

The Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion's Roar

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Translator's Introduction

The *Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion's Roar* (*Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanāda-sūtra*) is a Mahayana text no longer extant in Sanskrit but preserved in both the Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist canons. This text is a unique development within the Buddhist tradition because of its egalitarian and generous view concerning women, portraying, on the one hand, the dignity and wisdom of a laywoman and her concern for all beings, and, on the other, the role of woman as philosopher and teacher. The major philosophical emphases of the text are the theories of the "womb of the Buddha" (*tathāgatagarbha*) and the One Vehicle (*ekayāna*). Because of the number of citations and references that are retained in Sanskrit Buddhist texts, the *Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanāda-sūtra* seems to have been widely circulated at one time throughout India. The Chinese Buddhist canon has preserved two versions of the text: an earlier translation by Guṇabhadra

(394–468), from which this English translation has been made, and a later translation by Bodhiruci (672–727).

The story of Queen Śrīmālā has a simple and beautiful theme, full of lush imagery and metaphors. The bodhisattva is the essential agent through whom living beings are instructed in the profound teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* (“womb of the Buddha”). A future buddha who is still embracing the teachings and instructing others, Queen Śrīmālā becomes a bodhisattva who explains the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the presence of the Buddha, after her parents send her a letter requesting that she study the teaching (Dharma). Awakening to the thought of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*), meditating upon the Buddha, she visualizes him and expresses the wish to follow the bodhisattva path. Receiving the prediction of her future buddhahood from the Buddha, she enters the path of the True Dharma and thus begins her bodhisattva practice. Queen Śrīmālā, who had the “lion’s roar”—or eloquence—of a buddha, first converts the women of her kingdom, then her husband, a non-Buddhist, and finally the men. Śrīmālā is praised for her intelligence and compassion, not for her beauty or wealth, which are implicit. She is proficient in explaining the Dharma and is charismatic, as are all the bodhisattvas throughout Buddhist literature. Queen Śrīmālā describes the True Dharma using four metaphors: 1) the great cloud, which is the source of all good merits pouring forth on living beings; 2) the great waters, which are the source for creating all good meritorious acts; 3) the great earth, which carries all things just as the True Dharma supports all living things; and 4) the four jewel storehouses, which are the four types of instructions that living beings accept and embrace. The text raises the question of the possibility of female buddhas. This question had continually vexed Buddhist scholars and commentators, who attempted to come to terms with the possibility of a relationship between the notion of the ultimate spiritual perfection or buddhahood and the feminine. Such a relationship was viewed with ambivalence. This question was raised only by Mahayana Buddhists, particularly those who proclaimed the one path to universal buddhahood. For these Buddhists, all men and women equally had the nature of the Buddha. If women were truly capable of having buddha-nature in this lifetime without denying their female gender, this would implicitly indicate that women were not biologically determined as religiously, psychologically, and physically inferior to men.

One popular theme in Mahayana Buddhist texts had been the teaching of transformation from female to male, providing a means, both literary and

spiritual, for women to become bodhisattvas and buddhas. Other texts and commentaries suggest that there is no need to undergo a gender change through either vowing to despise the female nature or through rebirth as a male after death as a female.

The controversy that arose among scholars concerning Queen Śrīmālā's level of spiritual attainment may reflect continual controversy among Buddhists with regard to the bodhisattva ideal and the image of buddhahood as female. The entire tone of the text, in which the bodhisattva is the supporter, acceptor, and compassionate Dharma mother, suggests female imagery. The question of whether or not women were ever recognized as potential or imminent buddhas remains unanswered.

THE TEACHING OF QUEEN ŚRĪMĀLĀ OF THE LION'S ROAR
A comprehensive text that teaches the skillful means of the One Vehicle.
Translated from the Sanskrit by the Central Indian Tripiṭaka Master
Guṇabhadra in 435 C.E.

Chapter I: The Merits of the Tathāgata's True Dharma

Thus have I heard. One time the Buddha was residing in the Jeta Garden of Anāthapiṇḍika's Park in the city of Śrāvastī [in the kingdom of Kosala]. At that time King Prasenajit and Queen Mallikā, who had only recently attained faith in the Dharma, said these words together, "Śrīmālā, our daughter, is astute and extremely intelligent. If she has the opportunity to see the Buddha, she will certainly understand the Dharma without doubting [its truth]. Some time we should send a message to her to awaken her religious state of mind." The queen said, "Now is the right time." The king and queen then wrote a letter to Śrīmālā, praising the Tathāgata's immeasurable merits, and dispatched a messenger named Candirā to deliver the letter to the kingdom of Ayodhyā [where Śrīmālā was queen]. Entering the palace, the messenger respectfully conferred the letter to Śrīmālā who rejoiced upon receiving it, raising the letter to her head [as a sign of reverence]. She read and understood it, arousing a religious mind of rare quality. Then she said to Candirā in verse:

"I hear the name 'Buddha,'
The One who is rarely in the world.
If my words are true [that the Buddha is now in the world]
Then I will honor him.

“Since I humbly submit that the Lord Buddha
 Came for the sake of the world,
 He should be compassionate with me
 Allowing me to see him.”
 At that very moment of reflection,
 The Buddha appeared in heaven,
 Radiating pure light in all directions,
 And revealing his incomparable body.
 Śrīmālā and her attendants
 Prostrated themselves reverently at his feet,
 And with pure minds,
 Praised the true merits of the Buddha:
 “The body of the Tathāgata, excellent in form,
 Is unequalled in the world,
 Being incomparable and inconceivable.
 Therefore, we now honor you.
 “The Tathāgata’s form is inexhaustible
 And likewise his wisdom.
 All things eternally abide [in him].
 Therefore, we take refuge in you.
 “Having already exorcised the mind’s defilements
 And the four kinds [of faults] of body [and speech]
 You have already arrived at the undaunted stage.
 Therefore we worship you, the Dharma King.
 “By knowing all objects to be known,
 And by the self-mastery of your body of wisdom,
 You encompass all things.
 Therefore, we now honor you.
 “We honor you, the One who transcends all measures [of space and time].
 We honor you, the One who is incomparable.
 We honor you, the One who has the limitless Dharma.
 We honor you, the One beyond conceptualization.”
 [Śrīmālā:]
 “Please be compassionate and protect me,
 Causing the seeds of Dharma to grow [within me]
 In this life and in future lives,
 Please, Buddha, always accept me.”

[The Buddha:]

“I have been with you for a long time,
Guiding you in former lives.

I now again accept you.

And will do likewise in the future.”

[Śrīmālā:]

“I have produced merits

At present and in other lives.

Because of these virtuous deeds

I only wish to be accepted.”

Then Śrīmālā and all of her attendants prostrated themselves before the Buddha’s feet. The Buddha then made this prediction among them: “You praise the true merits of the Tathāgata because of your virtuous deeds. After immeasurable periods of time, you will become sovereign among the gods (*devas*). In all lives you will continually see me and praise me in my presence, in the same manner as you are doing now. You will also make offerings to the immeasurable numbers of buddhas for more than twenty thousand immeasurable periods of time. Then you (Śrīmālā) will become the buddha named Universal Light (Samantaprabha), the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One. Your buddha land will have no evil destinies and no suffering due to old age, illness, deterioration, torments. . . . There will be no evil whatsoever, not even the word for evil. Those who are in your land will have the five desires [of the senses fulfilled], longevity, physical power, and physical beauty, and will be happier than even the gods who control enjoyments created by others. They all will be exclusively Mahayana, having habitually practiced virtuous deeds, and assembling in your land.”

When Queen Śrīmālā had received this prediction, the innumerable gods, humans, and other beings vowed to be born in her land. The Buddha predicted to everyone that they all would be born there.

Chapter II: The Ten Ordination Vows

At that time Śrīmālā, having received the [Buddha’s] prediction, respectfully arose to take the ten major ordination vows.

“O Lord, from now until I am enlightened:

- 1) “I will not transgress the discipline that I have received.
- 2) “I will have no disrespect toward the venerable elders.

3) “I will not hate living beings.

4) “I will not be jealous of others with regard to either their physical appearance or their possessions.

5) “I will not be stingy although I have little sustenance.

“O Lord, from now until I am enlightened:

6) “I will not accumulate property for my own benefit. Whatever I receive will be used to assist living beings who are poor and suffering.

7) “I will practice the four all-embracing acts (giving, kind speech, benefiting others, and cooperation toward leading all beings to virtuous deeds) for all living beings, and not for myself. I accept all living beings without lust, without satiation, and without prejudice.

8) “When I see living beings who are lonely, imprisoned, ill, and afflicted by various misfortunes and hardships, I will never forsake them, even for a moment, for I must bring them peace. Through my good deeds I will bring them benefits and liberate them from their pain. Only then will I leave them.

9) “When I see those who hunt or domesticate animals, slaughter, or commit other such offenses against the precepts, I will never forsake them. When I obtain this power [to teach all beings], I will restrain those who should be restrained and assist those who should be assisted wherever I see such living beings. Why? Because by restraining and assisting them, one causes the eternal continuation of the Dharma. If the Dharma continues eternally, gods and humans shall flourish and the evil destinies shall diminish in number. Then the wheel of the Dharma that is turned by the Tathāgata will again be turned. Because I see these benefits I will save, and never quit [teaching living beings].

“O Lord, from now until I am enlightened:

10) “I accept the True Dharma, never forgetting it. Why? Because those who forget the Dharma forget the Mahayana. Those who forget the Mahayana forget the perfections (*pāramitās*). Those who forget the perfections do not aspire toward the Mahayana. If the bodhisattvas are not committed to the Mahayana, they cannot have the aspiration to accept the True Dharma. Acting according to their pleasure, they will not be able to transcend the level of common people.

“Because I have seen, in this way, the immeasurably great errors [of humans] and have seen the immeasurable merits of the bodhisattvas, those great beings (*mahāsattvas*) who will accept the True Dharma, I will accept these great ordination vows.

“O Lord of the Dharma manifested before me, you are my witness. Even though the Lord Buddha presently witnessed [my testimony], living beings’

virtuous deeds are superficial. Some of them are skeptical and extremely difficult to save through these ten ordination vows. They engage in immoral activities for long periods of time and are unhappy. In order to bring peace to them, I now declare, in your presence, that my vows are sincere.

“If I receive these ten major ordination vows and practice them as I have stated them, by [the power of] these true words, heavenly flowers will rain down and divine music will ring out upon this assembly.”

Just as Śrīmālā said these words, a shower of heavenly flowers poured from the sky and divine music rang out: “It is so! It is so! What you have said is true, not false.” Having seen these wondrous flowers and having heard this music, the entire assembly no longer was skeptical, rejoicing immeasurably and exclaiming, “We wish to stay with Queen Śrīmālā and together we would like to join in practice with her.”

The Buddha predicted to all that their wish [to stay with Queen Śrīmālā] would be fulfilled.

Chapter III: The Three Great Vows

At that time Śrīmālā again, in the presence of the Buddha, professed the three great vows:

“By the power of my earnest aspiration, may I bring peace to innumerable and unlimited living beings. By my virtuous deeds, throughout all rebirths may I attain the wisdom of the True Dharma.” This is called the first great vow.

“Having attained the wisdom of the True Dharma, for the sake of all living beings, may I explain [the Dharma] without wearying.” This is called the second great vow.

“In accepting the True Dharma, may I abandon body, life, and wealth and uphold the True Dharma.” This is called the third great vow.

At that time the Lord prophesied to Śrīmālā, “With reference to the three great vows, just as all forms are contained in space, so likewise the bodhisattva vows, which are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River, are all contained in these three great vows. These three vows are the truth and are extensive.”

Chapter IV: Acceptance of the True Dharma

At that time Queen Śrīmālā said to the Buddha, “Having received the Buddha’s power, I will now explain the great vow which is controlled [by the principle of the True Dharma], being the truth without error.”

The Buddha said to Śrīmālā, “I permit you to explain as you wish.”

Śrīmālā said to the Buddha, “The bodhisattva vows, which are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River, are all contained in the one great vow that is called ‘acceptance of the True Dharma.’ Acceptance of the True Dharma truly is the great vow.”

The Buddha praised Śrīmālā: “Excellent! Excellent! Your wisdom (*prajñā*) and skillful means (*upāya*) are most profound and subtle! You have already, for a long time, increased in virtue. In the future, living beings who develop such virtue will be able to understand you. Your explanation of the acceptance of the True Dharma is that which the buddhas of the past, present, and future have explained, now explain, and will explain. Having realized supreme, complete enlightenment (*anuttarā samyaksambodhi*), I also speak of this acceptance of the True Dharma. I explain that acceptance of the True Dharma has merits that cannot be limited. The Tathāgata’s wisdom and eloquence also are without limits. Why? Because in this acceptance of the True Dharma there are great merits and great benefits.”

Queen Śrīmālā said to the Buddha, “Again, having received the Buddha’s power, I shall further explain the extension of the acceptance of the True Dharma.”

The Buddha said, “Then please explain.”

1. Immeasurable

A. Like a Great Cloud

Śrīmālā said to the Buddha, “The meaning of the extension of the acceptance of the True Dharma is immeasurable. It includes all teachings of the Buddha, consisting of eighty-four thousand discourses.

“Like a great cloud that appeared at the time of creation, showering down multicolored rain and many kinds of jewels, acceptance of the True Dharma rains forth innumerable rewards and innumerable virtues.”

B. Like the Great Waters

“O Lord, at the time of creation, the three thousand great worlds and the forty billion kinds of continents emerged from the great waters. Similarly, the innumerable worlds of the Mahayana, the supernatural powers of all the bodhisattvas, the peace and happiness of all worlds, the magical omnipotence of all worlds, and the peace of the transcendental worlds that has not been experienced by gods and humans from the time of creation—all these emerge from acceptance of the True Dharma.”

C. Like the Great Earth, the “Supporter”

“Moreover, acceptance of the True Dharma is like the great earth that supports four weights. What are the four? The great seas, the mountains, vegetation, and living beings. Similarly, like that great earth, good sons and daughters who accept the True Dharma build the great earth and carry four responsibilities. Who are the four? 1) Living beings who have parted from good friends either have not heard [the Dharma] or are without the Dharma. By advising them to cultivate the good deeds of humans and gods, [good sons and daughters] prepare them [for entering the path]. 2) For those who want to be disciples (*śrāvakas*) they present the disciple vehicle. 3) For those who want to be *pratyekabuddhas* (solitary enlightened ones) they present the *pratyekabuddha* vehicle. And 4) for those who want to be [followers of the Great Vehicle], they present the Mahayana. These are the good sons and good daughters who accept the True Dharma, build the great earth, and carry the four responsibilities.

“Therefore, Lord, good sons and daughters who accept the True Dharma, build the great earth, and carry the four responsibilities become friends without being asked for the sake of all living beings. In their great compassion, they comfort and sympathize with living beings and become the Dharma mother of the world.”

2. Like the Great Earth, Which Has Four Jewel Storehouses

“Again, acceptance of the True Dharma is like the great earth that has four kinds of jewel storehouses. What are the four? They are: 1) the priceless, 2) the supremely valuable, 3) the moderately valuable, and 4) the slightly valuable. These are the great earth’s four kinds of jewel storehouses.

“Similarly, good sons and daughters who accept the True Dharma and build the great earth obtain the four kinds of most precious jewels, namely, living beings. Who are the four? 1) Those who have not heard [the Dharma] or are without the Dharma to whom the good sons and daughters who have accepted the True Dharma present the [cultivation of] merits and virtuous deeds of humans and gods. 2) Those who want to be disciples are presented with the disciple vehicle. 3) Those who want to be *pratyekabuddhas* are presented with the *pratyekabuddha* vehicle. And 4) those who want to [follow the Great Vehicle] are presented with the Mahayana.

“Therefore, all the good sons and daughters who obtain the great jewels, namely living beings, realize extraordinarily rare merits because of acceptance of the Dharma. Lord, the great jewel storehouse is the acceptance of the True Dharma.”

3. Identical with the True Dharma Itself

“Lord, ‘acceptance of the True Dharma’ means the True Dharma [itself] is not different from acceptance of the True Dharma. The True Dharma [itself] is identical with acceptance of the True Dharma.”

4. Identical with the Perfections

“Lord, the perfections are not different from the one who accepts the True Dharma. The one who accepts the True Dharma is identical with the perfections. Why?

1) “Good sons and daughters who accept the True Dharma give even their body and limbs for those who respond to giving. By protecting these [living beings’] intentions, they teach them. When they are thus taught and caused to abide in the True Dharma, this is called the perfection of giving (*dāna*).

2) “Good sons and daughters teach the protection of the six senses, the purification of body, speech, and mind, and the cultivation of the four correct postures [in walking, standing, sitting, and reclining] to those who respond to discipline. By protecting these [living beings’] intentions, they teach them. When they are thus taught and caused to abide in the True Dharma, this is called the perfection of discipline (*śīla*).

3) “Good sons and daughters teach nonhatred, supreme patience, and neutrality in outer expression to those who respond to patience. By protecting these [living beings’] intentions, they teach them. When they are thus taught and caused to abide in the True Dharma, this is called the perfection of patience (*kṣānti*).

4) “Good sons and daughters do not teach indolence but the desire [to practice], supreme perseverance, and cultivation of the four correct postures to those who respond to perseverance. By protecting these [living beings’] intentions, they teach them. When they are thus taught and caused to abide in the True Dharma, this is called the perfection of perseverance (*vīrya*).

5) “Good sons and daughters teach tranquility, constant mindfulness not conditioned by external objects, and recollection of all actions and speech over long periods of time to those who respond to meditation. By protecting these [living beings’] intentions, they teach them. When they are thus taught and caused to abide in the True Dharma, this is called the perfection of meditation (*dhyāna*).

6) “Good sons and daughters, when questioned concerning the meaning of all things, extensively teach all treatises and all arts, without trepidation, causing those who respond to wisdom to reach the ultimate in science and art. By

protecting these [living beings’] intentions, they teach them. When they are thus taught and caused to abide in the True Dharma, this is the perfection of wisdom (*prajñā*).

“Therefore, O Lord, the perfections are not different from the one who accepts the True Dharma. The one who accepts the True Dharma is identical with the perfections.

“O Lord, now receiving your power, I will further explain the greatness [of the True Dharma].”

The Buddha said, “Please do so.”

[Identical with the One Who Accepts the True Dharma]

Śrīmālā said to the Buddha, “‘Acceptance of the True Dharma’ means acceptance of the True Dharma is not different from the one who accepts the True Dharma. Good sons and daughters who accept the True Dharma are identical with acceptance of the True Dharma. Why? Because good sons and daughters who accept the True Dharma abandon three things for the sake of acceptance of the True Dharma. What are the three? They are body, life, and wealth.

“When good sons and daughters abandon the body, they become equal to the last limit of the cycle of birth and death (*samsara*). Having parted from old age, illness, and death, they realize the indestructible, eternal, unchanging, and inconceivable merits of the Tathāgata’s Dharma body (*dharmakāya*).

“When they abandon life, they become equal to the last limit of the cycle of birth and death. Ultimately, having parted from death, they realize the limitless, eternal, and inconceivable merits, penetrating all the profound Buddha-Dharmas.

“When they abandon property, they become equal to the last limit of the cycle of birth and death. Having realized the inexhaustible, indestructible, ultimately eternal, inconceivable, and complete merits that are not common to all other living beings, they obtain the excellent offerings of all living beings.

“Lord, good sons and daughters who have abandoned these three (body, life, and wealth) and have accepted the True Dharma will always obtain the predictions of all the buddhas [concerning their buddhahood], and will be honored by all living beings.

“Furthermore, O Lord, good sons and daughters who accept the True Dharma without distortion, and without deception or misrepresentation, will love the True Dharma and accept the True Dharma, entering into Dharma

friendship when the [four groups of followers] (monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen) are forming rival factions that cause the destruction and dispersion [of the sangha]. Those who enter into Dharma friendship will certainly receive the prediction [of their future buddhahood] by all the buddhas.

“O Lord, I see that acceptance of the True Dharma has such great powers. Because you are the eye of truth, the wisdom of truth, the source of the Dharma, and you penetrate all things, you are the basis for the True Dharma and know all things.”

At that time, the Lord was joyous over Śrīmālā’s explanation concerning the great powers of acceptance of the True Dharma. [The Buddha said,] “Śrīmālā, what you have said is true. The great powers of acceptance of the True Dharma are like a very strong man who only briefly touches a [vulnerable] part of one’s body yet causes great pain. Similarly, Śrīmālā, barely accepting the True Dharma causes suffering to Māra, the Evil One. I do not see even one remaining good act that can cause suffering to Māra in the manner that only barely accepting the True Dharma does.

“Moreover, the bull king has a form without equal, surpassing all other bulls. Similarly, even just barely accepting the True Dharma in the Mahayana is superior to all the virtuous deeds of the two vehicles, because it is so extensive.

“The majestic bearing and uniqueness of great Mount Sumeru surpasses all other mountains. Similarly, the [merit of] abandonment of body, life, and wealth in the Mahayana, acceptance of the True Dharma with a benevolent heart, surpasses [the merit of] those who have engaged only in the virtuous deeds of the Mahayana but do not abandon body, life, and wealth. Because of its extensiveness, of course it is superior to the two vehicles.

“Thus, Śrīmālā, through acceptance of the True Dharma, explain [this teaching] to living beings, teach and convert living beings, and confirm living beings [in the Dharma].

“Therefore, Śrīmālā, acceptance of the True Dharma has these great benefits, these great blessings, and these great fruits. Śrīmālā, even if I explain the merits and benefits of acceptance of the True Dharma for countless periods of time, I shall not reach the end [of explaining it]. Therefore, acceptance of the True Dharma has immeasurable and unlimited merits.”

Chapter V: The One Vehicle

The Buddha said to Queen Śrīmālā, “Now you should further explain the acceptance of the True Dharma that was taught by all the buddhas.”

Queen Śrīmālā said to the Buddha, “Very well, O Lord, I will, upon receiving your exhortation.” Then she said to the Buddha, “O Lord, acceptance of the True Dharma is [acceptance of] the Mahayana. Why? Because the Mahayana brings forth all the good acts of the world and of the transcendental, of the disciples and of the *pratyekabuddhas*. O Lord, just as the eight great rivers flow from Lake Anavatapta, so likewise all the good acts of the world and of the transcendental, of the disciples and of the *pratyekabuddhas*, emerge from the Mahayana.

“O Lord, moreover, just as all seeds are able to grow [only] when they depend upon the earth, so likewise all the good acts of the world, of the transcendental, of the disciples, and of the *pratyekabuddhas* are able to increase [only] when they depend upon the Mahayana. Therefore, O Lord, abiding in the Mahayana, one accepts Mahayana—this is identical with abiding in the two vehicles and accepting all the good acts of the world, of the transcendental, and of the two vehicles.

“What are the six stations that the Lord explains? They are: 1) the continuity of the True Dharma, 2) the extinction of the True Dharma, 3) the rules of the *Prātimokṣa*, 4) the discipline of the Vinaya, 5) renunciation of one’s home, and 6) ordination. On behalf of the Mahayana, the Lord preaches these six stations. Why? Because the continuity of the True Dharma is explained for the sake of the Mahayana. Continuity of the Mahayana is continuity of the True Dharma. Extinction of the Mahayana is extinction of the True Dharma.

“The rules of the *Prātimokṣa* and the discipline of the Vinaya have the same meaning even though they are different in name. The discipline of the Vinaya is learned by Mahayanists. Why? Because one renounces home and becomes ordained for the sake of the Buddha. Therefore, the conduct of the Mahayana, which is the [perfection of] discipline, is the Vinaya—renouncing one’s home and taking ordination.

“Consequently, in the case of the arhat, there is no renunciation of home nor taking ordination [as a separate vehicle from the Mahayana]. Why? Because the arhat renounces his home and is ordained for the sake of the Tathāgata. The arhat, seeking refuge in the Buddha, is afraid. Why? Because the arhat lives in a state of fear toward all conditioning forces, as if a man holding a sword wished to cause him harm. Therefore, the arhat has no ultimate happiness. Why? O Lord, being a [final] refuge, one does not seek refuge. Living beings who are without a refuge, having this or that fear, seek refuge because of these fears.

Likewise, arhats who have fears seek refuge in the Tathāgata because of these fears.

“O Lord, arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* are afraid. Because these arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* still have not extinguished their lives, these [psychophysical forces] continue. They have not completed the practice of purity, and so remain impure. Because their actions are not ultimate, they still have actions to perform. Because they have not reached that [final stage], they still have defilements that should be severed. Because these are not severed, one is far from the realm of nirvana. Why? Because only the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One attains final nirvana, being endowed with all merits. Arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* are not endowed with all merits. When it is said that they attain nirvana, this is [merely] the skillful means of the Buddha.

“Because only the Tathāgata attains final nirvana, being endowed with inconceivable merits, arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* are only endowed with conceivable merits. When it is said that they attain nirvana, this is [merely] the skillful means of the Buddha.

“Because only the Tathāgata attains final nirvana, eliminating transgressions that should be eliminated and endowed with supreme purity, arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* who still have transgressions are not supremely pure. When it is said that they attain nirvana, this is [merely] the skillful means of the Buddha.

“Only the Tathāgata attains final nirvana, is revered by all living beings, and surpasses the arhat, *pratyekabuddha*, and bodhisattva realms. Therefore, arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* are far from the realm of nirvana. When it is said that the arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* meditate on liberation, have the four wisdoms, and have ultimately attained their resting place, this is also the skillful means of the Tathāgata and is taught as the incomplete meaning. Why? There are two kinds of death. What are the two? They are ordinary death and the inconceivable death of transformation [for a purpose]. Ordinary death refers to living beings who live in unreality. The inconceivable death of transformation [for a purpose] refers to the mind-made bodies of the arhats, *pratyekabuddhas*, and greatly powerful bodhisattvas until the time of their supreme, complete enlightenment.

“Within these two kinds of death, it is the ordinary death through which arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* have completely attained the knowledge said to have ‘extinguished their lives.’ Because they attain realization (nirvana) with remainder, it is said that ‘the practice of holiness has been completely upheld.’ Because their errors and defilements have been eliminated, it is said that ‘their actions have been completed,’ actions which the common people, gods, and

seven kinds of educated people are incapable of performing. Because arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* cannot be reborn since their defilements are eliminated, it is said that ‘they are not reborn.’ When it is said that ‘they are not reborn,’ this is not because they have eliminated *all* defilements nor exhausted *all* births. Why? Because there are defilements that cannot be eliminated by arhats and *pratyekabuddhas*.

“There are two kinds of defilements. What are the two? They are latent defilements and active defilements. There are four kinds of latent defilements. They are: 1) the stage of all [false] views of monism, 2) the stage of desiring sense pleasures, 3) the stage of desiring forms, and 4) the stage of desiring existence. From these four stages of [defilement], there are all the active defilements. ‘What is active’ is momentary and associated with the momentariness of the mind. O Lord, the mind does not associate with the stage of beginningless ignorance [in the same manner].

“O Lord, the power of these four latent defilements is a basis for all active defilements but cannot possibly be compared in number, fraction, counting, similarity, nor resemblance to ignorance [in power].

“O Lord, such is the power of the stage of ignorance! The power of the stage of ignorance is much greater than the other stages represented by the fourth stage of desire for existence. The power of the stage of ignorance is like that of the wicked Evil One (Māra), whose form, power, longevity, and retainers are both superior to and more powerful than the heaven where the gods control the enjoyments created by others. Its power is far superior to that of the other stages of defilement represented by the fourth stage of desire for existence. This basis for the active defilements, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River, causes the four kinds of defilements to continue for a long time. The arhats’ and *pratyekabuddhas*’ wisdom cannot eliminate it. Only the Tathāgata’s enlightenment-wisdom can eliminate it. Yes, O Lord, the stage of ignorance is extremely powerful!

“O Lord, the three states of existence arise, conditioned by clinging to existence and by defiled actions. In like manner, O Lord, the three forms of mind-made bodies of arhats, *pratyekabuddhas*, and greatly powerful bodhisattvas are conditioned by the stage of ignorance and by pure actions. In these three levels (the arhat, *pratyekabuddha*, and bodhisattva stages), the three kinds of mind-made bodies and pure actions are based upon the latent stage of ignorance. Because all things are conditioned and not unconditioned, the three

kinds of mind-made bodies and pure actions are conditioned by the stage of ignorance.

“O Lord, thus the other stages of defilement, represented by the fourth stage of desire for existence, are not identical with the stage of ignorance with respect to action. The stage of ignorance is different from the four stages and is eliminated by the buddha stages and by the enlightenment-wisdom of the Buddha. Why? Arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* eliminate the four kinds of stages but their purity is not complete, for they have not attained autonomy nor have they accomplished their realization [of enlightenment].

“‘Their purity that is not completed’ refers to the stage of ignorance. O Lord, arhats, *pratyekabuddhas*, and bodhisattvas in their very last body do not know and do not awaken to the various phenomena because of the impediments of the stage of ignorance. Because they are not aware [of these phenomena] they cannot absolutely eliminate what should be eliminated. Because they do not eliminate [all defilements] they are ‘liberated with remaining faults,’ which is not ‘liberation separated from all faults.’ They have ‘purity with remaining’ [purification to be done,] which is not purity in its entirety. They ‘accomplish merits with remaining’ [merits to be accomplished,] which is not entirely meritorious. Because they accomplish liberation with remainder, purity with remainder, and merits with remainder, arhats, *pratyekabuddhas*, and bodhisattvas know suffering with remainder, eliminate the source of suffering with remainder, attain the extinction of suffering with remainder, and practice the path with remainder. This is ‘attaining partial nirvana.’

“Those who attain partial nirvana are ‘turned toward the nirvana realm.’ If one knows all suffering, entirely eliminates the source of suffering, attains the complete extinction [of suffering], and practices the entire path, one will attain permanent nirvana in a world that is impermanent and decadent, impermanent and distressed. In a world without protection, a world without a refuge, there is a protector and a refuge. Why? There is attainment of nirvana because of [the differentiation between] inferior and superior phenomena. [O Lord, there is attainment of nirvana because of the equality of all phenomena.] Because of the equality of knowledge, one attains nirvana. Because of the equality of liberation, one attains nirvana. Because of the equality of purity, one attains nirvana. Therefore, nirvana has the same quality as liberation. O Lord, if the stage of ignorance is not absolutely eliminated, then one does not attain the same quality of knowledge and liberation. Why? If the stage of ignorance is not absolutely eliminated, then phenomena more numerous than the sands of the

Ganges River that should be eliminated will not be absolutely eliminated. Because phenomena more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River that should be eliminated are not eliminated, the phenomena more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River that should be attained will not be attained, and [the phenomena] that should be manifested will not be manifested. Therefore, the accumulation [of defilements] in the stage of ignorance produces both the defilements that are severed by the practice of the entire path and the virulent defilements, as well as the virulent defilements of the mind, of meditation, of concentration, of contemplation, of insight, of skillful means, of wisdom, of the results [of the path], of attainment, of power, and of fearlessness. These are all the active defilements more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River that are eliminated by the enlightenment-wisdom of the Tathāgata.

“All these defilements are due to the stage of ignorance. All the active defilements that arise are caused by and conditioned by the stage of ignorance. O Lord, among the defilements that arise, the mind and its various faculties arise together momentarily. O Lord, the mind does not associate with the stage of beginningless ignorance [in the same manner].

“O Lord, all phenomena more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River that should be eliminated by the Tathāgata’s enlightenment-wisdom are supported and sustained by the stage of ignorance. For example, all the seeds that depend on the earth for their life, sustenance, and growth would be ruined if the earth were ruined. Similarly, all phenomena more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River that should be eliminated by the Tathāgata’s enlightenment-wisdom are based upon the stage of ignorance for their life, sustenance, and growth.

“If the stage of ignorance is eliminated, all phenomena more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River that should be eliminated by the Tathāgata’s enlightenment-wisdom will be eliminated. If all defilements and virulent defilements are eliminated, all phenomena more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River will be attained by the Tathāgatas, who penetrate them without obstruction. Omniscience is separate from all transgressions, attaining all the merits of the Dharma King, the Dharma Lord, attaining autonomy and manifesting the stage of autonomy from all phenomena.

“O Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One, who has the lion’s roar, the complete extinction of one’s life, ‘the complete practice of holiness,’ ‘the completion of actions,’ and the ‘non acceptance of rebirth’ have been explained up until now, based upon your lion’s roar, for their complete meaning.

“O Lord, there are two kinds of knowledge that do not accept rebirth. First, there is the knowledge of the Tathāgatas who, by means of their unsurpassed powers, subdue the four Evil Ones, appear in all worlds, and are worshiped by all living beings. They attain the inconceivable Dharma body, all spheres of knowledge, and unobstructed autonomy in all things. In this stage there is no action nor attainment that is higher. Having the ten magnificent powers [of knowledge] they ascend to the supreme, unexcelled, fearless stage. With their omniscient, unobstructed knowledge, they understand without relying on another. This wisdom that does not accept rebirth is the lion’s roar.

“O Lord, second, there is the knowledge of arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* who cross over the fears of birth and death and gradually attain the happiness of liberation with this thought: ‘I have parted from the fears of birth and death and no longer experience the suffering of birth and death.’ Lord, when arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* meditate, they do not accept rebirth and have insight into the supremely restful stage of nirvana.

“O Lord, those who first attained that stage [of nirvana] were not ignorant of the Dharma and were not dependent upon others. They also knew they had attained the stages with remainder [through their own efforts], and would inevitably attain supreme, complete enlightenment (*anuttarā samyaksambodhi*). Why? Because the *śrāvaka* (disciple) and *pratyekabuddha* vehicles are included in the Mahayana. The Mahayana is the buddha vehicle. Therefore, the three vehicles are the One Vehicle.

“Those who attain the One Vehicle attain supreme, complete enlightenment. Supreme, complete enlightenment is the realm of nirvana. The realm of nirvana is the Dharma body of the Tathāgata. Attaining the absolute Dharma body is [attaining] the absolute One Vehicle. The Tathāgata is not different from the Dharma body. The Tathāgata is identical to the Dharma body. If one attains the absolute Dharma body then one attains the absolute One Vehicle. The absolute [One Vehicle] is unlimited and unceasing.

“O Lord, the Tathāgata, who is not limited by time, is the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One, equal to the utmost limit [of the cycle of birth and death]. The Tathāgata is without limitation. His great compassion also is unlimited, bringing peace and comfort to the world. His unlimited great compassion brings unlimited peace and comfort to the world. This explanation is a good explanation concerning the Tathāgata. If one again speaks of the inexhaustible Dharma, the eternally abiding Dharma that is the refuge of all worlds—this is also a good explanation concerning the Tathāgata. Therefore, in

a world that has not been saved, a world without a refuge, there is an inexhaustible, eternally abiding refuge equal to the utmost limit [of the cycle of birth and death], namely, the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One.

“The Dharma is the path of the One Vehicle. The sangha is the assembly of the three vehicles. These two refuges are not the ultimate refuge. They are called ‘the partial refuge.’ Why? The Dharma of the path of the One Vehicle attains the absolute Dharma body. Furthermore, there can be no Dharma body other than that of the One Vehicle.

“The assembly of the three vehicles (the sangha), being afraid, seeks refuge in the Tathāgata. Those students who go out to practice turn toward supreme, complete enlightenment. Therefore, these two refuges are not the ultimate refuge but are limited refuges.

“If there are living beings who are subdued by the Tathāgata, they will seek refuge in the Tathāgata, attain the permeation of the Dharma, and will have faith and happiness, seeking refuge in the Dharma and Sangha. These two refuges, [however,] are not two refuges, for they seek refuge in the Tathāgata. Seeking refuge in the supreme truth is seeking refuge in the Tathāgata.

“The supreme truth of these two refuges is the ultimate refuge, the Tathāgata. Why? Because the Tathāgata is not different from the two refuges. The Tathāgata is identical with the three refuges. Why? Because of the path of the One Vehicle. The Tathāgata, who has perfected the four states of fearlessness, is the one who teaches with the lion’s roar. The Tathāgata, according to individual dispositions, teaches through skillful means. This is the Mahayana and not the three vehicles. The three vehicles enter the One Vehicle. The One Vehicle is the supreme vehicle.”

Chapter VI: The Unlimited Noble Truths

“O Lord, the disciples and *pratyekabuddhas* first saw the noble truths with their one knowledge that eliminates the latent stages [of defilement]. With their one knowledge, one of the four wisdoms, they eliminate [the source of suffering, namely, the four latent stages of defilements]; know [suffering]; practice virtue [according to the path]; and realize [extinction]. They understand these four [noble truths] very well. O Lord, they do not have the most supreme transcendental wisdom but are gradually reaching the four wisdoms and the four conditions (i.e., the four noble truths). The Dharma that is not gradually reached is supreme transcendental wisdom. O Lord, supreme wisdom is like a diamond.

“O Lord, the disciples and *pratyekabuddhas* do not eliminate the stage of beginningless ignorance. Their initial wisdom of the noble truths is [not] supreme wisdom. Lord, because they do not have the wisdom of the two kinds of noble truths, they eliminate [only] the latent stages [of defilement]. O Lord, the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One is not the realm of all the disciples and *pratyeka buddhas*.

“The inconceivable wisdom of emptiness eliminates the stores of all defilements. O Lord, the ultimate wisdom that destroys the stores of all defilements is called supreme wisdom. The initial wisdom of the noble truths is not ultimate wisdom but is the wisdom that is turned toward supreme, complete enlightenment.

“O Lord, the meaning of ‘noble’ does not refer to all the disciples and *pratyekabuddhas*. Because the disciples and *pratyekabuddhas* have perfected limited merits and have perfected ‘partial’ merits, they are called ‘noble.’ The ‘noble truths’ are not the truths of the disciples and *pratyekabuddhas* nor are they the merits of the disciples and *pratyekabuddhas*.

“O Lord, these truths are those originally known by the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfectly Enlightened One. Later, on behalf of the world, which is the womb of ignorance, he appeared to extensively teach what are known as the ‘noble truths.’”

Chapter VII: The Tathāgatagarbha

“The ‘noble truths’ have a most profound meaning, which is extremely subtle, difficult to know, and not of the cognitive and finite realms. What is known by those who have this wisdom is inconceivable to the entire world. Why? Because this [profound meaning of the noble truths] explains the most profound *tathāgatagarbha*. The *tathāgatagarbha* is the realm of the Tathāgata, which is not known by all the disciples and *pratyekabuddhas*. The *tathāgatagarbha* explains the meaning of the noble truths. Because the *tathāgatagarbha* is most profound, explaining the noble truths also is most profound, extremely subtle, difficult to know, and not of the cognitive and finite realms. What is known by those who have this wisdom is inconceivable to the entire world.”

Chapter VIII: The Dharma Body

If there are no doubts with reference to the *tathāgatagarbha* that is concealed by the innumerable stores of defilement, then there also will be no doubts with reference to the Dharma body that transcends the innumerable stores of

defilement. In explaining the *tathāgatagarbha*, one explains the Dharma body of the Tathāgata, the inconceivable buddha realms, and skillful means.

“The mind that attains this determination then believes and understands the twofold noble truths. Likewise, what is difficult to know and to understand is the meaning of the twofold noble truths. What is their meaning? They are referred to as the ‘conditioned’ noble truths and the ‘unconditioned’ noble truths.

“The ‘conditioned’ noble truths are the ‘limited’ four noble truths. Why? Because one who depends on others cannot know all suffering, eliminate all sources of suffering, realize all extinctions of suffering, and practice the entire path. Therefore, O Lord, the cycle of birth and death is both conditioned and unconditioned; nirvana likewise is [conditioned and unconditioned], being [nirvana] with remainder (conditioned) and [nirvana] without remainder (unconditioned).

“The ‘unconditioned’ noble truths are the ‘unlimited’ four noble truths. Why? With his own power, one [who knows the unlimited noble truths] can know all suffering, sever all sources of suffering, realize all extinctions of suffering, and practice the entire path.

“These, then, are the eight noble truths. The Tathāgatas taught the four [conditioned] noble truths [as skillful means]. The meaning of the four unconditioned noble truths are the actions of the Tathāgatas, Arhats, Perfectly Enlightened Ones, who alone are ultimate. The actions of arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* are not ultimate. Why? Because phenomena are not inferior, mediocre, or superior, one attains nirvana. Why? With reference to the meaning of the four unconditioned noble truths, the actions of the Tathāgatas, Arhats, Perfectly Enlightened Ones are ultimate. Because all the Tathāgatas, Arhats, Perfectly Enlightened Ones know all future suffering, sever all defilements as well as the sources of all virulent defilements that have been accumulated, and extinguish all the elements in the mind-made bodies [of the three vehicles], they realize the extinction of all suffering.

“O Lord, the extinction of suffering is not the destruction of the Dharma. The ‘extinction of suffering’ signifies the Dharma body of the Tathāgata, which is from beginningless time uncreated, non arising, indestructible, free from destruction, eternal, inherently pure, and separate from all the stores of defilement. O Lord, the Dharma body is not separate from, free from, or different from the inconceivable Buddha-Dharmas that are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River.

“O Lord, the Dharma body of the Tathāgata is called the *tathāgatagarbha* when it is inseparable from the stores of defilement.”

Chapter IX: The Underlying Truth: The Meaning of Emptiness

“O Lord, the wisdom of the *tathāgatagarbha* is the Tathāgata’s wisdom of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). O Lord, the *tathāgatagarbha* has not been seen nor attained originally by all the arhats, *pratyekabuddhas*, and powerful bodhisattvas.

“O Lord, there are two kinds of wisdom of emptiness with reference to the *tathāgatagarbha*. The *tathāgatagarbha* that is empty is separate from, free from, and different from the stores of all defilements. And the *tathāgatagarbha* that is not empty is not separate from, not free from, and not different from the inconceivable Buddha-Dharmas more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River.

“O Lord, the various great disciples can believe in the Tathāgata with reference to the two wisdoms of emptiness. All arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* revolve in the realm of the four contrary views because of their knowledge of emptiness. Thus, arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* do not originally see nor attain [the wisdom of the *tathāgatagarbha*]. The extinction of all suffering is only realized by the buddhas who destroy the stores of all defilements and practice the path that extinguishes all suffering.”

Chapter X: The One Noble Truth

“O Lord, among these four noble truths, three are impermanent and one is permanent. Why? Because three of the [four] noble truths are conditioned. What is ‘conditioned’ is impermanent and what is ‘impermanent’ is false and deceptive in nature. What is ‘false and deceptive in nature’ is not true, is impermanent, and is not a refuge. Therefore, the [three] noble truths, namely, ‘there is suffering,’ ‘there is the source of suffering,’ and ‘there is the path,’ are not the supreme truth for they are neither permanent nor a refuge.”

Chapter XI: The One Refuge

“The one noble truth, namely, ‘the extinction of suffering,’ is separate from the conditioned. What is ‘separate from the conditioned’ is permanent. What is ‘permanent’ is not false and deceptive in nature. What is ‘not false and deceptive in nature’ is true, permanent, and a refuge. Therefore, the noble truth of the extinction [of suffering] is the supreme truth.”

Chapter XII: The Contrary Truths

“The noble truth of the extinction [of suffering] is inconceivable, transcending all the conditions of the consciousness of living beings. This is also not the knowledge of arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* who, like those born blind, cannot see all shapes; or like a week-old infant who cannot see the disc of the moon. The truth of the extinction of suffering, similarly, does not belong to the condition of the common person’s consciousness nor to the two vehicles’ realm of knowledge. The common person’s consciousness refers to the two contrary views. The wisdom of all arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* is pure [in comparison with that of the common person].

“‘Limited views’ refer to the common person’s adherence to the misconception that there is a substantial ego within the five psycho physical elements (*skandhas*), which then causes the two views that are designated ‘contrary,’ namely, eternalism and nihilism. If one considers the conditioned states impermanent, this is nihilism and not the correct view. If one considers nirvana permanent, this is eternalism and not the correct view. Because of misconceptions, there are such views.

“In the sense organs of the body, which are discriminative in nature, some perceive the destruction of phenomena in the present moment. Unable to see phenomena in continuity, they become nihilistic in their views because of misconceptions. The ignorant, who are unable to understand or know the momentary consciousness with reference to its continuity, become eternalistic in their views because of misconceptions. By this or that principle, they discriminate and maintain inadequate positions to an extreme degree. Because of foolish misconceptions they adhere to erroneous conceptions and contrary views, namely, nihilism and eternalism.

“O Lord, living beings have contrary ideas when they have acquired the five psychophysical elements of the individual. The impermanent is considered permanent, suffering is considered happiness. The nonsubstantiality of the self is considered a substantial self, the impure is considered pure. The knowledge of all arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* has not originally apprehended the Dharma body of the Tathāgata nor the realm of his omniscience. If there are living beings who believe in the Buddha’s words, they will have thoughts of permanence, of happiness, of self, and of purity. These are not contrary views but are correct views. Why? The Dharma body of the Tathāgata is the perfection of permanence, the perfection of happiness, the perfection of the

substantial self, and the perfection of purity. Those who see the Dharma body of the Buddha in this way are said to see correctly. Those who see correctly are the true sons and daughters of the Buddha. They arise from the Buddha's words, from the True Dharma, and from conversion to the Dharma, attaining the remaining benefits of the Dharma.

“O Lord, pure wisdom is the perfection of wisdom that belongs to all arhats and *pratyekabuddhas*. This pure wisdom, although it is called pure wisdom, with reference to the [conditioned noble] truth of the extinction [of suffering] is not the realm [of unconditioned wisdom]. Of course, the wisdom of [those beginning to study] the four basic truths (i.e., the four noble truths) also [does not belong to the realm of unconditioned wisdom]. Why? The three vehicles' first actions were not ignorant of the Dharma. Because of their principles, they understood and attained [enlightenment]. The Buddha explained the four basic truths for their sake. O Lord, these four basic truths are the Dharma of the world. O Lord, the one refuge is all refuges. It is the transcendental and supreme refuge, namely, the truth of the extinction [of suffering].”

Chapter XIII: The Inherently Pure

“O Lord, the cycle of birth and death depends on the *tathāgatagarbha*, because the *tathāgatagarbha* is referred to as the original limit [of the cycle of birth and death], which is unknowable. O Lord, ‘*tathāgatagarbha*’ is referred to as the cycle of birth and death for a proper designation. O Lord, the cycle of birth and death is the extinction of the senses and the subsequent arising of [new] inexperienced senses. This is called the cycle of birth and death.

“O Lord, these two phenomena—birth and death—are the *tathāgatagarbha*. It is worldly convention to say ‘there is birth’ and ‘there is death.’ ‘Death’ is the extinction of one's senses. ‘Birth’ is the arising of new senses.

“The *tathāgatagarbha* is neither life nor death. The *tathāgatagarbha* is separate from the conditioned. The *tathāgatagarbha* is eternal and unchanging. Therefore, the *tathāgatagarbha* is the basis, the support, and the foundation. O Lord, the *tathāgatagarbha* is not separate, not severed, not liberated from, and not different from the inconceivable Buddha-Dharmas. O Lord, the basis, support, and foundation of conditioned phenomena, which are severed from, separate from, and different from the Buddha-Dharmas, [also] are the *tathāgatagarbha*.

“O Lord, if there were no *tathāgatagarbha* there would be no revulsion toward suffering, nor aspiration to seek nirvana. Why? Because the seven

[mental] phenomena—the six [sense] consciousnesses and the knowledge of [their accompanying] mental phenomena—do not continue even momentarily and do not accept the impressions of suffering, there cannot be revulsion for suffering nor aspiration to seek nirvana.

“The *tathāgatagarbha* is without any prior limit, is non arising, and is indestructible, accepting suffering, having revulsion toward suffering, and aspiring to nirvana. O Lord, the *tathāgatagarbha* is not a substantial self, nor a living being, nor ‘fate,’ nor a person. The *tathāgatagarbha* is not a realm for living beings who have degenerated into the belief of a substantially existent body or for those who have contrary views, or who have minds bewildered by emptiness.

“O Lord, the *tathāgatagarbha* is the womb of the *dharmas*, the womb of the Dharma body, the transcendental womb, and the inherently pure womb. This *tathāgatagarbha* that is inherently pure is the inconceivable realm of the Tathāgata that has been contaminated by extrinsic defilements and other virulent defilements. Why? The good mind is momentary and not contaminated does not affect defilements. Then how does the mind, which is unaffected by nature, become defiled? O Lord, there are defilements and there are defiled minds. The fact that there is defilement in a mind that is inherently pure is difficult to comprehend. Only the buddhas, the lords, who have the eye of truth and the wisdom of truth, who are the sources of the Dharma and penetrate the Dharma, and who are the refuge of the True Dharma, can comprehend this truth.”

When Queen Śrīmālā had explained the difficulties in comprehending [the inherently pure mind’s defilement], she was questioned by the Buddha. The Buddha, with extreme joy, praised her, “Yes, it is so! It is so! The fact that there is defilement in a mind that is inherently pure is difficult to comprehend. There are two subjects that are difficult to completely comprehend. They are the mind that is inherently pure and the fact that this [same] mind has been contaminated by defilements. These two subjects can be heard by you and the bodhisattva *māhasattvas* who have the great Dharma. The others, namely, the disciples, can only believe through the Buddha’s words.”

Chapter XIV: The True Sons [and Daughters] of the Tathāgata

[The Buddha said,] “If my disciples comply with their [early stages of] faith and [subsequent] more fervent faith, then they will attain the ultimate after completing their subsequent wisdom of the Dharma that is based upon the

illumination of faith. ‘The subsequent wisdom of the Dharma’ is the insight and fundamental investigation into the realms of sensation and consciousness; insight into karmic retribution; insight into the eye of the arhat; insight into the happiness of the autonomy of mind and into the happiness of meditation; and insight into the supernatural powers of the arhats, *pratyekabuddhas*, and powerful bodhisattvas. When these five kinds of insight have been completed, even after my final nirvana, in future generations, my disciples who have [the early stages of] faith, the [subsequent] more fervent faith, and the subsequent wisdom of the Dharma that is based upon the illumination of faith will attain the ultimate even though their inherently pure minds become contaminated by defilements. The ‘ultimate’ is the cause for entering the path of the Mahayana. Faith in the Tathāgata has great benefits. Do not slander my [Dharma’s] profound meaning.”

Then Queen Śrīmālā said to the Buddha, “There are still remaining great benefits which I will explain, with the Buddha’s permission.”

The Buddha said, “Again, please explain.”

Queen Śrīmālā said to the Buddha, “The three kinds of good sons and daughters who, within the most profound meaning [of the Dharma], have separated themselves from injury [to the Dharma], produce great merits, entering the path of the Mahayana. What are the three [kinds of good sons and daughters]? They are those good sons and daughters who 1) develop their own wisdom of the most profound Dharma, 2) develop the subsequent wisdom of the Dharma [that is based upon the illumination of faith], and 3) revere the Lord though they do not completely understand the most profound Dharma.

“What is known only by the buddhas is not our realm. These [above-mentioned] are called the good sons and daughters who revere the Tathāgata. Only these are the good sons and daughters.”

Chapter XV: Śrīmālā

[Śrīmālā said,] “All the remaining living beings who stubbornly cling to false teachings, instead of to the most profound Dharma, turn their backs to the True Dharma and habitually practice the corrupt ways of various heterodoxies. These corrupt ways must be subdued by the [Dharma] King’s powers and by the powers of the divine *nāgas*.”

When Queen Śrīmālā and her attendants paid obeisance to the Buddha, the Buddha said, “Excellent, excellent, Queen Śrīmālā! In the most profound Dharma, protected by skillful means, subdue what is not the Dharma. Maintain

well its correctness. You have already been very close to the hundreds of millions of buddhas and can explain this [Dharma's] meaning.”

At that time the Lord emitted a most excellent light, radiating everywhere over the assembly. His body ascended into the sky, higher than seven *tala* trees. Walking in the sky, he returned to the kingdom of Śrāvastī. Then Queen Śrīmālā and her attendants together faced the Buddha and were transfixed by the sight of him, not moving for even a moment. [The Buddha,] having passed through their field of vision, caused them to be exalted. Each individual praised the Tathāgata's merits and was mindful of him. The Buddha then reentered the city. Turning toward [her husband,] King Mitrayaśas, Queen Śrīmālā praised the Mahayana. All the women of the city, seven years of age and older, were converted to the Mahayana. King Mitrayaśas was also converted to the Mahayana. All the men, seven years of age and older, were converted to the Mahayana. Then all the citizens of the state were turned toward the Mahayana.

Then the Lord entered the Jeta Garden, spoke to the venerable Ānanda, and called upon Śakra, the king of heaven. Śakra, along with his retinue, immediately arrived in the presence of the Buddha. Then the Lord turned toward the king of heaven, Śakra, and to the venerable Ānanda and extensively explained this text. Having explained it, he said to Lord Śakra, “You should accept and read this sutra, O Kauśika. Good sons and daughters, in innumerable *kalpas* as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River, cultivate the practice of enlightenment and practice the six perfections. If these good sons and daughters learn and read this sutra and uphold it, their blessings will be immense.

“How much more [advantageous] will it be for those who explain this text. Thus, O Kauśika, you must read this sutra on behalf of the thirty-three heavens, defining and extensively explaining it.”

Then the Buddha said to Ānanda, “You also must accept and read this sutra. For the sake of the four groups of followers you must extensively explain this sutra.”

Then the king of heaven, Śakra, asked the Buddha, “O Lord, what is the name of this sutra? How does one adhere [to its teaching]?”

The Buddha said to Lord Śakra, “This sutra has immeasurable and limitless merits. All the disciples and buddhas cannot, ultimately, have insight into [these merits] nor know them. Kauśika, you should know all the great merits that are so subtle and profound in this sutra. Now I shall, on your behalf, briefly explain its name. Listen well, listen well and remember this [text].”

Then the king of heaven, Śakra, and the venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha, “Excellent, O Lord! Yes, we will do as you have instructed.”

The Buddha said, “This sutra praises the supreme merits of the True Dharma of the Tathāgata [in Chapter I]. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter II] the ten inconceivable ordination vows. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter III] the great aspiration that embraces all aspirations. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter IV] the inconceivable acceptance of the True Dharma. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter V] the entrance into the One Vehicle. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter VI] the unlimited noble truths. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter VII] the *tathāgatagarbha*. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter VIII] the Dharma body. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter IX] the underlying truth: the meaning of emptiness. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter X] the one [noble] truth. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter XI] the one refuge that is eternal and quiescent. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter XII] the contrary truths. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter XIII] the inherently pure mind that is covered [by defilements]. In this manner accept it. It explains [in Chapter XIV] the true sons [and daughters] of the Tathāgata. In this manner accept it. Teach the *Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion’s Roar*. In this manner accept it.

“Again, O Kauśika, the explanations of this sutra eliminate all doubts. Be steadfast in the complete meaning [of this text] and enter the path of the One Vehicle. O Kauśika, today this scripture, the *Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion’s Roar*, has been transmitted to you. As long as the Dharma continues, accept, read, extensively define, and explain [this sutra].”

Lord Śakra said to the Buddha, “Very well, O Lord, we will reverently receive your holy teaching.” Then the king of heaven, Śakra, the venerable Ānanda, and all the great assemblies of gods, *asuras*, and *gandharvas*, among others, heard the Buddha’s teaching and joyfully put it into practice.

End of the Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion’s Roar