Homage to

The Buddha’s Flower Garland Sutra of Great Expanded Teachings
and

The Oceanwide Flower Garland Assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

南無大方廣佛華嚴經
ná mó dà fāng guǎng fó huá yán jīng

華嚴海會佛菩薩
huá yán hǎi huì fó pú sà
Once the Bodhisattvas heard of these supreme practices,
They felt delighted and made wondrous flowers fall like rain.
Radiant with pure lights, they threw aloft precious pearls
As offerings to the Tathagatas, to praise their skill in speaking.

Multitudes of gods rejoiced in unison, hundreds of thousand in number,
And together in the midst of the air, threw clusters of jewels,
Along with flowers, garlands, necklaces, banners and streamers,
Jeweled canopies and fragrant balms, all as offerings to the Buddha.

The Deva King of Sovereignty and his following,
Felt great happiness, and resting in the air,
Tossed gemstones and created clouds, which they held up by
way of making offerings,
They said: “O Disciple of the Buddha, please teach us now.”
Limitless numbers of deva maidens hovered in the air,  
And with musical notes in unison, sang praises of the Buddha.  
All their songs sang words such as these:  
“The Buddha’s teachings chase away the illnesses of affictions.

“If one can connect with the nature of dharmas,  
And be impartial towards existence and non-existence,  
And motivated by a wish to save the world, cultivate with vigor,  
Such a person becomes reborn from the Buddha’s teachings,  
and is true Buddhist disciple.

“Having ended all evil-doing, he holds the precepts immaculately.  
Having understood that dharmas are not to blame, such a one  
can be truly patient.  
Aware of how the Dharma nature is free of hallmarks, one  
grows full of vigorous energy.

“Having ended all afflictions, one can enter every samadhi,  
Good at understanding the emptiness of the Dharma-nature,  
one discerns all dharmas.  
Full of the power of wisdom, one can save all beings.  
Dispelling the many evils, one is called ‘The Great Knight.’”
These marvelous words of praise, ten million-fold in number, rang out and then fell silent as all those present gazed up at the Buddha.

Moon of Liberation then said to Treasury of Vajra:
“What are the characteristic practices of somebody who masters the next Stage?”

Then, Vajra Treasury Bodhisattva said to Moon of Liberation Bodhisattva,
“Disciples of the Buddha, the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva who has already mastered the Fifth Stage, and who wishes to approach the Sixth Stage called Manifestation, should contemplate ten ways that dharmas are all the same. What are these ten ways?

They are: all dharmas are the same in having no hallmarks; the same in having no substance; the same in having no creation; the same in having no destruction; the same in being fundamentally pure; the same in not being a matter for conjecture; the same in being neither grasped nor dropped; the same in being still and quiet; the same in being like illusions, like dreams, like reflections, like echoes, like the moon’s reflection in water, like images in a mirror, like mirages and like transformations; and the same in their existence and non-existence being not two.

Thus the Bodhisattva contemplates how the inherent nature of all dharmas is pure. He flows along with it and does not oppose it, and he gains entry into the Sixth Stage, that of Manifestation.

He realizes two qualities of patience: the patience of clarity and the patience of according, but has not yet realized patience when dharmas no longer arise.
Disciples of the Buddha, when the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva makes these contemplations, he also puts Great Compassion first. His Great Compassion increases, and develops it to fullness and perfection. He sees how worlds are created and destroyed, and he thinks, “Everything in the world comes into being because of attachment to the self. Once someone gets free from that attachment, rebirth has no where else to stand.”

Then he thinks, “Ordinary people, lacking wisdom, calculate based on their sense of self. They constantly vacillate between existence and its opposite. They do not see correctly and thus make wrong choices. Those mistakes lead them along crooked roads. This behavior creates offenses, blessings and imperceptible karma, all of this karma accumulates and increases. As they do these deeds they plant seeds in the mind, seeds which lead to outflowing and grasping. These bring on their future existence, birth, old age and death.

That is to say, with karma as a field and consciousness as seeds, ignorance is covering darkness. The water of love brings the moisture, and pride and arrogance irrigate the field. The net of views increases, and sprouts of name and form emerge. Name and form grow and create the five sense organs. As the sense organs pair with their objects they make contact. When contact happens, feeling is produced. After feeling, seeking leads to love. Love grows and produces grasping. Grasping increases and existence arises. Once existence arises in each realm, a body with five skandhas comes about and there is birth. Once born, bodies decline into old age, ultimately, into death.

When old age and death happens, we feel intense misery, and because of that misery, there is worry, grief, sorrow and...
lamentation; a multitude of suffering accumulates. Suffering comes from causes and conditions, yet there is nothing there which can accumulate it. The process moves on towards its end, yet there is also nothing which ends.” Thus the Bodhisattva contemplates the characteristics of conditioned arising.

Disciples of the Buddha, this Bodhisattva Mahasattva further makes the following reflection: Ignorance is the name we give failure to understand truth in the primary sense. Activities is what we call karma that we create and its retribution. Consciousness is what we call the first thought on which activities rely and stop. Name and form is the name we give the four grasping skandhas that are born along with consciousness. Name and form increase and become the six places. Their three aspects which are sense organs, states and consciousnesses combine and become what we call contact. Contact happens along with feelings. Love happens when feelings are colored/dyed by attachments. Love increases and creates grasping. Existence comes about when karma with outflows arises from grasping. Birth comes about when the skandhas arise from karma. Old age happens when the skandhas mature. Death then is the destruction of the skandhas.
Then he thinks, “If indeed there were a doer of deeds then there would be something done. If there were no doer, then there would be nothing done. And then amid the primary meaning, there would be nothing at all to get.”

Disciples of the Buddha, the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva, then thinks, “Everything whatsoever in the three-fold realms is only a single thought. The Tathagata extrapolates this one thought into twelve distinct branches, each of which depends entirely upon that one thought for its existence. Why is it so?”

Because thoughts and desire arise together with the deeds that are done. Thoughts are consciousness; deeds are activities and confusion about activities is ignorance.

Name and form arise together with ignorance and thoughts and when name and form grow they create the six places.

The six places’ three divisions combine to create contact.

Contact then brings forth feeling.

When feeling becomes insatiable then love is the result.

Love holds on and does not let go until there is grasping.

The branch of existence creates existence, then birth comes from existence.

When birth ripens it ages and when age goes bad it creates death.”

Disciples of the Buddha! There are two kinds of karma created by ignorance: The first kind confuses living beings about what is conditioned and the second provides the cause for the arising of activities.
Activities also have two kinds of karma. The first is that of being able to bring forth future retributions. The second provides the cause for the arising of consciousness.

Consciousness also has two kinds of karma: the first kind allows all existence to continue; the second provides the cause for the arising of name and form.

Name and form also has two kinds of karma. The first mutually aids each other’s creation. The second provides the cause for the arising of the six locations.

The six locations also have two kinds of karma. The first grasps at its own states. The second provides the cause for the arising of contact.

Contact also has two kinds of karma. The first supports the subject of contact. The second provides the cause for the arising of feeling.

Feeling also has two kinds of karma. The first effects the reception of feelings, concerning specific instances of love, hate and so forth. The second provides the cause for the arising of love.

Love also has two kinds of karma. The first defiled attachment to loveable phenomena. The second provides the cause for the arising of grasping.

Grasping also has two kinds of karma. The first effects the continuation of afflictions. The second provides the cause for the arising of existence.
Existence also has two kinds of karma. The first brings about birth in the remaining destinies. The second provides the cause for the arising of birth.

Birth also has two kinds of karma. The first creates the skandhas. The second provides the cause for the arising of old age.

Old age also has two kinds of karma. The first effects the change of the organs. The second provides the cause for the arising of death.

Death also has two kinds of karma. The first destroys activities. The second is continuity that goes on ceaselessly because of the loss of awareness that happens at death.

Disciples of the Buddha, when “ignorance conditions activities” up to and including “birth conditions old age and death” have as their conditions, “ignorance up to and including birth,” they ceaselessly bring “activities up to old and death” into being.

When “ignorance stops then activities stops,” up to and including “the cessation of birth up to and including “then old age and death ceases,” no longer have “ignorance up to and including birth” as their conditions, they eradicate the coming into being of “activities” up to and including “old age and death.”

Disciples of the Buddha, when ignorance, love and grasping are not stopped, that is the path towards affliction.
When activities and existence are not stopped, that is the path towards the creation of karma.

When the other links are not stopped that is the path towards suffering.

Still, when we stop discriminating between before and after, all three paths cease. In this way, the three paths are free of self and what belongs to the self, but birth and death still exist, like a bundle of dried grass.

Furthermore, ignorance conditioning mental formations is contemplation of the past.

Consciousness up to and including feeling is contemplation of the present.

Love up to and including existence is contemplation of the future.

After that the twelve links continue to cycle through. But the contemplation of "When ignorance ends then mental formations cease" is the contemplation of how the linking process can cease.

Furthermore, the twelve limbs of existence are called the three-fold sufferings.

Within them, ignorance and mental formations up to and including the six places make up the suffering of mental formations. Contact and feeling are ordinary suffering of suffering, and the rest are the suffering of decay. But the contemplation of "When ignorance ends then mental formations end" is the cessation of suffering.

Moreover, ignorance conditioning mental formations means that the causes and conditions of ignorance bring about all mental formations.

"Once ignorance ceases, mental formations cease" means that once you are free of ignorance there are no further mental formations. The rest of the links work in the same way.

Moreover, "ignorance brings about mental formations" creates bonds and fetters. "When ignorance ceases mental formations