

SELF-CULTIVATION AS TAUGHT IN THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA SŪTRA

ACCORDING to the Buddha, we all have inherent in ourselves the Tathāgata's wisdom which is unknown to us and which we cannot use because of our ignorance. We are also taught how to control our wandering minds so that our self-nature can return to its normal condition by which is meant a passionless, still and imperturbable state, free from all external influences, in which our immanent wisdom can manifest and function in the normal way, that is the way of the absolute, beyond all relativities and contraries.

Therefore, when discussing self-cultivation, we cannot stray from the Buddha Dharma for the World Honoured One taught us how to get out of saṁsāra for ever, whereas the highest achievement by other religious doctrines is only a temporary transmigration to the happy realm of devas from which, when the benefit of our good karma has been enjoyed to the full, we will be sent down again to the lower worlds of existence. For this reason, Yung Chia urged us not to seek happiness in saṁsāra and wrote in his Song of Enlightenment:

*With force expended, a spent arrow's bound to fall and cause
Distasteful things to follow in the next incarnation.*

How can it then compare with the wu wei reality

Which ensures a leap straight to the Tathāgata's stage?¹

1. See *Ch'an and Zen Teaching*, Third Series, Rider (1962), p. 127.

As regards self-cultivation, there are many methods of practice which are found in the Chinese sūtras and śāstras but it is a matter for regret that authentic versions in Western languages are not yet available. Although we Buddhists in the East have access to the Chinese Tripiṭaka, it is impossible for us to practise all the methods simultaneously or one after the other in our quest of enlightenment (bodhi). In China, many Buddhists fail in self-cultivation because they choose wrongly methods unsuitable for them. For this reason, the late Master Hsu Yun said at the Jade Buddha monastery at Shanghai a few years ago:

*Self-cultivation has no other method;
It requires but knowledge of the way.¹*

Because of His great compassion for all living beings whom He vowed to save, and in anticipation of our present confusion and perplexity in this Dharma ending age, the Buddha commanded twenty-five great Bodhisattvas and Arhats who were present in the Śūraṅgama assembly to speak of their methods of practice and of their personal experiences.

The Śūraṅgama Sūtra lists twenty-five ways of controlling the mind by meditation on the six sense data, six sense organs, six consciousnesses and seven elements—earth, water, fire, wind, space, sense-perception and consciousness. After each of the twenty-five great ones had related his personal experience and achievement, the Buddha ordered Mañjuśrī to compare their methods and to indicate the one most suitable for the benefit of Ānanda and those in the Dharma ending period, that is ourselves.

After rejecting the twenty-four methods which were not suitable for untrained minds, Mañjuśrī chose the one followed by Avalokiteśvara, which he praised as the most convenient for people on this earth. It consisted in disengaging the organ of hearing from its object, sound, and then directing that

1. See *Ch'an and Zen Teaching*, First Series, Rider (1960), p. 62.

organ into the stream of concentration. When the conception of both sound and stream-entry had been successfully wiped out, the duality of disturbance and stillness became illusory and non-existent. By advancing step by step, the subjective hearing and objective sound also vanished completely. This was where many meditators lost their way and were turned back to the realm of birth and death, but Avalokiteśvara said he did not stop there but strove to advance further. When the subjective awareness of this state and its object, that is the state itself, were perceived as illusory and non-existent, the awareness of voidness became all-embracing. However, the finest duality of subject and object, in other words the subtle view of ego and things (dharma), mentioned in the Diamond Sūtra, still remained and when this also was eliminated, this Bodhisattva reached the absolute state wherein all pairs of opposites, such as birth and death, creation and annihilation, beginning and end, ignorance and enlightenment, Buddhas and living beings, etc., have no room. Then the condition of nirvāṇa appeared, followed by a sudden leap over both the mundane and supramundane for realizing Absolute Universal Enlightenment (for the self) and Wonderful Enlightenment (for others).¹

Here are the relative passages in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra:

‘The World Honoured One said to the great Bodhisattvas and chief Arhats in the assembly: “I want now to ask you, Bodhisattvas and arhats who have practised my Dharma and have reached the state beyond study,² this question: When you developed your minds for awakening to the eighteen realms of sense (dhātu),³ which one did you regard as the best means of perfection and by what methods did you enter the state of samādhi?’⁴

1. Respectively the fifty-first and fifty-second stages of a Bodhisattva’s development into a Buddha.

2. Aśaikṣa in Sanskrit; no longer learning, beyond study, the state of arhatship, the fourth of the śrāvaka stages; the preceding three stages requiring study. When an arhat is free from all illusions, he has nothing more to study.

3. Realms of sense, i.e. the six organs, their objects and their perceptions.

4. Internal state of imperturbability, exempt from all external sensations.

A. MEDITATION ON THE SIX SENSE DATA

1. Meditation on sound

'(Thereupon), Kauṇḍinya (one of) the first five bhikṣus, rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: "When, soon after His enlightenment, we met the Tathāgata in the Mṛgadāva and Kukkuṭa parks, I heard His voice, understood His teaching and awakened to the Four Noble Truths.¹ When questioned by the Buddha, I interpreted them correctly and the Tathāgata sealed my awakening by naming me Ājñāta (Thorough Knowledge). As His wonderful voice was mysteriously all-embracing, I attained arhatship by means of sound. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, to me sound is the best according to my personal experience."

2. Meditation on form

'Upaniṣad then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: "I also met the Buddha soon after His enlightenment. After meditating on impurity which I found repulsive and from which I kept, I awakened to the underlying nature of all forms. I realized that (even our) bleached bones which came from impurity would be reduced to dust and would finally return to the void. As both form and the void were perceived as non-existent, I achieved the state beyond study. The Tathāgata sealed my understanding and named me Niṣad.² After eradicating (relative) form, wonderful form (surūpa) appeared mysteriously all-embracing. Thus I attained arhatship through meditation on form. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, to me form is the best according to my personal experience."

3. Meditation on smell

'A son of Buddha (kumāra)³ named "Fragrance Adorned" then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: "After the Tathāgata had taught me to look into all worldly phenomena, I left Him and retired to set my mind at rest. While observing the rules of pure living, I saw bhikṣus burning sandal incense. In the stillness, its fragrance entered my nostrils. I enquired into this smell which was

1. Catvāriārya-satyāni, the four dogmas which are: suffering (duḥkha), its cause (samudaya), its ending (nirodha) and the way thereto (mārga). They are the doctrine first preached by the Buddha to his five former ascetic companions, and also those who accepted them in the śrāvaka stage.

2. Niṣad: going to the source of the phenomenal.

3. Kumāra: a Bodhisattva as son of the Tathāgata; a son of Buddha.

neither sandalwood nor voidness, and neither smoke nor fire and which had neither whence to come nor whither to go; thereby my intellect (manas) vanished and I achieved the state beyond the stream of transmigration (anāsrava).¹ The Tathāgata sealed my awakening and named me 'Fragrance Adorned'. After the sudden elimination of (relative) smell, wonderful fragrance became mysteriously all-embracing. Thus I attained arhatship by means of smell. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, to me smell is the best according to my personal experience."

4. Meditation on taste

'The two sons of the Dharmarāja² called Bhaiṣajya-rāja and Bhaiṣajya-samudgata³ who were present with five-hundred Brahma-devas,⁴ then rose from their seats, prostrated themselves with their heads at the feet of the Buddha and declared: "Since the time without beginning, we have been skilful physicians in this world and have tasted with our own mouths herbs, plants and all kinds of mineral and stone found in the world, numbering 108,000 in all;⁵ as a result we know perfectly their tastes, whether bitter, sour, salt, insipid, sweet or acrid, etc., their natural, changing or harmonizing properties, and whether they are cooling, heating, poisonous or wholesome. We received instruction from the Tathāgata and clearly knew that taste was neither existing nor non-existent, was neither body nor mind and did not exist apart from them. Since we could discern the cause of taste, we achieved our awakening which was sealed by the Buddha who then named us Bhaiṣajya-rāja and Bhaiṣajya-samudgata. We are now ranked among the 'sons of the Dharma king' in this assembly and because of our enlightenment by means of taste, we have attained the Bodhisattva stage. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, to us taste is the best according to our personal experience."

5. Meditation on touch

'Bhadrapāla who was with sixteen companions who were all great Bodhisattvas, rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: "When the Buddha with awe inspiring voice

1. Anāsrava: no leak; outside the passion-stream as contrasted with āsrava, 'leaking' or worldly cause.

2. Dharmarāja: the King of the Law, Buddha; a son of the Dharmarāja is a Bodhisattva.

3. The two Bodhisattvas of medicine, whose office is to heal the sick.

4. Brahma-devas: the gods of the Brahma heavens.

5. 108,000: the ten evils which are killing, stealing, carnality, lying, double-tongue, coarse speech, filthy language, covetousness, anger and wrong views; and their opposites in the eightfold path: correct view, correct thought, correct speech, correct deed, correct livelihood, correct zeal, correct remembrance and correct meditation. These ten and eight are the characteristics of living beings on this earth.

(Bhīṣma-garjita-ghoṣa-svara-rāja) appeared in the world, I heard of the Dharma and left home. At the time of bathing, I followed the rules and entered the bathroom. Suddenly, I awakened to the causal water which cleanses neither dirt nor body; thereby I felt at ease and realized the state of nothingness. As I had not forgotten my former practice, when I left home to follow the Buddha in my present life, I achieved the state beyond study. That Buddha named me Bhadrapāla because of my awakening to wonderful touch and my realization of the rank of a son of Buddha. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, to me touch is the best according to my personal experience.”

6. Meditation on things (dharma)

‘Mahākāśyapa who was present with the bhikṣuṇī “Golden Light” and others (of his group) then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “In a former aeon, when Candra-sūrya-pradīpa Buddha appeared in this world, I had a chance of following him and of hearing the Dharma which I practised. After he had passed away, I revered his relics, lit lamps to perpetuate his Light and decorated his statue with pure gold powder. Since then, in every subsequent reincarnation, my body has been radiant with perfect golden light. This bhikṣuṇī ‘Golden Light’ and the others who are with her, are my retinue because we developed the same mind at the same time. I looked into the six changing sense data which can be reduced to complete extinction only through the state of nirvāṇa.¹ Thus my body and mind were able to pass through hundreds and thousands of aeons in a finger-snap. By eliminating all things (dharma), I realized arhatship and the World Honoured One declared that I was the foremost disciplinarian (dhūta).² I awakened to wonderful dharmas, thereby putting an end to the stream of transmigration (āsrava). As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, to me things (dharma) are the best according to my personal experience.”

B. MEDITATION ON THE FIVE SENSE ORGANS

7. Meditation on the organ of sight

‘Aniruddha then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “After I left home, I was always very

1. Nirvāṇa: complete extinction of worldly feelings and passions, thereby ending all return to reincarnation with its concomitant suffering for entry into the transcendental realm of absolute eternity, bliss, self and purity.

2. Dhūta: an ascetic who succeeds in removing the trials of life and attains nirvāṇa.

fond of sleep and the Tathāgata scolded me, saying that I was like an animal. After this severe reprimand, I wept bitterly and blamed myself. Because of my sadness, I did not sleep for seven successive nights and went completely blind. Then the World Honoured One taught me how to take delight in the Enlightening Vajra samādhi which enabled me to perceive, not with my eyes (but with my mind), the Pure Truth pervading the ten directions, very clearly perceptible, as easy to see as a mango held in my own hand. The Tathāgata sealed my attainment of arhatship. As He now asks about the best means of perfection, to me seeing is, according to my personal experience, the best which is made possible by turning the organ of sight back to its source.”

8. Meditation on the organ of smell

‘Kṣudrapanthaka then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “I did not know much (about the Dharma) for lack of reading and reciting (the Scriptures). When I first met the Buddha, I heard of the Dharma and then left home. I tried to memorize a line of His gāthā but failed for a hundred days, because as soon as I could retain its first words, I forgot the last ones, and when I could remember the last words, I forgot the first ones. The Buddha took pity on my stupidity and taught me how to live in a quiet retreat and to regularize my breathing. At the time, I looked exhaustively into each in and out breath, and realized that its rise, stay, change and end lasted only an instant (kṣaṇa);¹ thereby my mind became clear and unhindered until I stepped out of the stream of transmigration and finally attained arhatship. I came to stay with the Buddha who sealed my realization of the state beyond study. As He now asks about the best means of perfection, to me breathing is the best according to my personal experience in turning the breath back to the condition of nothingness.”

9. Meditation on the organ of taste

‘Gavāmpati then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “Because of my verbal sin when I trifled with monks in a former aeon, in every succeeding reincarnation, I have been born with a mouth that always chews the cud like a cow. The Tathāgata taught me the pure and clean doctrine of One Mind² which enabled me to eliminate the conception of mind for my entry into the state of samādhi. I looked into taste, realized that it was neither (a subjective) substance nor (an objective) thing and leaped beyond the stream of

1. Kṣaṇa: the shortest measure of time; sixty kṣaṇas equal one finger-snap, ninety a thought, 4,500 a minute.

2. Lit. One-flavoured Mind-ground Dharma-door to enlightenment.

transmigration; I thereby disengaged myself from both the inner body and mind and the outer universe, and was released from the three worlds of existence.¹ I was like a bird escaping from its cage, thus avoiding impurities and defilements. With my Dharma eye² now pure and clean, I attained arhatship and the Tathāgata personally sealed my realization of the stage beyond study. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, to me the turning of taste back to its knower is the best according to my personal experience.”

10. Meditation on the body

‘Pīlindavatsa then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “When I first followed the Buddha to enter upon the Path, very often I heard the Tathāgata speak about the worldly which could not give joy and happiness. (One day) I went to town to beg for food, and as I was thinking about His teaching, I stepped inadvertently on a poisonous thorn that pierced my foot and caused me to feel pain all over my body. I thought of my body which knew and felt this great pain. Although there was this feeling, I looked into my pure and clean mind which no pain could affect. I also thought, ‘How can this one body of mine have two kinds of feeling?’, and after a short (mental) concentration on this, all of a sudden, my body and mind seemed to be non-existent and three weeks later, I achieved the stage beyond the stream of transmigration and thereby attained arhatship. The Buddha personally sealed my realization of the stage beyond study. As He now asks about the best means of perfection, to me the pure awareness that wipes out the (conception of) body is the best according to my personal experience.”’

11. Meditation on the intellect (manas)

‘Subhūti then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “As my mind was already free from all hindrances in former aeons, I can now remember my previous incarnations as countless as the sands in the Ganges. Even when I was a foetus in my mother’s womb, I was already awakened to the condition of still voidness which subsequently expanded to fill all the ten directions and which enabled me to teach living beings how to awaken to their absolute nature. Thanks to the Tathāgata, I realized the absolute voidness of self-natured awareness, and with the perfection of my immaterial nature, I attained arhatship, thereby entering suddenly into the Tathāgata’s Precious Brightness which was as immense as space and the ocean, wherein I partially

1. The three states of mortal existence: world of desire, of form and beyond form.

2. Dharma eye which is able to penetrate all things, to see the truth that releases one from reincarnation.

achieved Buddha knowledge. The Buddha sealed my attainment of the stage beyond study; I am therefore regarded as the foremost disciple because of my understanding of immaterial self-nature. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, according to my personal experience, the best consists in perceiving the unreality of all phenomena, with the elimination of even this unreality, in order to reduce all things to nothingness.”’

C. MEDITATION ON THE SIX CONSCIOUSNESSES

12. Meditation on sight perception

‘Śāriputra then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “In former aeons, the sight perception of my mind was already pure and clean, and in subsequent incarnations as countless as the sands in the Ganges, I could see without hindrance through all things either on a worldly or supramundane plane. (One day), I met on the road the two brothers Kāśyapa who were both preaching the doctrine of causality,¹ and after listening to them, my mind awakened to the truth and thereby became extensive and boundless. I then left home to follow the Buddha and achieved perfect sight perception thereby acquiring fearlessness (abhaya), attaining arhatship and qualifying as the Buddha’s ‘Elder Son’—‘born from the Buddha’s mouth and by transformation of the Dharma’. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, according to my personal experience, the best consists in realizing the most illuminating knowledge by means of the mind’s radiant sight perception.”’

13. Meditation on ear perception

‘Samantabhadra Bodhisattva then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “I was already a son of the Dharma king when formerly I was with the Tathāgatas who were countless as the sands in the Ganges. All the Buddhas in the ten directions who teach their disciples to plant Bodhisattva roots, urge them to practise Samantabhadra deeds, which are called after my name. World Honoured One, I always use my mind to hear in order to distinguish the variety of views held by living beings. If in a place, separated from here by a number of worlds as countless as the sands in the Ganges, a living being practises Samantabhadra deeds, I mount at once a six tusked elephant and reproduce myself in a hundred and a thousand apparitions to come to his aid. Even, if he is unable to see me because of his great karmic obstruction, I secretly lay my hand on his head to protect and comfort him so that he can succeed.

1. i.e. the Four Noble Truths that put an end to birth and death.

As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, according to my personal experience, the best consists in hearing with the mind, which leads to non-discriminating discernment.”’

14. Meditation on smell perception

‘Sundarananda then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “When I left home to follow the Buddha, although fully ordained I failed to realize the state of Samādhi because my mind was always unsettled; I was, therefore, unable to reach the condition beyond the stream of transmigration. The World Honoured One then taught me and Kauṣṭhila to fix the mind on the tip of the nose. I started this meditation and some three weeks later, I saw that the breath that went in and out of my nostrils was like smoke; inwardly both body and mind were clear and I looked through the (external) world which became a pure emptiness like crystal everywhere. The smoke gradually disappeared and my breath became white. As my mind opened I achieved the state beyond the stream of transmigration. Both my in and out breaths, now bright, illumined the ten directions so that I attained the arhat stage. The World Honoured One prophesied that I would win enlightenment. As He now asks about the best means of perfection, according to my personal experience, the best is to eliminate breath which will then turn radiant, ensuring attainment of the stage of perfection beyond the stream of transmigration.”’

15. Meditation on tongue perception

‘Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “In former aeons, my power of speech was unhindered and I preached the (doctrine of) misery and unreality, thereby penetrating deep into absolute reality. I (also) expounded in the assembly the Tathāgata’s Dharma doors to enlightenment as uncountable as the sands in the Ganges, and thereby won fearlessness (abhaya).¹ The World Honoured One knew that I had acquired the great power of speech, and taught me how to carry out the Buddha work by preaching. Therefore, in His presence, I assisted Him in turning the Wheel of the Law and since I could give the lion’s roar,² I attained arhatship. He sealed my

1. There are two groups of fearlessness when expounding the Dharma to convert deluded living beings: (1) the four kinds of Bodhisattva fearlessness which arise from his power (a) of memorizing the Dharma to preach it to others; (b) of moral diagnosis and application of the appropriate remedy in each case; (c) of ratiocination overcoming all obstruction; and (d) of cutting off all doubts harboured by listeners; and (2) the four kinds of Buddha fearlessness which arise from (a) his omniscience; (b) perfection of character; (c) ability to overcome all opposition; and (d) to end all suffering.

2. To expound the Buddha Dharma without fear of men and things.

unexcelled skill in expounding the Dharma. As He now asks about the best means of perfection, according to my opinion, the best consists in employing the Dharma voice to subdue the enmity of Māra¹ and to stop the stream of transmigration.”’

16. Meditation on the perception of objects of touch

‘Upāli then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “I personally accompanied the Buddha, and we climbed the city wall to flee from home. With my own eyes, I saw how He endured hardship in His practice during the first years of ascetic life, subdued all demons, overcame heretics and freed Himself from worldly desires and all impure efflux (āsrava) from the mind. He personally taught me discipline, including the three thousand regulations² and eighty thousand lines of conduct³ which purified all my innate and conventional subtle karmas.⁴ As my body and mind were in the nirvāṇic state, I attained arhatship and the Tathāgata sealed my mind because of my strict observance of discipline and control of body. I am now a pillar of discipline in this assembly and am regarded as the foremost disciple. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, in my opinion, the best consists in disciplining the body so that it can free itself from all restraints and then in disciplining the mind so that it can be all-pervading, which results in the freedom of both body and mind.”’

17. Meditation on the faculty of mind (mano-vijñāna)

‘Mahā-Maudgalyāyana then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “One day as I was begging for food in the street, I met the three Kāśyapa brothers—Uruvilvā, Gayā and Nadi—who preached the profound doctrine of causality⁵ taught by the Tathāgata. Suddenly my mind opened and became all-pervading. Then,

1. Māra is the enemy of Buddha.

2. A monk’s regulations amount to 250; these are multiplied by four for the conditions of walking, standing, sitting and reclining and thus make 1,000; again multiplied by three for past, present and future, they become 3,000 regulations.

3. An abbreviation for 84,000. A monk’s regulations amount to 3,000 (see note 2), these are multiplied by the seven spreading branches, i.e. three sins of body (killing, robbing, carnality) and four of speech (lying, slander, abuse, double-tongue), they make 21,000; again multiplied by four, i.e. the three poisons (desire, anger and stupidity) plus the ego idea, they make 84,000 in all. According to the Ch’an interpretation, the digits eight and four stand for the eighth consciousness and the four elements that make the body and mind, i.e. space, while the three zeros stand for time. These 84,000 lines of conduct serve to wipe out space and time.

4. Karma against natural law, e.g. stealing, and karma against conventional rules, e.g. for a monk to eat meat.

5. The doctrine of causality that reveals the uncreate.

the Tathāgata gave me a monk's robe (kaṣāya) and when I wore it, my hair and beard fell out. I rambled in the ten directions and met no obstruction. I thus acquired transcendental power which proved the foremost and led to my attainment of arhatship. Not only the World Honoured One, but all the Tathāgatas in the ten directions, praised my supernatural powers which were perfect, pure, sovereign and fearless. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, in my opinion, it consists of returning to stillness to allow the light of the mind to appear, just as muddy water by settling becomes pure and clean as crystal."

D. MEDITATION ON THE SEVEN ELEMENTS¹

18. Meditation on the element fire

'Ucchuṣma² then came forward in front of the Tathāgata, joined the palms of his two hands, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: "I can still remember that in a very remote aeon I was filled with sensual desire. At the time a Buddha called 'The King of Immateriality' appeared in the world. According to him, those having lustful desires, increased their own hell fires. He then taught me to meditate on the bones in my body, on my four limbs and on my warm and cold breaths. So by turning inward the spiritual light for pointed concentration, my lustful mind turned into the fire of wisdom. Since then, I have been called 'Fire Head' by all the Buddhas. Because of my powerful Firelight samādhi, I attained arhatship. Then I took my great vow to become a demigod (vīra) so that when all Buddhas were about to attain enlightenment, I would personally help them to overcome the enmity of Māra.³ As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, according to my opinion, the best consists in looking into the non-existent heat in my body and mind in order to remove all hindrances thereto and to put an end to the stream of transmigration so that the great Precious Light can appear and lead to the realization of Supreme Bodhi."

19. Meditation on the element earth

'Dharaṇīrūdhara Bodhisattva⁴ then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: "I still remember that formerly when the Buddha of Universal Light appeared in the world, I was

1. The seven elements of the universe: fire, earth, water, wind, space, perception and consciousness.

2. i.e. Fire-head.

3. See p. 25, note 1.

4. Ruler of the earth.

a bhikṣu who used to level all obstacles, build bridges and carry sand and earth to improve the main roads, ferries, rice-fields and dangerous passes which were in bad condition or impassable to horses and carts. Thus I continued to toil for a long time in which an uncountable number of Buddhas appeared in the world. If someone made a purchase in the market-place and required another to carry it home for him, I did so without charge. When Viśvabhū Buddha¹ appeared in the world and famine was frequent, I became a carrier charging only one coin no matter whether the distance was long or short. If an ox cart could not move in a bog, I used my supernatural power to push its wheels free. One day, the king invited that Buddha to a feast; as the road was bad, I levelled it for him. The Tathāgata Viśvabhū placed his hand on my head and said: 'You should level your mind-ground (then), all things in the world will be on the same level.'² (Upon hearing this), my mind opened and I perceived that the molecules of my body did not differ from those of which the world is made. These molecules were such that they did not touch one another and could not be touched even by sharp weapons. I then awakened to the patient endurance of the uncreate (anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti) and thereby attained arhatship. Then by turning my mind inwards, I realized the Bodhisattva stage and when I heard the Tathāgatas expound the Buddha's universal knowledge in the profound Lotus Sūtra, I was the first listener to be awakened to it and was made a leader of the assembly. As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, in my opinion, the best consists in looking into the sameness of body and universe which are created by infection from falsehood arising from the Tathāgata store, until this defilement vanishes and is replaced by perfect wisdom which then leads to the realization of Supreme Bodhi."

20. Meditation on the element water

'Candraprabha Bodhisattva then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: "I still remember that in the remotest of aeons countless as the sands in the Ganges, there was a Buddha, called Varuṇa, who appeared in the world and taught Bodhisattvas to contemplate the element water in order to enter into the state of samādhi.

"This method consisted in looking into the body wherein all watery elements do not by nature suppress one another, using as subjects of meditation first tears and snot, and then saliva, secretions, blood, urine and excrement, and then reversing the order, thereby perceiving that this water element in the body does not differ from that of the fragrant oceans that surround the Pure Lands of Buddhas, situated beyond our world.

1. The third of the seven Buddhas of antiquity. See *Ch'an and Zen Teaching*, Second Series. Part One.

2. Viśvabhū Buddha taught him to develop a universal mind.

“When I achieved this contemplation, I succeeded in realizing only the sameness of the element water (everywhere), but failed to relinquish (my view of) the body. I was then a bhikṣu practising dhyāna (abstract meditation) and when my disciple peeped into the room, he saw that it was filled entirely with clear water, without anything else. As he was an ignorant boy, he picked up a broken tile, threw it into the water with a splash, gazed curiously and left. When I came out of my dhyāna state, I suddenly felt pain in my heart¹ as if I had the same trouble which Śāriputra had with a wicked demon.² I thought, ‘Since I have realized arhatship, I should be free from all causal ailments. Why today, all of a sudden, have I a pain in my heart; is it not a sign of backsliding?’ When the boy returned and related (what he had seen and done during my meditation), I said: ‘When next you see water in my room, open the door, enter the water and take away the broken tile.’ The boy obeyed, for when I again entered the dhyāna state, he saw the same broken tile in the water. He then opened the door to remove the tile. When I came out of dhyāna, my pain had vanished. Later, I met countless Buddhas before I encountered Sārgara-varādhara-buddhi-vikrīṭā-bhijñā Buddha (under whose instruction) I succeeded in relinquishing (the conception of) body, thereby realizing perfect union of this body and the fragrant oceans in the ten directions with absolute voidness, without any further differentiation. This is why I was called a ‘son of Buddha’³ and was qualified to attend all Bodhisattva meetings.

“As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, in my opinion the best consists in achieving the unhindered universalizing pervasion of the element water, thereby experiencing the ‘patient endurance of the uncreate’ (anupattika-dharma-kṣānti)⁴ which ensures Complete Enlightenment.”

21. Meditation on the element wind

“The Bodhisattva of Crystal Light then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “I remember that

1. Because of his attachment to the false notion of the reality of an ego existing in his body.

2. When Śāriputra practised dhyāna on the bank of the Ganges, due to an evil karma in his previous life, he was slapped by a demon and was in great pain. The Buddha said to him: ‘Fortunately you were in a dhyāna state, otherwise your body would have been damaged and you would have perished.’

3. Lit. Child-nature of simplicity. The stage of youth in Buddhahood, or the eighth of the ten stages in Bodhisattva-wisdom.

4. Rest in the imperturbable reality which is beyond birth and death and which requires a very patient endurance. The Prajñā-pāramitā-śāstra defines it as the unflinching faith and unperturbed abiding in the underlying reality of all things, which is beyond creation and destruction. It must be realized before attainment of Buddhahood.

once, in the remotest of aeons countless as the sands in the Ganges, there was a Buddha called ‘Infinite Voice’ who appeared in the world to reveal to Bodhisattvas the profoundly enlightened fundamental awareness which, by looking into this world and the bodily forms of all living beings, could perceive that all were created by the power of the wind arising from illusory concurrent causes. At the time, I inquired into the (illusory) setting up of the world,¹ changing time, bodily motion and motionlessness, and stirring of mind, in other words all kinds of movement which were fundamentally the same and did not differ from one another. I then realized that these movements had neither whence to come nor whither to go and that all living beings in the ten directions, as uncountable as dust, came from the same falsehood. Likewise, all living beings in every small world of the great chiliocosm² were like mosquitoes in a trap in which they hummed aimlessly and created a mad tumult. Soon after meeting that Buddha, I realized the patient endurance of the uncreate. As my mind opened, I perceived the land of the Imperturbable Buddha (Akṣobhya)³ in the eastern region where I was admitted as a son of the Dharma king, serving all the Buddhas in the ten directions. My body and mind gave out rays of light that illumined everything without obstruction.

“As the Buddha now asks about the best means of perfection, in my opinion the best consists in looking into the power of the element wind which has nothing (real) on which to rely, thereby awakening to the Bodhi mind so as to enter samādhi and (then) to unite with the Profound One Mind expounded by the Buddhas in the ten directions.”

22. Meditation on the element space

‘Akāśagarbha Bodhisattva then rose from his seat, prostrated himself with his head at the feet of the Buddha and declared: “When the Tathāgata and I were with Dipaṅkara Buddha and realized our boundless bodies, I held in my hands four large precious gems⁴ which illumined all Buddha lands

1. To wipe out space first and then time.

2. Tri-sahasra-mahā-sahasra-loka-dhātu. Mount Sumeru and its seven surrounding continents, eight seas and ring of iron mountains form one small world; 1,000 of these form a small chiliocosm; 1,000 of these small chiliocosms form a medium chiliocosm; 1,000 of these form a great chiliocosm, which consists of 1,000,000,000 small worlds.

3. One of the five Dhyāni Buddhas, viz. Vairocana, in the centre, Akṣobhya in the east, Ratnasambhava in the south, Amitābha in the west and Amoghasiddhi in the north. He is the first of the sixteen sons of Mahābhijñā-jñānābhīḥ, the great Buddha of supreme penetration and wisdom, who was also father of Amitābha and Śākyamuni in their former incarnations.

4. Akāśagarbha had then succeeded in his meditation on the four elements: earth, water, fire and wind which he could perceive as identical with the underlying principle thus transmuting them into four precious gems.

