

Practicing the Dhamma

The Right Way

Shurangama Sutra

"Samatha Vipassana Practice."



How to Meditate Correctly
Distractions affecting Practitioners
During Meditation

Compiled for the Serene Joy and Emotion of the Pious

A Gift of Dhamma

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Shurangama Sutra

Practicing the Dhamma the right way

Samatha Vipassana



Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

“**Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahtto Sammasambuddhassa** “

*We take refuge in the Buddha,
We take refuge in the Dharma,
We take refuge in the Sangha,*

This is a discourse given in the *Mahayana Sanskrit Tipitaka*, hence you will not find it in *Pali Tipitaka*.. It is important that we know the origination of this *Shurangama sutra* to appreciate the *Buddha Sakyamuni's* (Gotama Buddha) Teaching on the Practicing of *Samatha Vipassana*. This sutra is unique in the sense that it is very clear and upfront on what a practitioner could face in his practice to gain *Samadhi*. Based on this discourse, it is necessary for one to practice *Samatha Vipassana* with a well qualified teacher who has already acquired the power to negate the demonic forces. This sutra was given to *Ananda* by our Lord Buddha when *Ananda* was tempted by the *Kapila's Magic to Matangi's* daughter, at the time of Buddha.

*Buddha explains: In “The Origin of Demonic States”, the Buddha states clearly that **samadhi** is the main cause for the demons' unrest. The demons then will attempt to confuse the good cultivator. If the good cultivator recognizes the situation and remains unattached,*

then the cultivator will progress. However, if the cultivator is confused by the state, he or she will then fall under the spell of the demons.

I will like to share this sutra with my dhamma friends – this valuable sutra - practicing the *Samatha Vipassana*.

The Background Story:

Ananda was the Buddha's first cousin and his attendant. He also compiled and edited the sutras. His name means rejoicing, because he was born on the day the Buddha realized Buddhahood. His father also rejoiced and gave him that name. The entire country celebrated the Buddha's enlightenment on that day. With his flawless memory, Ananda was able to remember all the Sutras the Buddha spoke and was foremost among the Buddha's disciples in erudition."

"The *Shurangama Sutra* was spoken for Ananda's sake, precisely because he didn't have sufficient *samadhi*-power. He had not done the work of meditation required to develop it. When others were sitting investigating *dhyana*¹, Ananda would go read a book or write instead Put another way, Ananda hadn't cultivated real mark wisdom-panna - (*prajna*); he thought he could realize Buddhahood through literary *prajna* alone. He thought that since he was the Buddha's cousin, the Buddha, who had realized Buddhahood, would certainly help him realize Buddhahood too, and so it didn't really matter whether he cultivated or not. He ended up wasting a lot of time.

"One day, as the *Shurangama Sutra* relates, *Ananda* went out begging for food all alone. He took his bowl and went from house to house, and while alone on the road he encountered the daughter of *Matangi* Ananda was particularly handsome, and when *Matangi's* daughter saw him she was immediately attracted to him. But she didn't know how to snare him. And so she went back and told her mother, 'You absolutely must get Ananda to marry me. If you don't, I'll die.'

"The mother, *Matangi*, belonged to the religion of the *Kapilas (Brahmanism)* the 'tawny haired', and she cultivated that religion's *mantras*² and dharma-devices, which were extremely effective (*the Kapila's Magic*). Since Matangi truly loved her daughter, she used a mantra of her sect-it was a mantra formerly of the Brahma heaven-to confuse Ananda. Ananda didn't have any *samadhi*-power, and so he couldn't control himself. He followed the Kapila's magic and went to Matangi's daughter's house, where he was on the verge of breaking the precepts.

"The first five precepts prohibit *killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying*, and *the taking of intoxicants*. Ananda was about to break the precept against sexual misconduct. The

¹ *Dhyana* – *samatha meditation practice – samatha Bhavana*.

² *Mantra* – Kapila's magic incantation performed to ensnare a person to do some thing by invocation for devas' help. This kind of practice is very prevalent in villages and town in many Theravada countries like in Thailand, Laos, Sri Lanka, & Myanmar. There are also good Mantra to invoke help from Gods and Devas.

Buddha knew about it as it was happening. Realizing his cousin was in trouble, he quickly spoke the *Shurangama Mantra* to break up the Kapila's magic formerly of the Brahma Heaven of the *Kapila* religion. Ananda's confusion had made him as if drunk or as if he had taken drugs-he was totally oblivious to everything. But when the Buddha recited the Shurangama Mantra, its power woke Ananda up from his confusion, and there he was wondering how he had gotten himself into such a situation.

"He returned, knelt before the Buddha, and cried out in distress. 'I have relied exclusively on erudition and have not perfected any strength in the Way. I have no *samadhi*-power. Please tell me how the Buddhas of the ten directions have cultivated so that they were able to obtain *samadhi*-power.' In reply the Buddha spoke the *Shurangama Sutra*." (SS I 25-26)

The *Dharma Flower Sutra* records the Buddha bestowing the prediction of future Buddhahood upon Ananda:

At that time the Buddha told Ananda, 'You in a future age shall become a Buddha by the name of King of Self Control and Penetrations with Wisdom like the Mountains and Seas Thus Come One. One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One Perfect in Clarity and Practice, Well-Gone One, Unsurpassed One Who Understands the World, Hero Who Subdues and Tames, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World-Honored One. You shall make offerings to sixty-two million Buddhas, protecting and upholding their storehouses of Dharma. After that you shall obtain anuttarasamyaksambodhi. You shall teach and transform twenty-thousand myriads of millions of Ganges' sands of Bodhisattvas, causing them to accomplish anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Your country shall be called Banner of Victory Always Raised. That land will be pure, with lapis lazuli for soil. The kalpa shall be called All Pervasive Wonderful Sound. Your lifespan as a Buddha shall be countless thousands of myriads of millions of asankhyeyas of aeons. Were someone to attempt to reckon it through countless thousands of myriads of millions of asankhyeyas of aeons, they could not do so. The proper Dharma shall dwell in that world for twice that length of time. The Dharma Image Age shall dwell twice the length of Proper Dharma.

'Ananda, the merit and virtue of the Buddha King of Self-Control and Penetrations with Wisdom Like the Mountains and Seas shall be praised by all the Buddhas of the ten directions equal in number to the sands of countless thousands of myriads of millions of Ganges rivers.' (DFS VIII 1500-1501)

Then, the causes and conditions for the Sutra is revealed in "*Ananda's Fall*", where the Venerable Ananda, the Buddha's youngest cousin, was tempted by *Matangi's* daughter, the prostitute. Fortunately, the Buddha, knowing this in advance, instructed the greatly-wise Manjushri Bodhisattva to rescue Ananda from the *indecent artifact* which nearly caused Ananda to break his precept substance.

Ananda, realizing his great error and his lack of *samadhi*, Ananda then reverently requested instruction. In "The Way to Samatha (Shamatha)", Shakyamuni Buddha attempts to reveal the true reason for Ananda's fall; it was because Ananda did not realize the falseness of his own mind. Even with all his years of learning, Ananda still had not yet recognized his true mind and so had not attained sainthood (Arahatship).

Finally, in “Ananda Repents and Seeks the Truth”, Ananda realizes that the Buddha cannot bestow salvation upon him. He has to actually walk the path and cultivate the Way. Again, Ananda requests the Buddha’s compassionate instruction. The Buddha then prepares to erect the great Dharma banner for all living beings so that they can obtain the wondrous subtle secret, the pure nature, the bright mind, and attain the pure eye.

The wondrous journey into the *Shurangama Sutra*’s deep, profound teachings begins.

‘Save others first then save yourself. That is the aspiration of a Bodhisatta (Bodhisattva). Once your own enlightenment is perfected, then you can enlighten others. That is the way the Blessed One responds to the world.’ Although I am not yet saved, I vow to save all living beings in the *Dharma-ending Age*. The dharma ending age is not far from now (5,000 BE).

The Shurangama Sutra Is the Essence of All Sutras

If you can eliminate all your bad habits and faults, you will naturally be in accord with the Sutta (Sutra) doctrines.

As we study the Buddha dhamma (dharma), we must understand the meanings and principles spoken in the Sutras. There are true meanings and principles in every one of the Sutras spoken by the Buddha. All Sutras are related, and so are the principles contained in them. The Buddha expounded the **Theravada** (Small Vehicle) and the **Mahayana** (Great Vehicle), and finally, the Buddha Vehicle, which encompasses everything else. The first thing all these vehicles teach is to eradicate bad habits and faults, to get rid of ignorance, afflictions, greed (*Loba*), anger (*Dosa*), and delusion (*Moha*) If you can eliminate all of your bad habits and faults, you will naturally be in accord with the Sutra doctrines. But if you don’t get rid of your faults, you won’t be able to understand the principles spoken in the Sutras.

We have deals with the investigation the Fifty Khandha (*fifty Aggregates*) Skanda-Demon States and the Four Rules of Purity of the *Shurangama Sutra*.

What is the true principle of this Sutra?

Why did the Buddha speak of it?

If you find the true principle, you will be able to really understand this Sutra. Otherwise, you can’t be considered to have understood this Sutra. This is just like getting to know a person. In addition to the person’s name, you must find out what he looks like, what he thinks, and how he behaves before you can say you know him. If you only know someone’s name, but don’t know his appearance, his thoughts, and so forth, you can’t say you know him. Studying Sutras is the same.

The *Shurangama Sutra*’s scope is so vast that there’s nothing beyond it, yet so small that there’s nothing within it. The principles of the *Shurangama Sutra* are like the bones in our bodies. If we had flesh, blood, and skin, but no bones, we wouldn’t look like human

beings, and we wouldn't even be able to stand up. *The Shurangama Sutra is the essence of all Sutras.* Its function is to destroy what's perverse and disclose what's proper—*to abolish all evil and reveal the true samadhi.* If the *Shurangama Sutra* disappeared from this world, there would be no Buddhadharma. As long as the *Shurangama Sutra* exists, the Buddhadharma exists.

*Buddha had asked Ananda not to leave this world, even if he had attained the arahatship; but to teach the dhamma in the **dhamma ending age**, when the Buddha dispensation comes to an end in 5,000 BE., teach this dhamma to save the sentient beings.*

Compiled for the serene joys and the emotion of the pious!

*Maung Paw
California*

How to Meditate Correctly

Distractions affecting Samatha Practitioners During Meditation

(Excerpt taken from **Shurangama Sutra**)

Introduction: Just as the Buddha was about to quit his dhamma-platform, he once again leaning back in his seat, he declared to the great assembly and to his most learned disciple *Ananda*:

"You *Savaka* (sravakas) and *pacceka-buddha* (pratyeka-buddhas) must turn your minds to the achievement of the supreme bodhi. I have already instructed you in the correct methods of practice, but you are not yet aware of the subtle deceptions of the evil maras when you practice ***Samatha-Vipassana*** (samatha-vipasyana) meditation.

Samatha Vipassana Meditation

When the mara-realms appear before you, if you are not able to distinguish them, and *your minds are not pure and balanced*, you will fall into erroneous views. These may take the form of:

- *Your own Aggregate (Aggregate)-maras,*
- *Deva Mara,*
- *Ghosts and spirits, or evil demons.*

If your mind is not clear:

- *you may mistake thieves as your own sons,* or
- *take small progress as complete achievement,* like the ignorant monk who after reaching the fourth³ and final dhyana⁴ announced that he had attained sainthood.

No sooner had he earned his heavenly reward than signs of his fall appeared. For vilifying the arahats, he reaped the fruits of his own karma and fell into the eternal hells. You must listen carefully as I explain this to you in detail."

Ananda rose to his feet, and together with all the assembled neophyte saiksa⁵ (well disciplined) students, they gratefully prostrated themselves at the Buddha's feet and awaited his compassionate instruction. The Buddha said: "You must all understand that there is no difference between the universal mind of the twelve types of beings birthed in

³ Fourth – Arahatship is the fourth level of holiness.

⁴ *Dhyana* - was undoubtedly the extensive ritual practice of the brahmins, which called for tremendous mental concentration.

⁵ *Saiksa* – well disciplined virtuous persons

the worlds of suffering and illusion and that of the Buddhas of the ten directions. However, because of distorted thinking, people become ignorant and greedy, and ignorance and greed become universal. Therefore, the original, absolute void is ceaselessly transformed into illusion, and thus the world is created. In reality, this very earth came into being from the stubborn and erroneous thinking of the unenlightened. You must know that voidness is created in your own mind like a wisp of cloud against a clear sky; how much more so the worlds within this void. If just one among you realizes your true nature and reverts to the original source, then the whole void is obliterated. Would not all the nations of this void be shaken and shattered?

When you practice *dhyana* and *samadhi*

"When you practice *dhyana* and *Samadhi*: -

- *All the bodhisattvas and great arahats, whose mind-essences are in perfect accord, remain unmoved.*
- *The king of the demons, together with the ghosts, spirits, and lesser heavens witness the spontaneous collapse of their palaces, and the whole earth is shattered.*
- *All the creatures of land, sea, and air are startled.*
- *The worldly man labors in darkness and feels no change,*

The hosts of demons, who have acquired the five supernatural powers but have not yet extinguished their passions, are still attached to the troubles of this world.

*How can they allow you to destroy their dwellings? This is why when you enter the state of *samadhi*, the ghosts and spirits, *Deva Mara*, and monsters and demons swarm about to harass you.*

When you attain the *Jhanas*

"However, do not be concerned about the maras' rage, for they are afflicted with the passions of the world, while you enjoy wonderful bliss. They can no more touch you than wind can blow out light or a knife can cut water; you are like boiling water and they are like solid ice. As the warm air draws near, the ice is soon melted. Though they rely on their supernatural powers, these are merely external and can only succeed in destroying you through your own internal five aggregates⁶ (Aggregates)--*form, sensation, conception, volition, and consciousness*).

What harm can they do to you?

If you are deluded, they will take advantage of you. When you are established in *dhyana*, enlightened and free of delusion, what harm can the maras do to you? When your

⁶ **Five Khandhas** – five aggregates - *form, sensation, conception, volition, and consciousness*

Aggregates are wiped out, and you enter a state of perfect clarity, then all evils are but dark vapors. As light overcomes darkness, they will perish as soon as they approach you.

How could they dare to disturb your samadhi?

What if your mind is deluded?

"However, if you fail to awaken and are deluded by the five Aggregates, then you, *Ananda*, will become the offspring of Mara and aid him in his work. This is like the despicable *Matangi*, who used spells to try to cause you to violate one of the eighty thousand rules of the order. At that time, however, your mind was pure and you did not succumb. This was a potential threat to your precious bodhi-wisdom and to your very being, and you might have ended up like a minister of state who finds himself suddenly dispossessed, destitute, and hopeless.

The Ten Mara-States of the Aggregates (Aggregate) of Form

"*Ananda*, you must know that when you sit in the meditation hall with thoughts extinguished and a clear mind, you will no longer be affected by movement or stillness, and memory and forgetting will be as one. In this state as you enter samadhi, you are like a man with sharp eyes who is standing in the dark. Although your mind is clear, it does not yet shine. This is called '*the state conditioned by the aggregate of form.*'

1. The interaction of the aggregate of form⁷

When your eyes are clear, light floods the ten directions, and you will no longer dwell in darkness. This is called '*the end of the Aggregate of form,*' and allows you to transcend the kalpa of impurity, whose root cause is stubborn and erroneous thinking.

1.1. Your body free of all hindrances

"Ananda, in your present state of penetration and clarity, the four elements⁸ of the world cannot entwine you, and after a short time **your body will be free of all hindrances**. This state is called '*the outward diffusion of clear consciousness*' and is but a temporary manifestation resulting from your progress in meditation. It does not mean that you have reached sainthood. This stage, although it is called '**an excellent level of attainment,**' should not be confused with sainthood. *If you do misinterpret this, you will be attacked by hordes of demons.*

1.2. You will see your own body

"Ananda, once again in this state of penetration and clarity, you will attain internal discernment of your own body and **may even see roundworms inside**. However, although you perceive your body thus, there will be no harm. This state is called '*the diffusion of clear consciousness into the body*' and is but a temporary manifestation resulting from your progress in meditation. It does not mean that you have reached sainthood. This stage, although it is called '**an excellent level of attainment,**' should not be confused with sainthood. *If you do misinterpret this, you will be attacked by hordes of demons.*

1.3. You will hear the voices

"Continuing with this mind to penetrate both within and without, **the higher and lower souls, the mind and will, and the spirit** (though excepting the physical body) all intermingle as host and guest. **Suddenly you will hear a voice in the middle of the air preaching the dhamma or proclaiming its secret meanings in the ten directions.** This state is called '*the mutual separation and union of spirit and the higher and lower souls.*' This attainment sows good seed, but it is temporary and is not sainthood. This stage, although it is called '**an excellent level of attainment,**' should not be confused with sainthood. *If you do misinterpret this, you will be attacked by hordes of demons.*

1.4. You will see the meditating Buddha (Vairocana)

"Continuing with this clear and penetrating mind, **your inner light will shine forth and bathe everything in the ten directions with the golden hue of sandalwood**, and all creatures are transformed into Buddhas. **Suddenly you will see Vairocana⁹**, the embodiment of truth himself, seated on a throne of heavenly light surrounded by a

⁷ Form: one of the five aggregates – body (*form, sensation, conception, volition, and consciousness*)

⁸ Four elements of the world – *Pathavi, Arpo, tejo, Vayo* – earth, water, fire and wind

⁹ Vairocana – meditation Buddha

thousand Buddhas and countless nations and lotus blossoms, all appearing at once. This is called 'the effect of the awakening spirituality of the mind.' *The penetrating light of the mind illuminates all the worlds.* However, this is a temporary stage and is not sainthood. This stage, although it is called 'an excellent level of attainment,' should not be confused with sainthood. **If you do misinterpret this, you will be attacked by hordes of demons.**

1.5. You will see the seven colors of precious gem

"Continuing to contemplate with this clear and penetrating mind, if you persist in repressing and controlling your thoughts, **the effort will produce the desire for release.** Suddenly, then, the *ten directions of space will be filled with the colors of the seven or hundred precious gems.* Without clashing, the green, yellow, red, and white colors will each manifest in all their purity. This is called '*the effect of excessive repression.*' This is a temporary stage and is not sainthood. This stage, although it is called 'an excellent level of attainment,' should not be confused with sainthood. **If you do misinterpret this, you will be attacked by hordes of demons.**

1.6. Your inner light will shine

"Continuing to investigate with this clear and penetrating mind, your inner light will become concentrated, and suddenly at midnight in a dark room you will see all sorts of objects just as if it were broad daylight. These objects will persist and will not disappear. This is called 'the clarity of mental refinement penetrating obscurity.' This is a temporary stage and is not sainthood. This stage, although it is called 'an excellent level of attainment,' should not be confused with sainthood. **If you do misinterpret this, you will be attacked by hordes of demons.**

1.7. Your limbs will feel nothing

"Continuing, as your mind merges with the void, suddenly your four limbs will feel like grass or trees. Even if burned by fire or cut with a knife, **you will feel nothing.** Flame cannot burn you, and cutting your flesh is just like whittling a stick. This is called 'the union of inner and outer worlds eliminating the four elements and realizing perfect purity.' This is a temporary stage and is not sainthood. This stage, although it is called 'an excellent level of attainment,' should not be confused with sainthood. **If you do misinterpret this, you will be attacked by hordes of demons.**

1.8. You will see all quarters of the great earth

"Continuing to pursue purity with your mind, when you have reached a very high level, you will suddenly see all quarters of the great earth, with its mountains and rivers, transformed into the Buddha's pure land, complete with the all-pervading radiance of the seven precious jewels. **You will also see all the Buddhas,** as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, filling space, together with beautiful temples and palaces. Your unimpeded vision will be able to see hells below and heavenly deva palaces above. This is called '*the result of prolonged contemplation of likes and dislikes.*' However, this is not sainthood.

This stage, although it is called 'an excellent level of attainment,' should not be confused with sainthood. **If you do misinterpret this, you will be attacked by hordes of demons.**

1.9. In the distance you will see market-places, wells, streets, and lanes

"Continuing with this mind to penetrate further and deeper, suddenly in the middle of the night far in the distance you will see market-places, wells, streets, and lanes. You may see relatives, clansman, and family members, and may even hear them speak. This is called '*remote visions of the overworked mind taking flight*.' However, this is not sainthood. This stage, although it is called 'an excellent level of attainment,' should not be confused with sainthood. **If you do misinterpret this, you will be attacked by hordes of demons.**

1.10. You will see men of good wisdom,

"Continuing with this mind to penetrate to the furthest extent, you will see men of good wisdom, whose bodies undergo countless changes without reason. This is called "*demonic influence on the perverse mind*." You may experience Deva Mara enter your innermost mind and spontaneously preach the dhamma and its profound meaning. This is not sainthood. Not confusing this with sainthood helps to undermine the work of Mara. **If you misinterpret this as sainthood, you will be attacked by hordes of demons.**

"Ananda, these ten manifestations of dhyana are the result of **the interaction of the Aggregate of form with the practice of meditation**. Living things are stubborn in their delusion and not reflective. Hence, when they experience these conditioned phenomena, they are bewildered and do not understand them, proclaiming that they have attained sainthood and are enlightened. In this way, they fall into the hell of uninterrupted punishment. After my nirvana, in the age of the degeneration of the dhamma, you must proclaim these teachings to prevent Deva Mara from exploiting these states and to protect yourselves and realize the supreme Tao.

2. The ten interaction of the aggregate of sensation

"Ananda, when disciples practicing samatha to realize samadhi are no longer susceptible to the Aggregate of form, they will see the minds of all the Buddhas like reflections in a clear mirror. But this is like winning a prize that cannot yet be enjoyed, or like a man having a nightmare, whose limbs are free and whose mind is normal, but because of an evil influence is unable to move. Therefore, this is called 'the aggregate of sensation' (the Aggregate of sensation.)' If the nightmare ceases, then the mind can leave the body to observe one's own face and come and go as one pleases without any hindrances. This is called 'the cessation of the Aggregate of sensation,' and one thus transcends contaminated views. If we examine the cause of this, it is false knowledge and erroneous thinking.

2.1. The feeling of infinite pity

"Ananda, disciples at this stage of their practice will find themselves surrounded by great brightness and become aware, as a result of excessive inner self-control, of *a feeling of infinite pity*. As this feeling swells, they may begin to view mosquitoes and gadflies as their own infant children. With great pity in their hearts, they may find themselves spontaneously weeping. This is called 'a breakdown from the rigors of practice.' If they realize its origin, there will be no harm, and if they do not misinterpret it as sainthood, after a time it will automatically disappear. Should they confuse this with sainthood, the maras of pity will enter their minds, and they will feel great pity for people *they meet and give way to uncontrolled sobbing*. This abnormal reaction may cause them to fall into a lower state.

2.2. The feeling of 'overconfidence arising from practice'

"Ananda, those disciples who practice dhyana will find that as the Aggregate of form recedes, the Aggregate of sensation manifests. Now with the prospect of final success before them, they may feel overwhelmingly excited and develop an attitude of unlimited boldness. With a fierceness of mind and a will equal to all the Buddhas, they may proclaim that with one thought they can transcend innumerable kalpas. This is called, '*overconfidence arising from practice*,' but if recognized, it will not result in harm. It is not, however, sainthood, and understanding this, after a time it will automatically disappear. If they confuse this state with sainthood, the maras of madness will enter their minds, and they will become boastful and arrogant with the people they meet, oblivious to both the Buddhas above and humanity below. This abnormal reaction may cause them to fall into a lower state.

2.3. You may experience a sense of great mental dryness

"Continuing, those disciples who practice dhyana will find that as the Aggregate of form recedes, and the Aggregate of sensation manifests, they will see before them no signs of progress and behind them former attainments disappear. Their intellectual capacities will weaken, and they will enter a destructive state. Turning around and seeing no hope, they may experience a sense of great mental dryness and exhaustion that leads to a state of

unremitting deep reflection. If they take this as a sign of diligence in practice, this is called 'losing one's mind through ignorance.' If they recognize these signs, there will be no harm, but if they confuse this with sainthood, the maras of forgetfulness will enter their minds, cling fast day and night, and hold it in suspension. This is an abnormal reaction and will cause them to fall into a lower state.

2.4. The loss of common sense through over stimulation

"Continuing, those disciples who practice dhyana will find that as the Aggregate of form recedes, and the Aggregate of sensation manifests, the faculty of wisdom outstrips samadhi. Swollen with a sense of pride, they may become convinced that they have equaled Vairocana-- the embodiment of wisdom-- and become prematurely satisfied with this small accomplishment. This is called 'loss of common sense through over stimulation of the power of discrimination in meditation.' If one recognizes this, there will be no harm. However, this is not sainthood, and if misinterpreted, the maras of inferiority and self-satisfaction will enter their minds, and they will announce to everyone they meet that they have already reached supreme enlightenment. This is an abnormal reaction and will cause them to fall into a lower state.

2.5. Contemplating the gulf between mortality and nirvana,

"Continuing, those disciples who practice dhyana will find that as the Aggregate of form recedes, and the Aggregate of sensation manifests, they will find themselves not only without further progress, but losing their previous gains. Contemplating the gulf between mortality and nirvana, the path seems difficult and dangerous, and suddenly they feel inconsolably depressed. Feeling as if they were lying on a bed of iron or drinking poison, they may lose their will to live. They may even ask others to make an end of their life and thus gain release from torment. This is called '**being at a loss for the appropriate method,**' but is harmless if they recognize it. This is not sainthood, and if misinterpreted, the maras of constant sorrow will enter their hearts and cause them to cut their own flesh, or even take their own lives. They may also suffer prolonged depression that drives them to escape to wild places and avoid contact with other human beings. This is an abnormal reaction and will cause them to fall into a lower state.

2.6. You will experience a feeling of unlimited joy

"Continuing, those disciples who practice dhyana may find that as the Aggregate of form recedes, and the Aggregate of sensation manifests, they will experience a feeling of purity and peace that suddenly gives rise to a sense of unlimited joy. This exhilaration may become uncontrollable. This is called '**lightness and ease unchecked by wisdom,**' but if you recognize it, there is no harm. However, it is not sainthood, and if they misinterpret it, the maras of joyfulness will enter their minds. They may burst into laughter when they meet people and sing and dance in the streets, saying that they have gained liberation. This is an abnormal reaction and will cause them to fall into a lower state.

2.7. The feeling of unjustified conceit

"Continuing, those disciples who practice dhyana will find that as the Aggregate of form recedes, and the Aggregate of sensation manifests, they may feel that they have already reached their goal and suddenly give way to unjustified conceit. All at once they may consider themselves superior to everyone and fully victorious. They may feel unjustifiably accomplished or smug in their inferior status. In their hearts they look down on all the Buddhas; how much more so the novice savakas (sravakas) and peccakabuddha (pratyeka-buddhas!) This is called 'progress without sufficient wisdom to save oneself from pride,' but if they recognize it, there is no harm. This is not sainthood, but if they misinterpret it, the maras of pride will enter their minds. *They will cause them to show disrespect for stupas and temples, to destroy sutras and images of the Buddha*, and to declare to their patrons: 'These images are but gold and bronze, earth and wood; the sutras are merely tree leaves and rag fiber. Your own body contains the eternal reality of Buddha-truth; to ignore this and instead to worship clay and wood is truly foolish.' Those who are taken in by his words may join him in destroying the images and sutras, or bury them underground. They mislead the people and will be condemned to hell. This is an abnormal reaction and will cause them to fall into a lower state.

2.8. The feeling of great harmony and infinite lightness of heart

"Continuing, those disciples who practice dhyana will find that as the Aggregate of form recedes, and the Aggregate of sensation manifests, and in the midst of spiritual illumination and realization of the truth, they may experience *a feeling of great harmony and infinite lightness of heart*. They may feel that they have achieved sainthood and great contentment. This is called 'comfort and purity gained through intelligence,' but if they recognize it, there is no harm. This is not sainthood, but if they misinterpret it, the maras of craving ease and purity enter their minds, and they become self-satisfied and stop seeking further progress. The majority of these act like ignorant monks who mislead people and fall into eternal hell. This is an abnormal reaction and will cause them to fall into a lower state.

2.9. The feeling to the point of believing in permanent extinction.

"Continuing, those disciples who practice dhyana may find that as the Aggregate of form recedes and the Aggregate of sensation manifests, in a moment of realization they will apprehend the insubstantial and luminous nature of phenomena. In this state, suddenly they may gravitate towards a belief in absolute extinction and discard the law of causality. As they enter this void, their minds become empty to the point of believing in permanent extinction. If they recognize this in time, there is no harm. This is not sainthood, but if they misinterpret it, the maras of voidness will enter their minds, and they may ridicule the vows of monasticism or dismiss them as Hinayana. They may say that after the bodhisattva has realized voidness, there no longer are any sins. *Hence, they may even indulge in drinking, meat-eating, and licentiousness in the presence of their gullible patrons*. Because of the power of this demonic influence, they will exert control over others, who will fail to question their genuineness. As time passes, demonic

possession may lead to consuming urine and feces together with wine and meat, all under the rationale that everything shares the same voidness-nature. They violate the Buddha's rules of morality and discipline and lead others into sin. This is an abnormal reaction and will cause them to fall into a lower state.

2.10. A feeling of boundless love arises

"Continuing, those disciples who practice dhyana may find that as the Aggregate of form recedes, and the Aggregate of sensation manifests, they will experience luminous voidness penetrating the mind and bones, and suddenly a feeling of boundless love arises. As the feeling of love becomes intense, they will go mad, and madness turns into craving. This is called 'irrational desires arising from the stillness and peace of meditation.' If they recognize it, there will be no harm. This is not sainthood, but if they misinterpret it, the maras of desire will enter their minds, and they will insist that desire is the bodhi path. They may preach the doctrine of universal desire to laymen and that practicing sexual indulgence is called '*being a child of the dhamma*.' The power of this demonic influence will prevail during the dhamma-ending age and hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of ignorant people will be swayed. When the demon is weary, it will depart the victims' body, leaving them without power over people and exposing them to the law of the land. For deceiving others they will fall into eternal hell. This is an abnormal reaction and will cause them to fall into a lower state.

"Ananda, these ten conditions associated with the practice of dhyana all arise from the *interaction of the Aggregate of sensation with the practice of meditation*. When these reactions manifest, deluded people do not analyze them, nor are they able to understand the causes. They claim that they have attained sainthood and falsely proclaim their enlightenment. *For this they fall into eternal hell. You my disciples, after I pass into nirvana, must transmit this teaching in the period of the end of the Buddha-law so that all living beings may awaken to this message*. Do not allow Deva Mara to take advantage of you during meditation, but guard yourselves well as you strive to realize the supreme Tao.

3. The Ten Mara-States of the aggregate of Conception

"Ananda, now those disciples who practice samadhi and in whom the Aggregate of sensation is exhausted, although the stream of transmigration has not yet ended, the mind is able to take leave of the body like a bird from its cage. Having reached this level, their mortal body is able to experience the sixty stages of the development of a bodhisattva towards Buddhahood and freely assume any form or move anywhere without obstruction. This may be compared to a man talking in his sleep, who though he has no awareness of what he is doing, makes perfect sense to those who are not asleep. *This is called 'the effect of the Aggregate of conception.'* When thoughts no longer stir in the mind and random ideation is eliminated, the mind is like a mirror free of dust and dirt that is able to reflect every detail of his present incarnation from beginning to end. This is called 'the end of the Aggregate of cognition.' At this level one can transcend the defilements of the passions. If we examine the cause of all this, it is the all-pervasiveness of erroneous thinking.

3.1. Pursue worldly desires in secret

"Ananda, those disciples who have purified the *Aggregate of sensation* and are no longer assailed by troublesome worries, may become enamored of this state of perfect clarity in samadhi. In this condition they may be tempted to sharpen their faculties in pursuit of skillful means to gain advantage. *At this time Deva Mara will exploit this situation by entering the body of a bystander, who will preach the dhamma, and unaware of his possession will claim to have attained the supreme nirvana.* He will approach the ambitious practitioner and assume the pulpit seat to preach the dhamma. The possessed man will alternately appear to the *ambitious practitioner as a monk*, as *Sakka - Indra*, a woman or a nun, or a glowing body in a dark room. The practitioner will become confused, take this man as a bodhisattva, and believe his teachings. His mind will thus be shaken, and he will violate the monastic rules and *secretly pursue worldly desires*. He will be fond of *holding forth on coming calamities, good fortune, and strange events*. He may also predict the appearance of Buddhas in certain places, or the kalpa of scorching fire, or strife and wars in order to frighten people and cause them to ruin their family fortunes. This is called 'ghosts becoming maras in their old age and harassing practitioners.' When the maras are weary of their victim, they will abandon his body. The ambitious practitioner and his possessed master will both be subject to the law of the land. You must be aware of this danger and avoid returning to samsara. If you remain deluded and ignorant of this, you will fall into eternal hell.

3.2. Feel an urge to roam abroad and secretly indulge in carnal desire

"Ananda, once again, those disciples who have purified the Aggregate of sensation and are no longer assailed by troublesome worries, in a state of perfect dhyana and in the midst of samadhi, may feel an urge to roam abroad. Projecting their thoughts, they may crave new experiences. *Deva Mara will take advantage of the practitioner's condition to possess an innocent bystander, who will preach the dhamma*, and unaware that he is possessed, claim that he has attained the supreme nirvana. The possessed man will

approach the restless practitioner and preach the dhamma. Without changing his own form, his listeners will suddenly visualize themselves as seated on precious lotus blossoms. With bodies that have been transformed into golden rays of light, they will gather to hear the words of the possessed man. Most of his listeners will have these extraordinary experiences, and in their ignorance, take him for a bodhisattva. For his part, he will give in to dissolute habits and violate the monastic rules, *secretly indulging in carnal desires*. He will be fond of announcing the appearance of Buddhas in the world and identify them by person and place as incarnating Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Seeing these events, the practitioner will bewitched and succumbs to perverted views, thereby destroying the seeds of Buddha-wisdom. This is called 'old drought ghosts becoming maras to harass practitioners.' When weary of their sport, the drought ghosts will depart the body of the practitioner. Both practitioner and master will be subject to the law of the land. You must be aware of this danger and avoid returning to samsara. If you remain deluded and ignorant of this, you will fall into eternal hell.

3.3. May conceive a craving for spiritual union

"Continuing, those disciples who have purified the Aggregate of sensation and are no longer assailed by troublesome worries, in a state of perfect dhyana and in the midst of samadhi, may conceive a craving for spiritual union and concentrate all of their thinking on this desire. *Deva Mara will take advantage of the practitioner's condition to possess an innocent bystander, who will begin to preach the dhamma, and unaware that he is possessed, even claim to have reached the supreme nirvana*. He will approach the seeker of union, and assuming the pulpit, begin to preach the dhamma. Without changing his form or that of his listeners, he is able to induce his audience to expand their consciousness even before they hear his words. *Their thinking will become overactive, and some will be able to see their former lives, read other people's minds, peer into hell, and know all good and evil deeds in the world*. Some will be able to chant gathas¹⁰ and recite sutras. They will all become ecstatic with these new experiences. The practitioner in his delusion will take the possessed man as a bodhisattva and become enamored of him. He will violate the monastic rules and secretly indulge in carnal desires. The possessed man will hold forth on the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, detailing their level of attainment, period of manifestation, and genuineness. When the practitioner sees these things, he becomes brainwashed and easily enters upon the path of heretical enlightenment. This is called 'goblins who in their old age become maras to disturb the practitioner.' When the goblins¹¹ become weary of their sport, they depart the victim's body. The practitioner and his possessed master will both be subject to the law of the land. You must be aware of this danger and avoid returning to the cycle of samsara. If you remain deluded and ignorant of this, you will fall into eternal hell.

3.4. A desire to get to the root of things

"Continuing, those disciples who have purified the Aggregate of sensation and are no longer assailed by troublesome worries, in a state of perfect dhyana and in the midst of

¹⁰ **Gathers** – verses recitation

¹¹ **Goblins** – tiny mischievous evil creature.

samadhi, may conceive a desire to get to the root of things and glimpse the beginning and end of all phenomena. They may sharpen their mental faculties and strive for detailed analysis. *Deva Mara will take advantage of the practitioner's condition to possess an innocent bystander, who will preach the Buddha-dhamma, and unaware that he is possessed, claim that he has reached the supreme nirvana.* He will approach the source-seeking practitioner, and assuming the pulpit, will preach the dhamma. With an air of awe-inspiring authority, the possessed man will be able to sway the seeker and win the submission of his listeners before uttering a single word. His listeners will be persuaded that their own flesh-and-blood bodies, transmitted father to son generation after generation, are identical with the eternal nirvanic and bodhi dhammakaya of the Buddha. He will point to the present world and call it the Buddha-land and maintain that it is identical with the pure-land paradise and the golden Buddha-body. The practitioner will believe him absolutely, lose his former faith, and submit to him body and soul, believing this to be utterly unique. The average listener will be deluded and mistakenly take him for a bodhisattva. Now giving in to their own inclinations, they will then violate the monastic rules and secretly indulge in carnal desires. The possessed man will be fond of saying that the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are all pure-lands and that the sexual organs of man and woman are the true abode of bodhi and nirvana. The ignorant will believe these perverse teachings. This is called 'bewitching fiends who in their old age become maras to plague the practitioner.' When the fiend is weary of his sport, he departs the victim's body. The disciple and his possessed master will then both are subject to the law of the land. You must be aware of this danger and avoid returning to the cycle of samsara. If you remain deluded and ignorant of this, you will fall into eternal hell.

3.5. A desire for spiritual communion

"Continuing, those disciples who have purified the Aggregate of sensation and are no longer assailed by troublesome worries, in a state of perfect dhyana and in the midst of samadhi, may conceive a desire for spiritual communion. Their minds will wander the universe searching and seeking for profound insights. *Deva Mara will take advantage of this condition to possess an innocent bystander, who will approach the practitioner and preach the dhamma, and unaware that he is possessed, claim that he has attained the supreme nirvana.* He will go to the seeker of spiritual communion, and assuming the pulpit, will preach the dhamma, causing his listeners to temporarily believe that he is a hundred or a thousand years old. His listeners will feel great affection for him, and becoming devoted followers, will serve him all manner of food and drink, clothing, bedding, and medicine. They will never tire of waiting on him. He will cause all of his listeners to believe that he was their teacher and intimate in a former life. They will develop a spiritual attachment to him, stick to him like glue, and consider this a unique experience. The practitioner in his delusion will believe him to be a bodhisattva and gravitate to him, violating the monastic rules and secretly indulging in carnal desires. The possessed man will be given to claiming that in a previous age and in a past life he saved such and such a person, or that such and such a person was a wife or brother in a past life and that he comes again to save them. He will claim that his followers will return to such and such a world and serve such and such a Buddha. Or *he may claim that there are other glorious heavens where the Buddha and all the Tathagatas dwell.* The ignorant believe

this nonsense and lose their original consciousness. This is called 'pestilent ghosts becoming maras in their old age and plaguing practitioners.' When they become weary of their sport, they abandon the victim's body. The disciple and his possessed master will then both be subject to the law of the land. You must be aware of this danger and avoid returning to the cycle of samsara. If you remain deluded and ignorant of this, you will fall into eternal hell.

3.6. A desire for deeper knowledge and strive to know their previous lives

"Continuing, those disciples who have purified the Aggregate of sensation and are no longer assailed by troublesome worries, in a state of dhyana and in the midst of samadhi, may conceive a desire for deeper knowledge and strive to know their previous lives. *Deva Mara will take advantage of the practitioner's condition to possess an innocent bystander, who will preach the dhamma, and unaware that he is possessed, claim to have attained supreme nirvana.* He will approach the practitioner, and assuming the pulpit, preach the dhamma. He will cause his listeners to each know his own karma, or he may tell a certain man that, although he has not yet died, he has already become an animal. He may tell another to stand on his tail, and the first man will indeed be unable to stand up. On seeing this, his listeners will be greatly moved and submit to him. If a thought arises in any of their minds, the man will know it immediately. He will insist on austerities that go beyond the Buddha's precepts, and will condemn the monks and curse their followers. He will expose people's private affairs, not sparing them any ridicule. *He will be fond of foretelling coming fortune or disaster, and his predictions will be accurate down to the smallest detail.* This is the powerful ghost who has become a mara in his old age and come to plague the practitioner. When the mara is weary of his sport, he will abandon the victim's body. Both the practitioner and his possessed master will then be subject to the law of the land. You must be aware of this danger and avoid returning to the cycle of samsara. If you remain deluded and ignorant of this, you will fall into eternal hell.

3.7. A desire for deeper penetration and search for seclusion and peace

"Continuing, those disciples who have purified the Aggregate of sensation and are no longer assailed by troublesome worries, in a state of dhyana and in the midst of samadhi, may conceive a desire for deeper penetration and search for seclusion and peace. *Deva Mara will take advantage of the practitioner's condition to possess an innocent bystander, who will preach the dhamma, and unaware of his possession, claims that he has attained the supreme nirvana.* He will approach the place where the disciple dwells, and assuming the pulpit, begin to preach the dhamma. In this place the possessed man will unexpectedly discover a large precious pearl. Sometimes the mara will appear in the form of an animal with a pearl in its mouth, together with other precious gems, prophetic documents, heavenly registers, and all manner of miraculous things. He will give these things to his listeners and then adorn his own person with them. He may also attempt to seduce his listeners by burying a pearl under the ground, which illuminates the surrounding area. All his listeners consider this most extraordinary. The possessed man will eat only medicinal herbs, abstaining from food, or he may live on a single hemp seed or grain of wheat per day. With the help of the mara he will remain plump and healthy.

He will condemn the monks and curse their followers, without sparing them any ridicule. *He will be fond of revealing the secret location of treasures and the retreats of holy men.* Proceeding to these places, they will actually encounter strange men. This is called 'the ghosts of forests, earth, cities, rivers, and mountains becoming maras in their old age.' They may also encourage licentiousness and violation of the Buddha's rule, or secretly indulge in the five desires with followers. Or, going even further, he may subsist on wild vegetation and refrain from any fixed occupation in order to plague the practitioner. When the mara is weary of his sport, he will abandon the victim's body. The disciple and his possessed master will then both be subject to the law of the land. You must be aware of this danger and avoid returning to the cycle of samsara. If you remain deluded and ignorant of this, you will fall into eternal hell. You must be aware of this danger and not reenter the cycle of samsara. The deluded will fall into eternal hell.

3.8. A desire for spiritual insight and all its manifestations

"Continuing, those disciples who have purified the Aggregate of sensation and are no longer assailed by troublesome worries, in a state of dhyana and in the midst of samadhi, may conceive **a desire for spiritual insight and all its manifestations.** *He will seek to plumb the source of transformations and search for supernatural power.* Deva Mara will take advantage of the practitioner's condition to possess an innocent bystander, who will preach the dhamma, unaware of his possession, and claim that he has attained the supreme nirvana. He will approach the seeker of spiritual insight, and assuming the pulpit, preach the dhamma. He may hold a flame in his hand and place a pinch of fire over the head of each of his listeners. The flames will be several feet high, but will not give off heat, and will not burn the person. *He may also walk on water just as if it were dry land, or sit motionless in midair.* He may slip into a bottle or a bag, or even walk through walls without any obstacle. Only knives and weapons can affect him. He will call himself a Buddha, and though he is a layman, will receive the obeisances of monks. He will condemn the Buddhist rules and curse the followers. He will expose people's private affairs, sparing no ridicule. He will be fond of boasting of his supernatural powers and sovereign mastery. He may cause his listeners to see Buddha-lands, which are demonic illusions without any reality. He praises acts of licentiousness and refrains from criticizing bestial behavior. He will take these shameful acts as methods for transmitting the dhamma. This is called 'powerful spirits of the mountains, seas, winds, rivers, earth, or all the demons of the plant kingdom accumulated over countless kalpas, or dragon demons, or dying immortals reborn as demons, or declining immortals who are anticipating death and whose bodies are possessed by other ghosts and who become demons in their old age to harass the practitioner.' When these demons become weary of their sport, they abandon their victim's body. The practitioner and his possessed master then both are subject to the law of the land. You must be aware of this danger and avoid returning to the cycle of samsara. If you remain deluded and ignorant of this, you will fall into eternal hell.

3.9. A desire for extinction in Nibbana (nirvana)

"Continuing, those disciples who have purified the Aggregate of sensation and are no longer assailed by troublesome worries, in a state of dhyana and in the midst of samadhi, may conceive a desire for extinction in nirvana, to penetrate the nature of transformation, and seek for profound voidness. *Deva Mara may take advantage of the practitioner's condition to possess an innocent bystander, who will then preach the dhamma, and unaware of his possession, claims to have attained the supreme nirvana.* He will approach the disciples, and assuming the pulpit, preach the dhamma to the assembled. Suddenly he will disappear without any trace, and then suddenly reappear and disappear again at will. Or he may appear as transparent as crystal, or his limbs may be as fragrant as sandalwood. Or his excrement and urine may appear like rock candy. He will condemn the Buddhist rules and curse the monks. He will preach the invalidity of the doctrine of causality and deny reincarnation and the distinction between the worldly and saintly states. Though he has attained voidness, he secretly indulges in desires of the flesh and holds that followers who likewise indulge will also attain voidness and discard causality. This is called 'the subtle essences of eclipses, gold, jade, and supernatural herbs, unicorns, phoenixes, turtles, and cranes, which surviving for tens of thousands of years have become spiritual and appear across this land and who in their old age become maras to harass the practitioner.' When they are weary of their sport, they abandon their victim. The practitioner and his possessed master are then both subject to the law of the land. You must be aware of this danger and avoid returning to the cycle of samsara. If you remain deluded and ignorant of this, you will fall into eternal hell.

3.10. A desire for longevity, and painstakingly searching for immortality

"Continuing, those disciples who have purified the Aggregate of sensation and are no longer assailed by troublesome worries, in a state of dhyana and in the midst of samadhi, may conceive *a desire for longevity, and painstakingly searching for immortality,* seeking to exchange our mortal state for eternal life. **Deva Mara will take advantage of the practitioner's condition to possess an innocent bystander, who will preach the dhamma, and unaware that he is possessed, claim that he has attained the supreme nirvana**¹². He will approach the disciples, and assuming the high pulpit, begin to preach the dhamma. He will be given to talking of distant places and of unobstructed travel, sometimes journeying ten thousand miles and returning in the blink of an eye with items fetched from those regions. Or he may demonstrate his ability to *cause someone to sprint from one side of a small room to the other without ever being able to reach the opposite wall.* These things will inspire faith in his listeners and belief that he is a Buddha in their midst. He will proclaim that all living things are his offspring and that he is the begetter of all Buddha's, that he now manifests in the world, that he is the primal Buddha, and that his appearance is spontaneous and requires no spiritual practice. This is called *'Deva Mara living in the world and commanding her minions, such as jealous (female) chamanda demons, and the four deva-king's vital essence vampire demons who exploit the meditative state of practitioners whose minds are not yet steadfast to consume their vitality.'* These **demons** may not possess another man, but may appear directly to the

¹² **Nirvana** – Sanskrit word – Nibbana in Pali

practitioner as one wielding a **vajra**¹³ to confer longevity or as a beautiful woman who seduces him and exhausts his organs before a year is out. The practitioner mumbles to himself as if talking to a ghost. If he fails to recognize these demons, he will suffer the consequences of the law, and will probably perish from exhaustion before his punishment is carried out. In this way the practitioner is harassed and even brought to death. You must be aware of this danger and avoid returning to the cycle of samsara. If you remain deluded and ignorant of this, you will fall into eternal hell.

"Ananda, know that it is during the kalpa of decline that these ten mara-states afflict the practitioners of my dhamma.

- Some demons possess human bodies, and
- some appear in their own form.

They all claim omniscience and advocate lustful desires and violate the rules and rites of the Buddhist order. From demon master to demon disciple, this licentiousness is transmitted, and in this way practitioner's minds are deluded by this evil influence, which lasting for hundreds of generations causes even the sincere to become followers of the demons. After they die, they become his minions, and not having true knowledge, fall into eternal hell.

"Ananda, there is no need for you to enter nirvana at this time. Even if you attained the state of arahatship that is beyond study, you must be willing to reenter the world during the kalpa of declining dhamma to express your compassion and save right-minded and faithful living things so that they will not be possessed by maras and will obtain right knowledge and views.

Now that I have saved you from the cycle of birth and death, you may repay my kindness by carrying out my teachings. **"Ananda, these ten phenomena associated with the state of dhyana are all the product of interactions between the Aggregate of conception and the practice of meditation.** Living things are stubbornly deluded and unable to evaluate their own level of accomplishment. When they encounter these experiences, they do not understand and claim that they have attained sainthood. For their boastfulness they fall into eternal hell. After my passing into nirvana, you disciples must transmit my teachings to all living things for the sake of their enlightenment. Do not allow Deva Mara to take advantage of you, but guard yourselves well and strive to realize the supreme Tao.

¹³ **Vajra** – Indra's thunder bolt - weapon

4. The Ten Mara-States of the aggregate of Volition

"Ananda, as the disciples practice samadhi and free themselves from the Aggregate of conception, ordinary delusory thinking disappears. Now they will be constant in waking and sleeping, and their consciousness will become as empty and pure as a clear blue sky, no longer subject to the shadow of coarse sense impressions. The earth together with its mountains and rivers seem as if they are reflections in a bright mirror. Impressions come without sticking and leave without a trace. Hence, the practitioner is able to react to externals unfettered by old habits. Now the ultimate reality and source of creation and destruction are fully revealed. *They will be able to see the twelve classes of living things in all their variety throughout the ten directions as essentially sharing the same state of life, although they do not yet understand the source of their existence.* In this state of mind things appear as shimmering mirages that disturb the mind's purity, and this explains the ultimate cause of the illusion of sense perception. This is called the Aggregate of volition, or action that passes on its effects. If these mirage-like disturbances of our purity are allowed to revert to their original nature, and this original nature is allowed to revert to its original purity, then with the purification of our original habits, they become like the passing of ripples that leave behind clear water. This then may be called the cessation of the Aggregate of volition. In this way a man may transcend the defilements that afflict living things during the kalpa of impurity. If we examine the origin of these defilements, the root cause is subtle erroneous thinking.

4.1. The wrong view of nonexistence of causality

"Ananda, all of the disciples fixed in samadhi, whose minds are concentrated and clear and are no longer troubled by the ten classes of heavenly maras, can now look deeply into the origin of living things. Having discovered the origin of creation and destruction and observing the continuous subtle disturbance in this clear state, if they then begin to indulge in misguided calculation and discrimination, they will fall into two theories of the nonexistence of causality.

4.1.1. The first is the practitioner who concludes that phenomena appear with no fundamental cause.

Why is this?

Because at this level they have already obliterated their life impulse, and based on the eight hundred powers of the organ of vision, they perceive all living things throughout the eighty thousand kalpas¹⁴ as reincarnating over and over. Because they see nothing beyond these eighty thousand kalpas, they come to the conclusion that all living things within the ten directions over the eighty thousand kalpas arise without cause, and as a result of this exercise of discrimination they miss universal knowledge and fall into an unorthodox path that obscures their bodhi-nature.

¹⁴ **Kalpas** - an immeasurably long period of time. Its length is variable, sometimes described as one complete cycle of the world

4.1.2. The second case is the practitioner who concludes that results appear with no fundamental cause.

Why is this?

Because this man has examined the root nature of life and discovered that human beings give birth to human beings and realized that birds give birth to birds; crows are always black and cranes always white. Human beings are upright and animals horizontal. Whiteness is not produced from washing, and blackness is not produced by dyeing. For eighty thousand kalpas this has never varied and will be so even after my present body is no more. Finding no such thing as bodhi-nature in this process, he wonders how such a thing could exist and concludes that all phenomena are fundamentally without cause. Calculating and discriminating in this manner, he misses universal knowledge and falls into an unorthodox path that obscures his bodhi-nature. These two theories of the nonexistence of causality are the first heresy.

4.2. The wrong idea of Universal permanence

"Ananda, all of the disciples fixed in samadhi, whose minds are concentrated and clear can no longer be troubled by maras. In looking deeply into the origin of all classes of living things and observing the continuous subtle disturbance that operates ceaselessly, if they exercise their powers of discrimination, they will fall into *the four theories of universal permanence*.

4.2.1. All living things experience birth and death

The first is the practitioner who looks deeply into the nature of the mind and its objects and finds that both are without cause. In his meditative practice he becomes aware that during twenty thousand kalpas all living things within the ten directions experience birth and death, and that nothing being lost within this cycle, he takes this to indicate permanence.

4.2.2. The four primal elements survive in spite of ceaseless process

The second is the practitioner who looks deeply into the four primal elements--earth, fire, water, wind--and finding that these elements survive in spite of the ceaseless process of creation and destruction affecting all living things in the ten directions for forty thousand kalpas, takes this to indicate permanence.

4.2.3. The six sense bases never lost

The third is the practitioner who looks deeply into the six indriyas¹⁵-- eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind--the manas, or faculty of intelligence, and the retention of memories and concludes that the

¹⁵ **Indriyas** – the six sense bases

source of consciousness is eternal. Through practice he realizes that during eighty thousand kalpas living things are never lost but ceaselessly cycle, and in thinking deeply on the nature of their continuation, he takes this to indicate permanence.

4.2.4. The wrong view of the third aggregate (conception) ceases (obliterated)

The fourth kind of practitioner has already exhausted the source of the third Aggregate, or *conception*, and concludes that the flow of life has ceased, and that the concept of creation and destruction being obliterated in his mind, he naturally comes to the conclusion that there is no creation and destruction and that this constitutes permanence. From this conception of permanence he misses the Buddha's universal knowledge and falls into an unorthodox path that obscures his bodhi-nature. These four theories of wrong permanence are the second heresy.

4.3. The root of various classes of living things

"Again, all of the disciples fixed in samadhi, who concentrate their minds, will no longer be taken advantage of by the maras. Now looking deeply into *the root of the various classes of living things*, and observing the continuous subtle disturbance that operates ceaselessly, if they exercise their powers of calculation and discrimination, they will fall into one of the four kinds of perverse views regarding permanence and impermanence.

4.3.1. The wrong view that the nature of mind is permanent

The first is the practitioner who observes that his own subtly clear mind pervades the ten directions, and takes this to be his own spiritual self. From this he concludes that since his own self fills the ten directions, and since within this luminous and immutable nominal self all living things are born and die, therefore the nature of mind is permanent, whereas that which is born and dies is impermanent.

4.3.2. The wrong view, of those that are destroyed are permanent.

The second type of practitioner does not look into his own mind, but contemplates the countless realms of the ten directions and concludes that those that are destroyed in the kalpa of destruction are impermanent and those spared are permanent.

4.3.3. The wrong view that everything that is born and dies as permanent

The third type of practitioner also observes his own mind and finds that it is composed of subtle particles. These circulate throughout the ten directions, and without changing in their fundamental nature, are capable of causing the body to instantly exist or not exist. Its indestructible nature he calls the permanence of the self, and everything that is born and dies and flows from this self he calls impermanent.

4.3.4. The wrong view that the ceaseless flow of aggregates is permanent

The fourth type of practitioner realizes that the Aggregate of conception has been exhausted, but observes the ceaseless flow of the Aggregate of discrimination and concludes that this represents permanence. Since his first three Aggregates--form, sensation, and conception--have already been exhausted, he calls them impermanent. By thus discriminating between permanence and impermanence, he falls into unorthodox paths and obscures his bodhi-nature. These four theories of wrong permanence are the third heresy.

4.4. Making discriminations on the basis of time, perception, self

"Again, all of the disciples fixed in samadhi, whose minds are concentrated can no longer be troubled by the maras. Now looking deeply into the origins of living things and observing the source of the continuous subtle disturbance in this clear state, if they begin to make discriminations on the basis of time, perception, self and other, and creation and destruction, they will fall into four types of theories regarding finitude and infinity.

4.4.1. The wrong view of the world is finite

The first is the practitioner who calculates that the source of life flows on without end. That portion belonging to the past and future he considers finite, and the continuous flow of his present mind he calls infinite.

4.4.2. The wrong view of considering all living things as finite

The second is the practitioner, who contemplating eighty thousand kalpas and beholding all living things therein concludes that since he has no knowledge of the period before the eighty thousand kalpas, it is infinite. That place where all living things dwell he calls finite.

4.4.3. The wrong view of saying the knowledge is finite

The third is the practitioner who calculates that his own knowledge is universal and of an infinite nature because all other people appear within his field of knowledge. However, because their knowledge does not appear in his mind, he concludes that they do not possess infinite minds, but are finite in nature.

4.4.4. The wrong view that the world is half finite and half infinite

The fourth practitioner looks deeply into the fourth Aggregate, or action that passes on its effects, and finds it empty. Based on his observation, he concludes that within each living body there exists half creation and half destruction, and that everything in the world is half finite and half infinite.

Thus all of these practitioners who discriminate between the finite and the infinite fall into an unorthodox path and obscure their bodhi-nature. These four theories of finitude and infinity are the fourth heresy.

4.5. The wrong views concerning the existence of an undying entity

"Continuing, all of the disciples fixed in samadhi, whose minds are concentrated are no longer troubled by the maras. Now, looking deeply into the origin of living things and observing the source of the continuous subtle disturbance in this clear state, if based on his own knowledge he exercises his powers of discrimination, he will fall into four categories of erroneous views concerning the existence of an undying entity.

4.5.1. The wrong view of creation and destruction

The first type of practitioner looks into the origins of the process of transformation; where he observes change he calls it transformation, and where he observes continuity he call it constancy. What he is able to observe he calls creation; what he does not observe he calls destruction. That which preserves its nature through the process of transformation he calls increase; that which is discontinuous through the process of transformation he calls decrease. Wherever creation appears he calls it existence; wherever disappearance occurs he calls it nonexistence. This is all the result of exercising his powers of discrimination. When approached by seekers for his explanation, he replies: 'At this moment I am simultaneously created and destroyed; I exist and do not exist; I increase and decrease.' With these kinds of wild statements he confuses his listeners.

4.5.2. The wrong view of non-existence

The second type of practitioner carefully scrutinizes his mind, and finding that it has no locus, concludes that its existence cannot be proven. When asked to explain his viewpoint, he answers with the one word 'nonexistence.' Apart from nonexistence, he has nothing to say.

4.5.3. The wrong view of the world exists.

The third type of practitioner carefully scrutinizes his mind, and finding that its locus is everywhere, concludes that he has proof of its existence. When asked to explain, he answers with the one word 'existence.' Apart from existence, he has nothing to say.

4.5.4. The wrong view of existence and non-existence

The fourth type of practitioner sees both existence and nonexistence, but because of this duality, his mind is confused. When asked to explain his viewpoint, he answers: 'Existence includes nonexistence, but nonexistence does not include existence,' and all manner of nonsense that defies reason. By discriminating in this way, he creates confusion and nonsense, and thus falls into heresy and obscures his bodhi-nature.

These four absurd notions concerning the undying and related false theories are the fifth heresy.

4.6 The interaction of the aggregate of volition.

Continuing, all of the disciples fixed in samadhi, whose minds are concentrated, are no longer troubled by the maras. Now, looking deeply into the origin of living things and observing the continuous subtle disturbance in this clear state, and in the midst of the infinite life stream, if the practitioner begins to exercise his faculty of discrimination, he will fall into the error of believing that after death our form remains.

4.6.1. The wrong view that form exists after death

He may stubbornly cling to this body and claim that his physical form is identical with his self.

Or he may feel that his all-encompassing self contains all realms and claim that the self possesses form.

Or he may feel that physical appearances that present themselves follow the self through its cycles and claim that form belongs to the self.

Or he may believe that the self is a property of the flow of samskara (form) and claim that the self resides within form.

All of the above arises from *the belief that form continues to exist after death*. In this way, the deluded practitioner goes round and round, postulating sixteen types of form. Or he may conclude that fundamentally mental suffering and bodhi coexist without contradiction. Because of the erroneous view that form exists after death, he falls into an unorthodox path and obscures his bodhi-nature. The theory that among the five Aggregates form continues to exist after death is the sixth heresy.

4.7. The wrong view that after death there is no form (Annihilation)

"Continuing, all of the disciples fixed in samadhi, whose minds are concentrated are no longer troubled by the maras. Now, looking deeply into the origin of living things and observing the source of the continuous subtle disturbance in this clear state, and after first eliminating the Aggregates (form, sensation, and conception), if the practitioner continues to exercise the faculty of discrimination, he will fall into *the belief that after death there is no form*, and hence his mind will be unbalanced.

- Seeing the aggregate (Aggregate) of form vanish, physical appearance no longer has a cause;
- Seeing the aggregate (Aggregate) of conception vanish, the mind is without attachments; and knowing that the Aggregate of sensation has vanished, there are no longer any aggregates.

Thus, although the Aggregates have disappeared, even though life remains, without sensation and conception, it is the same as grass and trees. *If form does not even exist in the present, how then can it exist after death?* As a result, he speculates that form does not exist after death. Reasoning in this way, he posits a theory of eight aspects of formlessness. Hence, he asserts that nirvana is without cause and effect, everything else being merely names and subject to annihilation. In this way, he concludes that nothing survives after death, and thus falls into an unorthodox path and obscures his bodhi-nature. This theory that within the five Aggregates form does not exist after death is the seventh heresy.

4.8. The wrong view of the belief in existence and non-existence.

"Continuing, all of the disciples fixed in samadhi, whose minds are concentrated, are no longer troubled by the maras. Now looking deeply into the origin of living things and observing the source of the continuous subtle disturbance in this clear state, they are still subject to the aggregate (Aggregate) *of volition*. Having seen the annihilation of the Aggregates of form, sensation, and conception, they may conclude that existence and nonexistence automatically cancel each other. This type of practitioner falls into the belief that *after death neither existence nor nonexistence* are valid and thus puts forth nonsensical theories. When subject to the Aggregates of form, sensation, and volition he believed they existed, but on further penetration concludes they did not exist. Now in the midst of the stream of the Aggregate of volition, he sees non-existence as not nonexistence. Continuing in this vein, he penetrates the realm of the four Aggregates and concludes that the eightfold negation of form is arbitrary, that it can equally be said that *after death form exists or does not exist*, and that the Aggregate of volition is likewise in a state of constant flux. Thus he concludes that he has awakened to the truth that existence and nonexistence are invalid, the real and the unreal ungraspable. From this he concludes that there is nothing that can be asserted about death, and that all is murky and nothing can be said of it. Thus he falls into an unorthodox path and obscures his bodhi-nature. This theory that within the five Aggregates nothing can be asserted about our state after death is the eighth heresy.

4.9. The wrong view in annihilation after death.

"Continuing, all of the disciples fixed in samadhi, whose minds are concentrated are no longer troubled by the maras. As they look deeply into the origins of living things and observe the source of the continuous subtle disturbance in this clear state, if they exercise the faculty of discrimination *may determine that nothing exists after our final end*. This type of practitioner falls into the theory of the seven annihilations. He may conclude that the body is destroyed, or that desire is destroyed, or that suffering is destroyed, or that joy is destroyed, or that indifference is destroyed. Continuing in this vein, he sees these seven aspects as thoroughly and irrevocably annihilated. For his belief in annihilation after death he falls into an unorthodox path and obscures his bodhi-nature. This theory that within the five Aggregates all is annihilated after death is the ninth heresy.

4.10. The wrong belief that there is existence after death

"Continuing, all of the disciples fixed in samadhi, whose minds are concentrated are no longer troubled by the maras. As they look deeply into the origin of living things and observes the continuous subtle disturbance in this clear state, if they exercise the faculty of discrimination may conclude that *there is existence after death*. This type of practitioner will fall into the false theory of the five conditions of nirvana. He may conclude that the realm of desire is the true foundation of nirvana because of his delight in contemplating the perfect clarity of the six devaloka heavens of sensual pleasure; or he may conclude that the first dhyana heaven is the true foundation of nirvana because it is free of worldly cares; or he may conclude that the second dhyana heaven is the true foundation of nirvana because the mind is without suffering; or he may conclude that the third dhyana heaven is the true basis of nirvana because it is full of joy; or he may conclude that the fourth dhyana heaven, where both suffering and happiness are no more and one is no longer subject to birth and death in samsara, is the true basis of nirvana. Thus he mistakes samsaric heavens for the true state of nonaction and *takes refuge in these five heavens as the ultimate basis of nirvana*. Continuing in this vein, he will conclude that these five manifestations constitute true nirvana and will thus fall into an unorthodox path and obscure his bodhi-nature. This theory of the five false manifestations of nirvana within the five Aggregates is the tenth heresy.

"Ananda, it is these ten kinds of wild interpretations of dhyana, which are all *due to the interaction of the Aggregate of volition* with the practice of meditation, that causes them to have these realizations. Living things are stubborn and deluded and unable to assess their own level of accomplishment. When they experience these phenomena, they misinterpret them and claim to have reached sainthood. For violating the commandment against lying, they fall into eternal hell.

You disciples must take my words, and after I pass into nirvana, transmit them during the dhamma-ending age¹⁶ in order to awaken them to this truth, and so that the maras of the mind will not cause them to bring retribution upon themselves. They must be vigilant and wipe out perverse views. They must train their bodies and minds to awaken to the truth and not stray from the supreme Tao. They must refrain from wishful thinking or complacency after a little progress, but must be models of the highest enlightenment and purity.

¹⁶ **Dhamma ending age**: it is prophesied that in the year 5,000 BE.

5. The interaction of the aggregate of Consciousness

"Ananda, as the disciples practice samadhi and the Aggregate of volition comes to an end, within the nature of all things in the world the subtle disturbance in this clear state that is the common life force shared by all living things suddenly breaks open. At this point, the fine fabric of samsara, together with the deep thread of the karma of transmigration and feeling and response are radically suspended. Now they have reached the threshold of the great enlightenment to nirvana, like the cock's crow that causes us to gaze to the east where brilliant rays already appear. The six senses are empty and still and no longer galloping abroad. Within and without are perfect clarity, and one enters a state where nothing stains our consciousness. Profoundly penetrating the origin of life of the twelve classes of living things in the ten directions, they can contemplate the source of attachment without feeling any attraction themselves. Now they have already achieved an identity with all things in the universe; daylight dawns and all secrets are revealed. This is called 'the realm of the Aggregate of consciousness.' In the midst of the world's attractions they are now able to maintain their identity with the world, for they have overcome the six senses, so that the senses are able to unite or function separately, and hearing and seeing are interchangeable in their purity. The world of the ten directions, together with his own body and mind are like glass, which is perfectly transparent within and without. This is called 'the end of the Aggregate of consciousness.' In this way, the practitioner can transcend the defilements of life and contemplate the source of its impurity, which arises from insubstantial imaginings and foolish thoughts.

5.1. The first false condition of the aggregate of consciousness

"Ananda, you must know that as the disciples come to thoroughly comprehend the voidness of the Aggregate of volition, they will revert to the source of the Aggregate of consciousness. *Although they have wiped out the illusion of birth and death, they have not yet reached the perfection of nirvana.* Nevertheless, they are able to unify the six senses or use them independently. They are also able to unify their consciousness with the consciousness of all living things and achieve a state of omniscience. However, if in reverting to this state of perfection they take it as the cause of true permanence and regard this as the superior interpretation, they will fall into the error of holding onto the notion of causality and become an adherent of the Kapila doctrine, that holds primordial obscurity as the origin of reality, and thus miss the true bodhi of the Buddha-nature and lose correct knowledge and correct views.

This is called the first false condition of the Aggregate of consciousness, which holds that the consciousness attained produces the effects experienced. In this way one strays far from perfect enlightenment, turns one's back on nirvana, and sows the seeds of heresy.

5.2. The wrong belief in adherent to the creator – Deva Mahasavara

"Ananda, progressing further, as the disciples come to thoroughly comprehend the voidness of the Aggregate of volition, they are able to wipe out the concept of birth and death. However, before realizing the wonder of nirvana, in reverting to this state of pure

consciousness, they may survey the universe and regard it as their own body, insisting that the twelve classes of living things throughout boundless space all flow from it. In this way they will fall into the error of holding that they create what they do not in reality create, and thus become adherents of the *deva Mahasvara*, who appears in a limitless body. Thus they miss the true bodhi of the Buddha-nature and lose correct knowledge and correct views.

This is called the second false condition of the Aggregate of consciousness, which holds that the mind is the ultimate creator and that this is the highest attainment. In this way, one strays far from enlightenment, turns one's back on nirvana, and sows the seeds of arrogance for asserting the omnipresence of the self.

5.3. The wrong view in the belief in adherents of Ishvaradeva, the divine creator of all things

"Continuing, as the disciples come to thoroughly comprehend the voidness of the Aggregate of volition, they are able to wipe out the concept of birth and death. However, if before realizing the wonder of nirvana, they cling to the Aggregate of consciousness, they may take it that the body and mind both flow from this state and that boundless space in the ten directions also arises from this. Then they will insist that the realm from which all of this is expressed is the true permanent indestructible body. *As a result of concluding that consciousness is permanent*, they will be confused regarding both noncreation and also creation and destruction. For complacency in this deluded interpretation, they will fall into regarding what is not permanent as permanent and become adherents of *Ishvaradeva*, the divine creator of all things. Thus they miss the true bodhi of the Buddha-nature and lose correct knowledge and correct views.

This is called the third false condition of the Aggregate of consciousness, which holds the causality of mind, and therefore produces an erroneous conclusion. In this way one strays far from enlightenment, turns one's back on nirvana, and sows the seeds of false perfection.

5.4. The wrong view in adherents of the doctrine of Vasistha and Sani –everything is sentient.

"Continuing, as the disciples come to thoroughly comprehend the voidness of the Aggregate of volition, they are able to wipe out the concept of birth and death. However, before realizing the wonder of nirvana, they may believe that their understanding is perfect universal knowledge, and based on this knowledge, insist that even the plant kingdom is sentient, no different from mankind. Likewise, plants being the same as men, when men die they return as plants. For this indiscriminate application of the concept of universal knowledge, they fall into attributing knowledge where there is no knowledge and become adherents of the doctrine of Vasistha and Sani, who held that everything is sentient. Thus they miss the true bodhi of the Buddha-nature and lose correct knowledge and correct views.

This then is called the fourth false condition of the Aggregate of consciousness, which incorrectly concludes that the omniscient mind is the ultimate attainment. In this way one strays far from enlightenment, turns one's back on nirvana, and sows the seeds of false knowledge.

5.5. The wrong view in worshipping fire

"Continuing, as the disciples come to thoroughly comprehend the voidness of the Aggregate of volition, they are able to wipe out the concept of birth and death. However, if before realizing the wonder of nirvana, they succeed in harmonizing the functioning of the six senses, they may find the source of creation in these harmonious transformations. In the midst of this they may be tempted to *worship the brilliance of fire*, the purity of water, the freedom of wind, or the creativity of the earth. They may take these elements as the fundamental causes of creation and insist that they are the permanent reality. For attributing creativity to that which has no power to create, they become followers of the **doctrine of Kasyapa and the Brahmins**, who devote themselves to the worship of fire and water and seek to escape the cycle of birth and death. Thus they miss the true bodhi of the Buddha-nature and lose correct knowledge and correct views.

This is called the fifth false condition of the Aggregate of consciousness, which engages in worship of the elements, losing one's mind in the pursuit of external objects, and thereby chasing false causes and effects. In this way one strays far from enlightenment, turns one's back on nirvana, and sows the seeds of distorting the laws of transformation.

5.6. The wrong view in adhering to the adherents of the dhyana of thoughtlessness

"Continuing, as the disciples come to thoroughly comprehend the voidness of the Aggregate of volition, they are able to wipe out the concept of birth and death. However, before realizing the wonder of nirvana, and in this state of perfect clarity, he may conclude that this state of consciousness is itself void and that **all transformations end in annihilation**. Taking refuge in eternal annihilation, and believing this to be the superior interpretation, these practitioners fall into relying on what is unreliable and become *adherents of the dhyana of thoughtlessness*. Thus they miss the bodhi of the Buddha-nature and lose correct knowledge and correct views.

This is called the sixth false condition of the Aggregate of consciousness, which posits perfect annihilation and mindlessness and leads to voidness and fruitlessness. In this way one strays far from enlightenment, turns one's back on nirvana, and sows the seeds of annihilation.

5.7. The wrong view in adherent of the immortality seekers

"Continuing, as the disciples come to thoroughly comprehend the voidness of the Aggregate of volition, they are able to wipe out the concept of birth and death. However, before realizing the wonder of nirvana, and in this state of perfect constancy, they may *desire to attain immortality of the body* and share in the perfection and everlasting

deathlessness. For insisting on the superiority of this interpretation, they will fall into coveting the unattainable and become adherents of the immortality seekers. Thus they miss the bodhi of the Buddha-nature and lose correct knowledge and correct views.

This is called the seventh false condition of the Aggregate of consciousness, which consists of clinging to the source of life, leading to foolish causes and bitter fruits. In this way one strays far from enlightenment, turns one's back on nirvana, and sows the seeds of foolishly clinging to longevity.

5.8. The wrong view in adherent of the heavenly demons

"Continuing, as the disciples come to thoroughly comprehend the voidness of the Aggregate of volition, they are able to wipe out the concept of birth and death. However, if before realizing the wonder of nirvana, they may contemplate the fundamental unity of the source of life and come to fear the total annihilation of this material plane, thus using their mental powers to retire to a lotus palace, display the seven treasures, and surround themselves with beautiful women. For insisting on indulging in this fantasy, these practitioners will fall into regarding as real what is not real and become adherents of the heavenly demons. Thus they miss the bodhi of the Buddha-nature and lose correct knowledge and correct views.

This is called the eighth false condition of the Aggregate of consciousness, which generates the effects of heterodox thinking and reaps the bitter worldly fruit. In this way one strays far from enlightenment, turns one's back on nirvana, and sows the seeds of Deva Mara.

5.9. The wrong view in adherent of the ignorant monks and uneducable devas of the four dhyana heavens

"Continuing, as the disciples come to thoroughly comprehend the voidness of the Aggregate of volition, they are able to wipe out the concept of birth and death. However, if before realizing the wonder of nirvana practitioners in the midst of this clear understanding of the source of life begin to make distinctions of fine and coarse, true and false, and seeking results from the law of cause and effect, they will turn their backs on the path of purity. By attempting to put an end to suffering, and taking pride in this achievement, they will make no further progress. Insisting on the superiority of this interpretation, they will fall into arrested sravaka stage practice and become *adherents of the ignorant monks and uneducable devas of the four dhyana heavens*. Thus they miss the bodhi of the Buddha-nature and lose correct knowledge and correct views.

This is called the ninth false condition of the Aggregate of consciousness, which takes perfection of consciousness as realization of the fruits of nirvana. In this way one strays far from enlightenment, turns one's back on nirvana, and sows the seeds of fettered voidness.

5.10. The wrong view in the adherents of selfish enlightenment

"Continuing, as the disciples come to thoroughly comprehend the voidness of the Aggregate of volition, they are able to wipe out the concept of birth and death. However, before realizing the wonders of nirvana and in the midst of this perfect and pure consciousness, they may seek to probe more deeply into its marvels, take this as nirvana, and no longer strive for further progress. Believing this to be the superior interpretation, they will be arrested at the peccaka-buddha (pratyeka-buddha) stage and become adherents of selfish enlightenment. Thus they miss the bodhi of the Buddha-nature and lose correct knowledge and correct views.

This is called the tenth false condition of the Aggregate of consciousness, which consists of believing that pure consciousness bears clear fruit. In this way one strays far from enlightenment, turns one's back on nirvana, and sows the seeds of perfecting one's own consciousness without seeking to help other living things.

"Ananda, these are the ten states of dhyana in the midst of which you may lose your head and become complacent before reaching the ultimate goal. This is the result of the interaction of the Aggregate of consciousness with the practice of meditation. Living things are stubborn and deluded and unable to assess their own level of accomplishment. Encountering these experiences, they delight in old habits and delusions, and resting on their laurels, take these as their final refuge. They claim to be satisfied with this so-called supreme bodhi, and violating the Buddha's prohibition against lying, become contaminated with the evil karma of heretics and maras and finally fall into eternal hell. As to those *Savaka* (sravakas) and *Peccaka-buddha* (pratyeka-buddhas), whose minds become arrested at their respective levels of attainment, they are not able to make further progress.

You disciples must uphold my teachings and proclaim them after my nirvana during the dhamma-ending age in order to awaken all living things to this doctrine and not allow the maras of false perception to bring calamities upon you.. *Strive always to protect yourselves and conquer heterodoxy (deviation). Teach them to enter body and mind into the wisdom of the Buddha and throughout the course of their practice never to stray onto deviant paths.*

"Tathagatas as innumerable as particles of dust over kalpas as numberless as the sands of the Ganges have passed through this dhamma-door to enlighten their minds and attain the highest Tao¹⁷.

When the Aggregate of consciousness is overcome, then all of your senses are coordinated, and you can enter the first stage of the indestructible wisdom of the bodhisattva, whose perfect and clear mind will be transformed into pure glass containing a precious moon within. In this way you will transcend the ten stages of bodhisattva faith, the ten stages of unfertilized wisdom, the ten necessary actions, the ten commitments, the four good roots of development, and all the ten stages of the bodhisattvas progress to

¹⁷ **Tao** – The universal energy that makes and maintains everything that exists.

Buddhahood, omniscience, and perfect clarity to enter the Tathagata's magnificent sea of perfect and complete bodhi and revert to the state to which nothing can be added. These are the subtle mara-states detected by past Buddhas, as they abided in vipassana (vipasyana) and practiced passionless samatha. If you are familiar with these mara-states, you will be able to keep your minds free of defilement.

- *In this way you will not fall into unorthodox views,*
- *The maras of the five Aggregates will be swept away,*
- *Deva Mara will be smashed,*
- *The powerful ghosts and spirits will lose their nerve and take flight,*
- *The spirits of the rivers and hills will no longer appear to you, and*
- *You will achieve complete bodhi without the slightest deficiency.*

Even beginning from the most unenlightened state, one can progress to nirvana and no longer suffer delusion and depression."

6. The Falseness of the Five Aggregates

Having heard the Buddha's instruction, Ananda rose from his seat and prostrated himself at the master's feet. Then without forgetting a single word, he recited the Buddha's message to the assembled. Now addressing the Buddha he said: "**The five kinds of falsehoods arising from the five Aggregates are rooted in the thinking mind, but we have not yet received your detailed explanation. Moreover, should the five Aggregates be wiped out simultaneously or one at a time, and what are the boundaries between them?**"

We only hope that in your compassion you will purify our vision so that we may serve as guiding lights for all living things in the dhamma-ending age ahead."

The Buddha said to Ananda: "In the enlightened state there is no trace of birth and death, defilements, or even voidness, for these all arise from false thinking. It is from this primal enlightened mind that arises the illusion of the material world, just like *Yajnadatta*¹⁸, who convinced himself that his real head was a mere shadow. Falsehood fundamentally is without cause, but its causality is produced by false thinking. Those who are confused by this causality consider it perfectly natural. Even voidness is in truth an illusion, how much more so causality and nature. All of these are examples of the *Aggregate of volition functioning in the false minds of living things*.

"Ananda, if you know the source of false thinking, then you can speak of its cause. However, if there is no source of false thinking, then the source of the cause of false thinking does not exist. How must less when you do not know its source and regard it as spontaneous? *For this reason the Tathagata must enlighten you that the root cause of the five Aggregates is in all cases false thinking.*

6.1. The first kind of false thinking

"The original cause of your body is your parent's thought to give birth, but without a thought in your mind to be born there would have been no way for the thought of your incarnation to enter their minds. As I have said before, if you think of the taste of vinegar in your mind, your mouth will begin to water; if you think of scaling great heights, the soles of your feet will begin to feel sore. However, neither the mountain cliff nor the vinegar actually exist. If your body were not subject to the same falsehood, how could saliva appear at the mention of vinegar? Therefore, you should know that your physical form is called 'substantiality,' or *the first kind of false thinking*.

¹⁸ [Yajnadatta, the Mad Man](#) - "The story of Yajnadatta, the mad man of Shravasti, who one day looked in the mirror and noticed that the person reflected in it had a head. At that point, he lost his reason and said, 'How come that person has a head and I don't? Where has my head gone?' He then ran wildly through the streets asking everyone he met, 'Have you seen my head? Where has it gone?' He accosted everyone he met, yet no one knew what he was doing. 'He already has a head,' they said. 'What's he looking for another one for?'"

6.2. 'The empty reflection,' or the second kind of false thinking."

As I have mentioned, the mere thought of scaling great heights was sufficient to produce the sensation of soreness, and this sensation was able to affect your body. These positive or negative feelings run about wildly together. This is called 'empty reflection,' or the second kind of false thinking.

6.3. It is thoughts that stir up false feelings

"Your thoughts are able to direct your body; if your body was not the same as your thoughts, how could your body follow the orders of your body? From all our impressions of the external world, *the mind generates thoughts and the body reacts*. In the waking state the thinking mind is active, and in sleep these thoughts manifest as dreams. Thus it is thoughts that stir up false feelings. This is called 'pervasiveness,' or the third kind of false thinking.

6.4. The process of transformation never ceases

"The process of transformation never ceases, and everything is in constant motion. Nails grow and hair sprouts, energy declines, and wrinkles appear. This goes on day and night without our noticing. Ananda, if this is not you, how can your body undergo these changes; if it really is you, how is it that you are unaware of them? Therefore, there is continuity in the functioning of discrimination that goes on unceasingly. This is called 'concealment,' or the fourth kind of false thinking.

"Furthermore, if you say that your perfect, clear, still, and unshakable consciousness is permanent, why does it not go beyond what you see, hear, feel, and know? If it is the real, it should not be influenced by false habits.

"How is it that you have experienced viewing a strange object in the past, and after many years completely forgotten about it, but suddenly when you see the same unusual object again, you seem to remember it as if it were never lost. "

6.5. The fifth kind of confusion is subtle thinking

This shows the continual contamination of your perfect, profound, and unshakable consciousness. How can this be determined? Ananda, you must know that this mental stillness is not genuine. It is like flowing water that looks still at first glance, but is simply flowing too fast for us to perceive it. It is not that there is no flow. If consciousness is not the source of false thinking, how can one be influenced by wrong habits. If you are not able to harmonize the functioning of the six senses, you will never be able to wipe out false thinking. *Thus what you experience as seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing is a subtle sequence of old habits*, and your inner stillness and apparent absence of impressions is not genuine. The fifth kind of confusion is 'subtle thinking.'

"Ananda, these five Aggregates all arise from the five kinds of false thinking. If you wish to know the shallowness or depth of the causes and boundaries of the Aggregates, they are as follows:

- *form and voidness are the boundaries of the Aggregate of form;*
- *contact and separation are the boundary of the Aggregate of sensation;*
- *memory and forgetfulness are the boundaries of the Aggregate of conception;*
- *destruction and creation are the boundaries of the Aggregate of volition;*
- *entering in stillness and uniting with stillness are the boundaries of the Aggregate of consciousness.*

"These five Aggregates build one upon the other. **They originate with the Aggregate of consciousness, but their elimination must begin with the Aggregate of form.** In theory they all disappear with sudden enlightenment, but in reality it is not the work of an instant. Rather, they are overcome gradually one by one in order. I have already shown you how to unite the six knots in a cloth. What is still unclear that prompts you to inquire further?

You should grasp the root cause of false thinking and issue a warning to practitioners in the dhamma-ending age ahead, that they may come to understand its falsehood and learn to detest its arising, and so that they learn of nirvana and not become enamored of the three worlds of desire, form, and formlessness.

"Ananda, if there is a man whose being expands to fill the ten directions of space with all its seven treasures and who then offers these to the Buddhas as numberless as particles of dust and serves them devotedly with a faultless mind, what would you say of him? What are the rewards of serving the Buddha in this way?

Ananda replied: "Space is infinite and the treasures within are boundless. Once a man offered only seven coins to seven Buddhas, and for this he was rewarded with rebirth as a heavenly king; how much more so the illimitable rewards of serving the Buddhas with unimaginable treasures that fill space and the Buddha-lands."

The Buddha answered Ananda saying: "The words of the Buddhas and Tathagatas are without falseness. If there was another man, who though guilty of committing the four sins and ten sins, and after experiencing all manner of eternal hells, in one instant had a desire to open this dhamma-door in the dhamma-ending age for the benefit of the uninitiated, this man's sins would be wiped out and his suffering in hell would become joy in heaven. His reward would exceed that of the other man who faithfully served the Buddhas by a hundredfold, thousand fold, ten thousand fold, and incalculable times.

"Ananda, those who read this sutra, uphold these vows, and practice my teachings will gain merit that transcends this kalpa. If you are able to rely on my teachings and practice accordingly, you will achieve bodhi and not be disturbed by the maras."

After the Buddha had expounded this sutra, all the monks, nuns, male and female

devotees, together with all the devas, men, bodhisattvas, sravakas, pratyeka-buddhas, rises, and newly initiated ghosts and spirits were all filled with great joy, bowed to the Buddha, and departed.

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