

# Avatamsaka Sūtra

## Flower Ornament Scripture

Translated from the Chinese translation of Shikshānanda by Thomas Cleary

Book Thirty-Seven: Manifestation of Buddha / Tathāgata (highlights of chapter)

Kegon kyō 華嚴經 Nyorai shugen 如來出現 (T's Appearance) (Nyorai shōgi 如來性起 T's nature-arising)

### The Body of the Tathagata

"How should great enlightening beings see the body of Buddha? They should see the body of Buddha in infinite places. Why? They should not see Buddha in just one thing, one phenomenon, one body, one land, one being—they should see Buddha everywhere. Just as space is omnipresent, in all places, material or immaterial, yet without either arriving or not arriving there, because space is incorporeal, in the same way Buddha is omnipresent, in all places, in all beings, in all things, in all lands, yet neither arriving nor not arriving there, because Buddha's body is incorporeal, manifesting a body for the sake of sentient beings. This is the first characteristic of the body of Buddha; great enlightening beings should see it thus.

"Furthermore, just as space is wide open, is not a form yet can reveal all forms, yet space is without discrimination or false description, so also is the body of Buddha like this, causing all beings' mundane and trans-mundane good works to be accomplished by illumining all with the light of knowledge, yet without discrimination or false descriptions, having originally terminated all attachments and false descriptions. This is the second characteristic of the body of Buddha—great enlightening beings should see it this way.

"When the sun comes out, infinite living beings all receive its benefits—it disperses the darkness and gives light, dries up moisture, causes plants and trees to grow, matures crops, permeates the sky, causes lotuses to bloom, allows travelers to see the road, allows people to do their work—because the orb of the sun radiates infinite beams of light everywhere. The sun of knowledge of Buddha is also like this, benefiting sentient beings everywhere by infinite works—destroying evil and producing good, breaking down ignorance and creating knowledge, benevolently saving, compassionately liberating, causing growth of faculties, powers, and elements of enlightenment, causing beings to develop profound faith, enabling them to see inevitable cause and effect, fostering in them the celestial eye to see where beings die and are born, causing their minds to be unimpeded and not destroy roots of goodness, causing them to cultivate illumination by knowledge and open the flower of awakening, causing them to determine to fulfill their fundamental task. Why? Because Buddha's immense sun-body of knowledge and wisdom radiates infinite light, illumining everywhere. This is the third characteristic of the body of Buddha; great enlightening beings should see it thus.

"When the sun rises, first it lights up the highest mountains, then the lower mountains, then the high plateaus, and finally the whole land; but the sun does not think, 'First I will illumine here, afterward I will illumine there'—it is just because of difference in height of the mountains and land that there is a succession in illumination. The Buddha, similarly, having developed the boundless orb of knowledge of the realm of reality, always radiating the light of unimpeded knowledge, first of all illumines the high mountains, which are the great enlightening beings, then illumines those who are awakened by understanding of conditioning, then illumines those who listen to the message, then illumines sentient beings whose foundations of goodness are sure and stable, revealing vast knowledge according to beings' mental capacities, finally illumining all sentient beings, even reaching those who are fixated on error, to be a beneficial cause for the future, that they may develop to maturity. But the light of the sun of great knowledge of Buddha does not think, 'I will first illumine the great deeds of enlightening beings and at the very last shine on the sentient beings who are fixated on error'—it just radiates the light, shining equally on all, without obstruction or impediment, without discrimination. Just as the sun and moon appear in their time and impersonally shine on the mountains and valleys, so also does the knowledge of Buddha shine on all without discrimination, while the light of knowledge has various differences according to the differences in faculties and inclinations of sentient beings. This is the fourth characteristic of the body of Buddha; great enlightening beings should see it thus...

## **The Voice of the Tathagata**

"How should great enlightening beings know the voice of Buddha? They should know Buddha's voice is omnipresent, because it pervades all sounds. They should know Buddha's voice pleases all according to their mentalities, because its explanation of truth is clear and comprehensive. They should know Buddha's voice gladdens all according to their resolve, because their minds gain clarity and coolness. They should know Buddha's voice teaches without error in timing, because all who need and are able to hear it do. They should know Buddha's voice has no birth or death, because it is like the echo of a call. They should know Buddha's voice has no owner, because it is produced by cultivation of all appropriate practices. They should know Buddha's voice is extremely profound, because it cannot be measured. They should know Buddha's voice has no falsehood or deviousness, because it is born of the realm of truth. They should know Buddha's voice has no end, because it permeates the cosmos. They should know Buddha's voice has no change, because it reaches the ultimate.

"Great enlightening beings should know that Buddha's voice is neither quantified nor unquantified, neither has a master nor lacks a master, neither communicates nor does not communicate. Why? It is as when the world is about to disintegrate, there is no master, no maker, yet it spontaneously emits four voices. One says, 'You all should know that the well-being of the first meditation stage, free from the ills of desire, surpasses the realm of desire.' The sentient beings hearing this are naturally able to accomplish the first meditation stage, relinquish the body of the realm of desire and be born in Brahma heaven. The second voice says, 'You should know that the well-being of the second meditation stage, without reflection and rumination, surpasses the Brahma heaven.' The sentient beings hearing this naturally manage to accomplish the second meditation stage, relinquish the body of Brahma heaven, and are born in the light-sound heaven. The third voice says, 'You should know that the well-being of the third meditation stage has no flaws and surpasses the light-sound heaven.' Hearing this, the sentient beings are naturally able to achieve the third meditation stage, relinquish the body of the light-sound heaven, and are born in the heaven of universal purity. The fourth voice says, 'You should know that the tranquillity of the fourth meditation stage surpasses the heaven of universal purity.' Hearing this, the sentient beings are naturally able to achieve the fourth meditation stage, relinquish the body of the heaven of universal purity, and are born in the heaven of vast results. These voices have no master or maker—they are just produced by the power of good practices of sentient beings.

"The voice of Buddha is also like this, without master or maker, without discrimination, not entering, not emerging, yet producing four great voices from the power of the virtuous qualities of Buddha. One voice says, 'You all should know that all conditioned states are miserable. There is the misery of hells, the misery of animality, the misery of hungry ghosthood, the misery of lack of virtue, the misery of clinging to self and possessions, the misery of evildoing. If you want to be born human or divine, you should plant roots of goodness. Born in the human world or in a heaven, you will leave all situations in which enlightenment is difficult.' Sentient beings, having heard this, give up error and perversity, practice good actions, leave all difficulties behind, and are born in the human world or in heaven. The second voice says, 'You should know that the myriad pains of all conditioned states are as searing as balls of hot iron. Conditioned states are impermanent and pass away. Nirvana is tranquil, unfabricated well-being, beyond all burning, extinguishing all inflaming afflictions.' Having heard this, sentient beings diligently practice good principles, and in the vehicle of listeners to Buddha's voice attain the tolerance of conformity to the message. The third voice says, 'You should know that those in the vehicle of listeners follow the words of another to understand; their knowledge and wisdom is narrow and inferior. There is a higher vehicle called the vehicle of the individually awakened, whose enlightenment does not depend on a teacher. You should learn it.' Those inclined to a superior path, having heard this voice, give up the path of listeners and cultivate the vehicle of the individually awakened. The fourth voice says, 'You should know that there is an even higher path beyond the ranks of these two vehicles, which is called the great vehicle, practiced by enlightening beings, following the six transcendent ways, not stopping enlightening practice, not relinquishing the determination for enlightenment, being in the midst of infinite birth and death without getting sick of it. Going beyond the two vehicles of individual liberation, it is called the Great Vehicle, the foremost vehicle, the preeminent vehicle, the supreme vehicle, the highest vehicle, the unexcelled vehicle, the vehicle of benefiting all sentient beings.

If there are any sentient beings whose resolve is very great, whose faculties are strong and keen, who have planted roots of goodness in the past, who are spiritually empowered by the buddhas, who have superior inclinations and seek buddhahood, once they have heard this voice they arouse the determination for enlightenment. Buddha's voice does not come from the body or from the mind, yet it can benefit infinite sentient beings. This is the first characteristic of Buddha's voice; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"Furthermore, just as an echo arises due to mountains, valley, and sound, and has no form, cannot be seen, and though it has no discrimination can follow all words, so also is the voice of Buddha—it has no form, cannot be seen, has no direction or location yet is not without direction and location; it just emerges according to the conditions of sentient beings' inclinations and understandings. Its nature ultimately has no words, no information, and cannot be explained. This is the second characteristic of the voice of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"Furthermore, it is like the heavens' great drum of law, called awakener: when the celestials act without restraint, the drum produces a voice in the sky saying, 'You should know that all pleasures are impermanent, unreal, illusory, changing and disintegrating in a moment. They only fool the ignorant, causing attachment. Don't be indulgent, for the unrestrained fall into bad ways, and it is of no use to regret afterward.' The indulgent celestials, having heard this voice, are greatly distressed and frightened; they leave the pleasures in their own abodes, go to the king of gods, seek the truth and practice the way. The sound of that drum has no master, no maker, no origin, no destruction, yet it can benefit infinite sentient beings. Know that Buddha likewise utters the voice of infinite sublime truths in order to awaken indulgent beings: the voice of non-attachment, the voice of nonindulgence, the voice of impermanence, the voice of suffering, the voice of selflessness, the voice of impurity, the voice of annulment, the voice of nirvana, the voice of measureless spontaneous knowledge, the voice of incorruptible enlightening practices, the voice of all-pervasive effortless knowledge of buddhas. These voices pervade the cosmos, awakening the beings therein; countless sentient beings, having heard them, all become joyful and diligently cultivate good ways, each seeking emancipation by their respective vehicles of emancipation—that is, some practice the vehicle of listeners, some practice the vehicle of individual awakening, and some practice the unsurpassed Great Vehicle of enlightening beings. Yet the voice of Buddha does not remain in any place; it has no speech. This is the third characteristic of the voice of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus...

### **The Mind of the Tathagata**

"How should great enlightening beings know (jnana) the mind of Buddha, the truly awake? The mind, intellect, and consciousness (chitta, manas, vijnana) of Buddha are ungraspable. One can know the mind of Buddha only in terms of the infinity of knowledge (prajna). Just as space is the resting place of all things, while space has no resting place, so also is the knowledge of Buddha the resting place of all mundane and transcendental knowledge, while the knowledge of Buddha has no resting place. This is the first characteristic of the mind of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"Just as the realm of truth always produces the liberations of Buddhist followers, individual illuminates, and enlightening beings, while the realm of truth has no increase or decrease, in the same way the knowledge of Buddha always produces all kinds of worldly and transmundane knowledge without itself increasing or decreasing. This is the second characteristic of the mind of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"Just as the ocean water flows under the continents and islands, so that all who drill for water find it, yet the ocean does not form any notion of itself giving out water, in the same way the water of the ocean of knowledge of Buddha flows into the minds of all sentient beings, so that if they examine things and practice ways of entering truth they will find knowledge, pure and clear, with lucid understanding—yet the knowledge of Buddha is equal, nondual, without discrimination; but according to the differences in sentient beings' mental patterns, the knowledge they obtain is not the same. This is the third characteristic of the mind of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"In the ocean there are four jewels imbued with infinite qualities that produce all the precious jewels in the ocean; if these jewels were not in the ocean, it would be impossible to find even one jewel. What are these

four? One is called accumulation of treasures; another is called inexhaustible treasury; another is called removal of burning heat; the other is called replete with adornments. These jewels cannot be seen by any ordinary people or sea creatures. Why? The king water spirit Ocean, because the jewels are magnificent with perfect lines and proportions, keeps them in a deeply hidden place within the palace.

"The great ocean of knowledge of Buddha similarly has four great jewels of knowledge, with infinite qualities of knowledge and virtue, whereby are produced all the jewels of knowledge of the stages of learning and beyond learning of ordinary people, Buddhist followers, and individual illuminates, and of enlightening beings. What are the four? They are the jewel of great knowledge of unattached skill in means; the jewel of great knowledge of skillfully distinguishing the conditioned and the unconditioned; the jewel of great knowledge analytically explaining countless things without violating the essential nature of things; and the jewel of great knowledge knowing appropriate and inappropriate timing without ever a miss. If these four jewels were not in the Buddha's ocean of knowledge, not a single being would ever be able to enter the Great Vehicle of liberation. These four jewels of knowledge cannot be seen by unworthy beings. Why? Because they are kept in the deeply secret treasury of Buddha. These four jewels of knowledge are even, symmetrical, straight and true, immaculately beautiful, and able to universally benefit all enlightening beings, enabling them to attain the light of knowledge. This is the fourth characteristic of the mind of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"Also, the ocean has four jewels of blazing light spread on its floor, which by nature are extremely, fiercely hot; they are able to drink up and shrink the immeasurable quantities of water poured in by all the rivers, so that the ocean neither increases nor decreases. What are these four? One is called solar matrix; the second is called removing moisture; the third is called flame light; the fourth is called thorough exhaustion. If these four jewels were not in the ocean, the whole world, up to the highest heaven of material existence, would all be flooded. The light of this great jewel solar matrix, when it shines on seawater, turns it to milk; the light of the great jewel removing moisture, when it shines on the milk, turns it to cream; the light of the great jewel flame light, when it shines on the cream, turns it to butter; the light of the great jewel thorough exhaustion, when it shines on the butter, turns it to ghee, blazing like fire, consuming it without remainder.

"Buddha's ocean of great knowledge similarly has four kinds of jewels of great knowledge, with light of immeasurable power; when the light of these jewels of knowledge touches enlightening beings, it ultimately causes them to attain the great knowledge of Buddha. What are the four? They are the jewel of great knowledge stopping all the waves of scattered goodness; the jewel of great knowledge eliminating all emotional attachment to the teachings; the jewel of great knowledge of the universal illumination of the light of intelligence; the jewel of great knowledge of boundless effortlessness equal to Buddha.

"When enlightening beings practice the methods of fostering enlightenment, they rouse innumerable waves of scattered goodness, which all worldly beings, celestials, humans, or titans cannot destroy; when Buddha touches those enlightening beings with the light of the jewel of great knowledge of stopping all the waves of scattered good, it causes them to leave behind the waves of scattered good, keep their minds on one point, and dwell in concentration. Then, touching the enlightening beings with the light of the jewel of great knowledge, removing all emotional attachment to the teachings, causes them to give up clinging to the taste of concentration and awaken great spiritual powers. Then, touching the enlightening beings with the light of the jewel of great knowledge of the universal intelligence causes them to relinquish the occult powers they exercise and to engage in the active employment of great science. Then, touching the enlightening beings with the light of the jewel of great knowledge of boundless effortlessness equal to Buddha causes them to relinquish the active exercise of great science they have been engaged in so that they finally reach the equanimity of Buddhas and cease all effort completely. Without the contact of the great light of these four jewels of knowledge of Buddha it would be impossible for a single enlightening being to attain buddhahood. This is the fifth characteristic of the mind of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"The million lands from the sphere of water up to the heaven of neither perception nor nonperception, the abodes of sentient beings in the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm, all arise from space and rest in space. Why? Because space is everywhere. But though space contains all the realms of desire, form, and formlessness, yet it has no discrimination. The knowledge of Buddha is also like this: the knowledge of listeners, the knowledge of individual illuminates, the knowledge of enlightening beings, the

knowledge of formulated practices, and the knowledge of unformulated practices, all arise from the knowledge of Buddha and rest in the knowledge of Buddha, because the knowledge of Buddha pervades all; though it contains innumerable knowledges, it has no discrimination. This is the sixth characteristic of the knowledge of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"Atop the Snowy mountains there is an excellent medicinal tree called inexhaustible roots; the roots of that medicinal tree grow from 168,000 leagues, all the way down to the adamantine ground and the sphere of water. When that medicinal tree grows roots, it causes the roots of all trees on the continent to grow; when the medicinal tree grows a stem, it causes the stems of all trees on the continent to grow. The same is true of the branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits. The roots of the medicinal tree can grow stems, and the stems can grow roots—the roots are inexhaustible, so it is called inexhaustible roots. That medicinal tree can foster growth everywhere, except for two places where it cannot perform the beneficial action of promotion of growth—that is, in the pits of hells and in the sphere of water; yet it has no aversion to them. The great tree of the supreme medicine of the knowledge of Buddha, likewise, by past development, fully perfects all good qualities of knowledge, shades all realms of sentient beings, and destroys all the miseries of bad states. Universal compassion and commitment form its roots; it is born from the seed of true knowledge of all buddhas. It is steadfast and immovable; skill in means is its trunk, the transcendent perfections of cosmic knowledge are its branches; meditations, liberations, and the great concentrations are its leaves; mental command, intellectual skills, and the elements of enlightenment are its flowers, and the ultimate unchanging liberation of buddhas is its fruit. Why may the medicinal tree of knowledge of Buddha be called 'inexhaustible roots'? Because of ultimately never ceasing, because of not stopping enlightening activity. The practice of enlightening beings is the nature of Buddha, the nature of Buddha is the practice of enlightening beings. Therefore it can be called inexhaustible roots. When the roots of the medicinal tree of buddha-knowledge grow, it causes enlightening beings to grow the root of great love and compassion, which does not abandon sentient beings. When its trunk grows, it causes all sentient beings to grow the trunk of profound determination with steadfast vigor. When its branches grow, it causes all enlightening beings to grow the branches of all transcendent ways. When its leaves grow, it causes enlightening beings to grow the leaves of pure conduct, austerity, virtue, paucity of desire, and contentment. When its flowers grow, it causes all enlightening beings to be replete with the flowers of magnificent arrays of the marks and embellishments of virtues. When its fruit grows, it causes all enlightening beings to gain the fruits of acceptance of nonorigination up to acceptance of coronation by all buddhas. The supreme medicine tree of knowledge of Buddha cannot perform its beneficial growth-fostering function in two places only: in those in the two vehicles of individual salvation who have fallen into the abyss of nondoing, and in unsuitable sentient beings with rotten roots of goodness who are sunk in the floodwaters of erroneous views and craving—yet Buddha never has rejected these people. The knowledge of Buddha has no increase or decrease, because its roots are stable and grow ceaselessly. This is the seventh characteristic of the mind of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"When the eonic holocaust starts in the universe, it burns up all the plants and trees, and even the mountains, consuming all without leaving anything. Suppose someone picked up some dry straw and threw it in that fire—do you think it could do aught but burn?"

"No."

"It is more possible for that straw not to burn than for Buddha's knowledge, analyzing all sentient beings, all lands, all ages, and all phenomena of all times, not to know something. Why? Because that knowledge impartially comprehends all clearly. This is the eighth characteristic of the mind of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"When a gale destroys the worlds, a great wind called destruction arises, able to pulverize the billion worlds of the universe, their iron mountains and so on, to smithereens. There is another wind, called blocker, circling the billion-world universe, blocking the gale of destruction so that it cannot reach the worlds in other places. Without this blocking wind, all the worlds in the ten directions would be completely destroyed. Buddha similarly has a great wind of knowledge, called extinguisher, which can extinguish the afflictions and habit energies of all great enlightening beings; and a great wind of knowledge called skillful sustaining, which skillfully sustains the enlightening beings whose faculties are not yet mature, not letting the

extinguishing whirlwind totally eliminate all their afflictions and habit energies. Without Buddha's skillfully sustaining wind of knowledge, countless enlightening beings would fall into the states of those content with individual salvation. By this knowledge enlightening beings are enabled to transcend the stages of the two lesser vehicles of individual salvation and abide in the ultimate rank of Buddha. This is the ninth characteristic of the mind of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"There is nowhere the knowledge of Buddha does not reach. Why? There is not a single sentient being who is not fully endowed with the knowledge of Buddha; it is just that because of deluded notions, erroneous thinking, and attachments, they are unable to realize it. If they would get rid of deluded notions, then universal knowledge, spontaneous knowledge, and unobstructed knowledge would become manifest. It is as if there were a great scripture, equal in extent to a billion-world universe, in which are written all the things of the universe—there are written the things of the iron peripheral mountains, to an extent equal to those mountains; there are written the things on the land, to an extent equal to the land; there are written the things in the million-world galaxies, to an extent equal to the galaxies; there are written the things in the thousand-world systems, to an extent equal to the systems; there are written the things in the continents, to an extent equal to the continents; and so on; the things of the oceans, the polar mountains, the abodes of earth and sky, the celestial abodes in the sky of the desire realm, the abodes in the form realm, the abodes in the formless realm, are each written down to an equivalent extent. Though this scripture is equal in measure to a billion-world universe, yet it entirely rests in a single atom; and as this is so of one atom, it is also true of all atoms. Then suppose someone with clear and comprehensive knowledge, who has fully developed the celestial eye, sees these scriptures inside atoms, not benefiting sentient beings in the least, and, with this thought—'I should, by energetic power, break open those atoms and release those scriptures so that they can benefit all sentient beings'—then employs appropriate means to break open the atoms and release the great scriptures, to enable all sentient beings to benefit greatly. Similarly, the knowledge of Buddha, infinite and unobstructed, universally able to benefit all, is fully inherent in the bodies of sentient beings; but the ignorant, because of clinging to deluded notions, do not know of it, are not aware of it, and so do not benefit from it. Then the Buddha, with the unimpeded, pure, clear eye of knowledge, observes all sentient beings in the cosmos and says, 'How strange—how is it that these sentient beings have the knowledge of Buddha but in their folly and confusion do not know it or perceive it? I should teach them the way of sages and cause them forever to shed deluded notions and attachments, so they can see in their own bodies the vast knowledge of buddhas, no different from the buddhas.' Then Buddha teaches them to practice the way of sages, so they get rid of deluded notions, after which they realize the infinite knowledge of Buddha and aid and comfort all living beings. This is the tenth characteristic of the mind of Buddha; great enlightening beings should know it thus.

"Great enlightening beings should know the mind of Buddha, who has realized Thusness and is completely awake, in terms of such infinite, unimpeded, inconceivably great characteristics."...

### **The Accomplishment of Perfect Awakening of the Tathagata**

"Great enlightening beings should know that in one pore of Buddha's body are buddha-bodies as numerous as all sentient beings. Why? Because the body of the Buddha's attainment of true awakening ultimately has no birth or destruction. And as this is so of one pore, so is it of every point in the entire cosmos. Know that there is not a bit of space where there is no buddha-body. Why? Because Buddha's attainment of true awakening reaches everywhere. According to capability and power, on the lion seat under the enlightenment tree at the site of enlightenment, with various bodies, Buddha attains true awakening.

"Great enlightening beings should know that in each moment of thought of their own minds there are always buddhas attaining true awakening. Why? Because the buddhas do not attain true awakening apart from this mind. As this is true of one's own mind, so is it also true of the minds of all sentient beings—in all are buddhas attaining true awakening, all-pervasive, existing everywhere, without separation or annihilation, without cease, entering the inconceivable doors or means of enlightenment. Great enlightening beings should know Buddha's attainment of enlightenment this way."