worthy of being relied upon by all beings. Bodhisattvas should also be like Brahmā, acting as lord of all things. Bodhisattvas should work for all beings’ welfare, establishing them in the lasting happiness of the transcendence of suffering. Bodhisattvas should be like a father or mother to all beings, giving them things that are helpful and pleasing. Bodhisattvas should be unspoiled and unimpaired by any wholesome or unwholesome qualities. Bodhisattvas should be free of enmity, impartial toward both friends and enemies. Bodhisattvas should not put their trust in any mode of birth. Bodhisattvas should be spiritual benefactors, giving liberally. Bodhisattvas, without being infatuated by their conscientiousness, should be entirely free of carelessness. Mañjuśrī, bodhisattvas who endeavor in bodhisattva practice—who are conscientious in practice, vows, training, [F.113.b] and diligence—are capable of fully awakening to unexcelled and perfectly complete buddhahood.”
- 2.178 The Blessed One, expressing his approval of what Bodhisattva Constant Stable Diligence had explained, said to him, “Excellent, son of noble family, excellent. You have described very well the skill of remaining constantly in the bodhisattva’s practice. Son of noble family, bodhisattva great beings who wish to achieve this absorption that encapsulates all merit should avoid everything that is not meritorious, and exert themselves in taking up everything that is meritorious.”
- 2.179 Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa then asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, what distinguishes bodhisattvas who have achieved this absorption that encapsulates all merit? What signs do they have? What marks? What qualities? What benefits?”
- 2.180 The Blessed One answered Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa, “Son of noble family, bodhisattvas who have achieved this absorption that encapsulates all merit have left the eight unfree states behind, and will not be born in the lower realms. Whatever they even wish for is actualized, so they are able to genuinely

- alleviate all poverty. They are adorned with the thirty-two major marks of a great being, and are replete with all the faculties. Because of the unending true nature, they achieve eloquence. They have no forgetting, and thus achieve retention. They turn the wheel of Dharma, and are thus exalted by a plenitude of merit. They achieve the power of Śakra, Brahmā, and the world protectors, and are empowered as objects of veneration by all beings. Their superknowledge is unimpaired, and they achieve superknowledge. [F.114.a] They gain control over all modes of birth. All the riches of the teachings increase in them, and in their methods they are inexhaustible treasuries. They are free of harmful views, and perceive everything with their insight.
- 2.181 “They have no desire for the levels of the śrāvakas or solitary buddhas. They are the ones who train all the śrāvakas and solitary buddhas. They have expertise in the faculties of beings, which they use to bring them all to maturation. They revel in concentration, absorption, equipoise, and the gateways of liberation. Being devoted to giving, they possess untaught generosity. Their three vows being utterly pure, they possess untaught discipline. Having actualized love in their mindstreams, they acquire unfathomable patience. Never discouraged, they work diligently for all beings. Devoted to solitude, they reach perfection in concentration. To bring all beings to maturation, they take birth in the desire realm. Skilled in the discernment of what is pronounced and what is not pronounced,⁶ through insight they possess pure liberation. Having abandoned dangerous paths, they possess vision. They are never apart from beholding the true nature and buddhahood. They are never apart from pronouncements of emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, the unconditioned, non-occurrence, non-origination, and non-substantiality. They retain everything the Buddha has said. They are never apart from meeting the community of irreversible bodhisattvas.
- 2.182 “They possess all the qualities of buddhafiels, [F.114.b] and are liberated without obscurations. They have dispelled the four demons, and have thus vanquished demons and hostile forces. They are characterized by being irreversible, and have acceptance of the profound. Through the magical power of the Buddha’s teachings, they gain swift superknowledge. They even understand the stream of teachings they have not heard. They hold all the extensive, pure qualities of buddhafiels, and possess all intentions. They leave behind all transmigration caused by their own habitual tendencies. They manifest all sorts of bodies, forms, and bodily natures, and are certain of mentally created abodes and bodies. They are not affected by any opponent. They uphold the blessed buddhas’ sublime teachings. They give up even their bodies and lives to preserve the sublime teachings. Since they display the domains of buddhas and have forever passed beyond suffering, they do not pass beyond suffering.
- 2.183 “Having no anxiety or trepidation in the face of an audience, they attain fearlessness. They know all actions, yet they do not carry them out with pride in doing something. They emanate within the illusory absorption, and attain the great display. They cannot be harmed in any way, and attain unwavering strength. They can make their words perfectly heard throughout all the buddhafiels, and have complete purity in the accumulation of speech. Having vanquished all the demon hordes, they are heroes. They can make every buddhafielf tremble, and have attained transcendence in miraculous manifestation. Their meanings, teachings, definitions, and eloquence are all perfect, and they have achieved true discerning knowledge. [F.115.a] They are conscientious, and devoted to unimpeded wisdom. They point out true omniscient wisdom to all beings, and dwell in the activity of buddhas.
- 2.184 “Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas who have certainty in this absorption that encapsulates all merit can be distinguished in these ways. These qualities can also be characterized as their signs, marks, qualities, or benefits.”
- 2.185 Then bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, may all beings achieve this absorption that encapsulates all merit! May bodhisattvas who have achieved this absorption come to acquire as well all the qualities and benefits that are not possessed by any śrāvakas and solitary buddhas! Blessed One, any beings who have not come to hear about this precious absorption—or who do not devote themselves to it once they have heard it—must indeed be influenced by demons.”
- 2.186 The Blessed One replied, “Precisely, Nārāyaṇa. It is just as you have said. Moreover, those bodhisattvas who have emerged, are emerging, or will emerge definitively by way of this absorption, acquire an unfathomable number of qualities. They acquire an inconceivable number of qualities.”
- 2.187 Nārāyaṇa then asked Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, “Mañjuśrī, when bodhisattva great beings wish to achieve this absorption, what Dharma should they strive in?”

- 2.188 Mañjuśrī replied, “Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattva [F.115.b] great beings who wish to achieve this absorption should not strive to eradicate the qualities associated with ordinary beings, nor to attain the qualities of awakening. They should not strive in any way toward the Dharma or dissociate themselves from non-Dharma; that is the way they should strive. While being within cyclic existence, they should not train in such a way that perpetuates cyclic existence, and they should not be afflicted by the subsidiary afflictions of cyclic existence. They should train toward the transcendence of suffering, but they should strive in such a way that they do not transcend suffering in the way that the śrāvakas and solitary buddhas transcend suffering.
- 2.189 “Furthermore, Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattva great beings who wish to achieve this absorption should train in truly bringing forth all merit. They should not form concepts about merit being of a defiled or undefiled type. They should not form concepts about things being meritorious or unmeritorious, whether they are immoral or moral, conditioned or unconditioned, mundane or supramundane. They should devote themselves to all merit that is subsumed in the realm of phenomena. They should embrace merit in the sense that it shares the same characteristics as a nonfluctuating formation. They should regard all beings’ merit as being like this, since they experience the absence of cyclic existence. They should regard the merit of one buddha or that of all buddhas as being similar. At the same time, they should not regard things as being similar or dissimilar, even in the slightest degree, since there are no such distinctions in the realm of phenomena. [F.116.a] They should have conviction that all merit—whether it is that of ordinary beings, that which is associated with training or nontraining, that of solitary buddhas, that of bodhisattvas, or that of completely perfect buddhas—is unreal and insubstantial, with no fixed place or location. And yet they should have conviction that all merit has a connection with all sentient beings.
- 2.190 “Son of noble family, consider how any possible physical form is considered to consist and be composed of the four great elements. In the same way, bodhisattva great beings should have conviction that merit has a connection to everything. They should not become infatuated by their merit, since it is the eternal, unending true nature.
- 2.191 “Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattva great beings who wish to achieve this precious state of absorption should not be intimidated by four types of inexhaustible, immeasurable merit. What four types? Immeasurable great compassion for all beings, the immeasurable buddhafi elds, immeasurable awakened wisdom, and immeasurable engagement with all beings’ mental activity. Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas should not be intimidated by these four.
- 2.192 “Bodhisattva great beings likewise should have conviction in four inconceivable things. What four things? The inconceivable ways that karmic actions ripen, the inconceivably manifold experiences of beings, the inconceivable ways of awakened liberation of the blessed buddhas, [F.116.b] and the inconceivable pure places where bodhisattvas take birth as wandering beings. Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattva great beings should have conviction in these four inconceivable things.
- 2.193 “Son of noble family, bodhisattvas who have such conviction will attain the four unending qualities. What four qualities? Unending merit, unending perfect aspiration, unending unhindered eloquence, and unending merit and wisdom. Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas will attain these four unending qualities.
- 2.194 “Son of noble family, bodhisattvas should strive in four things. What four things? Being insatiable in accumulating the roots of virtue, being insatiable in teaching the Dharma, being insatiable in the skill of perfect dedication, and being insatiable in incorporating all the qualities of buddhafi elds into one’s own realm. Nārāyaṇa, they should strive in these four.”
- 2.195 Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa then asked Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, “Mañjuśrī, how do bodhisattva great beings who are laypeople or renunciants acquire this absorption that encapsulates all merit? How do they transcribe it, recite it, and gain the acceptance that comes with assimilating it?”
- Mañjuśrī replied, “Nārāyaṇa, I would not call bodhisattva great beings laypeople if they happen to even hear of this absorption, nor if they acquire it, transcribe it, recite it, and do not abandon it. [F.117.a] They should only be referred to as renunciants. Why do I say this? Because that is how bodhisattvas who strive to realize this absorption come to free themselves of all notions. Wherever they may be, they do not reject any type of unending merit or wisdom. Nārāyaṇa, in order to bring beings to maturity, bodhisattvas manifest in various colors and forms.
- 2.196 “Moreover, Nārāyaṇa, they connect with everything and do not exclude anything. Consider, Nārāyaṇa, the way the moon and sun connect to everything, extending out to the four continents, not excluding anything. In the same way, Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas do not dwell in any particular conduct. They do not live

- as householders and become involved in the affairs of householders. Nor do they become renunciants, living as renunciants and dwelling in the affairs of monks. They could not be described in either way.
- 2.197 “Why is this? It is because such bodhisattvas are to regard all modes of birth as unreliable. Consider, Nārāyaṇa, how a highly precious gem such as beryl might be placed in any type of vessel without losing its nature as a precious gem. Similarly, Nārāyaṇa, even though bodhisattvas who abide by this absorption might live as householders, they should be referred to as renunciants, since they do not lose the identity of the realm of phenomena.”
- 2.198 Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa then asked Mañjuśrī, [F.117.b] what should bodhisattva great beings abide by, so that they will not lose this absorption that encapsulates all merit, and so that they will attain an inexhaustible amount of merit and wisdom?”
- Mañjuśrī answered, “Nārāyaṇa, there are four ways that bodhisattvas should live. What four ways? Bodhisattvas should live without any special attachment to their bodies or lives, and without longing for gain, respect, or eulogy. Bodhisattvas should live in emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness, and not live falling into the certainty of śrāvakas and solitary buddhas. Bodhisattvas should seek out the wisdom of awakening and the knowledge of correct discrimination, and live without holding onto deceit, conceit, ideas, or concepts. Bodhisattvas should live in freedom for all beings alike, and live without apprehending a self, sentient being, life, sustenance, being, or person. Nārāyaṇa, these are the four most superior, eminent, and supreme ways for bodhisattvas to live. They will lead to inexhaustible accumulations of merit and wisdom, to the abandonment of all types of views, and even to the realization of all the qualities of awakening.”
- 2.199 Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa then asked, “Mañjuśrī, how do bodhisattvas achieve these ways of living, such that they become renunciants even while living as householders?” [F.118.a]
- 2.200 Mañjuśrī replied, “Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas have four abodes. What are these four? Abiding in love, abiding in compassion, abiding in joy, and abiding in equanimity. Nārāyaṇa, these four are bodhisattvas’ abodes. Nārāyaṇa, wherever bodhisattvas live—whether in towns or in monasteries—if they abide by these four, they can be aptly described as dwelling in the abodes. Taking as one’s abode a compound like the Palace of Victory, or a mansion, is not what is meant by dwelling in the abodes. Nārāyaṇa, if bodhisattvas lack the four abodes of Brahmā and yet think they are dwelling in the abodes, they are not only fooling themselves, but the whole world including gods, humans, and demigods. Their alms rounds will be meaningless.
- 2.201 “Nārāyaṇa, any and all bodhisattvas who practice chastity emerge definitively by means of the four great abodes of Brahmā. Therefore, Nārāyaṇa, those who do not manifest the four abodes of Brahmā or the accomplishment of the concentrations of noble beings are a long way from abiding in the true practice of chastity. They have not forsaken pride, and are still conceited with the mundane view of the transitory collection.”
- 2.202 Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa then asked, “Mañjuśrī, how do bodhisattvas abide in love? How do they abide in compassion? How do they abide in joy? How do they abide in equanimity?”
- Mañjuśrī replied, [F.118.b] “Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas should abide in these four in the following way. They abide in love when they think, ‘I shall liberate all beings.’ They abide in compassion when they think, ‘I must set all beings free.’ They abide in joy when they think, ‘I shall establish all beings in the qualities of awakening.’ And bodhisattvas abide in equanimity when they think, ‘I shall free all beings from worldly concerns.’
- 2.203 “Moreover, Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas abide in love when they have the conviction that the realm of phenomena is empty. They abide in compassion when they have the conviction that all phenomena are void. They abide in joy when they have the conviction that all phenomena are beyond attachment, bondage, and liberation. And they abide in equanimity when they have the conviction that all phenomena are beyond coming and going. In this way, Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas abide in love, compassion, joy, and equanimity.
- 2.204 “To put it another way, Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattvas abide in love when they are not intimidated by phenomena lacking inherent identity. They abide in compassion when they are not intimidated by phenomena being void. They abide in joy when they are not intimidated by all the qualities of awakening having the true nature of sameness. And they abide in equanimity when they are not intimidated by the unending true nature of all the buddhafiels.

- 2.205 “In addition, Nārāyaṇa, the definition of love is the absence of enmity. The definition of compassion is the absence of behavior.⁷ [F.119.a] The definition of joy is the absence of ill will. The definition of equanimity is to be neither arrogant nor timid.
- 2.206 “Furthermore, Nārāyaṇa, there can be love and compassion that are not great love and great compassion. Śrāvakas and solitary buddhas do not have great love and great compassion. What śrāvakas and solitary buddhas have is love and compassion, the wish that all beings be happy—and that love is not great love; that compassion is not great compassion.
- 2.207 “So what are great love and great compassion? Great love is an impartial attitude toward all beings. Great compassion is what liberates all beings from every kind of suffering. Great love is to forsake your own welfare and to take birth intentionally within existence, among the five kinds of wandering beings. Great compassion is to think that you will free beings from the negative states of cyclic existence and establish them in positive ones.
- 2.208 “Nārāyaṇa, you should understand through these descriptions that the love and compassion that śrāvakas and solitary buddhas have is not great love or great compassion. Nārāyaṇa, bodhisattva great beings, therefore, should possess great love and great compassion.”
- 2.209 As this teaching was being given, eight thousand living beings formed the resolve set on unsurpassed and completely perfect awakening, saying, “Blessed One, we too will abide by what Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta has explained here.” [F.119.b] Eighty thousand bodhisattvas achieved the absorption that encapsulates all merit. And eight thousand living beings purified their eyes of Dharma regarding phenomena so that they became cleared of dust and immaculate.
- 2.210 Then Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, the thus-gone ones, the foe-destroyers, the completely perfect buddhas, are said to possess the marks of one hundred merits. What merits enable one to accomplish the thus-gone ones’ marks of one hundred merits?”
- 2.211 The Blessed One answered Bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa, “Nārāyaṇa, imagine that as many beings as there are in as many universes as there are grains of sand in the Ganges were brought together, and each of them had as much merit as a wheel-bearing monarch. The sum total of the merit of all those beings with as much merit as a wheel-bearing monarch would then match the merit of Śakra, lord of the gods.
- 2.212 “Nārāyaṇa, imagine that as many beings as there are in as many universes as there are grains of sand in the Ganges were brought together, and each of them had as much merit as Śakra. The sum total of the merit of all those beings with as much merit as Śakra would then match the merit of Brahmā.
“Nārāyaṇa, imagine that as many beings as there are in as many universes as there are grains of sand in the Ganges were brought together, and each of them had as much merit as Brahmā. [F.120.a] The sum total of the merit of all those beings with as much merit as Brahmā would then match the merit of one śrāvaka.
- 2.213 “Nārāyaṇa, imagine that as many beings as there are in as many universes as there are grains of sand in the Ganges were brought together, and each of them had as much merit as a śrāvaka. The sum total of the merit of all those beings with as much merit as a śrāvaka would then match the merit of one solitary buddha.
“Nārāyaṇa, imagine that as many beings as there are in as many universes as there are grains of sand in the Ganges were brought together, and each of them had as much merit as a solitary buddha. The sum total of the merit of all those beings with as much merit as a solitary buddha would then match the merit of a bodhisattva, a bodhisattva who achieves this *absorption that encapsulates all merit*.
- 2.214 “Nārāyaṇa, imagine that as many beings as there are in as many universes as there are grains of sand in the Ganges were brought together, and each of them had achieved this absorption that encapsulates all merit. If you were to then bring that entire amount of merit together—the sum total of the merit of all those beings—it would effectively be analogous to carrying out an extravagant offering ceremony. Nārāyaṇa, the amount of merit generated by that extravagant offering ceremony and by its results, multiplied by one hundred, would create one of the marks of a great being that manifests on the body of a thus-gone one. That is why a thus-gone one is referred to as possessing the marks of one hundred merits. [F.120.b] It is such skills that enable the thus-gone ones to manifest on their bodies all thirty-two major marks of a great being as well; these marks are beyond the comprehension of any being. Therefore the thus-gone ones are said to possess the marks of inconceivable merit.”

- 2.215 As this teaching on the marks of one hundred merits was being given, the trichilocosm shook in six ways and was bathed in a bright light. One hundred thousand instruments sounded without being played, and a shower of flowers rained down. Everyone in the whole world, including the gods, was amazed, and burst into a great buzz and jubilation. Joining their palms and bowing to the Blessed One, they all proclaimed together:
- “The attainment of those who form the resolve set on unsurpassed and completely perfect awakening is a most excellent attainment indeed! Those who possess these marks of one hundred merits do indeed outshine Śakra, Brahmā, all the world’s protectors, śrāvakas, and solitary buddhas! The attainment of those who happen to hear of this precious absorption and practice it unerringly is a most excellent attainment indeed! Wherever on the earth they may be practicing this absorption, how fortunate they are! We understand that those sons and daughters of noble family who expound elaborately and correctly on this precious absorption are blessed by the thus-gone ones. Wherever this Dharma discourse on absorption is being propounded, we will cross as many world systems as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges in order to hear it, and we are even ready to die for the sake of hearing this teaching.” [F.121.a]
- 2.216 The Blessed One replied, “Just so, children of noble family! It is just as you have said. Know that sons and daughters of noble family who fail to hear of this absorption, who fail to retain it, read it, master it, and expound it correctly and in detail to others, must be under the influence of demons. Children of noble family, I would not describe as learned any bodhisattvas who do not expound in detail and correctly to others this absorption that encapsulates all merit.”
- 2.217 Then the gods and bodhisattvas together requested the Blessed One, “Blessed One, please grant your blessings that this Dharma discourse on the absorption that encapsulates all merit will be practiced and propagated by all means in times to come.”
- 2.218 At that moment the Blessed One emitted light from the coil of hair between his eyebrows. This light illuminated infinite, limitless world systems, while resounding with the phrase, “This Dharma discourse is blessed by the Thus-Gone One, the Foe-Destroyer, the Completely Perfect Buddha!”
- 2.219 The Blessed One then said to the venerable Ānanda, “Ānanda, before long, when three months have passed, the Thus-Gone One will pass beyond suffering. I entrust this Dharma discourse to you, so that you will retain it and teach it widely to others.
- “Ānanda, for any being who holds this Dharma discourse in mind, the blessed buddhas do not pass beyond suffering. Neither do their teachings wane. Why? Because, Ānanda, if someone puts this Dharma discourse into practice, he meets the Buddha. If he articulates it and teaches it to others, he is upholding the sublime Dharma.”
- 2.220 Venerable Ānanda wept, [F.121.b] and pleaded with the Blessed One, “Blessed One, Thus-Gone One, Foe-Destroyer, Completely Perfect Buddha, please remain for an eon or longer so that you can continue to bring aid and happiness to so many beings, bring love to the world, and bring benefit, aid, and happiness to gods, humans, and the vast multitudes of beings!”
- The Blessed One replied, “Ānanda, do not grieve and lament! Ānanda, as long as you hold this Dharma discourse in mind, read it, and teach it, you will never be apart from meeting the Buddha. Why do I say so? Because, Ānanda, the thus-gone ones cannot be regarded in terms of a body, or in terms of the major and minor marks. Ānanda, as long as you meet Dharma discourses that I have taught, like this one, that in itself is meeting the Buddha.”
- 2.221 As he said this, everyone in the world, including Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, the bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa, the mighty strongman Vimalatejā, the community of bodhisattva great beings, the great śrāvakas, venerable Ānanda, numerous gods, as well as gods, humans, demigods, and gandharvas, all rejoiced and extolled what the Buddha had taught.

c.

Colophon

c.1

This completes the noble Great Vehicle sūtra, *The Absorption That Encapsulates All Merit*.

Translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian preceptors Prajñāvarman and Śilendrabodhi, the chief editor and translator Bandé Yeshé Dé, and others.

n.

NOTES

- 1 The catalogue of the Narthang Kangyur (F.94a) says that the Tshalpa (*tshal pa*) catalogue lists this text as having two chapters (*le'u*), but that the Great Fifth Dalai Lama considered this to be a scribal error. Nevertheless, the 16th century Tibetan commentator Pekar Zangpo (*pad dkar bzang po*, p 193) does identify a thematic distinction, writing that the first chapter deals with the nature of the absorption while the second explains its causes and the benefits of training in it. Curiously, however, both the Narthang and Degé catalogues also list the text as having no less than 50 *le'u*. It may be that in this and similar catalogue entries (see also Dharmachakra 2016, Introduction I.15) the term *le'u* is being used to denote “episodes” or “scenes,” rather than in its more usual sense of formal sections or chapters.
- 2 The Degé Kangyur, in common with the other Kangyurs predominantly of the Tshalpa tradition, here reads *dgon par bgyi ba lta bu ni 'jig rten gnas pa lags so*, which is difficult to interpret in the context. This (and some other details of this passage) appear less erroneous in the Kangyurs of the Thempangma tradition. The Stok Palace (*stog pho brang*) manuscript Kangyur reads *dgum par bgyi ba lta bu ni ...* which is the reading we have translated here.
- 3 Tib: *gang kho na na gnas pa de kho nar 'gags pa*. “Remaining in themselves and ceasing in themselves” is our best guess at translating this obscure phrase.
- 4 The occurrence in this passage of the term *bar ma dor yongs su myang ngan las 'da' ba / anantarāparinirvāyī* is the only occurrence in any of the Kangyur sūtra sections, except for one mention in the longer *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* in relation to the Buddha’s qualities. The term is included in the *Mahāvīyutpatti* (section 46, 1015), and the *sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa* makes it clear that the Tibetans interpreted it as attaining the śrāvaka’s nirvāṇa in the interval between one life and the next (*antaraparinirvāṇi zhes bya ba phyir mi 'ong ba srid pa gcig nas 'phos pa pha rol tu yang ma skyes par srid pa bar mdo'i tshes dgra bcom pa'i 'bras bu mngon du byas nas mya ngan las 'da' bas na bar ma dor yongs su mya ngan las 'da' ba zhes bya*). According to Edgerton the Pāli sources interpret the term as meaning simply “attaining parinirvāṇa prematurely” i.e. in the middle of life, and the *Prajñāpāramitā* occurrence could be interpreted as prematurely in the sense of before having perfected the qualities. Here it could be interpreted either simply as attaining nirvāṇa “without any interval,” i.e. immediately, or possibly as in the interval after death; in both cases the implication is, of course, that the bodhisattva will not continue to live to benefit beings.
- 5 Tib: *bdag gi sdug bsngal dang 'dra bar 'dod pa* (or, in the Stok Palace Kangyur, *bdag gis sdug bsngal ...*). The meaning of this expression is unclear to us.
- 6 Tib: *sgra dang sgra ma yin pa so sor brtag pa la mkhas pa*. The Tibetan *sgra* has a wide range of meanings, including “sound,” “voice,” “speech,” “language,” “word,” “term,” and “grammar.” It is not clear what this expression means in the context of this sentence.

z

Tib: *snying rje ni kun tu spyod pa med pa'i mtshan nyid do*. This way of defining compassion is surprising; it could possibly carry the sense of not having a fixed type of conduct, though this is not clear.

b.

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GLOSSARY

g.

g.1

Abodes of Brahmā

ཚངས་པའི་གནས་

tshangs pa'i gnas

brahmavihāra

Love, compassion, joy, equanimity.

g.2

Āmrapālī

ཨ་མྲས་བསྐྱེད་པ་

a mras bsrungs pa

Āmrapālī

A famous and beautiful patron of the Buddha's, courtesan in the city of Vaiśālī.

g.3

Āmrapālī's great grove

ཨ་མྲས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་ཚལ་ཆེན་པོ་

a mras bsrungs pa'i tshal chen po

Āmrapālivana

The grove donated to the Buddha by the courtesan Āmrapālī.

g.4

Ānanda

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ་

kun dga' bo

Ānanda

One of the Buddha's primary followers, compiler of the sūtras.

g.5

Anantamati

བློ་གྲོས་མཐའ་ཡས་

blo gros mtha' yas