

This sutra is one that I personally heard the Buddha expound. At that time, the Blessed One was residing at the Jetavana Monastery in Śrāvastī, along with twelve hundred and fifty monks. Among them were great arhats who had attained the wisdom free of defilements, as well as bodhisattvas who, endowed with the Buddha's wisdom, remained in the world to propagate the Dharma. With the wisdom of the Buddha, they transcended the constraints of conditioned existence, enabling them to exercise the Buddha's majestic discipline and rituals within the world, continuing the Dharma to eradicate the delusions of sentient beings and to carry forward the Tathāgata's teachings. They purified and rigorously promoted the Buddha's teachings in the realm of human life and extended the Buddha's disciplinary influence to the worldly realm of birth and death. In the world, they manifested countless transformation bodies, demonstrating the Buddha's wisdom, guiding sentient beings out of the cycle of birth and death, and liberating present and future beings from the oppression of samsara, thus surpassing the burdens of conditioned existence.

Their names were: the wise Śāriputra, Mahā-Maudgalyāyana, Mahā-Kauṣṭhila, Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra, Subhūti, Upaniṣad, and others. They were all the foremost disciples of the Tathāgata. Additionally, there were countless pratyekabuddhas, those beyond learning, those newly entering the holy path, and some who had just aroused the aspiration to enlightenment. They all came to the Tathāgata, joining the bhikṣus in meditation and practice, participating together in post-practice examination and reflection. Bodhisattvas from the ten directions also came, seeking to resolve the final doubts in their hearts, respectfully requesting the Tathāgata to expound the profound meanings of the Dharma for the benefit of all beings. At that moment, the Tathāgata, having taken his seat, began to expound the profound and esoteric meaning of the Dharma to the assembly. Instantly, the entire assembly experienced unprecedented enlightenment. The harmonious sound of the Dharma reverberated, spreading throughout the ten directions of the heavens and various realms. Countless bodhisattvas gathered at the Tathāgata's place, with Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva being the foremost among them.

At that time, King Prasenajit, in observance of the anniversary of his father's passing, prepared a grand feast to honor and seek the blessings of the Buddhas. He welcomed the Tathāgata and the bodhisattvas to his palace,

where the feast was adorned with an array of exquisite delicacies. Meanwhile, other elders and laypeople in the city were also preparing feasts to honor the monks, hoping that the Tathāgata might grace them with his presence. The Tathāgata instructed Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī to lead the bodhisattvas and arhats to attend the feasts hosted by these devotees. However, the Tathāgata's disciple, Ānanda, had previously accepted an invitation elsewhere and had not yet returned from his travels. Since there were no esteemed monks or teachers accompanying him, he accepted the highest offerings from the donor's household and received the title of mentor.

At this time, Ānanda was traveling alone on his way back. That day, he had not received any offerings, so he carried his alms bowl and walked through the streets of the city where he was staying, seeking alms. Ānanda resolved that when he reached the last household during his alms round, he would accept their offering, regardless of whether the household was clean or not, or whether it belonged to a noble or lowly family. He intended to extend the same compassionate care to all, with the resolve to help all beings realize their Buddha nature and achieve supreme merit. At this moment, Ānanda was aware that the Tathāgata had previously rebuked Subhūti and Mahākāśyapa, criticizing them for having attained the arhatship yet still failing to treat all beings with an equal mind. Ānanda longed for the Tathāgata to expound on and clarify the Buddha's wisdom of tolerance and equality, to guide them in freeing themselves from the delusions of resentment and vexation.

As Ānanda walked past the city gate and slowly made his way down the street, his appearance was dignified and serene, and he observed the alms practice with respectful and solemn conduct. However, as he approached a place of debauchery, he encountered a powerful demon spell. A woman named Matangi used a spell from the Brahma Vedic tradition of Pavitra to seize Ānanda and force him onto a bed of lust, intending to violate his vow of chastity.

The Tathāgata, knowing that Ānanda had fallen under the spell of Matangi, returned from the feast. King Prasenajit, along with his ministers, elders, and laypeople, followed, eagerly anticipating the opportunity to hear the essential teachings of the Dharma. At that moment, the Tathāgata emitted a brilliant light from the crown of his head, a great, fearless radiance of many precious colors. Within this light, a thousand-petaled jeweled lotus flower appeared, and within the lotus, a Buddha was seated in the lotus posture, reciting a sacred

mantra. The Tathāgata then instructed Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī to take this mantra to protect Ānanda. Instantly, Matangi's spell was dispelled, and both Ānanda and Matangi were brought before the Tathāgata.

Upon seeing the Tathāgata, Ānanda bowed at his feet and wept with sorrow. He deeply regretted that, although he had long been renowned for his extensive learning, he had not yet achieved the perfection of the path. Ānanda earnestly requested the Buddhas of the ten directions to help him attain supreme wisdom, supreme tranquility and meditation, supreme correct concentration, and enlightenment, as well as the most direct path to realizing the Way. At that time, countless bodhisattvas, along with great arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and śrāvakas from the worlds of the ten directions, also expressed their desire to listen to the teachings. They returned to their seats, ready to receive the highest teachings from the Buddha.

The Tathāgata said to Ānanda, "You and I share a deep bond, like that of brothers. When you first aspired to attain supreme wisdom, what marvelous vision did you perceive in my Dharma that caused you to instantly renounce the profound attachments of the worldly life?"

Ānanda replied to the Tathāgata, "At that time, I saw the Tathāgata's body adorned with thirty-two supreme and wondrous marks, its form clear and transparent like crystal. I reflected to myself that such a marvelous appearance could not have arisen from desire or attachment. Why? Because the energy of lust is coarse, impure, and foul-smelling, a mixture of blood and pus, and it could never give rise to such a pure, immaculate, and radiant form. Filled with admiration and reverence, I decided to follow the Tathāgata and become a monk."

The Tathāgata said, "How commendable, Ānanda. You should understand that all sentient beings have long been caught in the cycle of birth and death, continuously perpetuated because they do not realize the true mind, which is unborn, undying, unmoving, and unchanging. The nature of the mind is inherently pure and radiant, but when it is applied to deluded thoughts, these

thoughts become inverted and unreal. As a result, sentient beings are endlessly trapped in the sufferings of birth and death.

If you wish to cultivate supreme wisdom and truly reveal the reality of the mind's nature, then you must answer my questions with complete honesty. The practice of all the Buddhas in the ten directions is the same; their liberation from the cycle of birth and death is the result of sincere practice. When the mind is sincere, and speech is sincere, and this sincerity permeates the entire practice from beginning to end, your cultivation will never be subject to fluctuations or difficulties."

Ananda, let me ask you this. When you first resolved to seek supreme wisdom, was it because of the Tathagata's thirty-two marvelous features? If so, what did you use to see them, and what did you use to feel joy?

Ananda replied to the Tathagata. "World-Honored One, I used my mind and my eyes to experience joy. My eyes saw the wondrous appearance of the Tathagata, and my mind was filled with joy. Thus, I resolved to seek supreme wisdom, vowing to forsake life and death."

The Tathagata then said to Ananda: "As you have said, the true source of joy lies in the mind and the eyes. However, if you do not know where your mind and eyes are, you cannot overcome the troubles of mundane life. It is like a king who, when invaded by enemies, must know where the enemy is before he can send his army to defeat them. The reason you are still unable to escape the cycle of birth and death is because you are bound by your mind and eyes. So, tell me, where are your mind and eyes right now?"

Ananda said to the Tathagata: "World-Honored One! All sentient beings in the world believe that the mind, which perceives and understands external things, resides within the body. Even the blue lotus eyes of the Tathagata are located on the face. These superficial organs, such as the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, are merely situated on my face, but the mind that perceives and understands is hidden within the body."

The Tathagata then said to Ananda: "You are now sitting in the Buddha's lecture hall. Look and see, where is the Jeta Grove?"

Ananda replied: "World-Honored One, this pure and serene lecture hall with its many stories and layers is located within the Jeta Grove, which is outside the hall."

The Tathagata said: "Ananda, while you are in this lecture hall, what do you see first?"

Ananda replied: "World-Honored One, while in the lecture hall, I first see the Tathagata, then the assembly of people, and only when I look outside do I see the grove."

The Tathagata said: "Ananda, what allows you to see the grove?"

Ananda answered: "This great lecture hall has wide and open doors and windows on all sides, so I can see the grove while I am inside the hall."

At this moment, the Tathagata extended his golden arm amidst the assembly, gently placing his hand on Ananda's head. He then imparted a teaching to Ananda and the gathered assembly: "There is a supreme state of mind, characterized by unwavering concentration and undistracted focus, known as the Great Buddha's Crown, the Surangama King. Attaining this state encompasses thousands of Dharma practices. All the Tathagatas of the ten directions have entered the Great Way of the Buddha through this state, ultimately achieving the supreme fruit of Buddhahood. Listen carefully."

At that time, Ananda respectfully bowed and prostrated himself, receiving the Tathagata's teaching.

The Tathagata said to Ananda: "As you mentioned, when you are in the lecture hall, you can see the distant grove because the doors and windows are open."

However, there are also beings in the hall who cannot see the Tathagata; they can only see the things outside the hall."

Ananda replied: "World-Honored One! It is impossible for someone in the lecture hall to not see the Tathagata and only see the grove and springs outside."

The Tathagata then said: "Ananda, you are just like this. Your mind is inherently spiritual, clear, and bright. If the mind that perceives and understands everything is truly within your body, then it should first be able to clearly perceive the inside of your body. But many beings caught in the cycle of birth and death try to first look inside their body before observing external things. Even so, they cannot see their heart, liver, spleen, and stomach, nor do they see the growth of their nails and hair, or the movement and flow of their muscles, bones, and blood vessels. Why can't this truly clear and bright mind that understands everything perceive these things? If it cannot perceive the inside, how can it perceive the outside? Therefore, you should understand that your belief that the mind of awareness and clarity resides within the body is incorrect."

At that moment, Ananda respectfully bowed and said to the Tathagata: "Having listened to the Buddha's teachings, I have suddenly realized that my mind actually resides outside of my body. Why is this? It is like the light of a lamp: when the lamp is lit in a room, it first illuminates the inside of the room, then the doorway, and finally the courtyard. All sentient beings cannot perceive the inside of their bodies; they can only see external things. This is like the light of a lamp being situated outside the room, which is why it cannot illuminate the inside. Understanding this, there should no longer be any confusion, and one can attain the same wisdom as the Buddha's. This realization should not lead to any delusion or disorder, right?"

The Tathagata said to Ananda: "These bhikkhus followed me into the city to beg for alms and have now returned to the Jeta Grove. I have already eaten. Now, tell me, if one bhikkhu eats, will the others also be full?"

Ananda replied: "The others will not be full. World-Honored One, why is that? Even though these bhikkhus have all attained the fruit of Arhatship, each of them has their own body. If one person eats, how could the others be full?"

The Tathagata said to Ananda: "If, as you say, the mind that perceives and knows is actually outside the body, then the body and the mind would be in separate places and unrelated to each other. What the mind can perceive, the body would not be able to feel; what the body can feel, the mind would not be able to perceive. Now, as I extend my hand to you, when you see it with your eyes, can your perceiving mind recognize it?"

Ananda replied: "Yes, World-Honored One."

The Tathagata then said to Ananda: "If the perceiving mind can recognize it, then it is clear that the eyes and the mind are not separate and unrelated. So why do you still say that the mind is outside the body? Therefore, you should understand that your belief that the perceiving and knowing mind resides outside the body is also incorrect."

Ananda said to the Tathagata: "Just as you said, since the mind cannot perceive what is inside, it is said that the mind does not reside within the body. And because the body and mind can recognize each other and are not separate, it is also said that the mind is not outside the body. Now, I think that the perceiving mind is located somewhere."

The Tathagata asked: "Where is it located?"

Ananda replied: "This perceiving mind, even though it cannot perceive what is inside, can see external things. Therefore, I think that this perceiving mind is like something that is hidden within a root. It's like someone covering their eyes with a crystal bowl. Although the eyes are covered, they can still see things. Similarly, the perceiving mind emerges from a deep root. When vision appears, this vision can then distinguish and recognize things. This means that when the eyes see something, the mind can recognize it. So I believe that the reason the perceiving mind cannot perceive what is inside is because it is

hidden within a deep root, but it can perceive external things without obstruction. This is also because it is hidden within the root."

The Tathagata said to Ananda: "As you say, if the perceiving mind is hidden within a root, like being covered by a crystal bowl, then when someone covers their eyes with a crystal, they should be able to see rivers and mountains. But can they see the crystal itself?"

Ananda said: "World-Honored One, when someone covers their eyes with a crystal, they actually see the crystal."

The Tathagata then said to Ananda: "If your perceiving mind is together with the crystal, and you can see rivers and mountains, then why can't you see your own eyes? If you could see your eyes, then the eyes would be together with the scene before them, and the eyes themselves would become the scene. In that case, how could you still distinguish and recognize things? If you cannot see your eyes, why do you say that the perceiving mind is hidden within a root, just like the crystal covering your eyes? Therefore, your idea that the perceiving mind is hidden within a root, like being covered by a crystal, is incorrect."

Ananda said to the Tathagata: "World-Honored One, I now think that the bodies of sentient beings have internal organs hidden inside, while the eyes and ears are exposed outside. What is hidden inside is dark, and what is outside is bright. Now, when I face the Tathagata, if I open my eyes, I see brightness, which is called seeing outside. If I close my eyes and see darkness, this is called seeing inside. How should this be explained?"

The Tathagata replied to Ananda: "When you close your eyes and see darkness, is this darkness in front of your eyes or not? If it is in front of your eyes, then the darkness should be before your eyes. Why would you say that this is seeing inside? If it is indeed seeing inside, then when you are in a dark room without sunlight, moonlight, or a lamp, the darkness in the room should consist of your heart, lungs, and internal organs, and not be just something in front of

your eyes. If you cannot directly face your heart, lungs, and internal organs, how can you see them?

If you say that you see by looking outward, and this seeing also applies to looking inward, then there is no difference between seeing inside and seeing outside. If closing your eyes and seeing darkness means that this darkness is inside your body, then when you open your eyes and see brightness, why can't you see your face? If you can't see your face when looking outward, then you shouldn't be able to see inside when looking inward either. If you can see your face, then your perceiving mind and the root of your vision must be in the open space, so how can they be inside your body? If they are in the open space, then they naturally do not belong to your body but are external things. Now, if you see your face, it is part of your body. Even though your eyes perceive it, your body cannot sense that they are unified. At this point, you must think that the body and the eyes are two separate perceivers, so there should be two perceiving minds. This means that you, with one body, would have to become two Buddhas. Therefore, you should know that your belief that seeing darkness is seeing inside is incorrect."

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