

The Sutra of Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life as Expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha

The Visualization Sutra, also known as the Kuan Wu-Liang-Shou-Fo Ching, is another expedient means by which one may attain Buddhānsmṛti, the Buddha-Remembrance Samādhi. In the Visualization Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha teaches a series of 16 visualizations which, when perfected, allow one to have a vision of Amitābha Buddha, Amitābha's Bodhisattvic attendants and the Pure Land itself in this very lifetime. This Sutra differs from the Larger and Smaller Sukhavati Sutras in that it is an actual manual of meditation. To many, this Sutra played a central role in the emergence of Pure Land Buddhism as a major Buddhist school.

- I. [Prologue](#)
- II. [The Setting Sun](#)
- III. [Water](#)
- IV. [The Ground](#)
- V. [The Jeweled Trees](#)
- VI. [The Bodies of Water](#)
- VII. [The Trees, Ground & Lakes](#)
- VIII. [The Lotus Seat](#)
- IX. [The Three Sages](#)
- X. [The Body of the Buddha Amitayus](#)
- XI. [Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara](#)
- XII. [Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta](#)
- XIII. [The World of Sukhavati](#)
- XIV. [The Three Sages](#)
- XV. [The Superior Grade of Rebirth](#)
- XVI. [The Middle Grade of Rebirth](#)
- XVII. [The Lowest Grade of Rebirth](#)
- XVIII. [Epilogue](#)

I. PROLOGUE

Thus have I heard: at one time, Shakyamuni Buddha was staying on Vulture Peak near Rajagrha with a great assembly of 1,250 *bhiksus* and 32,000 *bodhisattvas*, led by the Dharma-Prince Manjushri.

At that time, in the great city of Rajagrha, there was a prince named Ajatasatru. Following the counsel of Devadatta, an evil friend, he arrested his father, King Bimbisara, and confined him in a cell surrounded by walls seven layers deep, forbidding any officials or ministers from going there. The queen, whose name was Vaidehi, remained loyal to the king. Purifying herself by bathing, she anointed her body with an

ointment of cream and honey mixed with wheat flour, and filled her ornaments with grape juice. She then offered them to the king in secret.

At that time, the king ate the flour-paste and drank the grape juice, then asked for some water. Having rinsed his mouth completely, he respectfully placed his palms together and, facing Vulture Peak, bowed to the World-Honored One. He said, "Great Maudgalyayana is my friend and compatriot; I beg you to have the compassion to come and initiate me in the Eight Precepts."

Thereupon, Maudgalyayana flew to the king like a swooping bird of prey. Day after day, he came like this to initiate the king in the Eight Precepts. The World-Honored One also sent the Venerable Purnamaitrayaniputra, who delivered Dharma discourses and Sutras to the king. Three weeks passed in this fashion. Because the king was able to eat the flour-paste and honey and to hear the Dharma teachings, his countenance became peaceful and calm.

At that time, Ajatasatru questioned the guard at the entrance: "Is my father, the king, still alive?" The guard replied, "Your Majesty, the queen daily anoints her body with flour-paste and fills her ornaments with grape juice. And the monks Maudgalyayana and Purnamaitrayaniputra swoop down from the sky and deliver Dharma discourses to the king. It is impossible to stop them."

Hearing this, Ajatasatru became enraged with his mother and said, "My own mother is a criminal and with criminals does she associate! Those evil monks, with their tricks, illusions and magical incantations, have caused this evil king to have escaped death for many days." With this, he seized a sharp sword intending to kill his mother.

At that time, there was a wise and intelligent minister whose name was Moonlight. Along with the physician Jivaka, he bowed to the king and said, "Your Majesty, we have heard it said in the Vedic discourses that from the beginning of this aeon to the present there have been some 18,000 evil kings who have killed their own fathers because they desired the throne; yet never have we heard of anyone who committed the outrageous crime of killing his mother. Your majesty, if you commit such a vicious murder, you will bring disgrace upon the Noble Caste. As your ministers, we cannot even bear to hear of it, for this indeed is the act of an outcaste. We cannot stay here any longer." Having spoken these words, the two ministers began to withdraw, each with his hand grasping on his sword.

Ajatasatru, astounded and fearful, called out to Jivaka and said, "Are you going to desert me?" Jivaka replied, "Great King, please restrain yourself; do not harm your mother." Hearing this, the king repented and begged their forgiveness. Thereupon he immediately put away his sword and gave up all thought of killing his mother. Instead he

ordered that she be detained in her quarters and kept in the palace so that she could not leave again.

Having thus been detained, Vaidehi was stricken with sorrow and grief. Facing faraway Vulture Peak, she prostrated herself towards the Buddha and said, "O Tathagata, World-Honored One, in former times you never failed to send Ananda to come and comfort me. Now I am greatly distressed and have no way to look upon World-Honored One's majesty. I pray, send the Venerable Maudgalyayana and the Venerable Ananda to come and meet with me." Having said this, she wept sorrowful tears that fell like rain as she bowed to the Buddha.

But even before she raised her head, the World-Honored one, who was then staying on Vulture Peak and knew the thoughts in Vaidehi's mind, ordered Great Maudgalyayana and Ananda to go to her through the sky. The Buddha also disappeared from Vulture Peak and reappeared in the inner chamber of the royal palace.

When Vaidehi finished her prayer and raised her head, she saw the World-Honored One, the Buddha Shakyamuni. His body was the color of purple-gold and he was seated on a hundred-jeweled lotus flower, attended by Maudgalyayana on his left side and Ananda on his right. Indra and Brahma, along with the other heavenly beings guarding the world, hovered in the sky about him; scattering heavenly blossoms like rain, they paid homage to the Buddha.

When Vaidehi saw the Buddha, the World-Honored One, she tore off her ornaments, rose and prostrated herself on the ground. Weeping bitterly, she faced the Buddha and said, "O World-Honored One, what evil *karma* did I commit in a previous life that should cause the birth of such an evil son? World-Honored One, what were the causes and conditions of his association with Devadatta and his kind? My only wish is for the World-Honored One to reveal to me a place where I might be reborn that is without distress, for unhappy is this impure world in this evil *kasaya* era. This defiled and evil place is full of hell-beings, hungry spirits and beasts, and there is an accumulation of much evil. I pray that in the future I may hear no evil worlds and may see no evil beings. Now, World-Honored One, prostrating before you, I ask for your compassion. My only wish is for you to teach me to visualize a place where one can be born by performing pure and undefiled acts."

At that time, the World-Honored One emitted a golden light from between his eyebrows. It illuminated all the countless worlds of the Ten Directions, and upon returning rested atop the Buddha's head, forming a golden tower resembling Mount Sumeru. Upon the tower were revealed the pure and wondrous worlds of all the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Some of these lands were made of the seven kinds of jewels, others consisted entirely of lotus flowers; some resembled the heavenly palace of Isvara, and

others were like crystal mirrors in which all the lands of the Ten Directions were reflected. These countless lands of the Buddhas could be seen by Vaidehi in all their majesty.

Then Vaidehi said to the Buddha, "O World-Honored One, all these Buddha Lands are pure, free of defilement and brilliant, but I would prefer to be born in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss where the Buddha Amitayus resides. My only wish is that you instruct me in how to concentrate my thoughts and attain samadhi."

At that time, the World-Honored One gently smiled, and from the Buddha's mouth emerged five-colored rays of light, each ray illuminating the top of King Bimbisara's head. Although the great king was in his cell and despite the obstacle of distance, his mind's eye remained unhindered, and he saw the World-Honored One. Touching his forehead to the ground in homage, he spontaneously advanced to the Stage of a Non-Returner.

At that time, the World-Honored One said to Vaidehi, "Do you not know now that the Buddha Amitayus is not far from here? You should concentrate your thoughts upon and visualize that Buddha-land which is the result of pure actions. I shall now give you detailed instructions so that you and future generations who desire to practice the pure actions may attain birth in the Western Realm of Ultimate Bliss."

"Those who desire to be born in that land must perform the three meritorious acts: first, they should attend dutifully to their parents, honor the work of teachers and elders, with a compassionate mind refrain from killing, and cultivate the ten virtuous acts; second, they should receive and uphold the Three Refuges, keep the various precepts, and refrain from breaking the rules of conduct; third, they should awaken the mind that aspires for Enlightenment, believe deeply in the principle of cause and effect, read and recite the Mahayana teachings, and encourage those who practice the way. These three acts are called the undefiled acts."

The Buddha further said to Vaidehi: "You should know that these three kinds of virtuous deeds are none other than the true cause for the Enlightenment of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future."

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "Listen closely and think well upon this! I, the Tathagata, will now expound the pure and undefiled acts for the benefit of the future generations of all sentient beings who are affected by the enemy – blind passions. Excellent is this Vaidehi, who has done well to ask about this! Ananda, you should receive and keep the Buddha's words and proclaim them widely for the benefit of the multitudes of beings.

"I, the Tathagata, will now instruct you, Vaidehi and all the sentient beings of future generations in the visualization of the Western Realm of Ultimate Bliss. By the power of the Buddha, they will see that Pure Land as though seeing their own images in a bright mirror. When they see that land of ultimate and wondrous joy, they will rejoice and immediately acquire the insight into the non-origination of all existence."

The Buddha said to Vaidehi, "You are but an ordinary person whose mental capacities are weak and feeble. As you have yet to attain the divine eye, you are unable to see very far. But the Buddhas, the Tathagatas, have special means to allow you to see that far."

Then Vaidehi said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, because of the Buddha's transcendent power, I may be able to see that land. But how will sentient beings who come after the Buddha's death be able to see Buddha Amitayus' Realm of Ultimate Bliss when they are constrained by defilements, unwholesomeness and the five afflictions?"

II. FIRST VISUALIZATION: THE SETTING SUN

The Buddha said to Vaidehi, "You and all sentient beings should single-mindedly concentrate your thoughts with one-pointed attention, on the Western Quarter. How is this to be done? All the multitudes of sentient beings who are not born blind and have the sense of sight have seen the setting sun. Focusing your attention and sitting in the proper posture, you should face the west. Contemplatively examine the sun, with your mind firmly fixed upon it. Firmly concentrate upon the setting sun and do not let your sight wander from it. It should appear like a (red) drum suspended above the horizon. Once the sun is visualized in this way, then whether the eyes are shut or open, it can be clearly seen. This is the image of the sun and is called the First Visualization."

III. SECOND VISUALIZATION: WATER

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When the First Visualization has been completed, next form the perception of water. Envision the Western Quarter as being completely filled with water, and picture the water as clean and pure. Seeing water that is clear leads to clear sight and then there is no scattering of the mind. Once this water has been visualized, envision it as turning into ice. Having visualized the ice as brilliant and transparent to its depth, see it as turning into lapis lazuli."

"When this vision is completed, next imagine that this ground of lapis lazuli shines brilliantly, both inside and out, and that the lapis lazuli ground is supported from below by majestic golden-bannered pillars made of adamant and the seven precious jewels. Each golden-bannered pillar has eight corners and eight sides, each side is made of a hundred jewels, each jewel shines with a thousand rays of light, and each ray of light has eighty-four thousand colors. As they are reflected on the lapis lazuli ground, they look like thousands of millions of suns, so dazzling that it is impossible to see them all in detail.

"On the surface of this lapis lazuli ground, golden paths intricately mesh and crisscross like a net of cords, and the seven kinds of precious jewels form borders that demarcate the intersected parts of the ground. Each jewel emits a flood of light in five hundred colors. The light appears in the shape of a flower, or a star or the moon; suspended in the sky, these rays form a tower of light on which there are ten million pavilions made of a hundred jewels. Both sides of the tower are adorned with a billion flower-banners and countless musical instruments. Pure breezes of the eight pleasing qualities are produced by these rays of light, causing the musical instruments to play in voices which proclaim the truths of 'suffering, emptiness, impermanence and non-self.' This is the visualization of water and is called the Second Visualization. To do this visualization is called the right visualization; to do another is called an incorrect visualization."

IV. THIRD VISUALIZATION: THE GROUND

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When the visualization of the water has been achieved, each image should be clearly seen whether the eyes are shut or open, and should be constantly kept in your mind except when sleeping. Accordingly, these images are called the general perception of the ground of the Realm of Ultimate Bliss. If you succeed in realizing the state of *samadhi*, seeing the ground of that land so clearly and distinctly that it cannot be adequately described, then it is the perception of the ground which is called the Third Visualization."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You are the keeper of the Buddha's discourses for future generations and for the benefit of the multitudes of beings who wish to be liberated from suffering. For them I proclaim the Dharma of visualizing the ground. If they can visualize the ground, the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for eight hundred million aeons is eliminated, and when they take leave of this life, they will assuredly be born into the Pure Land with a heart that is free of doubt. To do this visualization is called the right visualization; to do another is called a wrong visualization."

V. FOURTH VISUALIZATION: THE JEWELLED TREES

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When the visualization of the ground has been completed, the next visualization is of the jeweled trees. In visualizing the jeweled trees, one should see them one by one and form an image of seven pathways that are lined with these trees. Each tree is eight thousand *yojanas* high, and is adorned with blossoms and leaves made of the seven kinds of jewels. Each blossom and leaf is the color of a different jewel. From the lapis lazuli-colored blossoms is emitted a golden light; from the rock crystal-colored is emitted a crimson light; from the emerald-colored is emitted a sapphire light; and from the sapphire-colored is emitted a pearl-green ray of light. In addition, coral, amber and all the other myriad jewels serve as dazzling ornaments.

"Exquisite nets of pearls completely cover the trees, and each tree is veiled by seven layers of nets. Between each of the nets there are five billion exquisite flower palaces that resemble the palace of Lord Brahma, and within each of them reside celestial children. Each of these children wears ornaments made of five billion noble wish-fulfilling jewels. The light from these *mani* jewels shines brightly for a radius of a hundred *yojanas* in all directions, not unlike a constellation of a billion suns and moons, but no words can fully describe the brilliance of this light. The intermingling of the light from these various jewels produces a color unexcelled among all colors.

"The rows of these jeweled-tree paths are evenly arranged, and their foliage is equally spaced. From among the leaves appear exquisite blossoms, and upon these flowers, fruits made of the seven kinds of jewels spontaneously appear. Each blossom is twenty-five *yojanas* in diameter, and their petals shine with a thousand colors and have a hundred different patterns so that altogether, the leaves are like heavenly ornaments. This array of exquisite blossoms is the color of the golden sands of the Jambu River and resembles revolving wheels of fire gently turning among the leaves; and from these flowers, fruits well up as if from Sakra's vase.

"These fruits issue forth great floods of light that form banners, flags and countless canopies adorned with jewels. Within these jeweled canopies, all the deeds of the Buddhas of the three-thousand-great-thousand worlds are illuminated, and the Buddha-Lands of the Ten Directions also appear within.

"When you have seen the trees in this way, visualize each detail in order: perceive the trunks, the branches, the leaves, the blossoms and the fruits, and let your vision of all of them be clear and distinct. This is the visualization of the trees and is called the Fourth Visualization. To do this visualization is called the right visualization; to do another is called an incorrect visualization."

VI. FIFTH VISUALIZATION: THE BODIES OF WATER

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When the visualization of the trees has been completed, next perceive the bodies of water. The Land of Utmost Bliss has eight bodies of water; the waters of each one of these lakes are made of the seven treasures and are begotten from a wish-fulfilling pearl. The water of each lake flows into fourteen streams, each of which is made of the seven treasures and is wondrous in color. The banks of each channel are golden in color, and the bed is strewn with the sand of variegated diamonds.

"In the midst of each lake there are six hundred million seven-treasured lotus flowers. Each lotus flower is perfectly round and is twelve *yojanas* in diameter. The pearly water flows among the flowers and courses back and forth amidst the trees. The delicate and exquisite sounds of the flowing waters proclaim the teachings of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, non-self and the *Paramitas*. They also praise the physical characteristics and marks of the Buddhas.

"From the wish-fulfilling pearl, delicate and exquisite golden rays of light issue forth and become singing birds as colorful as a hundred jewels; and their harmonious and sweet songs continually praise the mindfulness of the Buddha, the mindfulness of the Dharma and the mindfulness of the Sangha. This is the visualization of the eight lakes of excellent qualities and it is called the Fifth Visualization. To do this visualization is called the right visualization; to do another is called an incorrect visualization."

VII. SIXTH VISUALIZATION: THE TREES, GROUND AND LAKES

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "In every region of that land of myriad treasures there are five billion treasure palaces adorned with jewels, and in those palaces there are countless heavenly beings playing heavenly music. Like heavenly jeweled banners, musical instruments are suspended in the sky, producing myriad sounds that proclaim the mindfulness of the Buddha, the mindfulness of the Dharma and the mindfulness of the Sangha.

"When this visualization has been completed, it is called the general perception of the jeweled trees, the jeweled ground and the jeweled lakes in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss. This is the unified visualization of these images which is called the Sixth Visualization. For those who see this, the heavy and evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for measureless tens of millions of aeons is eliminated, and when they take leave of this

life, they will assuredly be born in that land. To do this visualization is called the right visualization; to do another is called an incorrect visualization."

VIII. THE LOTUS SEAT

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "Listen closely! Listen closely! Consider my words carefully. I shall now analyze and expound for you the Dharma by which you may free yourselves from sufferings and afflictions; keep it in your minds, and explain it widely for the benefits of the multitudes of beings."

After Shakyamuni Buddha had spoken these words, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span appeared in the sky with the two great beings, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta standing in attendance to the left and right. They shone with such a radiant and brilliant light that it was impossible to see them in detail. The golden hue of the sands of a hundred thousand Jambu rivers could not compare to it.

Once Vaidehi saw the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span, she fell to her knees at the feet of Shakyamuni Buddha saying, "O World-Honored One, it is by your transcendental power that I am now able to see the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span and the two Bodhisattvas; but how can sentient beings in the future visualize the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span and the two Bodhisattvas?"

The Buddha said to Vaidehi, "Those who wish to visualize that Buddha should concentrate their thoughts and form the visualization of a lotus flower on the seven-jeweled ground; each petal of that lotus flower has the color of hundreds of jewels and eighty-four thousand veins that are like heavenly patterns; each vein has eighty-four thousand rays of light so clear and distinct that one can see all of them. Even the smallest petals are two hundred and fifty *yojanas* in diameter. Each lotus flower has eighty-four thousand such petals, and between each petal are a billion *mani*-pearls, the king of jewels, serving as dazzling ornaments. Each of these *mani*-pearls sends forth a thousand rays of light which, like canopies made of the seven kinds of jewels, cover the entire land.

"There is a pedestal made of *sakrabhilagna-mani* jewels, and this lotus flower pedestal is studded and adorned with eighty thousand diamonds, rubies and wondrous nets made of *brahma mani*-pearls. Four columns with jeweled banners spontaneously arise from this pedestal, each jeweled banner as large as a hundred trillion Mount Sumerus.

"Atop these bannered columns is a jeweled canopy like that of the palace of the Yama Heaven, and this canopy shines with five billion rare and exquisite jewels that serve as

dazzling ornaments. Each of these precious jewels emits eighty-four thousand rays of light, and each ray of light creates eighty-four thousand different shades of gold. Each golden ray of light illuminates the entire jeweled ground and transforms itself everywhere into various forms: some become diamond pedestals, some form nets of pearls, and others create clouds of various kinds of flowers. In all the Ten Directions, they transform themselves according to one's wishes, performing the works of the Buddhas. This is the visualization of the lotus seat and is called the Seventh Visualization."

The Buddha further said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "These exquisite flowers were originally created by the power of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara's vows. Those who wish to be mindful of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life should first visualize the image of the Lotus Seat. When visualizing this image they should not stray into other visualizations, but should perceive each detail one by one. Each petal, each jewel, each ray of light, each pedestal and each bannered column should be as clear and distinct as when seeing the reflection of one's own face in a mirror. For those who have completed this visualization, the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for fifty thousand aeons is eliminated, and they assuredly will be born in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization; if one performs another visualization, that is called an incorrect visualization."

IX. EIGHTH VISUALIZATION: THE THREE SAGES

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When you have seen these things, next you should visualize the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span. And why is that? Because each *Buddha-Tathagata*, as the body of the *Dharmadhatu*, pervades the mind of all sentient beings. This is why when your mind perceives the Buddha, it is your mind that possesses the thirty-two prominent features and the eighty secondary attributes. This mind that creates the Buddha is the mind that is the Buddha, and the wisdom of the Buddhas – true, universal and ocean-like – arises from this mind. This is why you should single-mindedly fix your thoughts and contemplatively examine that Buddha, that Tathagata, that Arhat, that Supremely Awakened One.

"To perceive the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, you must first imagine Amitayus' form, and whether your eyes are open or closed, you should see this precious form – the color of the golden sands of the Jambu river – seated upon that flower-throne. Once that Buddha's figure is seen sitting there, your mind's eye will be opened, and you will clearly see the Land of Ultimate Bliss adorned with the seven kinds of jewels; you will see the jeweled ground, the jeweled lakes and the paths lined with jeweled trees; you will see the heavenly jeweled canopies completely covering the trees and the jeweled

nets completely filling the sky; you will see these things as clearly and distinctly as you might see the palm of your hand.

"Once this has been seen, you should again from the visualization of a large lotus flower and place it on the Buddha's left. This lotus flower should be exactly like the one described before. Then form the visualization of another large lotus flower and place it on the Buddha's right. Next visualize an image of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara seated on the left flower throne, sending forth golden rays of light exactly as described before. Then visualize an image of Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta seated on the right flower throne.

"When this visualization has been completed, the figures of the Buddha and the two Bodhisattvas all send forth exquisite rays of light, and these golden rays illuminate the jeweled trees. At the foot of each of the trees there are also three lotus flowers, and atop these lotus flowers sit the figures of the Buddha and the two Bodhisattvas so that the land is completely filled with such images.

"When this visualization has been completed, you, the practitioner, will hear the flowing waters, the rays of light, the jeweled trees, the ducks, geese and so forth which proclaim the exquisite Dharma teachings; and whether you are in meditation or not, you will always hear these exquisite teachings. Even after you rise from meditation, keep in mind and do not forget what you have heard, then confirm it with the Sutras. If it does not agree with the Sutras, it is called an illusory perception, but if it does accord, it is called the attainment of the general perception of the Land of Ultimate Bliss. This is the perception of the Three Sages which is called the Eighth Visualization. Those who perform this visualization eliminate the evil karma of an immeasurable number of aeons of births and deaths, and in this very life attain the Buddha-Remembrance Samadhi. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization; if one performs another visualization, that is called an incorrect visualization."

X. NINTH VISUALIZATION:

THE BODY OF THE BUDDHA OF IMMEASURABLE LIFE SPAN

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When this visualization has been completed, next one should further visualize the physical features and the light of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span. Ananda, it should be known that the Body of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span is as bright as the sands of a trillion Jambu rivers in the Yama Heavens. That Buddha's body is as tall as the number of yojanas equaling that of the sands of six sextillions of Ganges Rivers.

"Between that Buddha's eyebrows there is a tuft of white hair that curls gently to the right and is the size of five Mount Sumerus. The Buddha's eyes are pure like the waters of the four great oceans; the blue irises and the whites are clear and distinct; the pores of the Buddha's body emit rays of light that are the size of Mount Sumeru.

"The circle of light around that Buddha's head illuminates an area as large as a billion three-thousand-great-thousand worlds. Within that all-encompassing light there are miraculously created Buddhas whose number is as countless as the sands of ten sextillions of Ganges Rivers. Each of these miraculously created Buddhas is attended by a great assembly of countless miraculously created Bodhisattvas.

"The Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span has eighty-four thousand physical characteristics; and in each of those features there are eighty-four thousand secondary marks of excellence. Each of those marks sends forth eighty-four thousand rays of light; each ray of light shines universally upon the worlds of the Ten Directions; and those sentient beings who are mindful of the Buddha are embraced by that light, never to be abandoned.

"No words can adequately describe the lights, the physical characteristics, the secondary marks and the miraculously created Buddhas. But by concentrating your thoughts on these things, you can see them with your mind's eye. To see these things is to see all the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Because you see these Buddhas, it is called the Buddha-Remembrance Samadhi.

"To perform this visualization is to visualize the body of all the Buddhas. Because you perceive the bodies of the Buddhas, you also realize the mind of the Buddhas. The mind of the Buddhas is the mind of Great Compassion, and with this unconditioned compassion, all sentient beings are embraced. One who performs this visualization, upon taking leave of this life, will be born in the presence of the Buddhas and will acquire the insight into the non-origination of all existence. For this reason, those who realize the effectiveness of forming this perception should concentrate their thoughts and clearly perceive the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span.

"In order to perceive the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span, begin with one of the physical features. Visualize only the tuft of white hair between the eyebrows until it becomes very clear and distinct. Once you have visualized it, the eighty-four thousand physical characteristics and marks will appear of their own accord. Once you have seen the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span, you see at once the infinite Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Because you are able to see the countless Buddhas, you will receive from each the prediction of your future Buddhahood. This is the comprehensive perception of all the physical features of the Buddha, and is called the Ninth Visualization. Performing

this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

XI. TENTH VISUALIZATION: BODHISATTVA AVALOKITESVARA

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When you have clearly and distinctly seen the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span, next visualize Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. This Bodhisattva's body is eighty sextillions of *yojanas* tall and is purple-gold in color. On the top of the head is a mound of flesh surrounded by a halo of light which shines from behind the neck. Both the halo and the Bodhisattva's face are one hundred thousand *yojanas* in diameter.

"Within this halo of light there are five hundred miraculously created Buddhas that resemble Shakyamuni Buddha, and each miraculously created Buddha is attended by five hundred miraculously created Bodhisattvas and countless numbers of heavenly beings. Within the light emanating from this Bodhisattva's body, sentient beings of the five realms of birth-and-death appear in all their various forms. Atop the Bodhisattva's head is a heavenly crown made of *sakrabhilanga-mani* pearls, and within this heavenly crown stands a miraculously created Buddha Amitayus, twenty-five *yojanas* high.

"The face of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is the golden color of the sands of the Jambu river. A tuft of hair between the eyebrows possesses all the colors of the seven kinds of jewels, and streaming from it are eighty-four thousand different rays of light. Within each of those rays of light there are immeasurable and countless hundreds of thousands of miraculously created Buddhas, each attended by countless miraculously created Bodhisattvas. These Buddhas and Bodhisattvas miraculously appear everywhere, completely filling the worlds of the Ten Quarters.

"This Bodhisattva's arms, the color of a red lotus flower, are adorned with ornaments made of eight hundred million exquisite rays of light. Within these ornaments, the majestic works of the Buddha are reflected in their entirety. The palms of the hands are the color of five billion lotus flowers of various colors, and the tip of each of the ten fingers shows eighty-four thousand patterns like those on an engraved seal. Each pattern has eighty-four thousand colors, each color emits eighty-four thousand rays of light, and each soft, delicate ray of light illuminates all beings. With these jewel-like hands, this Bodhisattva embraces and guides sentient beings.

"When this Bodhisattva raises a foot, the thousand-spoked wheel that marks the sole of that foot changes of its own accord into a pedestal which emits five billion rays of light. When the foot is lowered, flowers made of diamonds and *mani* jewels are strewn about

everywhere, filling and covering everything. All other physical characteristics and marks are exactly like those of the Buddha. The mound of flesh upon the head and the invisibility of the uppermost part of this mound, however, are inferior to those of the World-Honored One. This is the visualization of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara's true physical features and is called the Tenth Visualization."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Those who wish to visualize Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara must do so with this method of visualization. Those who perform this visualization will not encounter any misfortune; their karmic obstructions will be purified, and the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for countless aeons is eliminated. Even to hear the name of this Bodhisattva is to gain immeasurable merits; how much more so if this Bodhisattva is clearly visualized?"

"Those who wish to visualize Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara should first visualize the mound of flesh on the head; next visualize the heavenly crown; then visualize the remaining physical characteristics in order. All of them should be seen as clearly and distinctly as you might see the palm of your hand. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

XII. ELEVENTH VISUALIZATION:

BODHISATTVA MAHASTHAMAPRAPTA

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "The next visualization is that of Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta, whose body is the same size as that of Avalokitesvara. The halo of light and this Bodhisattva's face are each two hundred and twenty-five *yojanas* in diameter and illuminates an area of two hundred and fifty *yojanas*. The light which emanates from the body illuminates the lands of the Ten Directions, making them shine like purple-gold, and this light can be seen by all sentient beings who have a close karmic relationship with this Bodhisattva.

"Even if one sees only a single ray of light emanating from only one of the pores of this Bodhisattva, one can see at once the countless Buddhas of the Ten Directions and their pure and wondrous light. This is why this Bodhisattva is called 'Boundless Light.' And with this light of wisdom all beings are illuminated, enabling them to be freed from the Three Evil Paths and to attain unsurpassed powers. This is why this Bodhisattva is called Mahasthamaprapta, 'The One Who Has Attained Great Power.'

"This Bodhisattva's heavenly crown is adorned with five hundred jeweled lotus flowers, and each one of the jeweled flowers has five hundred jeweled pedestals. Within each pedestal, the boundless and glorious features of the pure and exquisite lands of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions are reflected in their entirety. The mound of flesh on this Bodhisattva's head is like the *padma* [red lotus] flower, and in front of this mound of flesh is a jeweled vase filled with rays of light which reflect all the works of the Buddha. The remaining bodily characteristics are exactly like those of Avalokitesvara.

"When this Bodhisattva walks, the worlds of the Ten Directions all tremble and quake, and on this moving ground appear five billion jeweled flowers, each as splendid and brilliant as those in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss. When this Bodhisattva sits down, the seven-jeweled lands, from the Buddha-realm of Golden Light Buddha in the lower quarter to the Land of the Light King Buddha in the upper quarter, all tremble at once.

"From between those quarters, the manifested bodies of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life together with those of Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, as countless as particles of dust, all assemble like clouds in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, filling the entire sky. Sitting on lotus flower thrones, they proclaim the exquisite Dharma that liberates sentient beings from suffering.

"This visualization is the visualization of Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta; it is also known as the visualization of the physical features of Mahasthamaprapta, which is called the Eleventh Visualization. For those who visualize this Bodhisattva, the evil karma binding them to infinite aeons of birth-and-death is eliminated, and those who perform this visualization will no longer be subject to birth from the womb, but will roam freely throughout the pure and exquisite lands of the Buddhas. When this visualization has been completed, it is called the complete visualization of Mahasthamaprapta. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

XIII. TWELFTH VISUALIZATION:

THE BUDDHA OF INFINITE LIFE SPAN'S WORLD OF SUKHAVATI

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When these visualizations are completed, they are called the complete perfection of the visualization of Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. When you have seen these things, visualize yourself as being born in the Western Realm of Ultimate Bliss, sitting cross-legged inside a lotus flower. Visualize the lotus flower as being closed. When the lotus flower opens, rays of five hundred colors shine down and illuminate your body.

"Then your eyes are open and you see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas filling the skies and hear the sounds of waters and trees, the notes of birds, and the voices of the Buddhas all proclaiming the exquisite Dharma in accordance with the twelve divisions of the Sutras. Even after you rise from meditation, keep in mind and do not forget all that you have seen and heard.

"Seeing these things is called the vision of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life and the Realm of Ultimate Bliss. This is the comprehensive visualization of its imagery and is called the Twelfth Visualization. The countless miraculously created bodies of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life together with those of Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta will always appear before those who contemplate thus. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

XIV. THE THREE SAGES OF THE REALM OF ULTIMATE BLISS

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "If you wish with a sincere mind to be born in the Western Quarter, you should first visualize a sixteen-foot image of the Buddha standing on the surface of a lake. As I previously explained, the physical measurements of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life are boundless and are beyond the grasp of ordinary minds. But because of the power of that Tathagata's vows fulfilled in a previous life, those who keep the Buddha in mind will, without fail, be able to perceive this body. Simply visualizing the Buddha's image brings one immeasurable merits; how much more so if one visualizes all the perfect physical characteristics of that Buddha?

"This Buddha Amitayus, able to utilize transcendent spiritual powers at any time, can freely manifest various forms throughout the lands of the Ten Directions, here appearing as a great body that fills the sky, there appearing as a small body only sixteen or eighteen feet tall. The color of these manifested figures is that of pure gold, and the miraculously created Buddhas and the jeweled lotus flowers in the surrounding circle of light are the same as I described before.

"The physical features of the Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta are the same in all respects, and sentient beings who simply visualize the features on their heads can distinguish between Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. These two Bodhisattvas assist Buddha Amitayus in the work of universal liberation. This is the composite visualization which is called the Thirteenth Visualization. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

XV. FOURTEENTH VISUALIZATION:

THE SUPERIOR GRADE OF REBIRTH

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "In all, there are nine levels of sentient beings who are reborn in the Western Quarter. The sentient beings in the highest level of the highest grade of rebirth are those who vow to be reborn there. By awakening the three kinds of mind they are reborn there. What are the three? The first is the most sincere mind, the second is the mind of deep faith, and the third is the mind which aspires for rebirth by transferring merit. Those who possess those three minds will be reborn in that land without fail.

"There are three other kinds of beings who will be reborn there. What are the three? First are the compassionate ones who refrain from killing and observe the precepts; second are those who read and recite the Mahayana Vaipulya Sutras; and third are those who cultivate the six kinds of mindfulness. Transferring the merit for rebirth, they vow to be reborn in that land. By accomplishing these virtuous acts for a period of from one to seven days, they immediately attain rebirth.

"When an aspirant is about to be reborn in that land, a result of unconquerable resolve, the Tathagata Amitayus appears along with Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, countless transformation Buddhas, a great assembly of a hundred thousand *bhiksus* and *sravakas*, and countless heavenly beings in their seven-jeweled palaces.

"Holding a diamond pedestal, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara approaches the aspirant along with Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta. The Buddha Amitayus sends forth a great light that illuminates the aspirant's body, and along with the Bodhisattvas, offers welcoming hands. Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, along with countless other Bodhisattvas, then encourage the aspirant's mind by offering praise. Upon seeing this the aspirant dances with joy, is self-seen seated atop the diamond pedestal, and, following after the Buddha, is reborn into that land as quickly as the snap of a finger.

"Once reborn in that land, the aspirants see the Buddha's body and the perfection of the Buddha's myriad characteristics. The perfection of the Bodhisattvas' physical characteristics is also seen. The light of the jeweled forests widely proclaim the wondrous Dharma, and having heard it, the aspirants will instantly awaken the insight into the non-origination of all existence.

"Then, in an instant, the aspirants will visit and venerate all the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters, and in the presence of each Buddha receive a prediction of their future

Buddhahood. Upon returning to the land from whence they came, they attain countless hundreds of thousands of Dharma-gates of *dharanis*. These are called the sentient beings in the highest level of the highest grade of rebirth.

"The sentient beings reborn in the middle level of the highest grade of rebirth do not necessarily uphold and recite the Vaipulya Sutras, but fully understand their meaning. Upon hearing the highest truth, their minds are not perplexed or shaken, and deeply believing in the principle of cause and effect, they do not slander the Mahayana. Transferring the merit of their virtuous acts, they vow to be reborn in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss.

"Those who perform these practices will, when their life is about to end, be met by Buddha Amitayus together with Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta; surrounded by a measureless, great host of attendant-followers, they hold a pedestal of purple-gold. The Buddha praises each aspirant, saying, 'Dharma disciple, you have practiced the Mahayana and have realized the highest truth. For this reason we have now come to welcome you.' With this, Buddha Amitayus and the thousands of miraculously created Buddhas offer their hands all at once.

"The practitioners see themselves seated on a pedestal of purple-gold, and with palms pressed together, praise the Buddhas. In the space of a single thought, they are reborn in that land in a seven-treasure lake. The pedestal of purple-gold is like a great jeweled flower, and after one night passes, the flower opens. Each practitioner's body becomes the color of purple-gold, and under their feet there are lotus flowers made of the seven treasures. The Buddha and the Bodhisattvas all send forth rays of light to illuminate each practitioner's body, causing their eyes to open, clear and wide. Because of the store of merit from their previous lives, they hear a variety of voices exclusively proclaiming the most profound, supreme truth. Descending from the golden pedestal, and with palms pressed together, they bow to and praise the Buddha, the World-Honored One.

"After seven days pass, each aspirant attains the Stage of Non-Retrogression on the path toward the Highest Perfect Enlightenment. Each aspirant acquires the ability to fly off at will to revere the Buddhas of the Ten Directions and to cultivate various *samadhis* from them. After one small aeon passes, each aspirant attains the insight into the non-origination of all existence, and in the presence of each Buddha, receive a prediction of their future attainment. These are called the sentient beings in the middle level of the highest grade of rebirth.

"Those sentient beings reborn in the lowest level of the highest grade of rebirth also believe in the principle of cause and effect, do not slander the Mahayana, and awaken

the mind which aspires to the highest perfect enlightenment. Transferring the merit of their virtuous acts, they vow to be reborn in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss.

"When the lives of such aspirants are about to end, these beings are met by Buddha Amitayus together with Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta and their great host of attendant-followers carrying golden lotus flowers which manifest five hundred transformed Buddhas to welcome them. These five hundred transformed Buddhas extend their hands to each person, saying, 'Dharma disciple, your mind is pure and you have awakened the mind which aspires to the highest perfect enlightenment, and so we have come to welcome you.'

"Having seen these things, each aspirant is self-seen seated on a golden lotus flower which then closes, and, following the World-Honored One, each aspirant is immediately reborn on a seven-jeweled lake.

"After one day and one night, the lotus flower opens, then within seven days, the aspirant beholds the Buddha. Although the body of the Buddha is seen, not all the physical characteristics and marks are clear in the aspirant's mind. But after three weeks, they are seen clearly and distinctly, and a variety of voices all widely proclaiming the wondrous Dharma are heard. The aspirant then travels to each of the Ten Quarters to make offerings to all the Buddhas, and to hear their most profound Dharma teachings.

"After three small aeons pass, the aspirant attains the hundred wisdom gates of the Dharma and abides in the Stage of Joy. These are called the sentient beings in the lowest level of the highest grade of rebirth. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

XVI. FIFTEENTH VISUALIZATION: THE MIDDLE GRADE OF REBIRTH

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "The sentient beings reborn in the highest level of the middle grade of rebirth are those who have upheld the five precepts, observed the eight abstinences, have cultivated the practice of the precepts, have not committed the five grave offenses and are free from various other faults. Transferring the merits of these roots of virtue for rebirth, they aspire to be reborn in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss in the Western Quarter.

"When their lives are about to end, these beings will be met by Buddha Amitayus, who, surrounded by a host of *bhiksus* and attendant-followers, sends forth golden rays of light. Coming to each person, they proclaim the teachings of suffering, emptiness, impermanence and non-self, praising the renunciation of the world which enables one to

be freed from suffering. After seeing this, each aspirant's heart is filled with great joy, and each is then self-seen sitting on a lotus flower pedestal. Dropping to their knees, the aspirants press their palms together, bowing to the Buddha in homage; and even before their heads are raised, rebirth in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss is attained.

"Immediately, the lotus flower opens, and when the flower unfolds, each aspirant hears a variety of sounds and voices praising the Four Truths. Instantly the aspirant attains the stage of an *Arhat*, acquires the three kinds of transcendent knowledge and the six supernatural powers, and realizes the eight *samadhis* of liberation. These are called the sentient beings in the highest level of the middle grade of rebirth.

"The sentient beings reborn in the middle level of the middle grade of rebirth are those who, for at least one day and one night observe the eight abstinences; or for one day and one night observe the *shramanera* [novice] precepts; or for one day and one night observe the complete set of precepts for monks, their majestic deportment lacking nothing. Transferring the merit of these virtuous acts for rebirth, they aspire to be reborn in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss.

"Permeated with the fragrance of these precepts, such an aspirant, when life is about to end, sees the Buddha Amitayus and the host of attendant-followers approaching. Sending forth golden rays of light, the Buddha comes before this practitioner carrying a seven-jeweled lotus flower. The aspirant then hears a voice from the sky saying, 'Child of a good family, as you are a virtuous person who has followed the teachings of the Buddhas of past, present and future, I have come to welcome you.' The aspirant is then self-seen sitting on a lotus flower which then closes, and rebirth in a jeweled lake of the Realm of Ultimate Bliss of the Western Quarter ensues.

"After seven days pass, the lotus flower unfolds. When the flower is fully open, the aspirant, whose eyes are now opened, places palms together and praises the World-Honored One. Hearing the Dharma, the aspirant is filled with joy and attains the stage of a Stream-Winner; then, after half an aeon, the stage of *Arhat* is attained. These are called the sentient beings of the middle level of the middle grade of rebirth.

"The sentient beings reborn in the lowest level of the middle grade of rebirth are those good sons or good daughters who attend dutifully to their parents and do benevolent deeds for others.

"When the lives of these people are about to end, they encounter a virtuous and learned teacher who fully explains the bliss of the land of the Buddha Amitayus and also expounds the Forty-eight Great Vows of the Bhiksu Dharmakara. Having heard these things, they soon come to the end of their lives, and in the time it takes for a vigorous

person to bend and extend an arm, the aspirants are reborn into the Realm of Ultimate Bliss of the Western Quarter.

"Seven days after that rebirth, the practitioners meet Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. Hearing the Dharma, they are filled with joy and attain the stage of Stream-Winner; then, after one small aeon passes, they attain the stage of *Arhat*. These are called the sentient beings of the lowest level of the middle grade of rebirth. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

XVII. SIXTEENTH VISUALIZATION: THE LOWEST GRADE OF REBIRTH

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "The sentient beings in the highest level of the lowest grade of rebirth are those who have committed myriad evil acts. Although they do not slander the *Vaipulya* sutras, these deluded beings repeatedly perform evil deeds, yet feel no remorse.

"When their lives are about to end, they meet a virtuous and learned teacher who praises for them the names and titles of the Mahayana sutras of the twelve divisions. By hearing the names of these sutras, the heavy and evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for a thousand aeons is eliminated. This learned teacher also teaches them to press their palms together and recite 'Namo Buddha Amitayus.' Because they recite the Buddha's name, the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for a hundred million aeons is eliminated.

"At that time, the Buddha sends a miraculously created Buddha, a miraculously created Avalokitesvara and a miraculously created Mahasthamaprapta, who appear before the aspirants and praise each of them, saying, 'Well done, child of a good family! Because you have recited the Buddha's name, your evil karma has been eliminated. We have come to welcome you.' After these words have been spoken, each aspirant immediately sees the miraculously created Buddha, whose rays of light completely fill the room. Having seen this, the aspirants are filled with joy and their lives come to an end. Riding atop a jeweled lotus flower, each practitioner follows behind the miraculously created Buddha and is reborn in a jeweled lake.

"After seven weeks, the lotus flower opens. When this flower unfolds, the greatly compassionate Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta send forth great rays of light and, standing before the aspirant, expound the profound sutras of the twelve divisions. Upon hearing this, the aspirant accepts it in faith and awakens the mind that aspires for the Highest Perfect Enlightenment. After ten small aeons pass,

the aspirant attains the hundred wisdom gates of the Dharma and enter the first stage of a Bodhisattva.

"These are called the sentient beings in the highest level of the lowest grade of rebirth; and being able to hear the name of the Buddha, the name of the Dharma and the name of the Sangha – that is, the Three Treasures – these sentient beings immediately attain rebirth.

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "The sentient beings in the middle level of the lowest grade of rebirth are those who violate the five precepts, the eight abstinences, and the complete set of precepts for monks. Such deluded people steal the property of the Sangha, take the personal belongings of the monks, preach the Dharma with impure intent, and feel no remorse. These deluded people defile themselves with these evil deeds, and because of this will fall into hell.

"When the lives of such people about to end, and the fires of hell simultaneously close upon them, they meet a virtuous and learned teacher who, with great compassion, praises and explains the majestic virtue and ten powers of the Buddha Amitayus, praises fully the transcendental powers of that Buddha's light, and further praises the virtues of that Buddha who accomplished the precepts, the meditation, the wisdom, the liberation and the awareness of that liberation. When these people have heard these things, the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for eight hundred million aeons is eliminated. Hell's fierce flames are then transformed into pure, cool breezes that gently blow upon heavenly flowers. On top of each flower is a miraculously created Buddha and miraculously created Bodhisattvas who come to welcome these people. And in a single moment of thought, they are each reborn inside a lotus flower in a seven-jeweled lake.

"After six aeons pass, the lotus flowers unfold. When the flowers open, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta reassure them using the Brahma voice and expound the profound Mahayana Sutras. Upon hearing this Dharma, each person at once awakens the mind that aspires for the highest enlightenment. These are called the sentient beings of the middle level of the lowest grade of rebirth.

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "The sentient beings in the lowest level of the lowest grade of rebirth are those who commit such evil acts as the five grave offenses and the ten transgressions, and are burdened with various kinds of evil. These foolish beings, because of their evil karma, shall fall into the evil realms of existence, and experience endless suffering for many aeons .

"When the life of such a foolish person is about to end, this person meets a virtuous and learned teacher who provides various kinds of comfort, expounds the exquisite Dharma,

and urges mindfulness of the Buddha. If that person is too tormented by pain to be mindful of the Buddha, the virtuous friend says, 'If you are unable to be mindful of the Buddha, you should recite the name of and take refuge in the Buddha of Immeasurable Life.' And so, with a sincere mind and an uninterrupted voice, this person says, 'Namo Buddha Amitayus' even as few as ten times, and because this person says the Buddhas name, with every repetition, the evil karma binding this person to birth-and-death for eight million aeons is eliminated.

"When the lives of such people come to an end, a sun-like golden lotus flower appears in front of them. And in the interval of a single thought-moment, each person will immediately attain rebirth inside a lotus flower in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss.

"After twelve great aeons the lotus flower opens. When the flower unfolds, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, using the Brahma voice, proclaim for each person the way to eliminate evil karma through the realization of the true nature of all existence. Upon hearing this, each person is filled with joy and, at that moment, awakens the mind that aspires for enlightenment. These are called the sentient beings of the lowest level of the lowest grade of rebirth. This perception of the sentient beings in the lowest grade of rebirth is called the sixteenth visualization."

XVIII. EPILOGUE

When the World-Honored One had spoken these words, Vaidehi and her five hundred female attendants, having heard the Buddha's discourse, saw at once the breadth and extent of the Realm of Ultimate Bliss; and being able to see the body of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span and the two Bodhisattvas, joy welled up in their hearts. Marveling at this unprecedented occurrence, Vaidehi, her clouds of doubt now cleared, attained the great enlightenment and acquired the insight into the non-origination of all existence. Her five hundred female attendants, having awakened the mind that aspires to the highest perfect enlightenment, vowed to be reborn into that land. The World-Honored One assured all of them that they would be reborn there, and that after rebirth they would acquire the Samadhi of Being in the Presence of All the Buddhas. Countless heavenly beings also awakened the mind that aspires for the Highest Perfect Enlightenment.

At that time, Ananda rose from his seat, stepped forward, and said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, what shall this Sutra be called? And how should the essence of this Dharma be received and kept?"

The Buddha said to Ananda, "The name of this Sutra is the 'Visualization of the Realm of Ultimate Bliss, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span, the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and the Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta.' It is also called, 'Removal of Karmic Hindrances for Attaining Rebirth in the Presence of All the Buddhas.' You should receive this Sutra and never forget it.

Those who practice this samadhi will be able to see, during their lifetime, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span and these two Bodhisattvas. If good sons and good daughters merely hear the name of this Buddha and these two Bodhisattvas, the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for immeasurable aeons is eliminated. How much more so if these people are mindful of the Buddha? Know that whoever is mindful of the Buddha is a lotus flower among humans, has Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta as excellent friends, will be seated in the place of enlightenment and will be born into the family of the Buddhas."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You should carefully hold these words in mind. To hold these words in mind is to hold in mind the name of the Buddha of Immeasurable life Span."

When the Buddha had spoken these words, the Venerable Maudgalyayana and the Venerable Ananda, as well as Vaidehi and the others, heard the Buddha's discourse and were all filled with great joy.

At that time, the World-Honored One walked through the open sky and returned to Vulture Peak. There, Ananda fully explained the above events for the benefit of the great assembly. The countless human beings, heavenly beings, naga deities, *yaksas* and all other beings who heard the Buddha's discourse were all filled with great joy, paid homage to the World-Honored Ones, and departed.