



and death. Hence this is called ignorance.

“Virtuous man, this ignorance has no real substance. It is like a person in a dream. Though the person exists in the dream, when the dreamer awakens, there is nothing that can be grasped. Like an illusory flower in the sky that vanishes into empty space, one cannot say that there is a fixed place from which it vanishes. Why? Because there is no place from which it arises! Amidst the unarisen, all sentient beings deludedly perceive birth and extinction. Hence this is called the turning wheel of birth and death.

“Virtuous man, one who practices Complete Enlightenment of the causal ground of the Tathagata realizes that birth and extinction are like an illusory flower in the sky. Thus there is no continuance of birth and death and no body or mind that is subject to birth and death. This nonexistence of birth and death and body and mind is so not as a consequence of contrived effort. It is so by its intrinsic nature.

“The awareness of their nonexistence is like empty space. That which is aware of the empty space is like the appearance of the illusory flower. However, one cannot say that the nature of this awareness is nonexistent. Eliminating both existence and nonexistence is in accordance with pure enlightenment.

“Why is it so? Because the nature of empty space is ever unmoving. Likewise, there is neither arising nor perishing within the Tathagatarbha. It is free from conceptual knowledge and views. Like the nature of dharmadhatu, which is ultimate, wholly complete, and pervades all ten directions, such is the Dharma practice of the Tathagata of the causal ground.

“Because of this intrinsic completeness, bodhisattvas within the Mahayana may give rise to pure bodhi-mind. If sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age practice accordingly, they will not fall into erroneous views.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Manjusri, you should know  
that all Tathagatas,  
from their original-arising causal ground,  
use wisdom to enlighten  
and penetrate ignorance.  
Realizing that ignorance is like  
a flower in the sky,  
they are thus liberated from the continuance  
of birth and death.  
Like a person seen in a dream who  
cannot be found when the dreamer awakens,  
awareness is like empty space.  
It is impartial and equal, and ever unmoving.  
When enlightenment pervades all ten directions,  
the Buddha Path is accomplished.  
There is no place where illusions vanish,  
and there is no attainment  
in accomplishing the Buddha Path,  
for the intrinsic nature is already wholly complete.  
By this, bodhisattvas  
can give rise to the bodhi-mind.  
Sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age  
through this practice will avoid erroneous views.

Bodhisattva Samantabhadra

Then Bodhisattva Samantabhadra rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: “O World Honored

One of great compassion! For the multitude of bodhisattvas in the assembly, as well as for all sentient beings who cultivate Mahayana in the Dharma Ending Age, please explain how they should practice, having heard about this pure realm of Complete Enlightenment.

“World Honored One, if these sentient beings come to understand illusion, then body and mind are also illusory. How can they then use illusion to remedy illusion? If all illusory characteristics were exhausted and extinguished, then there would be no mind. Who is it that practices? Why, then, do you say that practice is illusory?”

“If sentient beings originally had no need to practice, then they would remain confined to illusory projections amidst birth and death and never discern the state in which all is seen to be like an illusion. How could they be liberated from illusory conceptualization? For the sake of all sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, please explain the expedient method of gradual cultivation of practice in order that sentient beings may permanently leave the state of illusion.” Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to Bodhisattva Samantabhadra: “Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked about the expedient, gradual stages of the bodhisattva’s practice of the samadhi in which all is seen to be like an illusion, and which frees sentient beings from illusion. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you.”

Hearing this, Bodhisattva Samantabhadra was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

“Virtuous man, all illusory projections of sentient beings arise from the wondrous mind of the Tathagata’s Complete Enlightenment, just like flowers in the sky which come into existence from out of the sky. When the illusory flower vanishes, the nature of the sky is not marred. Likewise, the illusory mind of sentient beings relies on illusory cultivation for its extinction. When all illusions are extinguished, the enlightened mind remains unmoved. Speaking of enlightenment in contrast to illusion is itself an illusion. To say that enlightenment exists is to not have left illusion yet. However, to say that enlightenment does not exist is also no different. Therefore, the extinction of illusion is called the unmoving mind of enlightenment.

“Virtuous man, all bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the ,”Dharma Ending Age should separate themselves from all illusory projections and deluded realms. However, when one clings firmly to the mind that separates from all illusory projections and deluded realms, this mind should also be taken as an illusion, and one should separate oneself from it. Because this separation is an illusion, it should also be separated. One should then be free from even this ‘separating from the illusion of separation!’ When there remains nothing to be separated from, all illusions are eliminated. It is like rubbing two pieces of wood together to obtain fire. When the fire ignites and the wood completely burns, the ashes fly away and the smoke vanishes. Using illusion to remedy illusion is just like this. Yet even though illusions are exhausted, one does not enter annihilation.

“Virtuous man, to know illusion is to depart from it; there is no need to contrive expedient means! To depart from illusion is to be enlightened; there are no gradual steps! All bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who practice accordingly will permanently leave illusions behind.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Samantabhadra, you should know  
that the beginningless illusory ignorance  
of all sentient beings  
is grounded on the Tathagata’s  
mind of Complete Enlightenment.  
Like a flower in empty space,  
its appearance relies on the sky.  
When the illusory flower vanishes,  
the empty space remains in its original unmoving state.  
Illusion depends on enlightenment for its arising.  
With the extinction of illusion,  
enlightenment is wholly perfect,

for the enlightened mind is ever unmoving.  
All bodhisattvas and sentient beings  
in the Dharma Ending Age  
should forever leave illusions far behind  
until all illusions are extinguished.  
It is like producing fire with wood,  
when the wood is burned out,  
the fire is also extinguished.  
Enlightenment has no gradual steps;  
the same applies to expedient means.

#### Bodhisattva of Universal Vision

Then the Bodhisattva of Universal Vision rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: "O World Honored One of great compassion! For the sake of the multitude of bodhisattvas in this assembly and all sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, please expound on the gradual stages of the bodhisattva's practice. How should one contemplate? What should one abide in and uphold? What expedient methods should one devise to guide unenlightened sentient beings, to universally enable them to reach enlightenment?"

"World Honored One, if these sentient beings do not have the correct expedient methods and contemplation, they will be confused when they hear you expound this samadhi in which all is seen to be an illusion and will be unable to awaken to Complete Enlightenment. Would you be compassionate enough to expound the provisional expedient methods for our benefit and for sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age?" Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to the Bodhisattva of Universal Vision: "Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata about the gradual stages of cultivation, what contemplation one should abide in and uphold, as well as the various expedient methods one should use. Listen attentively now. I shall explain them to you."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva of Universal Vision was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

"Virtuous man, newly initiated bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age seeking the Tathagata's pure mind of Complete Enlightenment should hold the right thought of separating from myriad illusions. First, they should rely on the samatha practice of the Tathagatas and strictly observe the precepts. They should reside peacefully among an assembly of practitioners and sit in meditation in a quiet room.

"They should always be mindful that the body is a union of the four elements. Things such as hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, marrow, and brain all belong to the element of earth. Spittle, mucus, pus, blood, saliva, sweat, phlegm, tears, semen, urine, and excrement all belong to the element of water. Warmth belongs to the element of fire. Motion belongs to the element of wind. When the four elements are separated from one another, where is this illusory body? Thus one knows that the physical body ultimately has no substance and owes its appearance to the union of the four elements. In reality it is not different from an illusory projection.

"Due to the provisional union of the four conditions of vision, hearing, perception, and awareness, the illusory six sense faculties come to exist. The inward and outward combination of the six sense faculties and the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind gives rise to the illusory existence of conditioned energy. In this process, there 'seems to be' something which is cognizant. This is provisionally called 'mind.'

"Virtuous man, this illusory mind cannot exist without the six sense objects of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, thought. When the four elements disperse, the six sense objects cannot be found. Once the elements and the

sense objects disperse and are extinguished, ultimately there is no cognizant mind to be seen.

“Virtuous man, when the illusory bodies of sentient beings become extinguished, the illusory minds also become extinguished. When the illusory minds become extinguished, the illusory sense objects also become extinguished. When the illusory sense objects become extinguished, the illusory extinguishing also becomes extinguished. When the illusory extinguishing becomes extinguished, that which is not illusory is not extinguished. It is like polishing a mirror. When the defilements are wiped off, brightness appears.

“Virtuous man, you should know that both body and mind are illusory defilements. When these appearances of defilement are permanently extinguished, purity will pervade all ten directions.

“Virtuous man, for instance, the pure mani jewel reflects the five colors as they appear before it, yet the ignorant see the mani as actually possessing the five colors. Virtuous man, although the pure nature of Complete Enlightenment likewise manifests as body and mind, people respond in accordance with their capacities, yet the ignorant speak of the pure Complete Enlightenment as having intrinsic characteristics of body and mind. For this reason, they are unable to depart from illusion. Therefore, I say that body and mind are illusory defilements. It is in terms of separating from illusory defilements that bodhisattvas are defined. When defilements are thoroughly removed, their corresponding cognition is completely eliminated. Since there is nothing corresponding to defilement, there is also no ‘one’ there to designate.

“Virtuous man, if bodhisattvas as well as sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age realize the awakening of the extinction of illusory appearances, at that time unlimited purity and infinite emptiness will be revealed and manifested in their enlightenment. Because the enlightenment is complete and illuminating, it reveals the mind in its purity. Because the mind is pure, objects of vision are pure. Because vision is pure, the eye faculty is pure. Because that faculty is pure, the visual consciousness is pure. Because the consciousness is pure, hearing is pure. Because hearing is pure, the faculty of hearing is pure. Because that faculty is pure, the consciousness is pure. Because the consciousness is pure, perception is pure. The same holds true for the nose, tongue, body, and mind.

“Virtuous man, because the sense faculties are pure, the objects of sight are pure. Because the objects of sight are pure, the objects of sound are pure. The same holds in the cases of smell, taste, touch, and thought.

“Virtuous man, because the six sense objects are pure, the earth element is pure. Because the earth element is pure, the water element is pure. The same holds for the elements of fire and wind.

“Virtuous man, because the four elements are pure, the twelve entrances, the eighteen realms, and the twenty-five existences are pure. Because these are pure, the ten powers, the four kinds of fearlessness, the four unhindered wisdoms, the eighteen exclusive attributes of the Buddha, and the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment are all pure. The same holds for the purity of everything all the way up to the eighty-four thousand dharani doors.

“Virtuous man, because the nature of Absolute Reality is pure, one’s body is pure. Because one’s body is pure, a multitude of bodies are pure. Because a multitude of bodies are pure, likewise sentient beings in all ten directions are completely enlightened and pure.

“Virtuous man, because one world is pure, a multitude of worlds are pure. Because a multitude of worlds are pure, all things completely exhausting empty space in the past, present, and future are impartially equal, pure, and unmoving.

“Virtuous man, since empty space is equal, identical, and unmoving as such, you should know that the nature of enlightenment is also equal, identical, and unmoving. Since the four elements are unmoving, you should know that the nature of enlightenment is also equal, identical, and unmoving. Since everything up to the eightyfour thousand

dharani doors are equal, identical, and unmoving, you should know that the nature of enlightenment is also equal, identical, and unmoving.

"Virtuous man, as the nature of enlightenment is pervasive and full, pure, and unmoving, being perfect and boundless, you should know that the six sense faculties also fully pervade the dharmadhatu. Because the sense faculties are pervasive and full, you should know that the six sense objects also fully pervade the dharmadhatu. Because the sense objects are pervasive and full, you should know that the four elements also fully pervade the dharmadhatu. So it is with everything up to all the dharani doors, which also fully pervade the dharmadhatu.

"Virtuous man, because the nature of wondrous enlightenment pervades everything fully, the nature of the sense faculties and the sense objects is indestructible and clear. Because the sense faculties and the sense objects are indestructible, everything up to all the dharani doors is indestructible and clear. It is like hundreds of thousands of lamps illuminating a room: their illumination pervades fully and is indestructible and clear.

"Virtuous man, since his enlightenment is fully accomplished, you should know that a bodhisattva neither is bound by dharmas nor seeks to be free from dharmas. He neither detests birth and death nor clings to nirvana; neither reveres those who uphold the precepts nor condemns those who violate them; neither esteems experienced practitioners nor slights beginners. Why? Because all sentient beings are enlightened. It is like clear vision that is completely aware of what is in front: when this clarity is perfect, it has no likes or dislikes. Why? Because the essence of this clarity is nondual and itself has no likes or dislikes.

"Virtuous man, these bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who have gained accomplishments through cultivating the mind have neither cultivated nor accomplished anything. Complete Enlightenment is universally illuminating in quiescent-extinction without duality. Hundreds of thousands of millions of asamkayas of Buddha worlds, as innumerable as the grains of sand of the Ganges, are like flowers in the sky, randomly arising and perishing. They are neither identical to nor separate from the nature of Complete Enlightenment. Since there is no bondage or liberation, one begins to realize that sentient beings have intrinsically accomplished Buddhahood, and that birth and death and nirvana are like yesterday's dream.

"Virtuous man, because birth and death and nirvana are like yesterday's dream, you should know that they neither arise nor perish, neither come nor go. That which is actualized is neither gained nor lost, neither grasped nor discarded. One who truly actualizes enlightenment does not contrive, stop, allow things to be as they are, nor annihilate vexations. In the midst of the actualization, there is neither a subject nor an object. Ultimately there is neither actualization nor one who actualizes! The nature of all dharmas is equal and indestructible.

"Virtuous man, bodhisattvas should thus practice, thus progress through these gradual stages, thus contemplate, thus abide in and uphold, thus use expedient methods, and thus become enlightened. In seeking this Dharma, they will not be confused and perplexed."

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Universal Vision, you should know  
that the minds and bodies of  
all sentient beings are illusory.  
The body is the union of the four elements.  
The nature of mind is reducible  
to the six sensory objects.  
When the four elements are separated  
from one another, who is the unifier?  
If one practices gradual  
cultivation like this, all will be pure.  
The nature of Complete Enlightenment  
is unmoving and pervades the dharmadhatu.  
There is no contrivance, stopping,  
allowing things to be as they are,

annihilation, nor is there one  
who actualizes enlightenment.  
All Buddha worlds are like  
flowers in the sky.  
Past, present and future are  
all impartially equal.  
Ultimately there is no coming or going.  
The newly initiated bodhisattvas  
and sentient beings in  
the Dharma Ending Age,  
in their quest to enter the Buddha Path,  
should thus cultivate themselves.

Bodhisattva Vajragarbha

Then Bodhisattva Vajragarbha rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said:  
“O World Honored One of great compassion! You have wonderfully expounded to bodhisattvas the great dharani of the Tathagata’s pure Complete Enlightenment, the Dharma practice of the causal ground, and the expedient methods of gradual cultivation, so that sentient beings may unveil their obstructions. Because of your compassionate teaching, all in the assembly have cleared away illusory illnesses of the eye and their wisdom-eyes have become pure.

“World Honored One, if sentient beings have intrinsically accomplished Buddhahood, how can there be so much ignorance?

If all sentient beings originally have ignorance, why does the Tathagata say that they have intrinsically accomplished Buddhahood?

If sentient beings in all ten directions intrinsically accomplished the Buddha Path and afterward gave rise to ignorance, then when will the Tathagata give rise to vexations again?

Please do not forsake your unrestricted great compassion, but disclose the secret treasury for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas, so that when all the sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who hear of this Dharma door to the ultimate meaning of this sutra will permanently sever doubts and regrets.”

Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to Bodhisattva Vajragarbha:

“Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata about the very secret and profound ultimate expedient methods, which are the highest teaching for bodhisattvas and the ultimate truth in the Mahayana. These methods are capable of causing practicing and beginning bodhisattvas in all ten directions and all sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age to obtain the stage of resolute faith and permanently sever doubts and regrets. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you.”

Hearing this, Bodhisattva Vajragarbha was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

“Virtuous man, all worlds begin and end, are born and perish, have a before and after, exist and do not exist, coalesce and disperse, arise and cease. Thoughts follow one another in succession, going and coming in a ceaseless circle. With all sorts of grasping and rejecting, these changing processes are all cyclic existences. If one were to discern Complete Enlightenment while still in cyclic existence, then this nature of Complete Enlightenment would have the same nature as the turning flow of cyclic existence! If one wished to be free from cyclic existence, then there would be no place where Complete Enlightenment could exist. For instance, when one moves one’s eyes, still water appears to have waves; when one fixes one’s gaze, a circling flame appears to be a wheel of fire. The fact that moving clouds make it seem as if the moon were moving and a sailing boat makes one feel as if the shore were moving also exhibits the same principle.

“Virtuous man, while the motion is going on, it is impossible for those things to be still. How much more would this

be so if one were to discern the Complete Enlightenment of the Buddha with the defiled mind of birth and death, which has never been pure; how could it not appear to be in motion? For this reason, you gave rise to these three doubts.

“Virtuous man, for example, because of an illusory illness of the eye, a flower is falsely seen in an empty sky. When the illusory illness of the eye is eliminated, one does not say: ‘Now that this illness is eliminated, when will other illnesses arise?’ Why? Because the illness and the flower are not in opposition. Likewise, when the flower vanishes into the empty sky, one does not say: ‘When will flowers appear in the sky again?’ Why? Because the sky originally has no flowers! There is no such thing as appearing and vanishing. Birth and death and nirvana are like the appearing and vanishing flowers in the sky, while the perfect illumination of wondrous enlightenment is free from flowers or illnesses.

“Virtuous man, you should know that the empty sky does not temporarily exist and then temporarily not exist. How much more so in the case of the Tathagata who is in accordance with Complete Enlightenment, which is comparable to the equal intrinsic nature of empty space.

“Virtuous man, it is like smelting gold ore. The gold does not exist because of the smelting. As it has become perfect gold, it will not become ore again. Even after an inexhaustible period of time, the nature of the gold will not deteriorate. Therefore, one should not say that gold is not intrinsically perfect in itself. Likewise, the same holds true with Tathagata’s Complete Enlightenment.

“Virtuous Man, the wondrous and completely enlightened mind of all Tathagatas is originally without bodhi or nirvana; it has nothing to do with accomplishing Buddhahood or not accomplishing Buddhahood, illusory cyclic existence or noncyclic existence.

“Virtuous man, even the sravakas, who have perfected the state where the karmic activities of body, mind, and speech are entirely severed, are still unable to enter the nirvana that is personally experienced and manifested by the Tathagata. How can one possibly use one’s conceptual mind to measure the realm of the Tathagata’s Complete Enlightenment? It is comparable to using the light of a firefly to scorch Mount Sumeru; one would never be able to burn it! He who attempts to enter the Tathagata’s ocean of great quiescent-extinction by using the cyclic mind and giving rise to cyclic views will never succeed. Therefore, I say that all bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age should first sever the root of beginningless cyclic existence.

“Virtuous man, contrived conceptualizations come from the existence of a mind, which is a conditioned conglomeration of the six sense objects. The conditioned impressions of deluded thoughts are not the true essence of mind; rather, they are like flowers in the sky. The discernment of the realm of Buddhahood with such conceptualization is comparable to the production of empty fruit by the empty flower. One merely revolves in this entanglement of deluded thoughts and gains no result.

“Virtuous man, deluded groundless thinking and cunning views cannot accomplish the expedient methods of Complete Enlightenment. Discriminations such as these are not correct.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Vajragarbha, you should know  
that the quiescent and extinct  
nature of the Tathagata  
never had a beginning or end.  
To conceptualize this with the cyclic mind  
results in rotations in cyclic existence.  
One will then remain in cyclic existence  
unable to enter the ocean of the Buddha.  
Like smelting gold ore,  
the gold does not exist  
as the result of smelting.  
Though it regains the original golden quality,

it is perfected only after  
the process of smelting.  
Once it becomes true gold,  
it cannot become ore again.  
Birth and death and nirvana,  
ordinary beings and all Buddhas,  
are but appearances of flowers in the sky.  
Conceptualizations are illusory projections.  
How much more so are such questions asked  
with an illusory mind?  
If one can put an end to this illusory mind,  
Complete Enlightenment can be sought.

Bodhisattva Maitreya

Then Bodhisattva Maitreya rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said:  
"O World Honored One of great compassion! You have opened wide the secret treasure for bodhisattvas and have caused the great assembly to deeply awaken from cyclic existence and distinguish between the erroneous and the correct. Your teaching is capable of bestowing the Fearless Eye of the Path to sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, causing them to give rise to resolute faith in the great nirvana, and never again to flow within the realm of the turning wheel of samsara or hold cyclic views.

"World Honored One, if bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age desire to sail on the Tathagata's ocean of great quiescent-extinction, how should they sever the roots of cyclic existence? In the various cyclic existences, how many types of capacities are there? What are the different kinds of cultivation of Buddha's bodhi? When bodhisattvas enter the world of passions, how many expedient methods should they devise to deliver sentient beings?  
Pray do not forsake your great compassion in saving the world, but cause all practicing bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age to cleanse their wisdom-eyes and illumine their mirrorlike minds. May they be completely awakened to the Tathagata's unsurpassed knowledge and vision." Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to Bodhisattva Maitreya:

"Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of the multitude of bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata about the most profound, secret, subtle, and wondrous truth so that bodhisattvas' wisdom-eyes may become pure, so that all sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age may permanently sever themselves from cyclic existence, so that their minds may awaken to Absolute Reality, and so that they may possess the patient endurance of the unborn wisdom. Listen attentively now. I shall explain it to you."

Hearing this, Bodhisattva Maitreya was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

"Virtuous man, all sentient beings experience illusory cyclic existence due to all kinds of affection, love, craving, and desire since beginningless time. The different types of births in the world - be they from egg, womb, humidity, or by transformation - are created by sexual desire. You should know that attached love is the root of cyclic existence. Because there are all sorts of desirable objects that enhance and augment the activity of attached love, birth and death proceed in unending succession.

"Desire arises because of attached love. The existence of life comes from desire. Sentient beings' love of their lives in turn relies on desire as a base. Therefore, love and desire are the cause, love of life is the consequence. Because the objects of desire vary, like and dislike arise. If the object goes against one's grasping mind, one gives rise to hatred and jealousy and commits evil karmic deeds. As a result, one is reborn in hell or as a hungry ghost.

"Realizing that desire is detestable, if one desires to leave behind karmic paths and abandons evil and delights in doing good, one is reborn in the realms of gods or humans.

If, further, one knows that attachment is detestable, and thus abandons attachment and delights in renunciation, one still stirs up the root of attachment. This results in increased worldly meritorious fruit, which, being samsaric, does not lead to accomplishing the holy path. Therefore, if sentient beings wish to be liberated from birth and death and to avoid cyclic existence, they should first sever craving and desire, and eliminate their attached love.

“Virtuous man, the transformation and manifestation of bodhisattvas in various forms in the world are not based on attachment. Out of their compassion, they cause sentient beings to abandon attachment by provisionally taking on all kinds of craving and desire so they can enter birth and death. If sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age can abandon desire, eliminate love and hatred, permanently sever cyclic existence, and diligently pursue the Tathagata’s state of Complete Enlightenment with a pure mind, they will attain awakening.

“Virtuous man, due to the inherent desire in all sentient beings, ignorance flourishes and increases. Thus sentient beings manifest five distinct natures. According to the two obstructions, their hindrances may appear to be deep or shallow.

What are the two obstructions? The first is the obstruction of principle, which hinders right views. The second is the obstruction of phenomena, which perpetuates birth and death.

“What are the five distinct natures?”

Virtuous man, sentient beings who have not eliminated and extinguished these two obstructions are called ‘those who have not attained Buddhahood.’ Sentient beings who have permanently abandoned craving and desire and have eliminated the obstruction of phenomena, but not the obstruction of principle, can only be enlightened as sravakas or pratyekabuddhas. They are unable to manifest and abide in the realm of bodhisattvas.

“Virtuous man, if sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age desire to sail on the Tathagata’s great ocean of Complete Enlightenment, they should first vow to practice with diligence and sever the two obstructions. When these two obstructions have been subdued, they will be able to awaken to the realm of bodhisattvas. If the obstructions of principle and phenomena are permanently severed, they will enter into the subtle and wondrous Complete Enlightenment of Tathagatas and consummate bodhi and great nirvana.

“Virtuous man, all sentient beings intrinsically actualize Complete Enlightenment. If they meet a good teacher and can rely on his Dharma practice of the causal ground, their karmic roots for attainments will be either gradual or sudden. However, if they come across the Tathagata’s unsurpassable bodhi and engage in the correct path of practice, they will attain Buddhahood whether they are of great or small karmic roots.

If sentient beings, though they seek a good teacher, meet one with erroneous views, they will not gain correct awakening. These people are called ones of outer path nature. This fault is due to the teacher and not to sentient beings.

“The above are the five distinct natures of sentient beings.

“Virtuous man, with great compassionate expedient methods, a bodhisattva enters the world to ex and and mature the mind~ of the ~e6t~ene~dHe manifests in various forms, amidst favorable or adverse situations so that he may work together with sentient beings in order to guide them to Buddhahood. In so doing, he relies entirely on the power of his pure vows made since beginningless time.

“If sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age can arouse the supreme thought of awakening to great Complete Enlightenment, they should make the pure great vow of bodhisattvas, declaring:

‘May I, from now on, abide in Buddha’s Complete Enlightenment, and may I, in my search for a good teacher, not meet outer paths and practitioners of the Two Vehicles.’ With their practice based on this vow, they will gradually sever all hindrances. When all hindrances are exhausted, their vows will be fulfilled. They will then ascend the pure Dharma hall of liberation and actualize the wondrous, august citadel of great Complete Enlightenment.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Maitreya, you should know  
that sentient beings

cannot attain great liberation  
because of their craving and desire,  
which cause them to fall into  
the cycle of birth and death.  
If they can sever like and dislike,  
along with greed, anger, and delusion,  
regardless of their difference in nature,  
they will all accomplish the Buddha Path.  
The two obstructions will also be permanently severed.  
After correct awakening is attained  
by meeting a good teacher,  
one accords with the bodhisattva vow  
and abides in the great nirvana.  
All bodhisattvas in the ten directions,  
relying on the great compassionate vow,  
manifest the appearance of entering birth and death.  
Practitioners now and  
sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age,  
should diligently sever all attached views.  
Then they will return to great Complete Enlightenment.

#### Bodhisattva of Pure Wisdom

Then the Bodhisattva of Pure Wisdom rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, prostrated himself at the feet of the Buddha, circled the Buddha three times to the right, knelt down, joined his palms, and said: "O World Honored One of great compassion! You have broadly expounded to us inconceivable things which we have never seen or heard before. Because of your excellent guidance, our bodies and minds are now at ease and we have gained great benefit. For the sake of all practitioners of the Dharma who have come here, please expound again the nature of the Dharma King's complete and fulfilling enlightenment. What are the differences in actualization and attainment between all sentient beings, bodhisattvas, and the World Honored Tathagata? Pray teach us so that sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, upon hearing this holy teaching, may follow and conform to it, be awakened, and gradually enter the realm of Buddhahood." Having said these words, he prostrated himself on the ground. He made the same request three times, each time repeating the same procedure.

At that time the World Honored One said to the Bodhisattva of Pure Wisdom: "Excellent, excellent! Virtuous man, for the benefit of sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age, you have asked the Tathagata about the distinct progressive stages of practice. Listen attentively now. I shall explain them to you."

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva of Pure Wisdom was filled with joy and listened silently along with the assembly.

"Virtuous man, the intrinsic nature of Complete Enlightenment is devoid of distinct natures as described before, yet all different natures are endowed with this nature of Complete Enlightenment, which can accord and give rise to various natures. Since these two natures are nondual, there is neither attainment nor actualization. In Absolute Reality, there are indeed no bodhisattvas or sentient beings. Why? Because bodhisattvas and sentient beings are illusory projections. When illusory projections are extinguished, there exists no one who attains or actualizes. For example, eyes cannot see themselves. Likewise, this nature is intrinsically impartial and equal, yet there is no 'one' who is equal.

"Because sentient beings are confused, they are unable to eliminate and extinguish all illusory projections. Because of the illusory efforts and activities of those who extinguish and those who do not extinguish vexations, there manifest distinctions. If one can attain accordance with the Tathagata's quiescent-extinction, there is in reality neither quiescent-extinction nor the one who experiences it.

"Virtuous man, all sentient beings since beginningless time have deludedly conceived 'self' and that which grasps on to the self; never have they known the succession of arising and perishing thoughts! Therefore, they give rise

to love and hatred and indulge in the five desires.

“If they meet a good teacher who guides them to awaken to the nature of pure Complete Enlightenment and to recognize these arising and perishing thoughts, they will understand that it is the very nature of such rising thoughts that causes toils and anxieties in their lives.

“If, further, a man permanently severs all toil and anxiety, he will realize the dharmadhatu in its purity. However, his undermining of purity may become his obstruction and he will not attain freedom and ease regarding Complete Enlightenment. This is called ‘the ordinary man’s accordance with the nature of enlightenment.’”

“Virtuous man, all bodhisattvas realize that this very understanding is a hindrance. Although they sever themselves from this hindrance of understanding, they still abide in this realization. The realization of hindrance is yet another hindrance. Therefore they do not have freedom and ease. This is called ‘the bodhisattva before the stage of the first bhumi’s accordance with the nature of enlightenment.’”

“Virtuous man, ‘attaining’ illumination and realization is a hindrance. Thus a great bodhisattva is constantly in realization without abidance, where the illumination and the illuminator simultaneously become quiescent and vanish. For instance, if a man beheads himself, there exists no executioner after the head has been severed. It is the same with eliminating various hindrances with a mind of hindrance: when the hindrances have been eliminated, there is no eliminator. The teachings of the sutras are like the finger that points to the moon. When one sees the moon, one realizes that the finger is not the moon. Likewise, the various teachings of all Tathagatas in instructing bodhisattvas are also like this. This is called ‘the bodhisattva above the stage of the first bhumi’s accordance with the nature of enlightenment.’”

“Virtuous man, all hindrances are themselves the nature of ultimate enlightenment. Having a correct thought or losing it is not different from liberation. Conglomeration and dispersion of dharmas are both called nirvana. Wisdom and stupidity are equally prajna. The Dharma accomplished by bodhisattvas and that by outer path practitioners are both bodhi. Ignorance and true suchness are not different realms. The threefold discipline of sila, samadhi and prajna and the three poisons of greed, anger and delusion are all pure activities. Sentient beings and the world they live in are of one Dharma-nature. Hells and heavens are all Pure Lands. Regardless of their distinct natures, all sentient beings have intrinsically accomplished the Buddha Path. All vexations are ultimate liberation. The Tathagata’s ocean of wisdom, which encompasses the whole dharmadhatu, clearly illuminates all phenomena as empty space. This is called ‘the Tathagata’s accordance with the nature of enlightenment.’”

“Virtuous man, all bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age should at no time give rise to deluded thoughts! Yet, when their deluded minds arise, they should not extinguish them. In the midst of deluded concepts, they should not add discriminations. Amidst non-discrimination, they should not distinguish true reality. If sentient beings, upon hearing this Dharma method, believe in, understand, accept, and uphold it and do not generate alarm and fear, they are ‘in accordance with the nature of enlightenment.’”

“Virtuous man, you should know that these sentient beings have made offerings to hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddhas and great bodhisattvas as innumerable as the grains of sand of the Ganges, and have planted the roots of all merits. I say that such people will accomplish the Buddha’s Wisdom of All Aspects.”

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to clarify his meaning, proclaimed these gathas:

Pure Wisdom, you should know  
that the nature of perfect bodhi  
is without attainment or actualization.  
It is without bodhisattvas or sentient beings.  
However, when there is enlightenment  
and unenlightenment,  
there are distinct progressive stages.  
Sentient beings are obstructed by understanding.  
Bodhisattvas before the first bhumi

have not left behind realization.  
Once they enter the first bhumi  
there is permanent quiescent-extinction  
with no abidance in any form.  
Great enlightenment, being complete,  
is called 'pervasive accordance.'  
If sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age  
do not give rise to deluded thoughts,  
the Buddha says that they are  
bodhisattvas in this very lifetime.  
Having made offerings to countless Buddhas  
as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges,  
their merits are perfected.  
Though expedients are many,  
all are called in accordance with wisdom.