**The Avatamsaka Sutra**

**CHAPTER1 – PART4 & 5**

Translated in the Tang Dynasty by the Tripitaka Master Srãmana Siksananda of Khotan

**Explanation by VM. Hua**

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Fire-ruling Spirit Treasury of Universal Flames gained a passage into liberation of totally dispelling all darkness in the world. Fire-ruling Spirit Banner of Universally Assembled Light gained a passage into liberation of eradicating all sentient beings’ delusions and their sufferings of aimless drifting and scorching torment. Fire-ruling Spirit Great Light Universally Shining gained a passage into liberation of a treasury of great compassion and steadfast power of blessings.**

**Commentary:**

**Moreover** indicates that what was said before was not all, and more is to be said, namely that there was also **Fire-ruling Spirit Treasury of Universal Flames.** Her light shines everywhere; its blazing brilliance is multi-layered and unending, and so is called a treasury. This Fire-ruling Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of totally dispelling all darkness in the world.** With her treasury of universally blazing light, she is able to get rid of all the darkness in the world. She attained that passage into liberation.

The next **Fire-ruling Spirit** isnamed **Banner of Universally Assembled Light** because the lights from her fires merge together and resemble a jeweled banner. She **gained a passage into liberation of eradicating all sentient beings’ delusions and their sufferings of aimless drifting and scorching torment.** She can eradicate all sentient beings’ delusions--all types of confusion, ignorance, and dim-witted stupidity, as well as “their sufferings of aimless drifting and scorching torment.” This means the burning agony of revolving in the six paths of existence--at times, being a person, then a ghost, becoming an animal, then turning into an asura, suddenly being in the heavens, and suddenly returning to earth. That’s the reference in “aimless drifting and scorching torment.” The scorching torment is worst in the hells, where the sufferings are ceaseless. She attained that passage into liberation.

The subsequent **Fire-ruling Spirit** is named **Great Light Universally Shining**. Her fires’ lights shine throughout all worlds. She **gained the passage into liberation of a treasury of great compassion and steadfast power of blessings.** What is steadfast power of blessings? The force of such blessings is everlasting, steadfast and unmoving. She cultivated such power of blessings and attained a treasury of great compassion, by means of which she earnestly and compassionately teaches and transforms sentient beings. She uses her own power of blessings to sustain and help all sentient beings, enabling them all to attain the steadfast power of blessings and a treasury of great compassion. She gained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Fire-ruling Spirit Palaces of Multitudes of Wonders gained a passage into liberation of contemplating the Tathagata’s powers of spiritual penetrations and infinite manifestations.

Commentary:**

The next **Fire-ruling Spirit** is named **Palaces of Multitudes of Wonders** because she adorns her palaces with all sorts of wondrous gems. She **gained a passage into liberation of contemplating the Tathagata’s powers of spiritual penetrations.** She contemplates the Buddha’s strength of spiritual penetrations **and infinite manifestations**. She observeshow the Buddha, by means of his inconceivable might of great self-mastery and spiritual penetrations, appears in infinite manifestations in countless lands in order to teach and transform all sentient beings. She attained that passage to liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Fire-ruling Spirit Cowl of Infinite Light gained a passage into liberation of discovering light that shines throughout boundless realms of space.

Commentary:**

The previous section of sutra text spoke of how the Buddha teaches and transforms sentient beings in countless lands and oceans of eons. The present **Fire-ruling Spirit**, named **Cowl of Infinite Light**, **gained a passage into liberation of discovering light that shines throughout boundless realms of space.** This Fire-ruling Spirit’s light is infinite and shines endlessly. It illumines innumerable lands and limitless worlds, shining through infinitely many oceans of eons. Her light radiates to the ends of space and throughout the Dharma Realm, shining upon limitless and boundlessly many lands of sentient beings and oceans of eons. To the ends of space and the Dharma Realm, she inspires sentient beings to bring forth the resolve for bodhi. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Fire-ruling Spirit All Kinds of Blazing Eyes gained a passage into liberation of perceiving a serene radiance derived from adornment with all kinds of blessings.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Fire-ruling Spirit** is named **All Kinds of Blazing Eyes**. Her eyes emit various colors of light, such as green, yellow, red, white or black; and her eyes also send forth flames--hence her name. This overseer of fire **gained a passage into liberation of perceiving a serene radiance derived from adornment with all kinds of blessings.** She understands that the Buddha’s Dharma body is adorned with ten thousand blessings and ten thousand virtues. He has a kind of serene radiance that is the light of samadhi. That radiance is constantly emitted from within samadhi. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Fire-ruling Spirit Palaces Resembling Mount Sumeru in the Ten Directions gained a passage into liberation of extinguishing the blazing sufferings of all beings in all destinies in the worlds.

Commentary:**

The following **Fire-ruling Spirit** isnamed **Palaces Resembling Mount Sumeru in the Ten Directions**, suggesting being as lofty and adorned as all palaces throughout the ten directions, which resemble Mount Sumeru. She **gained a passage into liberation**, a state of the Buddha, **of being able to extinguish all the blazing sufferings of all beings in all destinies in the worlds**. “All beings…in the worlds” refers to the world of sentient beings. “All destinies” refers to the six paths in the cycle of rebirth, and more specifically to the four evil destinies of asuras, hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals--within which are all the blazing torments. “Blazing” indicates the sufferings are as intense as a raging bonfire that consumes all living things. Beings in the four evil destinies undergo torment comparable to being burned in a blazing fire. That was her passage to liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Fire-ruling Spirit Awesome Light of Self-Mastery gained a passage into liberation of enlightening all beings in all worlds with ease.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Fire-ruling Spirit** is named **Awesome Light of Self-Mastery**, for she has awesome virtue and emits a kind of light. She is also very free and at ease--very happy. This Fire-ruling Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of enlightening all beings in all worlds with ease.** “With ease” indicates there is nothing forced about this, the process being very natural and comfortable. She enables sentient beings in many worlds to become enlightened and to complete their work in the Way successfully. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Fire-ruling Spirit Light Illumining the Ten Directions gained a passage into liberation of refuting forever all foolish, attached views.**

**Commentary:**

Thenext **Fire-ruling Spirit** is named **Light Illumining the Ten Directions**. As you can see, most of these Fire-ruling Spirits have light from fire. This particular Fire-ruling Spirit was named for having light that shines throughout the ten directions. She **gained a passage into liberation of refuting forever all foolish, attached views.** People who lack of wisdom, clarity, and light are foolish. Yet fools do not consider themselves foolish. Not knowing that they themselves are fools, they insist on the exact opposite and say that intelligent people are fools. This is similar to the situation of a black crow landing on the back of a black pig and noticing the blackness of the pig, but not seeing its own blackness. Fools are the same way. They are fools precisely because they deny their own foolishness. Due to their foolishness, they have attachments that obstruct their understanding. Failing to understand situations, they become caught up in those situations. Rather than managing affairs, they are tied up by those affairs. With such attachments, they cannot achieve liberation, especially when they stubbornly cling to their own views. They insist that their own viewpoint is correct. An example of such intractable views can be found in our Way-place, where there are adults as well as children. When the children come here, they want to play. If the adults have a rigid outlook, they may claim that, because the children make so much noise here, their only recourse is not to attend the sutra lectures. They are so intransigent that they use the children as an excuse for not attending. Not only do they themselves not attend, they dissuade other people from attending. These are all instances of attachments to views. So long as people cling to such attached viewpoints, they cannot become enlightened. They cannot attain this passage to liberation. This Fire-ruling Spirit, however, could refute these types of foolish, attached views, and thus she did reach this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Fire-ruling Spirit Thunder Sound and Lightning Flash gained a passage into liberation of loosing a great boom of thunder resulting from fulfilling all vows. At that time Fire-ruling Spirit Treasury of Universal Flames received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Fire-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Fire-ruling Spirit** is named **Thunder Sound and Lightning Flash** because she has a voice of booming thunder that sends out great lightning flashes. She **gained a passage into liberation of loosing a great boom of thunder resulting from fulfilling all vows.** She helps all sentient beings carry out their vows. Whatever vows you make, she will assist you, affording protection and support so you can fulfill them. The great rumbling boom of her thunder can be heard and felt throughout the Dharma Realm. She attained that passage to liberation.

**At that time,** just at that moment, **Fire-ruling Spirit Treasury of Universal Flames received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power**. She availed herself of the greatly majestic spiritual power of the Buddha, **universally contemplated** all **the multitudes of Fire-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.** She used verse to describe the passages into liberation again.

**Sutra:**

**Contemplate the Tathagata’s power of vigor:
For inconceivable, vast, great kotis of eons,
He appears in the world to benefit beings,
Dispelling all obstructions of darkness.

Commentary:**

In the present stanza of four lines, when it says, “**Contemplate**,” ultimately who is speaking? And who should contemplate? When it says, “**the Tathagata’s**,” which Tathagata is meant? The line is addressed to all sentient beings. The speaker is Fire-ruling Spirit Treasury of Universal Flames, who was previously discussed. She says, “You should take a look. Everyone, look! All you sentient beings should see this.” What should you look at? At the Tathagata. Which Tathagata? Shakyamuni Buddha, who is also known as Shakyamuni Tathagata. What about him should you look at? At his Thirty-two Hallmarks and Eighty Characteristics? No. You ought to observe his **power of vigor**. The Tathagata’s was far more vigorous and energetic in cultivating the Way throughout infinitely many past eons than even the most vigorous of you are now. He could renounce his body, mind, and life. He sacrificed everything; gave up everything. He forgot about everything else and only practiced with vigor. He pushed out all thoughts of desire, sleep, and laziness, and drove away the Ten Great Demonic Hordes . He was able to be that vigorous.

The Buddha was vigorous in the daytime and throughout the night–constantly vigorous in the six periods of the day and night. He was able to cultivate without resting or slacking off; he applied effort and energetically pushed forward. He could do things others could not do, such as sacrificing his own body to feed a tiger. If you think about it, a tiger is an especially noxious beast, so why feed it? For the tiger to starve to death would mean one less tiger in the world, and one less menace for human beings. Why rescue one? But the Buddha was able to give up his own body to save a starving tiger. He was also able to cut off his flesh to feed a hawk. The hawk is also an evil predator, which preys upon other creatures. It’s a bandit among birds, the worst kind of bird. But he could slice of his own flesh to feed the hawk. See what powerful vigor he had! Which one of us could compare with him? Most of us just know how to selfishly pursue personal advantage; most of us do little to benefit others. Most of us only know how to be selfish and cannot be public-spirited and altruistic—indications that we lack vigor.

Observe the Buddha’s power of vigor. Truly, **for inconceivably vast, great kotis of eons, / He appears in the world to benefit beings.** The practices that he cultivated during vast, great kotis of eons, infinitely many eons, are all inconceivable. Why does the Buddha appear in the world? He does so in order to bring benefit to sentient beings. Why do we appear in the world? It’s to be feared that many of us end up bringing harm sentient beings. Many are intent upon usurping other beings’ benefits for themselves. Most of us are selfish and don’t realize we ought to benefit others. We only think of ourselves and don’t consider other people. The Buddha appears in the world to benefit sentient beings. We, on the other hand, often end up harming them. There are those whose attitude towards other beings is, “The sooner you die, the better! The things I should be using are all being used by you. If you were dead, I could enjoy a lot more of the material possessions of this world. More would fall to my share.” This even goes so far that a son may think, “Father, you have so much money. I wish you would die earlier so the money would be mine. Why haven’t you died yet?” This is truly a case of old people who haven’t died being regarded as thieves! There are sons who want their fathers to die. Think it over. Isn’t it the case that many of us come to the world and end up harming sentient beings?

The Buddha appears in the world for the sake of sentient beings**, dispelling all obstructions of darkness.** He can demolish all the impediments caused by the dull delusion of sentient beings, their obstacles of afflictions and obstacles of knowledge. When all their obstructions and impediments of dullness are gone, sentient beings become clear-headed and wise. Fire-ruling Spirit Treasury of Universal Flames achieved that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Sentient beings are obtuse and opinionated,
Their afflictions like a torrent and a blaze;
With skillful means, the Guiding Master quells them.
Banner of Universally Assembled Light awakens thus.**

**His blessings and virtues, like space, are never ending.
One seeks their limits and boundaries in vain.
Such is the Buddha’s unmoving power of great compassion.
Light Shining awakens to this and is delighted.

Commentary:**

**Sentient beings are obtuse and opinionated.** Obtuse sentient beings are in the majority, and intelligent beings are in the minority. There’s only one intelligent being in ten thousand. The intelligent being has proper knowledge and proper views, whereas the obtuse beings hold various wrong opinions. “Opinionated” means subscribing to any of the various wrong views. Beings with wrong views get afflicted, whereas those with proper knowledge and views have no afflictions. Afflictions arise from misguided knowledge and views. **Their afflictions** are **like a torrent or a blaze.** What are those afflictions like? They resemble rushing flood waters that uproot trees in their path and destroy houses and buildings. They are also similar to a huge blazing torch that burns things up. Obtuseness and wrong views resemble a raging flood and a blazing fire.

**With skillful means, the Guiding Master quells them.** The Guiding Master is the Buddha. The Buddha is a Guiding Master who gathers in sentient beings and expediently extinguishes their afflictions completely. The Buddha employs various expedient Dharma-doors to quell those afflictions that are like a raging flood and a blazing fire. **Banner of Universally Assembled Light awakens thus.** Fire-ruling Spirit Banner of Universally Assembled Light enters deeply into this passage to liberation.

**His blessings and virtues, like space, are never ending.** The Buddha’s blessings and virtues resemble the void in that they never come to an end. Even though space has nothing to it, you can’t say there is no space. The Buddha’s blessings and virtues resemble space in that they could never run out, never be used up. **One seeks their limits and boundaries in vain.** If you tried to discover just what ultimate perimeters there are to the Buddha’s blessings and virtues, they could not be found. You could never calculate them or understand them through numerical reckoning or analogy. **Such is the Buddha’s unmoving power of great compassion.** The still and unmoving strength derives from the Buddha’s greatly compassionate mind, which is a treasury of great compassion. **Light Shining awakens to this and is delighted.** Fire-ruling Spirit (Great) Light (Universally) Shining understands this state and is joyful at heart.

The verses in the Sutra text were contributed by Ananda when the Sutra Treasury was being compiled. It wasn’t that a particular individual presented them in that way at the time described in the Sutra. The verses reiterate what was expressed in the preceding prose section. It’s not at all certain that the particular spirit spoke in just that way. She might not have used exactly that line to praise the Buddha, but another line instead, and when the Sutra Treasury was being compiled, Ananda summarized the meanings. When the introduction says that such and such a spirit “received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power and spoke the following verse(s),” it definitely doesn’t say that spirit represented all ten spirits and spoke the ten stanzas which follow. She just received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power to speak her own four lines of verse, and afterwards each spirit spoke her own four-line verse.

This point is very important! You can’t use a literal interpretation as the basis for understanding the Sutra. That would be a mistake. That’s what’s known as relying on words to understanding the meaning. Being attached to the text of the Sutra basically does not accord with the Buddhadharma. Before the Nirvana Sutra arrived in China in its entirety, people read the first half of the Sutra, which said, “Icchantikas do not have the Buddha-nature.” Dharma Master Daosheng, however, maintained that icchantikas do have the Buddha-nature. While the second half of the Sutra was not yet available, no one could accept his statement. When the rest of the sutra finally arrived, part two did indeed say that icchantikas do have the Buddha-nature.

**Sutra:**

**I contemplate the Tathagata’s cultivations:
Boundless, they stretch through oceans of eons.
Such displays of powers and spiritual penetrations
Palaces of Multitudes of Wonders spirit understands.**

**Commentary:**

The Venerable Ananda, during the compilation of the Sutra Treasury, used reiterative verses to restate the ideas conveyed in prose. The verses also represent what the Fire-ruling Spirits had said. Since the prose section had already named the first Fire-ruling Spirit, her name does not appear in the four-line stanza. That’s why some of you thought the subsequent stanzas were also spoken by that Fire-ruling Spirit, but this interpretation does not accord with the meaning of the sutra. The sutra means that each Fire-ruling Spirit elucidates the state of the Buddha that she herself has achieved, the passage into liberation that she herself has entered. These verses are spoken by the Venerable Ananda, who uses verses to express the principles once again. Fearing that people might not have completely understood the previous meanings, he restates them in verse form.

Now the text says: **I contemplate the Tathagata’s cultivations**. Who is saying, “I contemplate”? Fire-ruling Spirit Palaces of Multitudes of Wonders is saying “I” of herself, and it was Ananda who represented her in saying that when Ananda wrote the line, “I contemplate the Tathagata’s cultivations,” referring to observing the practices cultivated by the Tathagata. **Boundless, they stretch through oceans of eons.** Those practices were cultivated throughout oceans of eons. And so we need to look at the repeating verses along with their corresponding prose section in order to understand them. The prior section of prose said, “Fire-ruling Spirit Palaces of Multitudes of Wonders gained a passage into liberation of contemplating the Tathagata’s powers of spiritual penetrations and infinite manifestions.” The powers of spiritual penetrations that the Tathagata attained were the practices he cultivated throughout oceans of eons. “Oceans of eons” isn’t just referring to one great eon, or two or three, or even hundreds of thousands of great eons. Rather, the eons are so many they are like a great ocean–infinitely many eons. That inconceivable and boundless amount is termed oceans of eons. This extended throughout such oceans of eons, that you could never find their boundaries or state ultimately how many great eons there are. There are no bounds to them. They could not be known through calculation or analogy; hence they are said to be boundless.

The text continues: **Such displays of powers and spiritual penetrations.** Over such a vast periods of time, the Buddha displayed all kinds of spiritual penetrations to teach and transform sentient beings, inspiring all beings to bring forth the resolve for bodhi. This is what the Spirit Palaces of Multitudes of Wonders understands. You don’t have to use any other words to explain this, just the words “**Palaces of Multitudes of Wonders spirit understands.** ” That line of verse indicates that the verse was spoken by the compiler of the Treasury of Sutras. Therefore, when the previous prose section mentioned a certain Fire-ruling Spirit by name and said he “received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power and spoke the following verse(s),” if that Fire-ruling Spirit received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power and spoke the following verse(s), why couldn’t the other Fire-ruling Spirits also receive the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power and speak the following verse(s)? All of you should reflect upon this principle. You ought to be able to figure it out without my having to explain it in detail. I didn’t go into the details before, because I thought all of you, being so much more intelligent that I am and so learned, would understand this principle. It never occurred to me that you would go so far as to consult a commentary about this principle. And is the commentary necessarily correct? Commentaries represent individual points of view. You have your commentary, I have mine, and other people have theirs. But it’s not for certain that any particular commentary can stand the test. Then why are the commentaries included in the Tripitaka? It’s not for certain that everything included in the Tripitaka is totally right! For that reason Mencius said: “It would be better not to have books than to have total faith in books. In the Wucheng Chapter I select only two or three passages.”

“Wucheng” is the name of a section in The Book of History. The Book of History says: “When King Wu attacked the tyrant Zhou, iron pestles floated in the blood that was shed in the slaughter.” Those pestles weighed a few hundred catties. The iron pestles wielded by warriors of those times weighed a minimum of two hundred catties, about three hundred pounds. You make the calculation: How many people would have to be killed for that to happen? King Wu was the best of kings, and the tyrant Zhou was the worst. King Wu’s army was a humane and righteous army. Using such an army, when the most humane person, the most virtuous king, was attacking the least humane of people, how could the number of people killed been so great that their blood made iron pestles float? Yet that’s what The Book of History says. If you believe this, well, is such a thing possible? Could this actually happen? How much blood would be needed to float iron pestles? For that reason, Mencius said it would be better not to have books at all than to believe the principles set forth in books entirely. We could do without books that only tend to make people confused.

We are studying the Buddhadharma, and all the principles in the Buddha’s Sutras tell people to break their attachments. As long as we have attachments, we will never achieve genuine wisdom. Those attachments will hinder us. Hence there is the saying: “When confused, one is a sentient being. When enlightened, one is a Buddha.” Buddhahood is a state of freedom from attachments. If we are attached, then we are still sentient being. But when we become enlightened, we are Buddhas. That’s why, after the Buddha achieved Buddhahood, he exclaimed, “Strange indeed! Strange indeed! Strange indeed! All sentient beings have the wisdom and virtuous characteristics of a Tathagata. It is only due to confused thinking and attachments that they fail to realize them.” Why do we lack wisdom? It’s due to attachments. If we’re attached to fame, we will die from fame. If we’re attached to profit, we will die from profit. Consequently, fame and profit are two major killers of people.

**Sutra:**

**Unthinkable, his achievements in cultivation for kotis of eons;
The quest for their boundaries ends in mystery.
He proclaims the truth of all dharmas, delighting all.
Infinite Light spirit contemplates thus and sees.**

**Commentary:**

While compiling the Sutra Treasury, Ananda spoke this four-line stanza to represent the passage into liberation of Fire-ruling Spirit Cowl of Infinite Light. He said that Cowl of Infinite Light had attained a passage to liberation. What was it? **Unthinkable, his achievements in cultivation for kotis of eons**. She knew how the Buddha had cultivated inconceivably many practices, inconceivably many spiritual penetrations, inconceivably many wondrous functionings for innumerable kotis of eons. In general, everything about this was inconceivable. **The quest for their boundaries ends in mystery.** Any search for the limits of the wonderful functionings of the Buddha’s spiritual penetrations, and of his adornments with merit and virtue, “ends in mystery.” Their limits are unfathomable. **He proclaims the truth of all dharmas, delighting all.** The Buddha speaks the wonderful Dharma of Truth, the wondrous Dharma of the True Mark, the wonderful Dharma which has no characteristics yet characterizes everything. Upon hearing such Dharma, all beings rejoice immensely, believe and accept it, and put it into practice. **Infinite Light spirit contemplates thus and sees.** This is the passage to liberation, the state contemplated and viewed by Fire-ruling Spirit Cowl of Infinite Light.

**Sutra:**

**The vast, great multitudes in all the ten directions
Behold the Buddha manifest before them.
His peaceful, quiescent light illuminates the world.
Wondrous Flames spirit understands thus.**

**Commentary:**

The ten directions are the zenith, the nadir, north, south, east, west, and the four intermediate points, which are the northeast, the northwest, the southeast, and the southwest. **The vast, great multitudes in all the ten directions**, so many sentient beings, all **behold the Buddha manifest before them**. Those vast, great multitudes of sentient beings are all before the Buddha, gazing up at him. **His peaceful, quiescent light illuminates the world**. The Buddha radiates a tranquil light from within samadhi. That light shines upon all sentient beings in the worlds. **Wondrous Flames spirit understands thus.** This state is the passage to liberation that Fire-ruling Spirit Wondrous Flames comprehends.

**Sutra:**

**In all the worlds the Muni appears.
Seated within each palace, he sends
A rain of infinitely vast great Dharma everywhere.
This is the spiritual state of Ten Directions spirit.

Commentary:**

**In all the worlds the Muni appears.** The Muni is Shakyamuni Buddha. Shakya means “able to be humane,” and Muni means “still and silent.” This refers to the Buddha, who can be patient and who is also still and silent. He appears in every single world-system, **seated within all palaces.** The Buddha appears in the world, manifesting in a royal family. Kings dwell in palaces, and the Buddha appears in the world sitting in a palace. Also, when the Buddha is seated underneath the Bodhi tree, a palace made of the seven precious things appears, and the Buddha sits within that. **He sends arain of infinitely vast great Dharma everywhere.** The Buddha speaks Dharma for sentient beings everywhere, the way auspicious clouds appear in the sky. He teaches Dharma that fulfills sentient beings’ wishes, thereby liberating them. That’s why the text describes the Buddha as “sending a rain of infinitely vast great Dharma everywhere,” infinitely many great Dharma-doors. **This is the spiritual state of Ten Directions spirit.** According to Ananda, this is the state that Fire-ruling Spirit (Palaces Resembling Mount Sumeru in the) Ten Directions attained.

**Sutra:**

**Most profound is the wisdom of the Buddhas.
Sovereign over dharmas, they appear in the world.
They completely clarify that which is true.
Awesome Light rejoices in this insight.

Commentary:**

**Most profound is the wisdom of the Buddhas.** We could say “the Buddhas” refers to all the Buddhas of the ten directions and the periods of time; or we could say this is Shakyamuni Buddha. The Buddhas’ wisdom of prajna is most profound. No sentient being has higher or more profound wisdom than the Buddha. The Buddha appears in the world as a Great Guiding Master. He uncovers the wisdom inherent in all sentient beings, enabling them to return to the origin and see their own original face. The Buddha uses various analogies to speak the Dharma for sentient beings, helping them to understand the Buddhadharma. That’s why the text says: **Sovereign over dharmas, they appear in the world.** “Sovereign over dharmas” refers to the Buddha’s realization of perfect enlightenment. He totally understands both worldly and world-transcending dharmas, and so he is at ease with all dharmas. That means nothing he does is forced or contrived. He appears in the world very naturally and with great ease. He manifests in the world to help sentient beings open the knowledge and vision of a Buddha, disclose the knowledge and vision of a Buddha, awaken to the knowledge and vision of a Buddha, and enter the knowledge and vision of a Buddha. He causes all sentient beings to open, disclose, awaken to and enter the knowledge and vision of a Buddha. **They completely clarify that which is true.** The Buddha’s speaking of Dharma gives expression to true principle. Truth never changes. True principle has been followed from ancient times until the present , in all lands. **Awesome Light rejoices in this insight.** Fire-ruling Spirit Awesome Light of Self-Mastery understands this passage into liberation, and enters this state. For that reason, he is extremely delighted and rejoices exceptionally–and so the text says: **Awesome Light rejoices in this insight.

Sutra:**

**The delusion of views casts a darkness that confuses
Sentient beings, so they drift and revolve without cease.
In order to teach them, the Buddha opens wondrous Dharma doors.
Illumining Directions spirit enters and awakens thus.**

**Commentary:**

**The delusion of views casts a darkness that confuses.** “Views” indicates all sorts of wrong views. Wrong views are due to wrong knowledge. If our outlook and understanding are wrong, we will be ignorant. If our outlook and understanding are proper, we will have wisdom. With wrong views, we will be stupid and deluded, hence in the dark. Delusion is a kind of covering. It covers over the light of our wisdom. **Deluded sentient beings drift and revolve without cease.** Since we sentient beings have wrong knowledge and views, from limitless eons up to now we have still not escaped from the revolving wheel of the six paths. All that is due to wrong knowledge and views. Such misguided views confuse and delude people. Confused and deluded, they are unable to end birth and death, to get out of the wheel of rebirth in the six paths. Instead, beings flow and turn in the cycle of rebirths in those paths: suddenly in the heavens, suddenly on earth, suddenly among hungry ghosts, suddenly becoming animals, suddenly being people, suddenly turning into asuras. Such lack of clarity, such obscure ignorance, prevents beings from transcending the six-path wheel where they turn round and round. **In order to teach them, the Buddha opens wondrous Dharma doors:** The Buddha, for the sake of deluded sentient beings, reveals the doors of most subtle, wonderful and inconceivable Dharma. He tells people to recite the Buddha's name and be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. He instructs them on holding mantras and realizing Buddhahood in this very life. He encourages sentient beings to cultivate all kinds of practices, and so the text says: “In order to teach them, the Buddha opens wondrous Dharma doors.” Wondrous Dharma doors enable beings to end birth and death and transcend the cycle of rebirth. **Illumining Directions enters and awakens thus.** Fire-ruling Spirit Light Illumining the Ten Directions understands this state and enters this passage to liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Vast, great, inconceivable is his approach to vows.
The Powers and Paramitas have been cultivated to purity.
Everything now manifests according to his previous vows.
Rumbling Sound spirit understands thus.

Commentary:**

**Vast, great, inconceivable is his approach to vows.** There are approaches to vows, approaches to faith and approaches to practice. Faith, vows and practice are the Three Requisites. If you wish to become a Buddha, to cultivate and end birth and death, you must start by having faith. However, it’s not sufficient simply to believe; you also need to make vows. For example, if you want to be reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, you must make the vow to attain rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Should you wish to be reborn in the Eastern Pure Vaidurya Land, you must vow to be reborn in the Eastern Pure Vaidurya Land. Therefore, the approach to vows is vast, great, and inconceivable.

**The Powers and Paramitas have been cultivated to purity.** The Powers are the Ten Powers, and Paramitas refers to the Ten Paramitas. The Buddha has cultivated the Ten Powers and Ten Paramitas to perfection, that is, to the point of purity. He has attained the fundamental pure substance. **Everything now manifests according to his previous vows.** Purity has already been achieved. In accordance with his past vows, and his cultivation in life after life and time after time for limitlessly many eons, “everything now manifests.” It’s somewhat like watching a film; frame after frame flashes on the screen; or like listening to an audio tape, where phrase after phrase is heard. Everything is now revealed. **Rumbling Sound spirit understands thus.** Fire-ruling Spirit Thunder Sound understands this and enters this passage to liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Water-ruling Spirit Creating Banners of Clouds Everywhere gained a passage into liberation of impartially benefiting all sentient beings with kindness.**

Commentary:

**Moreover** indicates that the principles described before have not yet been completely presented and are continued here. The next spirit, the first **Water-ruling Spirit** is named **Creating Banners of Clouds Everywhere** . This Water-ruling Spirit can flourish in any place, like banners of clouds forming everywhere. She is one of the guardian spirits of water. We have seen how space has guardian spirits, and so does earth. There are spirits watching over fire, and spirits in control of wind. Both fire and water have spirits who preside over them. Water-ruling Spirits are in charge of water. We human beings think we can use water as we please, unaware that there are spirits in control of it. Actually, everything in the world is watched by spirits. If there were no spirits in control of water, floods would spread out far and wide, inundating the entire world, and every place would be water. However, because there are spirits in control, the areas where water travels are clearly defined. Water flows downwards, although sometimes it flows upwards, which is very rare.

I remember that one time when I was in Manchuria, in the village of Eastern Well, I encountered a king of water-demons who came there with the express intention of drowning the group of five of us who were there. At that time, the water in the wells rose twenty or thirty feet, overflowing the mouths of the wells. There was extremely heavy rainfall from the sky, as if water were being poured down by the barrel. Eight hundred homes were washed away, and more than thirty people died. People were drowned while standing on their brick-beds. [In contrast with the South, Northerners have fire-heated high brick beds.] The water was that deep. The house where I was staying was in the lowest hollow, surrounded by a wattle-fence of wood that left a lot of openings through which water could enter. On that occasion, the water was more than ten feet high outside the fence, but inside the yard it was only one or two feet deep. Hence no water reached the brick-beds where I was staying.

Water can benefit people, but it can also harm them. In excessive amounts it can be harmful, but in small quantities it is beneficial to people. Therefore Lao Zi said: “People of superior goodness,” people who are exceptionally good, “are like water. Water benefits the myriad things but does not contend.” It doesn’t declare, “’You sentient beings are lucky to have me to keep you alive. I am very beneficial to you!” It doesn’t contend. “It dwells in places people do not like.” Water stays in the very places people don’t want to stay in, because they are the lowest spots. No one wants to live in the most inferior locations, but water is willing to take the very lowest positions. That’s the meaning of: “It dwells in places people do not like, hence it accords with the Way.” For that reason, water is in harmony with the Way, and people of superior goodness are that way too.

This particular Water-ruling Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of impartially benefiting all sentient beings with kindness**, using kindness and compassion to aid all sentient beings. She attained that passage to liberation.

Sutra:

**Water-ruling Spirit Sea-Tide Cloud Sound gained a passage into liberation of being boundlessly adorned with Dharma.**

Commentary:

The next **Water-ruling Spirit** is named **Sea-Tide Cloud Sound**. This Water-ruling Spirit has power like that of the clouds and the sound of the ocean tide. She **gained a passage into liberation of being boundlessly adorned with Dharma,** of all Dharma-doors whatsoever adorning the Path to Buddhahood. She attained that passage into liberation.

Sutra:

**Water-ruling Spirit Wheel-like Cowl of Wondrous Colors gained a passage into liberation of contemplating those to be taught and universally gathering them in with skill-in-means.**

Commentary:

The next **Water-ruling Spirit** is named **Wheel-like Cowl of Wondrous Colors.** She **gained a passage into liberation of contemplating** the potentials of all **those** sentient beings suited **to be taught** by her first, **and universally gathering them in with skill-in-means**. She adopts a great variety of expedient Dharma-doors to gather in those sentient beings, enabling them to achieve a sort of enlightenment. That’s the passage to liberation she attained.

**Sutra:**

**Water-ruling Spirit Whirlpools of Skillful Expedients gained a passage into liberation of universally proclaiming the profound states of all Buddhas.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Water-ruling Spirit** is named **Whirlpools of Skillful Expedients.** “Skillful” refers to being very intelligent and understanding the Dharmas of skill-in-means. “Whirlpools” indicates that this kind of Dharma is spoken over and over again in the employment of provisional expedient methods to teach and transform sentient beings. She attained a kind of samadhi of skill-in-means.

This Water-ruling Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of universally proclaiming the profound states of all Buddhas.** She can describe all the deep states of all the Buddhas of the ten directions, using various methods to proclaim them. Sometimes she uses light to express expedient Dharma doors. At other times she makes her proclamations of the Dharma doors of skill-in-means through the medium of the sound of flowing water. Hence this is called universally proclaiming the profound states of all Buddhas, and is the kind of passage to liberation that she attained.

**Sutra:**

**Water-ruling Spirit Immaculate Accumulation of Fragrance gained a passage into liberation of universally displaying a grand, pristine radiance.

Commentary:**

Thenext **Water-ruling Spirit** is named **Immaculate Accumulation of Fragrance.** She is free of all defilement. “Accumulation of fragrance” is as in the kitchen, which is the area where fragrances accumulate. The kitchen’s accumulation of fragrance refers to how the five flavors are blended exceptionally well, so there are all kinds of aromas and tastes. Water-ruling Spirit Accumulation of Fragrance **gained a passage into liberation of universally displaying a grand, pristine radiance.** She can purify the Dharma Realm with her universal display of intense, pure radiance. To the ends of space and throughout the Dharma Realm she reveals a great treasury of light. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Water-ruling Spirit Bridge to Blessings and Voice of Light gained a passage into liberation of purifying Dharma Realms so that they are devoid of characteristics and a nature.

Commentary:**

**Water-ruling Spirit Bridge to Blessings and Voice of Light gained a passage into liberation of purifying Dharma Realms**, of causing the Dharma Realms of the ten directions to return to purity, **so that they are devoid of characteristics and a nature**. The purification of the Dharma Realms indicates that they unite with space, so they have no appearances. Nor do they have a nature. In other words: “All dharmas from their origin are perpetually still and quiescent, and cannot be expressed by words.” There is no way you can use words and language to articulate them. She achieved the liberation of purifying Dharma Realms so they have no characteristics and no nature. Even if they have no characteristics, perhaps they have a nature? Not so. They are also without a nature. Having neither marks nor nature, they merge with emptiness. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Water-ruling Spirit Comfortable Contentment gained a passage into liberation of sharing an ocean of unending great compassion.

Commentary:**

It’s just to be feared that people do not know how to be content. Discontentment is suffering, whereas contentment is bliss, hence the saying: “One who knows how to be content will always be happy. One who can be patient will naturally be at peace.” To be happy all the time, we need to be content with our lot; and to have natural tranquility is itself freedom and ease. The inability to be content brings acute suffering.

What do we mean by not knowing to be content? Someone, to start with, might have no money and no house, and have to live along the roadside, even lacking clothing. At that time he might think, “It would be nice to have a house to live in.” Everyday he would think and think about housing, clothing, and food. The day might come when he actually does have a house and clothes, and food to eat. The house is adequate to keep out wind and rain. The clothes suffice to protect his body. The food available to him can stave off the hunger and thirst. Yet, when that happens, he starts musing, “It would be nice to live in a bigger house. I would prefer to eat very nutritious food - at least get to eat some cottage cheese or butter, or steak and pork chops.” Before, he didn’t have anything to eat, but now that he does, he wants the food to be good. Previously he had no clothes to wear, but now that he has some, he wants to wear fine clothes. In the beginning he didn’t have a house to live in, but now that he has a place to live in, he wishes for a very fine house. He lacks the ability to be content.

When he does get his home and food and clothes, he further aspires to hold public office. Being head of the County Board of Supervisors turns out to be a minor position, too insignificant for him, so he wants to be the State Governor. After being Governor of his State, or perhaps the Mayor of a major city, he wants to be President. Once he is President, he has ambitions to be world-leader. Having achieved the position of world-leader, he muses about going to the heavens to be the Heavenly Lord. So, you see how much suffering it is not to be content, whereas being content brings happiness. “One who can be content will always be happy, and will always be at ease.” She **gained a passage into liberation of sharing an ocean of unending great compassion.** She constantly cherishes the wish to bestow happiness on sentient beings and to eradicate their suffering. Hence, hers is the passage into liberation of sharing an ocean of unending great compassion.

**Sutra:**

**Water-ruling Spirit Kindly Sound of Pure Joy gained a passage into liberation of acting as a treasury of great delight within the Way-places of assemblies of Bodhisattvas.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Water-ruling Spirit** is named **Kindly Sound of Pure Joy.** She is always joyous at heart, and is very good at speaking Dharma. Therefore, she **gained a passage into liberation of acting as a treasury of great delight within the Way -p laces of assemblies of Bodhisattvas.** Bodhisattvas benefit themselves and benefit others, enlighten themselves and enlighten others, rescue themselves and rescue others; they make a great resolve for *bodhi*. In Way-places where multitudes of Bodhisattvas reside, she serves as a treasury of great delight. She enables all the Bodhisattvas in the Bodhimandas, all those great multitudes in the ocean-wide assemblies, to experience tremendous delight. Their great happiness is like a treasury, and so her passage into liberation is a treasury of delight. She attained that state and that passage to liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Water-ruling Spirit Universally Manifesting Majestic Light gained a passage into liberation of appearing everywhere through the unimpeded strength of enormous blessings and virtue.

Commentary:**

The next **Water-ruling Spirit** is named **Universally Manifesting Majestic Light.** She appears everywhere and has a great resplendence about her. This Water-ruling Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of appearing everywhere through the unimpeded strength of enormous blessings and virtue.** Her ability to appear in lands as many as motes of dust throughout the ten directions is unhindered. She employs the power of tremendous, boundless blessings and virtue. Blessings are cultivated, whereas virtue comes from one’s actions. Such blessings and virtue are immense, limitless and boundless, and through their power there can be universal manifestation of Buddhas in worlds as numerous as dust motes in the ten directions. Water-ruling Spirit Universally Manifesting Majestic Light understood that state and entered that passage to liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Water-ruling Spirit Roaring Sound Pervading Seas gained a passage into liberation of contemplating all sentient beings and bringing forth expedients like emptiness to tame and subdue them.

Commentary:**

The next **Water-ruling Spirit** is named **Roaring Sound Pervading Seas**, for the sound her roar pervades the seas of sentient beings in lands numerous as motes of dust. She **gained a passage into liberation of contemplating all sentient beings** in worlds throughout the ten directions, **and bringing forth expedients like emptiness to tame and subdue them.** She uses skill-in-means like emptiness to tame and subdue all those sentient beings like emptiness in the ten directions, teaching and transforming them all. Yet even though she teaches and transforms all sentient beings, sentient beings actually teach themselves and transform themselves. Consequently, her actions are as void, for she is not attached to what she does. That’s why the text says “like emptiness.” This principle is also stated in the *Vajra Sutra*, which describes taking all sentient beings to quiescence, without a single sentient being having been taken to quiescence. Even if the realm of sentient beings were empty, the Buddha’s vows would still not be fulfilled. Therefore, she observes all sentient beings and makes vows as expansive as space, using her vast spiritual penetrations to regulate those sentient beings. She employs all sorts of expedient Dharma doors to tame and subdue sentient beings. That’s her passage to liberation.

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Water-ruling Spirit Creating Banners of Clouds Everywhere received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Water-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time,** when Ananda had finished speaking the previous section of prose, he then used verses to restate what had been said in prose. The first **Water-ruling Spirit** isnamed **Creating Banners of Clouds Everywhere**. That particular Water-ruling Spirit **received the Buddha’s** great **awesome spiritual** p**ower,** just as all the other Water-ruling Spirits did. She **universally contemplated** the dispositions and conditioning factors of **the multitudes of Water-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse**, restating the prose section in verse.

**Sutra:**

**Countlessly many passages leading to purity and kindness
Are revealed within a single, wondrous hallmark of the Thus Come One;
The same is true of each and every hallmark.
Therefore, those who gaze upon him never tire of their beholding.**

**Commentary:**

Water-ruling Spirit Creating Banners of Clouds Everywhere gained the passage into liberation of impartially benefiting all sentient beings with kindness. Now the meaning of the prose passage is being restated, and discusses **countlessly many passages leading to purity and kindness.** These gates that open upon kindness are pure, free from defiling dharmas. No defiling dharmas means no thoughts of desire. What is the function of these passages into kindness and compassion? They benefit sentient beings, impartially benefiting all. The kindness and compassion aid all beings equally. How many of these doors are there? **Countlessly many.** Where did so many passages into purity and kindness come from? They **are revealed within a single, wondrous hallmark of the Thus Come One.** The tip of a single hair of the Tathagata is replete with all those many entrances into pure kindness and compassion. The tips of hair of the Thus Come One are quite numerous to begin with, and the tip of every hair holds passages as many as dust motes in lands. Every single pore contains infinitely many pure doors of kindness and compassion, and so it says: **The same is true of each and every hallmark.** Within each of the Tathagata's hallmarks are found boundlessly many of such vast, great, pure doors of kindness to benefit all sentient beings. How many doors of kindness would you say there were in all? **Therefore, those who gaze upon him never tire of their beholding.** Since each hallmark of the Tathagata is replete with infinitely many doors of kindness and compassion, and all his hallmarks are thus, consequently, sentient beings are delighted to see the Buddha and to hear the Dharma. They gaze at the Buddha, their eyes never leaving him for an instant. It is as if their eyes have entered samadhi; their gaze never wavers from the Buddha. Why is that? It’s because they can never get enough. Sentient beings are attached to appearances, and when they see the radiance of the Buddha’s fine hallmarks and characteristics, they never want to leave him. They would like to gaze at the Buddha forever.

**Sutra:**

**When cultivating in the past, the World Honored One
Made pilgrimages to all Thus Come Ones’ abodes.
He practiced in various ways–never weary, never lax:
Cloud Sound enters such expedients as these.**

**Commentary:**

This verse concerns the aforementioned Water-ruling Spirit named Sea-Tide Cloud Sound, who gained a passage into liberation of boundless adornment with Dharma. That she “gained” it means she achieved that state and understood how diligently the Buddha cultivated when he was at the level of planting causes. That’s why her verse talks about **When cultivating in the past, the World Honored One.** The World Honored One is honored in the world and beyond it. He is honored by people in the world and by those who have transcended the world. This is one of the Ten Titles of a Buddha. “In the past” refers to when the Buddha was at the level of planting causes. Now that the Buddha has achieved Buddhahood, he is at the level of the fruition. How did he cultivate at the time of planting causes?He **made pilgrimages to all Thus Come Ones’ abodes.** He went everywhere and was universally present in all places. What places were those? He went to all locations where there were Buddhas. Which Buddhas? He went to see all those who had already become Buddhas before him. Shakyamuni Buddha had not yet become a Buddha. Since he wasn’t a Buddha yet, he drew near to all previous Buddhas, made offerings to them, and revered them. **He practiced in various ways—never weary, never lax.** “ In various ways” describes how he employed whatever Dharma doors he was capable of in order to make offerings to the Buddhas, to worship and respect all Buddhas, and to draw near all Buddhas. He forgot himself in his quest for the Dharma. In his pursuit of the Dharma he went without sleep and food, and disregarded even illness as he sought the Dharma.

“Does a Buddha still get sick?” you may ask. Well, that was before the Buddha realized Buddhahood. And even after he became a Buddha, he would sometimes have headaches. He underwent the retributions of the metal spear and of horsefeed. What were those retributions? In a certain lifetime the Buddha had been a young lad. At that time, some people had dragged a fish to the shore. The boy saw the fish and hit it several times on the head with a staff just for the fun of it . [Note: Another version of the story is that the boy hit the fish in order to knock it unconscious, so it would not feel the pain of being cut up by the fishermen.] As a result, after he became a Buddha, he still suffered occasional headaches for having hit the fish. The law of cause and effect is never off by a hair.

In general, the Buddha was not lazy, lax, or remiss when he was cultivating at the level of planting causes. According to the precepts, if a Dharma Master is delivering a sutra lecture or speaking Dharma less than 40 (Chinese) miles [between 14 and 15 English miles] away, you ought to go listen to the Dharma. If, instead of going to listen to the Dharma, you sleep or take it easy where you are, you break a precept. In the past when the Buddha was seeking the Dharma and cultivating, he practiced at all times and was never lax or lazy. **Cloud Sound enters such expedients as these.** All of the various kinds of expedient Dharma doors that were just described constitute the passage to liberation that Water-ruling Spirit Sea-Tide Cloud Sound enters.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha traverses the ten direction while remaining
Quiescent and unmoving, neither coming nor going.
He responds to sentient beings; they perceive his teaching.
Thus understands Wheel-like Cowl.

Commentary:**

The Buddha is described as being in all the ten directions. Our world-system has ten directions, and so do other world-systems; and so there is not just one set of ten directions, but rather a great many world-systems of ten directions. Thus it says: **The Buddha traverses the ten directions while remaining / Quiescent and unmoving, neither coming nor going.** The Buddha is still and quiet, without movement. Since he is still and does not move, he neither comes nor goes, hence the quotation: “The Thus Come One does not come from anywhere, nor does he go anywhere.” He doesn’t come or go, yet **he responds to sentient beings; they perceive his teaching.** The Buddha uses great powers of spiritual penetrations to enable all the sentient beings who have affinities with the Buddha to see the Buddha. **Thus understands Wheel-like Cowl.** This state is the passage to liberation understood by Water-ruling Spirit Wheel-Like Cowl of Wondrous Colors.

[What follows is from Bhikshuni Heng Hsien’s notes. As it is interesting in connection with Water-ruling Spirits, it is included here.]

**Venerable Master:** Would the people who just arrived from Oregon like to say a few words? How was your trip?

**Man:** It was a good trip down. No problems.

**Venerable Master:** No rain?

**Man:** Wednesday night it rained a lot, and was very bad driving. But Thursday was the best weather in three weeks.

**Ven. Master:** When you wrote earlier you said you feared flooding.

**Man:** After we started, there was no rain.

**Venerable Master:** This is a response from your sincerity, because of your whole attitude about the possibility of a flood and rain the first day, and in spite of that coming anyway. It was a response. It was just a test. How are the two children?

**Man:** Fine. They were better on this trip than on any other we’ve made.

**Venerable Master:** Y our coming from such a long distance despite your concerns about water—rain; your being so sincere to come all this way to take refuge makes me very happy. It would be good if everyone could have your attitude, whether traveling by plane or drive by car.

**Sutra:**

**Inestimable are the states of the Thus Come One.
Not a single sentient being can fathom them.
His wondrous voice sounds throughout the ten directions:
Thus is the realm of practice of the spirit Whirlpools of Skills.**

**Commentary:**

**Inestimable are the states of the Thus Come One.** This describes how the states of the Buddha are inconceivable. Due to their inconceivability, they are boundless and immeasurable. N**ot a single sentient being can fathom them.** From the vantage point of sentient beings who have not yet opened the Buddha's knowledge and vision, not yet entered the Buddha's knowledge and vision, so long as they have not yet opened, disclosed, awakened to and entered the knowledge and vision of a Buddha, they are unable to understand the Buddha's state. As to the Buddha, **his wondrous voice sounds throughout the ten directions.** The Buddha sends forth a single kind of subtle and wondrous sound, and that single wondrous sound is not just heard in this world-system; rather, it extends throughout the world-systems of the ten directions. **Thus is the realm of practice of the spirit Whirlpools of Skills.** This state is the principle and the passage to liberation cultivated by Water-ruling Spirit Whirlpools of Skillful Expedients.

**Sutra:**

**Eternal, the World Honored One’s radiance.
Inconceivable, it fills the Dharma Realm.
He speaks Dharma to teach and save sentient beings.
Spirit Immaculate Fragrance contemplates thus.**

**Commentary:**

**Eternal, the World Honored One’s radiance.** The light emitted by the World Honnored One, the Buddha, is multi-layered and inexhaustible. That being the case, there is no time when it comes to an end. **Inconceivable, it fills the Dharma Realm.** A single ray of light of the Buddha’s can extend throughout space and pervade the Dharma Realm, filling it all. It cannot be conceptualized by thought or expressed in words. **He speaks Dharma to teach and save sentient beings.** The Buddha proclaims all kinds of wonderful Dharma to teach, transform, save, and liberate beings, enabling them to leave suffering and attain bliss. Water-ruling **Spirit Immaculate Fragrance contemplates thus.** Water-ruling Spirit Immaculate Accumulation of Fragrance personally observes this state; she herself understands and realizes this state.

**Sutra:**

**The Tathagata is pure as space.
Formless, without marks, he pervades the ten directions,
Yet all the assemblies see him, excepting none:
Light of Blessings spirit well contemplates thus.

Commentary:**

**The Tathagata is pure as space.** The Tathagata’s Dharma-body is immaculate, the same as emptiness. It is not located anywhere, nor is it absent from anywhere, which is why it is said to resemble space. **Formless, without marks, he pervades the ten directions*.*** Even though he extends throughout the Dharma Realms of the ten directions, nonetheless he has no characteristics and no form. Though he is markless and formless, he is able to fill all Dharma Realms in the ten directions. The Buddha’s realm of being is just that wonderful and inconceivable. **Yet all the assemblies see him, excepting none:** In spite of the fact that the Buddha has no characteristics and no appearance, he still can make himself visible to all sentient beings in the assemblies in the Way-places without exception. No one fails to see the Buddha. **Light of Blessings spirit well contemplates thus.** Water-ruling Spirit Bridge to Blessings and Voice of Light understands this state.

**Sutra:**

**In ages past, the Buddha cultivated methods of great compassion–-His mind vast, pervasive–-commensurate with sentient beings. Cloud-like, henceforth he appears in the world:
This passage to liberation Contentment understands.**

**Commentary:**

**In ages past, the Buddha cultivated methods of great compassion *.*** Previously, the Buddha cultivated the practice of great compassion, both alleviating sentient beings’ suffering and bestowing happiness upon them. Such was the gate to great compassion he learned to enter, **his mind vast, pervasive–commensurate with sentient beings.** When the Buddha was cultivating the practice of great compassion, his mind was especially vast and extensive, all-pervasive, equal in measure to the number of sentient beings. The Buddha cultivated as many means of great compassion as there are sentient beings, so there was an equal matching with sentient beings. **Cloud-like, henceforth he appears in the world:** For that reason, the Buddha is comparable to a cloud in the sky, appearing above the earth, bringing refreshing coolness to over-heated sentient beings. We who believe in the Buddha should know about this. The Buddha resembles a cloud over our world, providing cool and refreshing shade to sentient beings. **This passage to liberation** Water-ruling Spirit **Contentment understands.**

**Sutra:**

**All in the lands of the ten directions
See the Tathagata seated on his throne,
And open up and awaken to great *bodhi*.
Sound of Joy enters thus.**

**Commentary:**

**All in the lands of the ten directions / See the Tathagata seated on his throne.** You all know what the directions are, you have been to all lands, and you have seen all this. **Open up and awaken to great *bodhi*.** You have all experienced awakening. **Sound of Joy enters thus.** You have all been joyous – isn’t that the case? You have been to all the lands of the ten directions, and have come back from them. You have all seen the Tathagata seated on his throne, but then forgotten with the passage of time. You have all been enlightened, but have grown confused over time. Isn’t that the way it is? It is that way. Water-ruling Spirit Sound of Joy understands this state and declares it to all of you now in the great assembly.

**Sutra:**

**Nothing can hinder the actions of the Tathagata.
He pervades all lands in the ten directions.
In place after place he displays great spiritual penetrations.
Universally Manifesting Majestic Light awakens thus.

Commentary:**

**Nothing can hinder the actions of the Tathagata.** None of the things he does is blocked or obstructed. **He pervades all lands in the ten directions.** He is able to remain seated in stillness where he is, yet respond throughout the ten directions. Still and unmoving, without leaving where he is sitting, his responses accordingly extend through the ten directions. Wherever there is a being who evokes a response, a sentient being who wishes to see the Buddha and hear the Dharma, the Buddha naturally responds to that evocation. He never fails to fulfill a wish. Anyone who wishes to see the Buddha can do so. Therefore the text goes on to say: **In place after place he displays great spiritual penetrations.** In every location in the seas of lands as many as fine motes of dust in the Dharma Realms of the ten directions, he reveals his enormous spiritual penetrations. Those great spiritual penetrations are such that the great can include the small, and the small can include the great. The great and small can encompass each other. Lands as many as fine motes of dust are not outside a single mote of dust. A single dust mote can contain lands as numerous as motes of dust. Although a particle of dust is small, it can encompass the great. And even though the lands of the ten directions are great, nothing small is lost in them. The small appears within the great, and the great appears within the small. That is why they are called great spiritual penetrations.

**Universally Manifesting Majestic Light awakens thus.** When you hear this described, it seems very simple. Nonetheless, this principle is not all that easy to understand. How can something small contain something huge? And how can something huge retain the details of the small? It’s possible for the great to contain the small, but it doesn’t make sense for the small to contain the great. However, from the vantage point of the Buddha, there is no great and no small, no inside and no outside. There isn’t anything huge or anything tiny. There isn’t any inside or and any outside. Everything interpenetrates without obstruction. Water-ruling Spirit Universally Manifesting Majestic Light has awakened to this state. It just happened not very long ago. Just now she has understood this, whereas earlier she didn’t understand it very well. Therefore, she has just awakened to and understood this principle.

Sutra:

**He cultivates boundless expedients,
Commensurate with and filling sentient beings’ many realms.
His spiritual penetrations never cease their wondrous functionings.
Roaring Sound Pervading Seas enters thus.

Moreover, Ocean-ruling Spirit Manifesting Jeweled Lights gained a passage into liberation of impartially bestowing seas of blessings and virtues upon sentient beings, so they become physically adorned, as if with myriad jewels. Ocean-ruling Spirit Indestructible Vajra Banner gained a passage into liberation of using clever expedients to guard and protect sentient beings’ good roots. Ocean-ruling Spirit Untainted by Defilement gained a passage into liberation of draining the seas of sentient beings’ afflictions. Ocean-ruling Spirit Ever-Dwelling in Waves gained a passage into liberation of freeing sentient beings from the evil paths.**

**Commentary:**

**He cultivates boundless expedients.** Water-ruling Spirit Roaring Sound Pervading Seas has an understanding of the Buddha’s state, and so she says: The Buddha cultivates boundlessly many expedient practices, all kinds of skill-in-means. They are **commensurate with and filling sentient beings’ many realms.** These Dharma doors of expedient means are as numerous as sentient beings. They totally fill the realms of all sentient beings. **His spiritual penetrations never cease their wondrous functionings.** The Buddha’s powers of spiritual penetrations along with his inconceivable states of wondrous functionings never stop, even momentarily. Rather, the Buddha constantly manifests spiritual penetrations and wondrous functionings to teach and transform sentient beings. **Roaring Sound Pervading Seas enters thus.** Water-ruling Spirit Roaring Sound Pervading Seas enters this passage into liberation.

**Moreover** indicates that the principles presented previously were not fully elaborated, and something more is to be said. Now, the first **Ocean-ruling Spirit** to be discussed is named **Manifesting Jeweled Lights,** because she can make all kinds of gem-like radiance appear. She **gained a passage into liberation of impartially bestowing oceans of blessings and virtues upon sentient beings.** She attained the state of the Buddha of using an egalitarian, nondiscriminatory attitude to bestow seas of blessings and virtues upon sentient beings, **so they become physically adorned, as if with myriad jewels** such as gold, silver, vaidurya, crystal, mother-of pearl, red pearls and carnelian. She attained that passage into liberation.

The next **Ocean-ruling Spirit** is named **Indestructible Vajra Banner**. Her name conveys the meaning of solidity. This Ocean-ruling Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of using clever expedients,** skill-in-means, **to guard and protect sentient beings’ good roots.** She doesn’t allow sentient beings’ good roots to be destroyed. Instead, she protects them and helps sentient beings to perfect their good roots. Her preventing sentient beings’ good roots from being destroyed led to her becoming an Ocean-ruling Spirit with the name Indestructible Vajra Banner. She employs clever, expedient means to keep guard over the roots of goodness of all sentient beings. That is the state of the Buddha that she achieved, and the passage to liberation that she entered.

**Ocean-ruling SpiritUntainted by Defilement** is extremely pure, wi thout a speck of filth, hence her name. She **gained a passage into liberation of draining the seas of sentient beings’ afflictions.** She can dry up the oceans of the afflictions of sentient beings. “Draining” means getting rid of them, drying them up, so afflictions are gone and beings’ wisdom opens up. Why haven’t we opened our wisdom? It’s because our afflictions are too heavy. Our seas of afflictions have not dried up. Probably this Ocean-ruling Spirit isn’t paying any attention to us. If she were, then the seas of our afflictions would also have dried up, and we would have achieved this passage into liberation. However, now that we have listened to the Flower Adornment Sutra, this Ocean-ruling Spirit is sure to drain the oceans of our afflictions dry. Nevertheless, we should not rely on her to dry up our oceans of afflictions. We should drain our own seas of afflictions, and not wait for this Ocean-ruling Spirit to do all the work, or give her a lot of trouble. We should find a way to dry up our own oceans of afflictions. That will make this Ocean-ruling Spirit very happy, and she will definitely never want to leave this passage into liberation.

The next **Ocean-ruling Spirit** is named **Ever-Dwelling in Waves.** One way to explain her name is that she always dwells in the breakers. Another interpretation is that she can make the waves “dwell” or subside, so the ocean is always calm. Either explanation makes sense. “Ever Making Waves Dwell” would be the translation corresponding to the second interpretation that she always stops the waves. On the other hand, “Ever-Dwelling in Waves” stresses her not fearing any wave whatsoever, to the point that she passes her life in the breakers. This Ocean-ruling Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of freeing sentient beings from the evil paths.** She achieved the Dharma door of helping sentient beings get far away from the three evil paths and reach the three good paths. That’s her passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Ocean-ruling Spirit Auspicious Jeweled Moon gained a passage into liberation of universally dispelling the somber darkness of dullness and delusion. Ocean-ruling Spirit Wondrous Floral Dragon Cowl gained a passage into liberation of eradicating suffering and bestowing happiness on those in the destinies. Ocean-ruling Spirit Universally Maintaining Flavor and Light gained a passage into liberation of purifying and regulating the views and deluded natures of sentient beings.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Ocean-ruling Spirit** is named **Auspicious Jeweled Moon.** She **gained a passage into liberation,** a state of the Buddha, of knowing about the Buddha’s **universally dispelling the somber darkness of dullness and delusion.** The Buddha totally gets rid of all the darkness of stupidity and delusion. When the obscurity of foolishness is gone, the light of understanding emerges. Once the gloom of delusion is dispelled, brilliant light shines forth. This Ocean-ruling Spirit attains that passage to liberation and understands that state of the Buddha.

The following **Ocean-ruling Spirit** is named **Wondrous Floral Dragon Cowl.** She **gained a passage into liberation of eradicating suffering and bestowing happiness on those in the destinies**, meaning in the destinies of hungry ghosts, hell-beings, animals, and asuras. The agonies and troubles in those four evil destinies are overwhelming, but she can dispel them. She further enables sentient beings of those four evil destinies to be happy, to leave suffering and attain bliss.

**Ocean-ruling SpiritUniversally Maintaining Flavor and Lightgained a passage into liberation of purifying and regulating the views and deluded natures of sentient beings. “**Purifying” means cleaning up, and “regulating” means keeping in order, in this case regulating sentient beings’ views and deluded natures. She adjusts and balances their deluded natures by adding some wisdom to them, so the delusion is lessened. She purifies and regulates sentient beings’ views, “views” here meaning wrong knowledge and wrong views--the sixty-two views. She can adjust all those types of wrong opinions and outlooks, changing their deluded natures. She doesn’t cut off their deluded natures, but rather she transforms them into natures of wisdom. Wisdom counteracts delusion. This Ocean-ruling Spirit attained that passage to liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Ocean-ruling Spirit Jeweled Blaze of Floral Light gained a passage into liberation of committing to the bodhi resolve, the seed nature that produces all gems. Ocean-ruling Spirit Wondrous Vajra Cowl gained a passage into liberation of the ocean of developing the meritorious qualities of an unmoving mind. Ocean-ruling Spirit Thunderous Sound of Ocean Tides gained a passage into liberation of attaining the samadhi that serves as a gateway for universal entry to Dharma Realms.**

**At that time, Ocean-ruling Spirit Manifesting Jeweled Lights received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Ocean-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Ocean-ruling Spirit** is named **Jeweled Blaze of Floral Light.** She **gained a passage into liberation of committing to the bodhi resolve, the seed nature that produces all gems.** The seed nature of gems is the solid resolve, the firm resolve for bodhi. How firm is it? It’s as solid as vajra. Furthermore, this seed nature of gems is the fundamental substance of all precepts. When we left-home people receive the precepts, we receive the precepts of the seed nature of jewels. Once we attain the seed nature that produces all jewels, then day by day that seed nature of gems increases, that resolve for bodhi augments. She attained that passage into liberation.

The following **Ocean-ruling Spirit** is named **Wondrous Vajra Cowl.** She **gained a passage into liberation of developing the ocean of meritorious qualities of an unmoving mind.** She achieved a state of the Buddha and came to know about the oceanic merit and virtue of an unmoving mind. An unmoving mind is constantly still and quiet, and its meritorious qualities are so numerous that they resemble an ocean. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Ocean-ruling Spirit Thunderous Sound of Ocean Tides gained a passage into liberation of attaining the samadhi that serves as a gateway for universal entry to Dharma Realms**. One enters all Dharma Realms, and so this is the concentration, the samadhi, of universal entry into all Dharma Realms. She achieved such a concentration and entered such a passage into liberation.

**At that time, Ocean-ruling Spirit Manifesting Jeweled Lights received the Buddha’s** great, **awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Ocean-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.** She used verses to reiterate what had been said in the prose, stating it in more detail.

**Venerable Master:** Are there any questions?

**Guo Yi:** I would like to know more about the samadhi of the Dharma Realms, and where to find out more about it.

**Venerable Master:** The samadhi of Dharma Realms is in a single particle of dust. That’s where you can find it. Who else has a question?

**Guo Sui:** Do Ocean-ruling Spirits cause tidal waves and other catastrophes such as floods, inundations, torrents, and so forth?

**Venerable Master:** Not at all. If it weren’t for them, the oceans would long ago have drowned everyone. Since they are watching over the oceans, the water does not exceed its boundaries and drown people. Ocean-ruling Spirits help people, guarding and protecting them. They don’t harm people. Without these Ocean-ruling Spirits, the waters might have risen to the heavens by now.

Earlier on I discussed Ocean-ruling Spirit either “Ever-Dwelling in Waves” or “Ever Making Waves Dwell.” All of you should decide which interpretation is correct. Since we already discussed this spirit, we don’t need to repeat the explanation. If you remember it, you remember; if you don’t, you don’t. There’s no need to re-lecture it. Just use one of the names. You don’t have to repeat the two meanings I gave before. If there is time left, the translators can use it to translate. If they don’t understand or they forgot because they weren’t paying attention, that’s their problem. I explained to you all very clearly, and yet you still don’t know which meaning is correct.

Which of the meanings is more accurate, more forceful, and more complete? It’s decisions like this that determine whether you have Dharma-selecting Vision or not. You should use whichever interpretation expresses the principle more fully. There might not only be two interpretations, but millions upon millions of them. If you kept on explaining, there would be many, many meanings. And if you were to go into detailed and subtle analysis, then the meanings would be infinite and unending. However, just interpreting in a general way, which of the two meanings should be used? Do you know?

**Disciple:** Yes.

**Venerable Master:** Explain to the rest of them.

**Sutra:**

**During oceans of eons—inconceivable and vast--
He made offerings to all the Thus Come Ones,
Bequeathing the merit and virtue to all beings everywhere.
Thus, he is upright and adorned beyond compare.**

**In each and every world-system he appears,
Knowing the disposition and propensities of each and every being.
For their sakes he universally proclaims oceans of great Dharma.
Solid Banner joyfully awakens thus.**

**Commentary:**

Earlier, the prose section described how Ocean-ruling Spirit Manifesting Jeweled Lights received the Buddha’s great, awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Ocean-ruling Spirits, and spoke a four-line stanza. That verse of four lines was a restatement, by the compilers of the Sutra Treasury, of the previous prose, filling in meanings not completely presented there. Hence the verse discusses how **during oceans of eons—inconceivable and vast**. Ocean-ruling Spirit Manifesting Jeweled Lights speaks this verse, describing how for oceans of more great eons than could be conceptualized by thought or expressed in words—one knows not how many since they are limitless and boundless like the ocean—**he,** the Buddha, **made offerings to all the Thus Come Ones.** While at the level of planting causes, the Buddha made offerings to all Buddhas for a very long period of time. Sometimes he used wealth as the offering, sometimes he offered Dharma, and sometimes he made offerings of his body, mind, and life to the Buddhas. He gave his body, mind, and life to the Buddhas, employing that kind of sincerity in his quest for Buddhahood. An example of this can be seen here now at Gold Mountain Monastery. All the left-home people and laypeople take time out from their busy schedules to study and practice the Buddhadharma, apply and maintain it. That too is making offerings to all Thus Come Ones. We too are giving our bodies, minds, lives, wealth and Dharma as offerings to the Triple Jewel.

The Buddha cultivated all types of merit and virtue through making offerings to all Thus Come Ones, **bequeathing the merit and virtue to all beings everywhere.** He universally dedicated all his merit and virtue to sentient beings. He said, “I now transfer all the merit and virtue which I have to all sentient beings throughout the Dharma Realm. I don’t wish to enjoy the reward of that merit and virtue myself. I only hope all sentient beings will leave suffering and attain bliss. May the merit and virtue that I have cultivated enable their karmic obstructions to be eradicated and their good roots to increase and grow, so they will diligently cultivate the proper path and soon reach Buddhahood.” He made that kind of transference to all sentient beings. **Thus, he is upright and adorned beyond compare.** Since he dedicated all his merit and virtue to all sentient beings of the Dharma Realm, the Buddha’s body is most upright and adorned, especially subtle and wonderful, far beyond compare. No sentient being in the heavens or on the earth could equal the radiance of the Buddha’s hallmarks and characteristics, the wonder of his adornments, his Thirty-two Hallmarks and Eighty Subtle Characteristics.

**In each and every world-system he appears.** The Buddha manifests in all worlds, **knowing the disposition and propensities of each and every being.** The Buddha knows whether or not sentient beings have good roots, and what sentient beings are wishing for. **For their sakes he universally proclaims oceans of great Dharma.** For all sentient beings everywhere, he propagates the great Dharma, which is like the immense ocean. **Solid Banner joyfully awakens thus.** Ocean-ruling Spirit Solid Banner delights in, awakens to, and enters this passage to liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Unfathomable, the great rain from the Dharma clouds
Bestowed by multitudes of Guiding Masters in all worlds.
It desiccates the limitless ocean of sufferings:
Free from Defilement enters this Dharma door.**

**Commentary:**

**Unfathomable, the great rain from the Dharma clouds, / Bestowed by multitudes of Guiding Masters in all worlds.** “ Multitudes of Guiding Masters,” meaning the Buddhas, send out great Dharma clouds everywhere, which pour down great Dharma rain. This kind of state cannot be understood, guessed at, reckoned or known by ordinary beings.

**It desiccates the limitless ocean of sufferings.** The Dharma clouds’ great rain can eradicate the afflictions of sentient beings--their greed, anger and delusion. It can rid them of inexhaustible and unending amounts of afflictions. The “ocean of sufferings” refers to every type of suffering whatsoever. The sufferings are limitless and boundless, and so constitute an ocean. **Free from Defilement enters this Dharma door.** Ocean-ruling Spirit Free from Defilement understands this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Sentient beings are shrouded in afflictions.
They flow and turn in the destinies, undergoing every sort of woe. For them he discloses the realm of the Thus Come Ones.
Palaces in All Waters spirit enters this passage.**

**Commentary:**

**Sentient beings are shrouded in afflictions.** Basically, all sentient beings possess wisdom and are fundamentally no different from the Buddhas. However, because afflictions obscure their wisdom, that light does not shine forth. Just as when the sun is blocked by clouds, beings are shrouded by afflictions. **They flow and turn in the destinies, undergoing every sort of woe.** Shrouded by afflictions, they wander in the six paths of rebirth, suddenly in the heavens, suddenly on earth, suddenly among hungry ghosts, and suddenly among animals. They revolve non-stop in all destinies, undergoing myriad sufferings. **For them he discloses the realm of the Thus Come Ones.** For the sake of sentient beings, the Buddha discloses the state of the Thus Come Ones, hoping beings will attain it, that is, become enlightened and achieve Buddhahood. **Palaces in All Waters enters this passage**. Ocean-ruling Spirit Palaces in All Waters enters this door. Ocean-ruling Spirit Palaces in All Waters understands this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Over inconceivable oceans of eons, the Buddha
Cultivated all practices—inexhaustible in number,
Rending forever the net of beings’ delusion.
Jeweled Moon understands and enters thus.**

**The Buddha sees sentient beings forever fearful and alarmed.
They flow and turn in birth and death’s colossal sea.
For them, he shows the Thus Come One’s unsurpassed Way:
Dragon Cowl understands thus, and rejoices.

Commentary:**

**Over inconceivable oceans of eons, the Buddha / Cultivated all practices—inexhaustible in number.** The Buddha, in the past, cultivated all practices for such a very long time that it is termed “inconceivable oceans of eons.” How long are oceans of eons? The duration of time involved is so lengthy that it is beyond the mind’s ability to imagine. He renounced what was hard to renounce, practiced what was hard to practice, endured the unendurable, and yielded what was hard to yield. In general, the Dharma doors that were hardest to cultivate were the very ones he cultivated. And those hard-to-practice Dharma doors were inexhaustibly many. That resulted in his **rending forever the net of beings’ delusion.** He slashes through the net of sentient beings’ stupidity--not only once, but conclusively. He breaks that net. Ocean-ruling Spirit **Jeweled Moon understands and enters thus,** awakening to and entering this state .

[While the tape was being changed, the Venerable Master had disciples explain the first line of the next stanza of verse.]

Explain the line: **The Buddha sees sentient beings forever fearful and alarmed.** Who is afraid of whom, and who is not afraid of whom? [Two disciples explain.] Why did I tell the two of you to explain this? That’s because it’s very easy to misinterpret this line. It says: “The Buddha sees sentient beings forever fearful and alarmed,” and one might get the mistaken idea, “Oh, the Buddha is afraid of sentient beings. As soon as he sees them, he’s scared. The Buddha fears sentient beings more than anything.” If you miss the point, you might explain it that way, because on the surface it seems to be saying that when the Buddha sees sentient beings, he is always fearful and alarmed. But that’s not the meaning. It means that the Buddha observes how sentient beings themselves are always becoming fearful and scared. What are they afraid of? They are afraid because the problem of birth and death has not been solved. It’s not [as one disciple had explained] that they’re afraid of how hard it is to cultivate various entrances into the Dharma, because sentient beings don’t yet know what the Dharma is or what the entrances are. They are undergoing repeated deaths and rebirths, and not even trying to get out. It hasn’t yet occurred to them that they should try to get out of the Three Realms.

Therefore, the next line says **they flow and turn in birth and death’s colossal sea.** What is the most terrifying aspect of this? It’s that within the immense ocean of death and rebirth, they are born and then die, die and then are reborn, over and over again. Human beings live for several decades and then die, just as mayflies are born in the morning and die by the evening. The few decades of our lives seem, to the gods, like the brief life spans of mayflies that are born at daybreak and die at dusk. Fifty years in the human realm are just a day and a night in the Heaven of the Four Heavenly Kings. Comparatively speaking, isn’t that like being born at dawn and dying by nightfall? From the perspective of the Trayastrimsha Heaven, a hundred years among humans equals one day and one night in that heaven, the “Heaven of the Thirty-three.” The few brief decades of our lives do not even amount to a day and a night in the eyes of those gods. We die before that, like mayflies. The gods look upon people the way people look upon mayflies, as being born in the morning and dying by the evening. We experience the several decades as being a long time, but the mayfly also feels the time it passes through in that one day is quite lengthy, like hundreds of years. Perhaps for it one second is like a year of time for us, and so it lives to be over a hundred “years” of age, or at least many decades.

Consequently, repeatedly dying and being reborn in the great ocean of birth and death is extremely terrifying for sentient beings. On the other hand, you could say the Buddha is afraid for sentient beings, that he constantly stands in for sentient beings and is fearful for their sakes, since they have not ended birth and death. Hence, **for them, he shows the Thus Come One’s unsurpassed Way**. He points out the unsurpassed Path to Buddhahood.

**Dragon Cowl understands thus, and rejoices.** Ocean-ruling Spirit Dragon Cowl understands this state and is delighted in mind, filled with joy.

**Disciple:** There is a discrepancy between the name given Ocean-ruling Spirit number four in the prose and in the verses.

**Venerable Master:** It amounts to the same thing. There is not much difference between the two. There’s no need to expend too much effort at this point--you won’t get enlightened from doing so. The spirits’ names are all false. If you try to find out their names, it will be a lot of trouble. Guo Ning can also be called “Heng Ching” and “Steve.” The three are one and the one is three. The Spirit called “Ever-Dwelling in Waves” is later called “Palaces in All Waters,” isn’t that right? He can have a palace in the water. People see it as a wave, but he sees it as a palace. The eyes of ordinary people see things differently from the way spirits view them. For example, this bowing bench contains the Dharma Realms of the ten directions, but we ordinary beings just see it as a bowing bench.

**Sutra:**

**Inconceivable, all Buddhas’ spheres—
At one with space and the entire Dharma Realm,
They cleanse all beings’ nets of delusion:
Maintaining Flavor thus proclaims and tells.**

#### Pure and inconceivable, the Buddha Eye****Apprehends all and everything.**** ****The Buddha shows sentient beings many wondrous paths.********Thus awakens the mind of Floral Light.****

**Commentary:**

**Inconceivable, all Buddhas’ spheres**…We sentient beings have our states of sentient beings, Buddhas have the states of Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas have Bodhisattva states. The states of sentient beings are conceivable, and the states of Bodhisattvas can also be conceptualized. Only the states of the Buddhas are inconceivable. The mind cannot conceive of them, nor can words express them. They cannot be reached by the thought processes and verbal expressions of ordinary beings.

They are **at one with space and the entire Dharma Realm.** As to the states of all Buddhas, all Buddhas are just the Dharma Realm, and the Dharma Realm itself is all Buddhas. The Dharma Realm and all Buddhas are both just like space. “At one with” indicates there is no excess and no deficiency, but rather absolute equality.

**They cleanse all beings’ nets of delusion.** The Buddhas’ states and their spiritual penetrations function wonderfully to purify and regulate sentient beings’ nets of foolish delusions, their lack of clarity and their confusion.

Sentient beings can be compared to flies. A fly zooms around to the north and south, east and west, up and down. It’s ultimate aim is to find something to eat, but often it pursues many futile paths without finding anything edible. It expends considerable energy without necessarily obtaining anything to eat. It keeps on flying because it is deluded. Deeply confused, it flies everywhere. How did it come to be a fly doomed to fly all over the place without any success? The reason is that at the level of planting causes, which means in previous lifetimes, it entertained all kinds of random thoughts—its thoughts flew all over the place. It admired the fly for being free to do whatever it wanted with no one controlling it. As a result of liking the fly, it became a fly. That’s how it entered the net of delusions. Fortunately for it, the Buddha can cleanse its net of delusions, and in the future it still has the opportunity to become a Buddha.

**Maintaining Flavor thus proclaims and tells.** Ocean-ruling Spirit Maintaining Flavor and Light comprehends and fathoms the principles just discussed.

**Pure and inconceivable, the Buddha Eye**…The Buddha has the Five Eyes and the Six Penetrations. Here the sutra text is discussing the Buddha Eye. The Buddha Eye contemplates everything everywhere. It is pure and inconceivable, and it **apprehends all and everything.** “All and everything” includes the states of the Buddha as well as the states of sentient beings. The Buddha Eye totally takes them in. Whether the states are those of the Buddha or states of sentient beings, they are all perceived by the Buddha Eye. The Buddha Eye is like a great, bright mirror that encompasses and includes everything. The Buddha discerns everything.

**The Buddha shows sentient beings many wondrous paths.** The Buddha knows whether the disposition of any given sentient being is predominantly good or evil. The Buddha also knows the propensities of sentient beings. He universally reveals to sentient beings many wondrous paths, which are simply the paths we walk in our daily lives, the ways we use each day.

The paths we take in our ordinary daily activities are very wonderful. Unless you pay attention and investigate them, you will not realize their wondrous aspects. As soon as you are attentive and look into this, you find that everything whatsoever is wonderful. A very obvious example is that of the items we utilize each day. Where do they come from? Their origin is very wonderful. Furthermore, how do they go away? Their disappearance is also quite wonderful.

The states we encounter every day are all wondrous paths. For instance, if we don’t eat, we feel hungry. This is very wonderful. How do we get hungry? After we have eaten, we are satiated, which is also wonderful. Even wearing clothes, drinking tea, imbibing Coca - Cola—which would you say was not wonderful? If these things were not wonderful, why would we want to use them? After we have used them, they don’t remain forever; they are temporal. Would you deny that is wonderful? You may claim that everyone understands this. They may understand, but only superficially. They are unaware of its wondrous aspect. Why do people want to eat good food? This is a wonder. Why do they like to wear nice clothes? This too is a wonder. Why do people wish to live in nice homes? It is also a wonder. It is a wonder in that you don’t quite understand, and it is included in the net of delusion. The wonderful exists within the net of delusion. If you understand, then it is wonderful; if you fail to understand, then it isn’t wonderful.

There is just too much to say about the paths of wonder. For example, Guo Yu and Guo Dao are doing Three Steps One Bow. Wouldn’t you say this, too, is a wonder? In the course of their bowing, sometimes people throw glass bottles at them, which is another wonder. One of them didn’t have trousers to wear, and some trousers appeared. That is also a wonder. If we go into this, there are a great many wonders. **Thus awakens the mind of Floral Light.** This state is the passage to liberation that Ocean-ruling Spirit Jeweled Blaze of Floral Light understands.

**Sutra:**

**Massive, uncountable demon armies
Were all routed in an instant.
Steadfast, unmoving minds are difficult to fathom.
Wondrous Vajra Cowl has such skill-in-means.

Commentary:**

The ten armies of demons were discussed previously. Every army of demons transformed into ten armies of demons to make a hundred armies of demons. The hundred great demon armies changed into a thousand massive armies of demons. The thousand massive armies of demons changed into tens of thousands of extensive armies of demons. The more changes, the more armies; the more that were created, the more that came to be. One knows not how many sons of demons, grandsons of demons, demon kings, and demon masses there were. There were **massive, uncountable demon armies.** They were countless. It wasn’t just hundreds or thousands or millions or billions. Each army changed into hundreds of thousands of millions of billions. That is because the demons’ spiritual prowess was extraordinarily great. Unfortunately they belong to the forces of evil; it would be fine if they benefited beings, but they are always harming people. That’s why the demon kings are known as murderers.

Although there were so many, still, they **were all routed in an instant.** The power of the Buddha’s spiritual penetrations could subdue and tame them in an instant, a brief moment of time--so they were all overthrown and dispelled. That does not necessarily mean they were killed or anything like that. It means that they changed their way of thinking and behaving--they reformed in every way. What kind of change did they make? They become Dharma protectors. Thus, that they were routed means they surrendered.

**Steadfast, unmoving minds** are in a state of unmoving Thusness, lucid and forever clear. They are unshakable and have attained samadhi. Once in samadhi they **are difficult to fathom.** Steadfast, unmoving minds don’t entertain a single thought. When not a single thought arises, ghosts and spirits cannot perceive anything. Not having a single thought, one resembles a calm, placid sea without waves. When the wind is still, the waves subside. An ocean without waves is difficult to fathom. There’s no way to probe its depths.

**Wondrous Vajra Cowl has such skill-in-means.** Ocean-ruling Spirit Wondrous Vajra Cowl attains this expedient Dharma door.

**Sutra:**

**Wondrous sounds in ten directions everywhere proclaim, Pervading all throughout the Dharma Realm.
This is the state of the Thus Come One’s samadhi.
Sound of Ocean Tides spirit practices in this realm.

Commentary:**

**Wondrous sounds in ten directions everywhere proclaim.** The Buddha goes throughout the ten directions pronouncing wonderful sounds. You can observe that all the sounds in the world are expressing the Dharma in various ways. All of them are speaking the Dharma right here and now. Sometimes sentient beings speak the Dharma. Sometimes insentient entities speak the Dharma. Sometimes sound is used to express the Dharma; sometimes the expressions of Dharma are soundless. That’s the meaning of “wondrous sounds in ten directions everywhere proclaim.”

These are wonderful sounds **pervading all throughout the Dharma Realm.** Not only do these wonderful sounds pervade the ten directions, they reach every place in the Dharma Realm. To the ends of space throughout the Dharma Realm, there isn’t any place where the wonderful sounds of the Buddha’s proclamations cannot be heard.

**This is the state of the Thus Come One’s samadhi:** What gives him that strength? This state is accomplished by means of the Thus Come One’s samadhi power. **Sound of Ocean Tides spirit practices in this realm.** This passage into liberation and state is the state of the Ocean-ruling Spirit Thunderous Sound of Ocean Tides. She practices this method of samadhi. It’s not for sure that we can hear the wonderful sound of the Buddhadharma, and even if we can, we may not recognize it.

Let me tell you something about the radio. There’s no person in the radio, but the radio can talk, and quite loudly, too. Its voice is very loud if you turn up the volume. That’s not so spectacular, because you can only hear a voice. Take a look at the television--not only does it have sound, there are also little people who appear. If you told people about this phenomena 300 years ago, saying that in the future there would be something called television on which you could clearly see people talking and walking, those people from 300 years in the past would say, “You’ve gone mad! How could such an amazing thing be possible?” Now everyone believes that it’s possible. Now not only adults, but children are into watching television and do not doubt its existence. If you had mentioned television to people who lived 300 or 500 years ago, they would have said, “You’re just talking in your dream.” Wouldn’t that be a case of proclaiming wonderful sounds? Worldly dharmas include world-transcending Dharma; world-transcending Dharma also encompasses worldly dharmas.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, River-ruling Spirit Universally Initiating Swift Currents gained a passage into liberation of universally raining boundless Dharma rain.

Commentary:**

**Moreover,** because the meanings of the sutra were not completely expounded above, the exposition shall continue. **River-ruling Spirit Universally Initiating Swift Currents gained a passage into liberation of universally raining boundless Dharma rain.** “Swift currents” refers rapidly flowing water. She obtained the Buddha’s Dharma rain, which is said to be boundless because there are no bounds above, below, in the north, south, east, or west. Nor are there any bounds in front--that is, in the past. Although this Dharma rain is coming down now, those in the past and future also obtain it. Since it is boundless in the three periods of time, and boundless in the ten directions, the text says “universally raining boundless Dharma rain.” She attained that kind of passage to liberation.

**Sutra:**

**River-ruling Spirit Universally Cleansing Springs and Torrents gained a passage into liberation of universally manifesting before all sentient beings and freeing them from their afflictions forever.**

**Commentary:**

The next **River-ruling Spirit** is named **Universally Cleansing Springs and Torrents**. Springs and mountain torrents can be rather turbid and unclean. This River-ruling Spirit purifies the spring waters, which is a metaphor for getting rid of all sentient beings’ afflictions. Water that is unclean represents sentient beings with afflictions. Clean water symbolizes sentient beings who have left afflictions behind. This River-ruling Spirit cleanses springs and torrents, which metaphorically means she cleanses sentient beings of their afflictions. And so she says she **gained a passage into liberation of universally manifesting before all sentient beings and freeing them from their afflictions forever.** She helps every sentient being to leave afflictions, separating from greed, hatred, and delusion. Once greed, hatred, and delusion are left behind, one is eternally free of afflictions. One attains an inherent, essential purity and gives rise to a great wisdom. She gained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:

River-ruling Spirit Pure Eyes Apart from Dust gained a passage into liberation of using expedients of great compassion to universally cleanse the filth of all sentient beings’ delusions.**

**Commentary:**

The next **River-ruling Spirit** is named **Pure Eyes Apart from Dust**. “Apart from dust” means one has left behind all mundane defilements and false thinking. It could also be explained as leaving all defiled thoughts. If one has not left defiled thoughts, one is not apart from dust. Even if one has separated from the external dust, if one has not left defiled thinking internally, then one is not apart from the dust. Defiled thoughts are impure thoughts. With impure thoughts, we cannot obtain pure eyes. If our mind is pure, our eyes will be pure. If our mind is not purified of defiled thoughts, we cannot obtain pure eyes. These pure eyes are the pure Five Eyes. Only when one has purified the Five Eyes can one obtain the Five Powers.

What are the pure Five Eyes? They are the Buddha Eye, the Dharma Eye, the Wisdom Eye, the Heavenly Eye, and the Flesh Eye. Purifying the Five Eyes just means opening them. If you can let go of defiled thoughts, then you can open the Five Eyes.

If we went into detail, we could discuss the Five Eyes endlessly. For now I will give a general overview.

I will first talk about the Heavenly Eye. “The Heavenly Eye penetrates without obstruction.” It is unimpeded, so it perceives everything as empty--unobstructed emptiness.

“The Flesh Eye perceives obstructions and does not penetrate.” The Flesh Eye can see objects that have material solidity. It can see both material and immaterial things. Whether objects are obstructive (solid) or not, it can see them. The Flesh Eye does not refer to the physical, flesh eyes of ordinary people. This eye can see things with shape and form, as well as things without shape and form. It can perceive both material and immaterial entities, so it is not the same as the eyes of ordinary people.

The physical eyes of ordinary people can only see material things that have color and form. Those eyes do not discern formless things. The Flesh Eye, on the other hand, can see things whether or not they have form and color. What kinds of things are formless? Ghosts are, for example, so most people cannot see them with their ordinary eyes. If you open the Flesh Eye, then you will be able to see them. You will be able to see people as well as ghosts and spirits.

“The Dharma Eye contemplates only the mundane.” The Dharma Eye can behold all mundane and transcendental dharmas with perfect clarity.

“The Wisdom Eye understands True Emptiness.” The Wisdom Eye comprehends the principle of True Emptiness. It understands that True Emptiness is not empty, yet is empty; is empty and yet is not empty. The Wisdom Eye has a very clear grasp of this doctrine.

“The Buddha Eye is like a thousand suns.” The Buddha Eye is as brilliant as a thousand suns. Although it perceives differences, its fundamental substance is one.

Upon opening the Five Eyes, one obtains five kinds of powers, namely, the power of faith, the power of vigor, the power of mindfulness, the power of samadhi, and the power of wisdom. With the Five Powers of faith, vigor, mindfulness, samadhi, and wisdom, one’s bodhi roots will grow and increase. The River-ruling Spirit named Pure Eyes Apart from Dust **gained a passage into liberation of using expedients of great compassion to universally cleanse the filth of all sentient beings’ delusions**. With her mind of great compassion, she employs various kinds of expedient methods, not just one kind. She universally cleanses all sentient beings throughout the ten directions. What does she cleanse them of? She rids them of all delusions, of that dust and filth. She washes away the filth of confusion, enabling sentient beings to obtain pure eyes apart from dust. That is her passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**River-ruling Spirit Howling All Throughout the Ten Directions gained a passage into liberation of constantly emitting sounds that benefit beings.**Commentary:

The next **River-ruling Spirit** is named **Howling All Throughout the Ten Directions .** This spirit, who is in charge of rivers and streams, has a particularly loud sound. Her howl can be heard everywhere simultaneously throughout the ten directions, hence her name, “Howling All Throughout in the Ten Directions.”

She **gained a passage into liberation of constantly emitting sounds that benefit beings.** Her howl is not a useless howl. Her howl is useful. What use does it serve? It constantly emits sounds that benefit beings. When a being hears the sound of her howl, that being obtains benefit. What benefit? When those who are greedy hear this sound, their greed decreases a little. When those who are angry hear this sound, their anger decreases a little. When those who are foolish hear this sound, their foolishness decreases a little. By continually hearing this sound, one’s greed, anger, and foolishness will imperceptibly disappear. That’s how these sounds aid beings. They bring tremendous benefit to beings. She attained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**River-ruling Spirit Universally Rescuing and Protecting Sentient Beings gained a passage into liberation of constantly giving rise to kindness and never vexing or harming any sentient being.**

Commentary:

**River-ruling Spirit Universally Rescuing and Protecting Sentient Beings** has even greater spiritual penetrations. She can universally rescue all beings. For instance if sentient beings were about to drown in the river, she could rescue them from drowning. She rescues and protects all beings without discrimination, hence her name.

Her attainment involves any sentient being, including those born from wombs, born from eggs, born from moisture, and born by transformation. Sentient beings are those with sentience and awareness. Any creature with blood and breath is a sentient being. Some have breath but no blood; some have blood but no breath. Some have neither blood nor breath. These are also included under the term “sentient beings.”

She **gained a passage into liberation of constantly giving rise to kindness and never vexing or harming any sentient being**. Sentient beings of the Dharma Realm constantly give rise to kindness and compassion and refrain from vexing and harming sentient beings. This is the state, the passage into liberation, that this River-ruling Spirit attained.

Question: As to chakras, how many chakras are there?

Venerable Master: Is he a student of yoga?

Answer: He said he studied it before.

Venerable Master: Why doesn’t he go ask the yogis?

Answer:...He never knew that there were five.

Venerable Master: He didn’t know there were five?

Answer: He only heard it now, because in the Yoga School they say there is one...

Venerable Master: What is his question now?

Answer: He’s asking about the sixth chakra.

Venerable Master: What about the six chakras? Which one is pure?

Answer: [inaudible]

Venerable Master: This is the Buddha Eye, right here.

Answer: If this verse is talking about the Buddha Eye, why do they...?

Venerable Master: They basically do not understand at all; how could they become Buddhas?

Venerable Master: When did he give us these pictures?

Answer: About ten minutes ago.

Venerable Master: What does he have to say now?

Answer: He says that the “three contemplations” in yoga are not the Buddha Eye, but the Flesh Eye, Heavenly Eye and ....

Venerable Master: What about it?

Answer: The way they explain the Eyes and the way the Master explains them...

Venerable Master: They simply do not know, that’s all.

Answer: They don’t understand...

Venerable Master: If people have any views, bring them up and we can all discuss them. We were talking about yoga, but then you brought up philosophy. After a while you raised the topic of science. There’s no end to this.

Answer: [inaudible]

Venerable Master: Okay. Your slippery method, taken from the palm of your hand...Has he been here before?

Answer: He came once. We asked him to come.

Venerable Master: I have no idea. Tell him there is no such person as To Lun. He does not exist.

Venerable Master: Who else has questions?

Question: Is there a way to briefly explain this song? When I hear this song, it wipes out my greed, anger, and delusion. How should it be cultivated?

Venerable Master: How should it be cultivated? Any way you cultivate it is fine! Among the 84,000 Dharma doors, as long as you understand one Dharma door, you can cultivate it.

Do not cultivate for the sake of fame; do not cultivate in pursuit of profit. Do not base your cultivation on greed, anger, or delusion. Then you can cultivate that Dharma door. But if you get hung up on fame, profit, greed, anger, or delusion, then it will be impossible to cultivate that Dharma door.

Are there any other questions? Who else has a question? What are you doing that for - raising both your left hand and your right hand? You are too slippery. Even your hands have “slipped” up.

**Sutra:**

**River-ruling Spirit Clear Light Devoid of Heat gained a passage into liberation of universally displaying all good roots that are clear and cool.**

**Commentary:**

The next **River-ruling Spirit** is named **Clear Light Devoid of Heat**. Devoid of heat means devoid of afflictions. Heat is affliction. If there is no heat, one attains cool clarity. Since one has attained cool clarity, one gains “Clear Light”—a clear, pure brilliance.

The waters of the rivers and streams that this River-ruling Spirit rules over are not heated; they are always clear and refreshing. She has gained this state of the Buddha.

She **gained a passage into liberation of universally displaying all good roots that are clear and cool.** All the clarity and coolness dispelled all the afflictions, so she attained the good roots of clear and cool wisdom. Such clear, cool, good roots are just the good roots of prajna, the good roots of bodhi, and the root of faith. She gave rise to the power of the root of faith. This kind of faith is extremely solid, without any wavering between doubt and belief. She also has the root of mindfulness. Mindfulness of what? Mindfulness of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. She also has the root of vigor, the good roots of vigor, which includes both physical and mental vigor. Aside from the good roots of vigor and mindfulness, she also has the good roots of samadhi. Samadhi is the state of remaining unmoved by any state. As it is said, “Unmoved by the Eight Winds, one sits upright on a purple-golden lotus.” One is thus and unmoving, with clear and constant understanding. What are the Eight Winds? There is praise, a favorable wind, and ridicule, an adverse wind. It’s easy to feel happy when there’s a favorable wind, and easy to get angry when an adverse wind comes.

There’s also the wind of suffering, which is extremely hard to bear; and the wind of happiness, which makes you joyful. Suffering is an adverse wind; happiness is a favorable wind. Suffering can also be compared to the north wind, which is very chilly, and happiness to the south wind, which is warm and gentle. There is also the wind of benefit, which is beneficial to you, and that of decline, which is harmful to you. There is the wind of gain, and the wind of loss. Praise, ridicule, suffering, happiness, benefit, decline, gain, and loss--these are all “winds.” However, these Eight Winds cannot blow and move the root of samadhi, so the good roots of samadhi are solid.

Then there is the root of wisdom. If you wish to have the good roots of wisdom, you must cultivate the Dharma doors of wisdom; you have to open the Dharma doors of wisdom. All you have to do is devote more time to studying the sutras and cultivating prajna, and you will be replete with the faith, vigor, mindfulness, samadhi, and wisdom--these five kinds of good roots. You will attain these clear, cool good roots, and gain this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**River-ruling Spirit Universally Inspiring Joy gained a passage into liberation of perfecting the practice of giving, freeing all beings from stinginess and attachment forever. River-ruling Spirit Supreme Banner of Vast Virtue gained a passage into liberation of being a field of blessed happiness for all.

Commentary:**

**River-ruling Spirit Universally Inspiring Joy** makes all sentient beings everywhere happy. Once they are happy, they are free from stinginess and attachment. Stingy and attached beings cannot be happy. Those who have no stingy or attached thoughts are always happy. Hence this River-ruling Spirit has the name Universally Inspiring Joy.” What state of the Buddha did she attain? She **gained a passage into liberation of perfecting the practice of giving**. She attained the Dharma door of giving. The Dharma of giving includes giving wealth, giving Dharma, and giving fearlessness. Wealth can be divided into inner wealth and outer wealth. Outer wealth: One can give away one’s country, city, spouse, and children. Inner wealth: One can renounce one’s body, mind, and life. Giving Dharma includes the giving of conditioned dharmas and unconditioned Dharma. Conditioned dharmas have form and appearance. The unconditioned Dharma is unconditioned, yet there is nothing not conditioned by it. The giving of fearlessness involves comforting and allaying the fears of someone who is in a frightening situation. In giving fearlessness, you eliminate the fear in the person’s heart as well as any sources of fear in the environment.

Sometimes when people are frightened, they may panic and not know what to do. At that time, you can console them, saying, “Don’t be afraid. It’s not serious. There’s no real danger.” That’s giving of fearlessness. Suppose someone comes down with an illness and another person doesn’t know what the illness is and says, “This is serious. You’re probably going to die from this illness. It’s worse than cancer.” Hearing that, the sick person doesn’t have to wait for the illness to kill him; he will be scared to death. A person who understands the Buddhadharma would say to him, “Don’t be scared. Your illness isn’t a major one. You might have to suffer a little bit, but you’ll soon get well. Just see the doctor and take some medicine.” Such words relieve the person’s fears. That’s what the giving of fearlessness is all about. One cultivates giving to perfection, **freeing all sentient beings from stinginess and attachment forever.** Once stinginess and attachment are left behind, one is happy. That’s “Universally Inspiring Joy.”

Thenext **River-ruling Spirit,** who isnamed **Supreme Banner of Vast Virtue**, has extensively practiced virtuous deeds. Her merit and virtue resemble an exquisitely adorned, precious banner. She **gained a passage into liberation of being a field of blessed happiness for all.** She attained the Buddha’s ability to be a field of blessings of happiness for sentient beings, so that sentient beings can plant blessings and plant wholesome roots of bodhi. This River-ruling Spirit gained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**River-ruling Spirit Light Illuminating All Worlds gained a passage into liberation of making all defiled beings pure and wrathful beings happy. River-ruling Spirit Radiant Ocean of Virtues gained a passage into liberation of enabling all sentient beings to enter the ocean of liberation and constantly experience total happiness.**

**At that time River-ruling Spirit Universally Initiating Swift Currents received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of River-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.

Commentary:**

The next **River-ruling Spirit** is named **Light Illuminating all Worlds.** She **gained a passage into liberation of making all defiled beings pure**. “Defiled” means impure, having both wholesome and evil, good and bad. It means one has both proper thoughts and improper thoughts. The good and the bad are mixed together. Within the good, there is a bit of evil. Within the evil, there is also some good. Those who are defiled are purified of their defilement, **and wrathful beings happy.** Wrath refers to the fire of ignorance and to anger, which is like a venomous snake. People who are prone to anger are seldom happy. This River-ruling Spirit makes people with big tempers become happy. She attained that kind of passage into liberation.

**River-ruling Spirit Radiant Ocean of Virtues gained a passage into liberation of enabling all sentient beings to enter the** great **ocean of liberation and constantly experience total happiness.** The passages into liberation are so numerous that they are like an ocean. Total happiness is a full, perfect, and supreme happiness; a joy beyond compare. She attained that kind of passage to liberation.

**At that time** the first **River-ruling Spirit**, named **Universally Initiating Swift Currents, received the Buddha’s awesome spiritua lpower, universally contemplated the multitudes of River-ruling Spirits,** observing their potentials and causal conditions, **and spoke the following verse** to elaborate upon the previous lines of prose.

**Sutra:**

**Long ago, the Thus Come One, for the sake of sentient beings,
Cultivated boundless practices within the Dharma sea.
Just as a torrential rain cools the summer heat,
He pervasively quells the heat of sentient beings’ afflictions.**

**The Buddha, throughout inexpressibly limitless eons in the past,
By the light of his vows purified the world,
Causing those grown ripe in disposition to awaken to the Way:
The Spirit Universally Cleansing awakened to this.

Commentary:**

**Long ago, the Thus Come One, for the sake of sentient beings.** When the Buddha cultivated for limitless eons in the past, it was not for himself, but for sentient beings. The Buddha saw sentient beings suffering, not knowing how to leave suffering and find happiness. He thereupon vowed to cultivate, and vowed that when he became enlightened and realized Buddhahood, he would rescue all sentient beings.

He **cultivated boundless practices within the Dharma sea**. The practices cultivated by the Buddha were limitless and boundless, like a great ocean. Primarily, the Buddha cultivated selflessness, giving, holding precepts, patience, vigor, dhyana samadhi, and wisdom. He cultivated the Six Perfections and the myriad practices. Among the Six Perfections, giving refers to giving to others, not demanding that others give to you. Holding precepts: you yourself must honestly hold them, not just tell others to do so without doing so yourself. Patience: When you have samadhi, then you will not be moved by the Eight Winds discussed earlier, and that means you have patience.

Patience is being able to bear what others cannot bear. You have to bear what ordinary, worldly people cannot bear. You also have bear what people who cultivate transcendental Dharma cannot bear. Patience is a kind of test. If you have skill, you pass. Otherwise, you fail. The practices cultivated by the Buddha were like this. He was able to bear what ordinary people could not. He could endure what most people found unendurable. Why? He first cultivated selflessness. Without a self, who is being patient? Who is doing the enduring? There is neither a person who endures, nor anything that is endured–no receiver and nothing received. While the Buddha was cultivating boundless practices in the sea of Dharma, it’s not known how much abuse he took. People beat him and scolded him, but he remained unmoved; his mind didn’t react. Cultivating boundless practices, he attained the wonderful functioning of boundless spiritual powers with which to teach sentient beings. There is an analogy for this.

**Just as a torrential rain**, a huge downpour that nothing can stop, **cools the summer heat** . The Book of Mencius has these lines: “Ominous dark clouds suddenly appeared in the sky, and the rain fell in torrents.” This was a timely rain. The rain came at just the right time, exactly when it was needed. It was neither too much nor too little, but just the right amount. “The crops suddenly sprang up.” This analogy compares the Buddha’s teaching of sentient beings to the torrential rain that cools the summer heat. In the extremely hot summer weather, a rain brings refreshing coolness that dispels the summer heat.

**He pervasively quells the heat of sentient beings’ afflictions.** The Buddha uses the cool and refreshing Buddhadharma to completely dispel the heat of sentient beings’ afflictions. Once the heat of afflictions is gone, beings are cooled off.

**The Buddha, throughout inexpressibly limitless eons in the past, /By the light of his** great wisdom and great **vows**, taught those in the world and **purified the world**. He helped all sentient beings to depart from suffering and find happiness, **causing those grown ripe in disposition to awaken to the Way.** Sentient beings whose good roots had matured, he caused to awaken to the Way. **The SpiritUniversally Cleansing awakened to this.** The Spirit named Universally Cleansing Springs and Torrents understood this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Bestowing great compassion and expedients for all beings equally,
He manifests before them--a constant guide--
Making possible the purge of foul afflictions.
With profound delight Pure Eyes observes this.**

**The Buddha utters wondrous sounds for all to hear.
Delighted, sentient beings’ hearts fill with joy.
Unbounded woe is completely washed away.
Howling Everywhere spirit is liberated thus.**

**Commentary:**

**Bestowing great compassion and expedients for all beings equally,** the Buddha rescues all sentient beings with a heart full of kindness. That heart of great compassion eradicates sentient beings’ sufferings and bestows happiness upon them. He employs skill-in-means, clever expedient dharmas, to make it easy for sentient beings to accept the teachings. These are temporary methods applied in a dynamic, expedient way. They are not rigid dharmas. How much great compassion and how many expedient means are there? They are as many as the number of sentient beings. They are equal to the amount of sentient beings.

**He manifests before them—a constant guide.** The Buddha constantly appears before sentient beings and uses various methods to teach them, guiding them to reform, to change their faults and renew themselves. He always teaches them, **making possible the purge of foul afflictions**. He leads sentient beings to get rid of all their faults, return to the source, and do away with afflictions. Afflictions are defilements that should be cleaned up and discarded. **With profound delight** and joy in her heartRiver-ruling Spirit **Pure Eyes observes this** kind of state.

**The Buddha utters wondrous sounds** --pure Dharma sounds, the inconceivably subtle, wonderful soundof Dharma—**for all** sentient beings everywhere **to hear**. **Delighted, sentient beings’ hearts fill with joy.** Beings take delight in and love the Buddha’s wonderful sound, **and** as soon as they hear it, **unbounded** eons’ worth of **woe is completely washed away.** Once the roots of suffering are washed away, their good roots come forth. **Howling Everywhere spirit is liberated thus.

Sutra:**

**Long ago, the Buddha did cultivate for bodhi,
Wishing to benefit beings through limitless eons.
Hence, his brilliant light pervades the world.
Protecting spirit thus recollects with happiness and joy.

Commentary:**

**Long ago,** when **the Buddha** Shakyamuni was cultivating at the level of planting causes, he **did cultivate for bodhi**. He cultivated the practices for enlightening both self and others, and **for the sake of benefiting** all sentient **beings through limitless eons**. He cultivated for such a long time, **hence his brilliant light pervades the** ten directions of the sentient **world**. River-ruling SpiritRescuing and **Protecting** Sentient Beings **thus recollects** this state **with** immeasurable **happiness and joy**. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**In ages past, the Buddha did cultivate for sentient beings,
Applying various expedients to bring them to maturity.
Everywhere, he purified a sea of blessings, casting out sufferings.
Devoid of Heat sees this, her heart rejoicing.**

**Vast and inexhaustible is the gate of giving.
It can bring benefit to all sentient beings.
Those who perceive that are freed from stinginess and attachment.
Universal Joy spirit awakens thus.

Commentary:**

**In ages past, the Buddha did cultivate for** the sake of **sentient beings**, not for himself. The Buddha regarded all sentient beings as being the same as himself. Before sentient beings’ sufferings were eradicated, the Buddha felt as if his own suffering had not come to an end. He made vows to eradicate the suffering and afflictions of sentient beings, and then he cultivated, **applying various expedients to bring them to maturity**. The Buddha employed all manner of expedient Dharma doors–ingenious methods. To help sentient beings who had not planted good roots, he devised ways to get them to plant good roots. For those who had already planted good roots, he helped them to increase them. For those who had increased their good roots, the Buddha helped them bring their good roots to maturity. For sentient beings whose good roots were already mature, he enabled them to gain liberation. So, the Buddha used “various expedients to bring them to maturity,” to bring them to Buddhahood. **Everywhere he purified a sea of blessings**, enabling sentient beings to attain a pure field of blessings and to realize the supreme Way, **casting out sufferings**. **Devoid of Heat sees this, her heart rejoicing.** “Devoid of Heat” means free of afflictions. This River-ruling Spirit has encountered this state, understands it, and is extremely happy.

**Vast and inexhaustible is the gate of giving.** This River-ruling Spirit saw the Buddha cultivating the vast, great, infinite gate of giving. One can never finish discussing the Dharma door of giving, which includes the giving of wealth, Dharma, and fearlessness – all kinds of giving.

All these endless varieties of giving **can bringbenefit to all sentient beings.** All sentient beings, no matter what kind, derive benefit. **Those who perceive that are freed from stinginess and attachment**. The Buddha’s awesome spiritual might, his great power of wisdom, and his brilliant light can shine through and dispel all darkness. The Buddha enables beings who see his light, hear his Dharma, and listen to his voice, to let go off stinginess and attachment. Stinginess is a form of greed; it is the inability to renounce things. Cultivators should benefit others, not themselves. One should do what one can to help others. One should also try to do things beyond one’s capability to help others. That’s to be without stinginess and attachment.

Those who are stingy and greedy cannot give things up. However, we must give before we can get something back. If we cannot renounce things, we cannot obtain anything. We will not have virtuous conduct. When we benefit others, we have virtuous conduct. When we help ourselves, we are not engaging in virtuous conduct. Therefore, we who cultivate the Way should renounce all external possessions. We should also give away our internal wealth – out body, mind, and life. If we can give away your own body, mind, and life, how can we still be stingy and attached?

**Universal Joy spirit awakens thus.** Don’t think that this principle is easy to understand. It’s not easy at all. Why not? The text says that this is the state that the Spirit named Universal Joy was able to awaken to and understand. That’s why I said it’s not easy.

“Awakens” means she has just understood it now, and she didn’t understand it before. Having understood it, she speaks a verse in praise of the Buddha. The Spirit Universal Joy is a spirit, and yet even she did not understand until now. That is why I say it is not easy to understand. Before you heard the explanation of the Flower Adornment Sutra, you did not understand either. Now that you’ve heard the sutra, you understand a little, but not completely. That’s why I said it isn’t easy to understand. There aren’t any deep or esoteric principles involved; my meaning was just that the Buddhadharma is difficult to get to hear and to understand quickly.

The wise understand matters of wisdom. The humane perceive things in terms of humaneness. For example, when a wise person sees someone suffering, he wonders, “Why is he in such great misery? Oh, it’s because he didn’t cultivate in past lives. He only hurt people and never tried to help them.” He can see the previous causes that led to the present results. If a humane person who lacks wisdom sees a poor person, he may think, “I ought to give him ten dollars, so he can have a few meals.” The wise person understands that those in misery are that way because they didn’t do good deeds in their past lives. The purely humane person only commiserates with those in suffering and wants to help them right away. He may not understand that their suffering results from their past offenses.

**Sutra:**

**In the past, the Buddha cultivated expedients for the sake of truth,
Accomplishing boundless oceans of merit and virtue.
Of those who see him, none are not elated.
Supreme Banner spirit’s heart awakens and rejoices thus.**

**Commentary:**

**In the past, the Buddha cultivated** various Dharma doors of **expedientsfor the sake of truth**. He “bestowed the provisional for the sake of the true.” For the sake of the True Teaching, he cultivated expedient Dharmas, **accomplishing boundless oceans of merit and virtue**. The Buddha benefited and gave to sentient beings, creating all manner of meritorious virtue. As long as a deed was beneficial to sentient beings, he would to it. He wasn’t concerned with helping himself; he only wanted to help others. Thus he accomplished boundless oceans of merit and virtue.

**Of those who see him, none are not elated**. The Buddha made every sentient being who saw him feel happy**. Supreme Banner spirit’s heart awakens and rejoices thus.** River-ruling Spirit Supreme Banner understood this state and this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Entirely purifying sentient beings’ defilements,
The Buddha transforms all malice into kindness.
Thus, his light radiates throughout space.
River-ruling Spirit All Worlds thus sees with gladness.**

**The Buddha is a field of blessings—an ocean of merit and virtue,
Leading all to part with evil,
Leading all to great enlightenment.
Radiant Ocean spirit is liberated thus.

Commentary:**

**Entirely purifying sentient beings’ defilements** . Sentient beings have defiled thoughts, but the Buddha turns them into pure thoughts. **The Buddha transforms all malice into kindness.** The Buddha transforms all hateful thoughts into compassionate thoughts.

**Thus, his light radiates throughout space.** Having perfected the practice of causing all defiled beings to become pure and all angry beings to become happy, the Buddha has great wisdom light that pervades the Dharma Realm to the ends of space. **River-ruling Spirit All Worlds thus sees with gladness.** Having understood this state, she is extremely happy.

**The Buddha is a field of blessings,** a field where beings can plant blessings, and **an ocean of merit and virtue** for sentient beings, **leading all to part with evil**, so that they do no evil and practice all good. As you can see, the Buddha transmitted the precepts to sentient beings, helping them to refrain from evil and avoid making mistakes, to “do no evil and practice all good.” If they do no evil, they part with evil. Not only does the Buddha lead sentient beings away from evil – a relatively minor achievement – he is **leading all to great enlightenment**, to the realization of Buddhahood**. Radiant Ocean spirit is liberated thus.** River-ruling Spirit Ocean Light understands this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Crop-ruling Spirit Tender and Delectable gained a passage into liberation of giving all sentient beings the taste of Dharma so that they may accomplish the Buddha body.

Commentary:**

After the ten River-ruling Spirits had each used verses to praise the Buddha, ten Crop-ruling Spirits in the Flower Adornment Assembly continued to use prose to explain the inconceivability of the realm of Flower Adornment, which is beyond the understanding of common beings and those of the Two Vehicles. **Moreover** indicates that there is a continuation of the explanation of the sutra’s principles. **Crop-ruling Spirit Tender and Delectable gained a passage into liberation of giving all sentient beings the taste of Dharma so that they may accomplish the Buddha body.** In ancient China, Emperor Shen Nong taught the people to farm. He taught them how to till the fields and irrigate and tend them so that the shoots would thrive and grow day by day. The seeds are first planted in the ground. Then sprouts come up, grow, and mature. In the same way, when beings mature, they can attain liberation.

This Crop-ruling Spirit was called “Tender and Delectable.” Tenderness is an expedient Dharma that makes sentient beings very comfortable. Delectable refers to a good flavor. The five flavors are sour, sweet, bitter, spicy, and salty. Each person has his or her individual taste. Some people like to eat sour things; others prefer sweet food. Some are fond of bitter-tasting things. Some like to eat hot and spicy food. Others enjoy salty food. Sentient beings have different dispositions and individual preferences. However, we are talking about ordinary flavors. Here the sutra is talking about a most delectable flavor, which is the most expedient of expedient means; the most ultimate of ultimate truths. Delectable flavor transcends the five flavors of sour, sweet, bitter, spicy, and salty. It’s even more aromatic and delicious–more sour, more sweet, more bitter, more spicy, or more salty. It’s a special kind of flavor, but don’t get me wrong – I don’t mean a foul flavor. It is a good flavor.

We can also explain it this way. People in the world all have their preferences. Some are attracted to Catholicism and feel that it is the highest religion. Some prefer Protestantism and consider it to be the best. Others like Confucianism and think that its principles of humanness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness are not bad. “Universal love is known as humaneness. Practicing in accord with it is called righteousness. These are superb principles,” they think. Others relish Taoism and enjoy wearing a Taoist cap and letting their hair grow so that you can’t tell them apart from women, except for the fact that they have beards. Still others are attracted to Buddhism. They think, “Buddhism is pretty nice. It has a sweet, delectable flavor.” You haven’t had a full taste yet. A full taste would surpass even the most delectable flavor, so the text says, “the taste of Dharma.”

Each one of us is like a farmer. We should each till our own field and eat our own food, being self-reliant and strengthening ourselves continuously. How do we plant our own field? When we plant a bodhi seed in the Buddha’s field of blessings, a bodhi sprout comes forth. The bodhi sprout grows day by day until it becomes a Bodhi tree. The Bodhi tree bears bodhi fruit. Once you reap that bodhi fruit, you have attained liberation. That’s why it’s said, “Enable those who haven’t planted good roots to plant them; enable those who have already planted them to make them grow; enable those whose good roots have grown to bring them to maturity; and enable those whose good roots have matured to attain liberation.” Crop-ruling Spirits are involved in that kind of work.

If you plant a bodhi seed, in the future you will reap a bodhi fruit. The text says, “giving all sentient beings the taste of Dharma” whoever cultivates can get a taste. But those who don’t cannot. The attainment depends upon whether or not you cultivate. If you rely on the Dharma in your cultivation, you will obtain the flavor of Dharma. “So they may accomplish the Buddha body.” Having obtained the flavor of the 84,000 Dharma doors, you nurture the field of your Dharma nature and realize the Buddha body; that is, you become a Buddha.

“What’s so good about becoming a Buddha?” you ask. After you become a Buddha, you can teach all sentient beings to become Buddhas. The Buddha’s work is just to teach and transform sentient beings.

Crop-ruling Spirit Tender and Delectable understood the Buddha’s state and entered the passage into liberation of knowing and giving the flavor of Dharma.

**Sutra:**

**Crop-ruling Spirit Pure Light of Seasonal Blooms gained a passage into liberation of bringing tremendous joy and happiness to all sentient beings.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Crop-ruling Spirit is** named **Pure Light of Seasonal Blooms.** Seasonal Blooms means this Crop-ruling Spirit has big, wonderful lotus flowers that bloom all the time and shine their pure light upon all sentient beings throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, bestowing joy and happiness upon them. That’s why the text says she **gained a passage into liberation of bringing tremendous joy and happiness to all sentient beings.** All sentient beings includes you, me, and everyone else. This Crop-ruling Spirit brings tremendous joy and delight to all of us, ensuring that we will one day obtain this Dharma door as well. As long as we vigorously cultivate in accord with the Dharma and don’t retreat, we will eventually attain this Dharma door.

**Sutra:**

**Crop-ruling Spirit Robust Strength gained a passage into liberation of using all perfect Dharma doors to purify all realms of existence.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Crop-ruling Spirit is** named **Robust Strength.** Strength refers to the body. Robust means vigorous and healthy. This Crop-ruling Spirit is a hard worker skilled at teaching sentient beings. She works hard day and night, constantly vigorous in the six periods of the day and night. She is stalwart and valiant and will undergo any amount of toil and suffering in order to teach and transform beings. Thus she **gained a passage into liberation of using all perfect Dharma doors to purify all realms of existence.** She uses perfect Dharma doors to teach and transform sentient beings, leading them back to the source of the mind to regain their fundamental purity. “Realms” refers to realms of sentient beings. She can lead all beings away from confusion and back to enlightenment, so that they renounce what is wrong and return to what is right, practice the Bodhisattva path and realize Buddhahood. She attained that passage into liberation.

The Realm of the Flower Adornment is inconceivable. Not only can those with common understanding never finish explaining it, even Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the Pure Land of Eternal Stillness and Light could never finish explaining the principles of the Flower Adornment though they might speak all the time. Now we are just “bringing up one and leaving out ten thousand,” giving a very general explanation. Good advisors, if you have any questions or doubts, you may raise them. We can look into the principles together with straightforward minds. This is where the greatness of Buddhism lies. If there are questions, we investigate them. This differs from other religions where followers may listen but not question; that is superstition.

On the 9th of this month, we will have a Buddha Recitation Session. Each day from the beginning to the end, we will recite “Namo Amitabha Buddha” without stop. After we finish reciting and the session is over, we will ask, “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?” during two weeks of Chan meditation. All day long, we will meditate continuously. Anyone who would like to participate is welcome. Today the Dharma protectors, the good and wise advisors, from the Zen Center have come to participate in this Sutra Lecture Dharma Assembly, and we are delighted and extend a warm welcome to them.

Are there any questions? How can one understand without participating? To understand, one must participate.

**Sutra:**

**Crop-ruling Spirit Increasing Essence and Energy gained a passage into liberation of seeing the Buddha’s great compassion and his boundless power of spiritual penetrations and transformations. Crop-ruling Spirit Universally Producing Roots and Fruits gained a passage into liberation of universally manifesting the Buddhas’ fields of blessings and enabling beings to plant indestructible seeds.**

**Commentary:**

Thenext **Crop-ruling Spirit is** named **Increasing Essence and Energy.** Increasing means adding more. More of what? Essence and energy. Crop-ruling Spirits watch over the growing and harvesting of the various grains and crops, and so they are able to increase people’s essence and energy, as well as their spirit. When essence and energy increase, their vital spirit increases as well, and their bodies become healthy and free from illness. With a healthy body, one can cultivate. If one suffers from poor health and illness, it is not easy to apply effort in cultivation.

Now, we could also say that this Crop-ruling Spirit named Increasing Essence and Energy helps us to augment the wisdom life of our Dharma body as well as our bodhi resolve. She helps all beings increase their resolves for bodhi. She causes people to increase in good Dharma and wipe out all evil dharmas. Good Dharma refers to the bodhi resolve. Evil dharmas refers to thoughts that breed greed and hatred. Wishing to help sentient beings, this Crop-ruling Spirit plants fields of merit and virtue, and harvests the fruits of merit and virtue. What state of the Buddha has she understood? She **gained a passage into liberation of seeing the Buddha’s great compassion and his boundless power of spiritual penetrations and transformations.** She saw how Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated great compassion in previous lives, thereby obtaining limitless, measureless powers of spiritual penetrations and transformations beyond conception. If we cultivate in accord with the Dharma, vigorously cultivating great compassion, we can also obtain infinite powers of spiritual penetrations and transformations.

Transformations are not static. There are no static dharmas. Ordinary transformations require movement and cannot happen in stillness. Within the Buddha’s state, transformations can also occur in stillness. The Buddha’s spiritual penetrations and transformations can function in both movement and stillness. Thus the Buddha can speak Dharma in response to people’s potentials and teach and transform all beings. That’s the passage into liberation that the Crop-ruling Spirit Increasing Essence and Energy entered after she understood a little bit of the Buddhadharma.

Those of old had a saying, “With movement, there is change. With change, there is transformation. Only one of utmost sincerity in the world can bring about transformation.” So I said that movement brings about change and transformation. Americans are generally familiar with the Book of Changes (Yijing). This book explains the principles of transformations in movement and stillness.

The qian hexagram has three unbroken lines. When the first line moves, it becomes the dui hexagram, which is empty on top. If the first line remains the same and the second line moves, it becomes the li hexagram, which is empty in the middle. If the first and second lines remain the same and the third line moves, it becomes the xun hexagram, which is broken on the bottom. Those of you who have studied the Book of Change s will understand these principles. The transformations brought about through spiritual penetrations are generally the same way, so you might as well cultivate until you attain spiritual penetrations. Then you can try it out! When you have spiritual penetrations, you will understand transformations. Those with utmost sincerity can know things in advance. But if you have foreknowledge, you shouldn’t want to know too much, because knowing too much can be a lot of trouble. Do you understand? This is also movement; it’s also idle thinking.

**Crop-ruling Spirit Universally Producing Roots and Fruits** not only moves, but produces. What does she produce? She produces roots and fruits. What kind of roots? The roots of fruits. What kind of fruits? The fruits of roots. If there are roots, then there can be fruits. For there to be fruits, there must be roots. What roots are these? bodhi roots. What fruits are these? Bodhi fruits. “How do you know they are bodhi roots and bodhi fruits?” you may ask.

Anybody who doesn’t know that must be totally ignorant! Why? The text that follows very clearly says that she “universally manifests the Buddhas’ fields of blessings.” What is planted in the Buddhas’ fields of blessings is none other than bodhi roots and bodhi fruits. This Crop-ruling Spirit helps people produce bodhi roots and bear bodhi fruits. That’s how she **gained a passage into liberation of universally manifesting the Buddhas’ fields of blessings. And** as if that weren’t enough, her passage into liberation is also that of **enabling beings to plant indestructible seeds.** If you have never heard the Flower Adornment Sutra, then there’s nothing to talk about. When you hear the Flower Adornment Sutra,

Once it goes in your ears, it becomes a seed for the Way.

That’s what’s meant by “enabling beings to plant indestructible seeds.” These seeds will not get spoiled or fail to sprout. No matter when you plant them, they will definitely grow bodhi roots and bear bodhi fruits. The bodhi seeds are indestructible.

This is like when someone ingests vajra, even though it passes through his stomach, it remains unharmed. No matter how strong our digestive system is, it can’t digest vajra. The roots and fruits of bodhi are like vajra. Once they enter our ears, they become seeds for the Way. Having heard this passage of the sutra, it’s certain that we will eventually bring forth the bodhi resolve. Those of you who have resolved to leave the home life have done so because your good roots have matured. Since everyone has different causes and conditions from past lives, sometimes when people make a resolve, they run into a lot of obstacles. However, the seeds that this Crop-ruling Spirit helps beings plant cannot be lost or ruined. Once they are planted, they are bound to grow roots and leaves, and bear fruit. So don’t worry. Sooner or later, you shall realize Buddhahood.

This Crop-ruling Spirit named Universally Producing Roots and Fruits understood a small part of the Buddha’s state and entered this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Crop-ruling Spirit Wonderfully Adorned Circular Cowl gained a passage into liberation of universally causing flowers of pure faith to blossom in sentient beings. Crop-ruling Spirit Moistening Pure Flowers gained a passage into liberation of rescuing all beings out of great compassionate mercy, increasing their ocean of blessings and virtue. Crop-ruling Spirit Accomplishing Wonderful Fragrance gained a passage into liberation of extensively explaining all methods of practice.**

**Commentary:**

**Crop-ruling Spirit Wonderfully Adorned Circular Cowl is** adorned with merit and virtue. What merit and virtue? Subtle, wonderful, inconceivable merit and virtue. The circle represents infinity. The cowl symbolizes the appearance of adornment with merit and virtue. That’s a rather shallow explanation. If we were to go into detail, we could discuss this for endless eons without finishing. This Crop-ruling Spirit understood a little bit of the Buddha’s state and **gained a passage into liberation of universally causing flowers of pure faith to blossom in sentient beings**. “Universally” means that these flowers of pure faith bloom in all beings. Their blossoming means that previously they did not exist, but now they do. Sentient beings formerly had a lot of defilement, confused thinking, and selfish desires, and it was impossible for their flowers of pure faith to bloom. But now they have bloomed. So, beings who had not brought forth good roots before now plant them. This is all included in the meaning of “blossom.”

For example, when seeds are planted in the ground and all the conditions of heat, moisture, soil, and so forth are present, they germinate, grow, and eventually bear fruit. Once the flowers of pure faith have bloomed, they must bear the fruit of pure faith. It cannot be that there are flowers, but no fruit. Such flowers are barren. If there is fruit but no flowers, then that is like the fig [which in Chinese is literally the “flowerless fruit”.] Pure faith is perfected through merit and virtue. Such flowers are a manifestation of the realization of the Bodhi Way. They are flowers that bear the fruit of perfect enlightenment. Flowers of pure faith are the cause; the fruit of perfect enlightenment is the result.

The next **Crop-ruling Spirit** is named **Moistening Pure Flowers.** The flowers of pure faith need moisture. To nurture flowers of pure faith, one must create all kinds of merit and virtue. If you have merit and virtue, your flowers of pure faith will flourish. So the name of this Crop-ruling Spirit is “Moistening Pure Flowers.” She **gained a passage into liberation of rescuing all beings out of great compassionate mercy**. Compassion can gather sentient beings in. Mercy means taking pity on all beings and loving and protecting them.

With compassionate mercy, which is a teaching of Confucianism, one regards all beings as if they were one’s own children. This spirit’s compassion and loving protection is that of “loving all children as one would love one’s sons and daughters.” That’s a Confucian doctrine. Buddhism also teaches that we should love all children equally, with impartial great kindness. “Rescuing all beings”: What is meant by rescuing? Suppose someone falls into the water and is about to drown. He’s in the middle of the water, far from either shore, and he’s close to drowning. You can toss him a lifesaving ring or rope, and pull him to shore. Imagine another scenario in which a boat breaks down in the middle of a river or sea. You can go out in another boat and take the passengers to shore.

In ancient China, there was the story of “burning of boats at the Ji River.” I can’t remember which dynasty it happened in; it was probably during the Era of Warring States. There was a general who led a large army to invade another state. After the troops had crossed the river, he burned all the boats. He was letting his men know that they had to fight well, for there was no way to go back. They had to forget about whether they lived or died; only then would there be hope of going home. Cultivation is the same way. Once you reach the other shore, don’t think about going back. Once we arrive at the further shore of nirvana, we should burn the boat we used to come over. Don’t think about going back.

Once you’ve severed it, it’s severed forever.
Once you’re saved, you’re saved forever.
Once you’re done toiling, you’ll enjoy leisure forever.

Once we reach the other shore, we don’t want to come back. If we come back, we still have to undergo birth and death. “Rescuing all beings”: We don’t want to go to the other shore alone; we want to rescue all beings and bring them to the other shore. What for? For the purpose of **increasing their ocean of blessings and virtue**, so that, for example, they may go to the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, where they can cultivate to become Buddhas. When the amount of blessings and virtue becomes very great, they are like an ocean, limitless and boundless. It is difficult to measure the ocean’s breadth and depth; the same holds true the ocean of blessings and virtue. That’s the passage to liberation that this Crop-ruling Spirit attained.

**The** next **Crop-ruling Spirit is** named **Accomplishing Wonderful Fragrance**. Crop-ruling Spirits also rule over all flowers, so this Crop-ruling Spirit perfects all kinds of wondrous fragrances. When beings smell these wondrous fragrances, they change their evil ways, become good, and bring forth the bodhi resolve. Wonderful fragrance is the fragrance of precepts, the fragrance of liberation, and the fragrance of liberation of knowledge and views. This Crop-ruling Spirit **gained** a portion of the Buddha’s state, namely, **the passage into liberation of extensively explaining all methods of practice.** “Extensively” means her explanations are endless. She instructs sentient beings in all methods of cultivation-–from the limitless and boundless Dharma doors cultivated by all past Buddhas, to the limitless and boundless Dharma doors cultivated by all future Buddhas. We sentient beings should not be intimidated by all these Dharma doors. We should not say, “The Buddhadharma is as vast as the great ocean. When am I going to finish cultivating so many Dharma doors?” We can liken that attitude to a person standing beside the ocean and saying, “The ocean is so huge. How could I possibly drink up all the water in it? How could I ever cross it?” He heaves a sigh and concludes, “I’ll never be able to drink the ocean dry. I’ll never get to the other side.”

What should we do? We must truly and honestly get down to cultivation. Then, in a fingersnap, we perfect the cultivation of 80,000 Dharma doors; we penetrate and master them all. With such unobstructed penetration, “in a kshana the three asamkhyeyas of kalpas are done.” In the briefest instant, we perfect the cultivation of three great asamkhyeyas (an uncountable number) of eons. So, there’s no reason to feel that the Buddhadharma is too difficult to practice. Crop-ruling Spirit Accomplishing Wonderful Fragrance attained this passage into liberation.

Today I have a question for you. Instead of asking you for questions, I will ask you my question. I would like to know: “Among the 84,000 Dharma doors, which Dharma door is number one?” If you know the answer, please tell me.

Disciple: Of the Dharma doors of cultivation, there isn’t one that is number one. They are all number one.

Venerable Master: They are all number one? Why?

[Answer is inaudible.] Which one is your Dharma door?

Disciple: Sleeping.

Venerable Master: Oh? Do you really know how to sleep?

Disciple: No.

Venerable Master: If you don’t know how to sleep, then how can you consider that your Dharma door? If you master the Dharma door of sleeping and attain the sleeping samadhi, then being asleep would be the same as being awake, and being awake would be the same as sleeping. Wakefulness and sleep would be one and the same. There would be no difference between them. That’s the attainment of the “sleeping samadhi”; it’s also the attainment of the “no sleep samadhi.” Sleeping and waking, waking and sleeping – it’s all the same. So, what about your Dharma door? Tell me what your state is.

Disciple: Confused thinking.

Venerable Master: So confused thinking is also a Dharma door. Why do you say none of them are number one? You have to have a reason. You can’t just make baseless claims. What are your grounds? The Vajra Sutra says very clearly, “The Dharma is all the same, with no high or low. There is no number one and no number two.” If you don’t believe this, you can look into it. If your Dharma door works for you, then your Dharma door is number one for you – sleeping. If my Dharma door works for me, then it’s number one for me – eating. If her Dharma door works for her, then it’s number one for her – wearing clothes. Eating, wearing clothes, and sleeping – that’s all there is. Now, quickly go to bow the repentance ceremony. After bowing, quickly go to sleep. After you wake up, put on your clothes. After putting on clothes, at eleven o’clock you can eat your meal. You don’t have to do anything else.

**Sutra:**

**Crop-ruling Spirit Delighting the Beholder gained a passage into liberation of enabling all beings in the Dharma Realm to renounce laxness, worry, affliction, and other evils, so that they all become pure.**

**Crop-ruling Spirit Immaculate Light gained a passage into liberation of contemplating the good roots of every sentient being and speaking Dharma accordingly, thus gratifying and delighting the entire assembly.**

**At that time Crop-ruling Spirit Tender and Delectable received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Crop-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Crop-ruling Spirit** is named **Delighting the Beholder.** When sentient beings see this Crop-ruling Spirit, they experience adoration and joy, hence her name. She **gained** a state of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation of enabling all sentient beings** in the Dharma Realm – that many sentient beings – upon seeing this Crop-ruling Spirit or hearing the Buddhadharma, **to renounce laxness**. All the sentient beings present at Gold Mountain Monastery right now could be said to have renounced laxness. Why is this? Before they heard the Buddhadharma, these people were like ordinary young Americans – feeling that they had a share at every meal but didn’t have to share in the work. When it came to eating, they had no mark of others. When it came to work, they had no mark of self. When they got into a fight, they had no mark of sentient beings. When they ate meat, they had no mark of beings with a life span.

Now that they have come to Gold Mountain Monastery, some people have no mark of self when it comes to eating. They think, “It doesn’t matter if I eat or not, as long as other people can eat their fill.” When working they have no mark of others. “I can do all the work myself. I don’t need others to do it.” They are completely different from the way they used to be. When they get into a fight, they have the mark of sentient beings, so they think, “I should not fight with this person.” They don’t eat meat anymore, because they have the mark of beings with a life span. They say, “May all beings enjoy a long life,” and they refrain from killing. They are very diligent and hardworking, and not afraid of there being too much work. These are all ways in which they have given up laxness. They have forgotten their physical comfort for the sake of the Dharma. They even go without sleep so they can study more Buddhadharma.

Guo Zhan was especially vigorous today, standing up during the sutra lecture to avoid nodding off. [To Guo Zhan] Was that why you stood up? I saw him starting to doze off when he was sitting there. Yesterday he heard me talk about the sleeping samadhi, and today he wanted to get out of that samadhi. That’s also a case of renouncing laxness.

One also renounces **worry**, sorrow, pain, and **affliction**, **and other evils**. Cultivators should not become depressed or sad. Nor should they become afflicted. They should not constantly worry, like the man from the state of Qi who worried that the sky would fall down. He kept thinking, “I wonder which day the sky will collapse. What am I going to do when the sky falls?” He worried about this all day long to the point that he stopped planting his fields and did no work whatsoever. Now, wouldn’t you say this was going a little too far?

Sometimes people fret about things unnecessarily. For example, they may think, “I wonder if my father is about to die. I wonder if my mother will get sick.” These are worries about one’s elders. Others may wonder, “Will my child grow up? Will my pet dog get skinny? Will my cat know how to catch mice?” These anxieties are uncalled for. Some people make a big deal out of trivial issues and are always worried about something.

As for affliction, some people who have nothing better to do look in the mirror and think, “How irritating! Why do my nostrils point downward? It would be nice if they pointed upwards, so I could look different from everyone else.” They get afflicted about that.

“Other evils” refers in general to greed, anger, and delusion. Sentient beings forsake laxness, worry, affliction, freed, anger, and delusion, **so that they all become pure.** This is the state of Crop-ruling Spirit Delighting the Beholder.

The next **Crop-ruling Spirit** is named **Immaculate Light**. When all filth is left behind, one gains light. What is meant by defilement? Great Master Yongjia’s Song of Enlightenment says:

The mind is the root;
Dharmas are the dust.
The two are like streaks on a mirror.
When the streaks are entirely removed, light begins to appear.
When mind and dharmas are both forgotten,
Then the nature is true.

In order to leave filth, mind and dharmas must both be forgotten. That means to leave behind the two attachments to self and to dharmas. Attachment to self is filth, and so is attachment to dharmas. Once you have left these two attachments, so that people and dharmas are both empty, the light of wisdom inherent in your nature will come forth. Thus she is called the Crop-ruling Spirit Immaculate Light. She **gained a passage into liberation of contemplating the good roots of every sentient being**. She uses wisdom to contemplate and illuminate the good roots of all sentient beings. Sentient beings’ good roots may be shallow or deep, few or many, small or great. We have to use the Buddhadharma to nurture and irrigate them so they will grow. How do we nurture and irrigate them? We do that by **speaking Dharma accordingly**. Whatever Dharma a sentient being needs to hear, we speak it for him or her. We give each being exactly the right teaching, the one that accords with that being’s potentials. We dispense the teaching in accord with the individual’s needs, just as a doctor prescribes medicine according to the patient’s sickness, **thusgratifying and delighting theentire** Dharma **assembly.** All those at the feast of Dharma obtain just the amount of Dharma they are supposed to receive, so they are delighted and satisfied. This Crop-ruling Spirit attained that passage into liberation

**At that time** in the Dharma assembly, **Crop-ruling Spirit Tender and Delectable received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of** all the **Crop-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One, an unsurpassed ocean of merit and virtue, Appears everywhere as a bright lamp shining upon the world. Rescuing and protecting all sentient beings whatsoever,
He bestows peace and joy upon all, omitting not a single one.**

**Boundless is the World Honored One’s merit and virtue.
Those who hear him do not do so in vain.
They leave all suffering and feel perpetual joy.
Seasonal Blooms understands thus.

Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One** is **an unsurpassed ocean of merit and virtue.** The Thus Come One has perfected the three kinds of enlightenment and is replete with the ten thousand virtues. Thus he is said to be an unsurpassed ocean of merit and virtue. There is no merit and virtue higher or greater than that of the Thus Come One. Thus his merit and virtue is an ocean of merit and virtue, because it is measureless and boundless, infinite and inexhaustible.

He **appears everywhere,** teaching and transforming all sentient beings impartially. He is **as a bright lamp shining upon the world** and destroying all darkness. Before the Buddha came into the world, the world was as if devoid of the light of sun, moon, and lamps, going through a long, dark night. When the Buddha was born, it was as if sunlight, moonlight, and lamplight illuminated the entire world. The Buddha realized Buddhahood for the sake of saving sentient beings. His work is to save sentient beings, so the text describes him as: **Rescuing and protecting all sentient beings whatsoever**. Sentient beings are drowning in the river of love and the sea of suffering. The Buddha steers a great, precious ship of compassion to save them all. He rescues every single being. Even the most evil being gets rescued. The Buddha doesn’t say, “You’re too wicked. I won’t save you.” He doesn’t discriminate among sentient beings.

**He bestows peace and joy upon all, omitting not a single one.** He makes all beings peaceful and happy without leaving out or forgetting any. Every single sentient being gets saved by the Buddha. As we say in Buddhism, “Sentient and insentient beings will all perfect the Wisdom of All Modes.”

**Boundless is the World Honored One’s merit and virtue.** The One Honored both in and beyond the World, the Great Guiding Master of the Triple Realm, has limitless, boundless, infinite, and inexhaustible merit and virtue. His merit and virtue is inconceivable. **Those who hear him** include you and me. Those who hear the Buddha’s name or the sutras spoken by the Buddha **do not do so in vain.** Their hearing will not be in vain. What use will it be? **They leave all suffering and feel perpetual joy.** All beings will have no suffering, but will enjoy every kind of happiness.

**Seasonal Blooms understands thus**. Crop-ruling Spirit Pure Light of Seasonal Blooms has attained this state and this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**All the powers perfected, the Well-Gone One
Appears in the world, adorned with meritorious virtues.
All sentient beings are thoroughly tamed and subdued.
Robust Strength understands and attains this Dharma.**

**Long ago, the Buddha cultivated an ocean of great compassion.
His mind is intent upon each and every being in the world.
Thus, his spiritual penetrations know no bounds.
Increasing Essence and Energy sees thus.**

**Commentary:**

**All the powers** are **perfected** by **the Well-Gone One.** “Well-Gone One” is one of the ten titles of Buddhas. “All the powers” refers to the Buddha’s Ten Powers. Having cultivated all the powers to perfection, the Buddha **appears in the world, adorned with meritorious virtues.** Adorned with all the meritorious virtues he has accomplished, the Buddha appears in the world of sentient beings.

**All sentient beings are thoroughly tamed and subdued.** The obstinate beings of the Saha World are difficult to tame and subdue. You may try to teach them wholesome Dharmas, using all kinds of expedient means to teach them, whether speaking to them directly or hinting indirectly, yet they won’t believe you. On the other hand, when they encounter unwholesome, unclean, perverse conditions, they pursue them like crazy. Sentient beings may be hard to subdue, yet the Buddha can subdue them. They may be hard to teach, but the Buddha manages to teach them.

Crop-ruling Spirit **Robust Strength understands and attains this Dharma**, this passage into liberation.

**Long ago, the Buddha cultivated an ocean of great compassion**. The Buddha applied effort in cultivating the Dharma door of great kindness and compassion.

**His mind is intent upon each and every being in the world.** His every thought is to save beings from suffering and make them happy. **Thus, his spiritual penetrations know no bounds.** In order to teach and transform obstinate and incorrigible sentient beings, one must possess all kinds of spiritual powers and expedient means. Thus the Buddha’s spiritual penetrations are boundless. **Increasing Essence and Energy sees thus**. Crop-ruling Spirit Increasing Essence and Energy understands this state and this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Constantly, the Buddha manifests throughout all worlds.
None of his expedients are ever used in vain.
He thoroughly purifies beings’ delusions and afflictions:
Universally Producing spirit is liberated thus.**

**Commentary:**

**Constantly, the Buddha manifests throughout all worlds.** The Buddha is nowhere present, yet nowhere absent. The Buddha pervades the entire world. Why can’t all sentient beings see the Buddha? If the Buddha is everywhere in the world, beings should all be able to see him. But sentient beings are enveloped in their delusions and afflictions. Delusions shroud them like clouds covering the sun. Although the sun is there, clouds block it from view. Likewise, although the Buddha is present everywhere, sentient beings cannot see him because they are obstructed by their own ignorance, delusions, karma, and suffering. Even so, the Buddha constantly appears before sentient beings. Although beings cannot see him, the Buddha always sees them.

**None of his expedients are ever used in vain.** The Buddha uses all manner of expedient methods to teach and transform sentient beings, leading them to bring forth the resolve for bodhi and realize Buddhahood. **He thoroughly purifies beings’ delusions and afflictions.** The Buddha dispels the clouds covering sentient beings, so that the sun can shine forth. **Universally Producing spirit is liberated thus.** This state is the passage into liberation that Crop-ruling Spirit Universally Producing Roots and Fruits understands.

**Sutra:**

##### An ocean of great wisdom in the world, the Buddha**Releases pure radiance that reaches absolutely everywhere.** **Hence, all give rise to vast faith and understanding.** **Adorned Cowl understands and enters thus.**

**Commentary:**

**An ocean of great wisdom in the world, the Buddha.** The Buddha is the wisest and most intelligent sentient being in the world. The Buddha is an enlightened one among sentient beings. He possesses the highest understanding. There is nothing he does not know or understand. He is the Greatly Enlightened One. Not only is the Buddha an ocean of great wisdom, the Dharma is also an ocean of great wisdom, and so is the Sangha. The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha are all oceans of great wisdom in the world. They are also lamps of inexhaustible brightness for the world.

The Buddha, an ocean of great wisdom, **releases** the **pure radiance** of great wisdom **that reaches absolutely everywhere.** The Buddha emits a pure light that shines upon the waters of all sentient beings’ minds. The Buddha’s light shines into beings’ hearts, causing them to bring forth the resolve for bodhi and realize the unsurpassed Way.

The pure wisdom light emitted by the Buddha universally shines upon sentient beings’ hearts. **Hence all give rise tofaith and understanding** that fills their minds. Beings who have attained the Buddha’s wisdom light give rise to vast and inconceivable faith and understanding.

**Adorned Cowl understands and enters thus**. Crop-ruling Spirit Wonderfully Adorned Circular Cowl awakens to and understands this state and principle, this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One, beholding the world, gives rise to compassion.
He manifests to benefit sentient beings,
Showing them the supreme path of serenity and bliss:
Pure Flowers spirit is liberated thus.

Commentary:**

Guo Hu, you explain the next four lines of verse.

[Guo Hu: **The Thus Come One, beholding the world, gives rise to compassion.** Some people talk about Thus Come One Buddha. Actually, the Thus Come One is just the Buddha, and the Buddha is just the Thus Come One. Here, the Thus Come One refers to Shakyamuni Buddha. Seeing how miserable the sentient beings of the world were, experiencing suffering in everything they do, he brought forth a heart of compassion and wished to relieve their suffering and make them happy.

**He manifests to benefit sentient beings.** The Buddha comes into the world to give beings the opportunity to achieve ultimate happiness.

**Showing them the supreme path of serenity and bliss:** The Buddha sees that sentient beings have 84,000 kinds of suffering, so he leads them onto the supreme path of serenity and bliss. He teaches him ways to make their minds serene and peaceful. This sublime path is one by which the Buddhas achieve purity in the Triple Realm, and by which the Sangha – those who have left the home-life –are purified. **Pure Flowers spirit is liberated thus.** She understands this state of the Buddha. This is her passage into liberation.

Is his explanation completely correct? Does everyone know its problems? How do you explain the word “serenity”? [Serenity means that what sentient beings do leads them to enlightenment. Serenity refers to being still and quiet; the absence of affliction. Alright, if no one else has any objections, I don’t have any, either.

**Sutra:**

##### The pure practices cultivated by the Well-Gone One **He fully proclaimed beneath the Bodhi tree.** **Such teaching and transforming fills the ten directions:** **Wonderful Fragrance spirit thus hears and accepts.**

**Commentary:**

**The pure practices cultivated by the Well-Gone One**. Well-Gone One is another one of the titles of Buddhas. The pure practices cultivated by the Buddha in the past involved staying away from all evil and carrying out all good deeds. In other words, he stayed away from all unwholesome dharmas and cultivated all wholesome dharmas. Unwholesome dharmas are defiled dharmas, whereas wholesome dharmas are pure dharmas.

**He fully proclaimed beneath the Bodhi tree.** One night, while the Buddha was seated beneath the Bodhi tree, he saw a star and awakened to the Way. Thereupon, he exclaimed, “How strange! All sentient beings possess the wisdom and virtuous characteristics of the Thus Come One. It is only because of confused thinking and attachments that they cannot realize them.” It is clear from this that confused thinking and attachments are great obstacles to the cultivation of the Way. If we had no confused thinking or attachments, we would very quickly realize unsurpassed, proper and equal right enlightenment. Why haven’t we realized it yet? Our attachments are too great, and our confused thoughts are too numerous.

After the Buddha attained the Way beneath the Bodhi tree, he proclaimed the Great Flower Adornment Sutra, but those of the Two Vehicles were such that:

They had eyes, but could not see Nishyanda Buddha.
They had ears, but could not hear the Perfect Sudden Teaching.

The Buddha spoke the Great Flower Adornment Dharma and all the other sutras to teach and transform all the sentient beings throughout the ten directions. Thus the text says: **Such teaching and transforming fills the ten directions**. The sentient beings of the ten directions can all be taken across to liberation.

**Wonderful Fragrance spirit thus hears and accepts**. Crop-ruling Spirit Accomplishing Wonderful Fragrance gains insight into this passage into liberation. She hears and accepts this Dharma door of liberation.

**Sutra:**

**For those in the many worlds, the Buddha occasions the rise of
Freedom from distress, the upsurge of great joy.
Whatever dispositions and desire—he purifies all.
Delighting spirit awakens thus.**

##### The Thus Come One, appearing in the many worlds, **Ascertains the inclinations of delight in all beings’ hearts.** **Hence, with skillful means he enhances their maturing.** **This is Pure Light spirit’s passage to liberation.**Commentary:

The Spirit named Delighting the Beholder used a verse to praise the Buddha, saying: **For those in the many worlds,** the Buddha doesn’t appear only in our Saha world. He appears in all worlds throughout the ten directions. What for? **The Buddha occasions the rise of / Freedom from distress, the upsurge of great joy.** The Buddha pities sentient beings, for he sees them undergoing endless births and deaths in the dangerous paths of transmigration. They are suddenly born in the heavens, suddenly among people, suddenly in the hells, suddenly among hungry ghosts and animals, revolving endlessly in the six paths of rebirth. Being greatly concerned, the Buddha works tirelessly to save beings, trying to find ways to free all sentient beings from grief, suffering, and affliction so that they can experience tremendous happiness.

**Whatever disposition or desire—he purifies all:** Some sentient beings have good roots; others lack them. For those who have good roots, the Buddha uses numerous expedient means to help them increase their good roots. For those who lack them, the Buddha leads them to plant good roots. “Desire” refers to what sentient beings are fond of. Some are fond of wealth; some like beautiful women or handsome men. Others enjoy drinking wine or liquor. Some like to eat meat; others like to take drugs. Beings have many different kinds of dispositions and desires, but the Buddha is aware of them all and he can regulate and purify their habits accumulated from numerous lives and eons. He can transform their defilement into purity. As a saying goes:

Defiled thoughts arise easily.
Pure virtue is hard to achieve.

Yet, with his awesome spiritual might, the Buddha transforms defiled thoughts into pure ones. Thus the text says: “Whatever disposition or desire--he purifies all.” This is also as when an ordinary person who does not know anything about cultivation or following rules hears the Buddhadharma, and then starts following the rules, begins getting rid of his bad habits, and decides to cultivate. He casts aside his defiled thoughts, and pure thoughts arise. **Delighting spirit awakens thus** to this state and enters this passage into liberation.

**The Thus Come One, appearing in the many worlds, / Ascertains the inclinations of delight in all beings’ hearts**. The Buddha, observing what sentient beings delight in and wish for, expediently uses those things as tools to teach and transform them. **Hence, with skillful means he enhances their maturing**. It can be seen that saving sentient beings is not an easy thing to do. If it were easy, the Buddha would not need to use various skillful means. One kind would be enough. That the Buddha must use all manner of expedients goes to show how difficult it is to liberate sentient beings. If he tries one expedient method and doesn’t manage to save the sentient being, he must try another one and see if he can get that being to believe in, understand, practice, and realize the Dharma. Thus all kinds of expedient Dharma doors are used to bring beings to maturity, to realization of Buddhahood. That’s one way to explain this.

Another explanation is that all kinds of expedients are used to teach all kinds of beings. Since beings’ basic dispositions are all different, many different expedient methods must be employed to teach them. Each kind of sentient being requires his or her own kind of Dharma door.

This second explanation makes a little more sense, I feel. If the Buddha has to use all kinds of expedients to teach one sentient being, as per the first explanation, it seems to imply that the Buddha doesn’t understand that being’s dispositions and inclinations. Since the Buddha does know sentient beings’ dispositions and inclinations, he can convert a sentient being by using just one expedient teaching. He doesn’t need to use all sorts of Dharma doors to teach one being. Various Dharma doors are for teaching various beings and bringing them to maturity. Once one begins to teach and transform a sentient being, one must constantly help that being in his cultivation until he becomes mature and realizes the Way.

**This is Pure Light spirit’s passage into liberation**. This is the state and passage into liberation attained by Crop-ruling Spirit Immaculate Light.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Medicine-ruling Spirit Auspicious gained a passage into liberation of universally contemplating all sentient beings’ minds and diligently gathering them in.**

**Commentary:**

**Moreover, Medicine-ruling Spirit Auspicious** prepared to elaborate further on the principles discussed previously. “Auspicious” has the meaning that when sick people take this kind of medicine, they will be cured. When those who are dying take this medicine, they will not die. When healthy people take this medicine, they will never get sick. That’s what’s meant by “auspicious.” What kind of medicine is this? Happiness. If you are happy, then if you are not ill now, you will never get ill. If you are ill and you can be happy, your illness will be cured. If you are dying and you give rise to happiness, your life will be prolonged. The “medicine” of happiness is auspicious. There’s a saying:

Since ancient times, the immortals have had no other method:
They are simply happy all the time, and never grieve or worry.

Immortals do not die. How is it that they can avoid death? They are happy every day, and never sad. Medicine-ruling Spirit Auspicious wants people to be happy, for happiness itself is auspicious. To have good luck, you must be happy. If you aren’t happy, things won’t be lucky. And if things aren’t lucky, you won’t be happy. If everyone is joyful and happy, everything will be lucky and auspicious.

Medicine cures illness. For each illness, there is a certain kind of medicine that must be taken. If you have a cold, you can take some yinqiao tablets. If you are coughing, you can buy a bottle of loquat syrup to take. These are all medicines.

This Medicine-ruling Spirit named Auspicious **gained a passage into liberation of universally contemplating all sentient beings’ minds** to see what diseases afflict their minds. Do they suffer from the disease of greed? Do they have the disease of anger, or that of delusion? The disease of greed is not easy to cure. The disease of anger is also difficult to cure, and the disease of delusion is even harder to cure.

What is meant by the disease of delusion? An example of a deluded person would be someone who has never studied hopes to come out first in the imperial examination. Well, he might win first place in illiteracy! Another example would be a person who does not plant the fields and yet wants to reap a harvest. Perhaps someone who has never studied the Buddhadharma wants to lecture a sutra. Wouldn’t you say that’s being deluded?

I’ve often spoken of these kinds of foolish fantasies. Some people think:
Beautiful flowers should stay abloom every day
And the moon be full night after night!

“How nice it would be if pretty flowers could bloom forever,” they think. Or perhaps they think, “Moon, you really don’t know how to be a moon.” Why don’t you stay full every night? Why must you wane? That’s so annoying!”

Let all the springs on this great earth turn into wine
And may money grow on every tree in all the forests!

People who are fond of drinking think, “Instead of having to spend money on wine, how nice it’d be if all the pools of water turned into wine!” People who covet wealth have even more incredible fantasies: “In order to have money to spend, I have to go out and make it. If money grew on every tree and all I had to do was pluck it when I needed it, wouldn’t that be wonderful?” Such people are foolish, and their foolishness if not easy to cure.

This Medicine-ruling Spirit diagnoses sentient beings’ illnesses and gives them the appropriate medicine. And in curing their illnesses he is diligently gathering them in to the Bodhi Way.

Yesterday we mentioned Great Master Shaokang, and the verse in praise of Elder Master Hsu Yun, which has the line, “Leveling the Bodhi path.” I don’t know if you remember the verse. Maybe I can recite it for you:

In past lives, he made pure vows
To diligently be mindful of the Buddha.
With prajna he transformed the multitudes,
Leveling the Bodhi path.
He saved countless people
Through skillful guidance and remonstration.
His radiance is Buddhahood.
The Buddha is just radiance.

Medicine-ruling Spirit Auspicious attained this passage into liberation.

Part Five

**Sutra:**

Medicine-ruling Spirit Candana Forest gained a passage into liberation of using light to gather in all sentient beings, and of causing those who see him not to do so in vain. Medicine-ruling Spirit Radiance of Leaving Dust gained a passage into liberation of using pure expedient means to extinguish all sentient beings’ afflictions. Medicine-ruling Spirit Universal Renown gained a passage into liberation of using great renown to expand the ocean of boundless good roots.

**Commentary:**

The next **Medicine-ruling Spirit** is named **Candana Forest**. Candana is a type of incense. When one piece of it is lit, it‘s said that the fragrance can be smelled for forty li [about thirteen miles] around.

Medicine [Chinese herbal medicine] can be classified as cold, hot, warm, and neutral in nature. People who are running a fever (a “hot illness”) should take medicine of a cooling nature. Those with “cold” illnesses should take medicine of a hot nature to counteract the coldness. Warm means neither cold nor hot. Some illnesses should be treated with warm and gentle medicines. Neutral medicines are medicines that are not very strong or intense. An example is licorice root, which goes well with all other medicines and can neutralize any kind of poison because of its moderate and harmonious nature. Therefore, it is known as the Minister of State [among Chinese medicines]. The medicine chuanjun has the function of breaking through barriers and locks like a valiant general. For example, if a sick person is constipated, and he eats some chuanjun, he will quickly have a bowel movement. Thus it is considered a general. The medicine xijiao (rhinoceros horn) relieves heat in the heart. Since there are numerous kinds of medicine, people must not be careless or casual about them. That’s why there is a spirit in charge of medicine. Each type of medicine cures specific ailments.

This Medicine-ruling Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of using light to gather in all sentient beings**. She understood the state of the Buddha in which the Buddha uses light to gather in and transform beings**, causing those who see it not to do so in vain.** Every sentient being who sees the light will benefit and gain advantages. In other words, they will all be gathered in and transformed. That’s the passage into liberation that this particular Medicine-ruling Spirit attained.

The next **Medicine-ruling Spirit** is named **Radiance of Leaving Dust**. Leaving the dust, she attains purity and thus has a radiance about her, hence her name. She **gained a passage into liberation of using pure expedient means**, expedient Dharma doors of purity, **to extinguish all sentient beings’** obstacles of **afflictions.** She breaks through their ignorance and affliction, causing them to gain purity and light. She attained such a passage into liberation.

The next **Medicine-ruling Spirit** is named **Universal Renown**. Beings everywhere have heard of her. She is the most famous of all the Medicine-ruling Spirits, and her name is known everywhere. Her medicines are so efficacious that they can cure every sentient being’s ailments and generate all kinds of good roots. She **gained a passage into liberation**, a state of the Buddha, **of using** his **great renown**.Upon hearing her name, sentient beings make the resolve for bodhi. Having made the bodhi resolve, they **expand the ocean of boundless good roots.** That’s the passage into liberation that this Medicine-ruling Spirit attained.

We are now holding a Buddha Recitation Session. For seven days, we gather together to recite “Namo Amitabha Buddha.” This is a rare opportunity. Those who believe in the Buddha should take time out of their busy schedule to join the recitation. When you recite the Buddha’s name on your own, sometimes you have to pause and can’t keep reciting continuously. When everyone recites together, the recitation can continue without interruption. There is a verse that goes,

If you recite the Buddha’s name, reciting without cease,
The mouth recites “Amita” and makes things of a piece.
Scattered thoughts do not arise; samadhi you attain.
For rebirth in the Pure Land, your hope is not in vain.
If all day you detest the suffering Saha’s pain,
Cut off the red dust thoughts within your mind.
Make rebirth in Ultimate Bliss your mind’s essential aim.
Put down impure reflections, and pure thoughts you will find.

Your mouth recites “Namo Amitabha Buddha” and you enter the Buddha Recitation Samadhi. Your hope of being reborn in the Pure Land will certainly be fulfilled. If all day long you feel that the Saha world is full of suffering and vexation, you will let go of everything in this mundane “red dust” world. You make a vow to seek rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, and to you this is most important. When you cast aside defiled thoughts, pure mindfulness is then perfected.

During these seven days, we must be determined to attain the Buddha Recitation Samadhi, for then we will not have wasted our efforts. The more suffering it is, the more you must recite. The more difficult it is, the more you have to recite. Don’t be afraid of suffering or difficulty. Don’t think so highly of your stinking skinbag. You sit for awhile, and your back starts to ache. You walk a little, and your feet hurt. After reciting for a long time, your throat gets dry and your voice grows hoarse. You decide you can’t take it anymore. Who is it who can’t take it? Why do you place so much importance on your stinking skinbag? We should forget our bodies for the Dharma! For the sake of the Buddhadharma, we should disregard our false shell of a body. You may cherish and pamper your body right now, taking care not to let it get sick, get cold, get hungry, or get thirsty. You help it and protect it and lavish lots of attention upon it. But after you have done this for a long time, it will no longer help you out. Bit by bit, it will quit on you. The eyes will quit on you, and then you won‘t be able to see clearly. The ears will quit and grow deaf, saying, “You’ve used us for such a long time; now it’s time to give us our freedom.” Your arms and legs will become feeble and unable to move, also resigning their jobs. At that time, no matter how dearly you cherish your body, it won’t take orders from you anymore.

Now when you are still healthy, it’s the perfect time to recite the Buddha‘s name. You can still “borrow what’s false to cultivate what’s true.” Each of you should pay attention to this. You should not say, “Last year I attended the recitation but didn‘t get anything out of it, so I don’t feel like attending this year.” That‘s the wrong attitude. If you didn’t gain any advantages last year, you should work even harder this year and be determined to gain some benefit. You should vigorously advance in your practice instead of retreating. It shouldn‘t be that:

When you have studied Buddhism for one year, the Buddha is right in front of you.
When you studied Buddhism for ten years, the Buddha is far away on the horizon.”

You ought to be more vigorous and sincere with each passing day. Then you will accomplish something.

I have another piece of good news to tell everyone. We have two Bhikshus who are doing a “three steps one bow” pilgrimage to Seattle in order to pray for world peace. Now there will not be any major disasters in the world. There might be some minor mishaps, but nothing to worry about. These two Bhikshus have reversed the tides of destiny, making it so that there are much fewer people dying in the world than there would have been. Everyone at Gold Mountain Monastery should be aware of this, especially since two weeks ago, we all made a vow that wherever the bowing monks were, it could rain there either the day before or the day after they were there, but not rain while they were there. Or, it could rain at night, but not during the daytime, for the rain would make it very miserable for them. These conditions have already been fulfilled. After we made that vow, there was no more rain, but only a little fog. Fog is not much of a problem, but it would be better if the fog vanished as well. That would make it easier for them to carry out their vow.

All of you should think it over: Despite all the suffering that they have to go through, they still go ahead and apply effort in cultivation. How does our recitation of the Buddha‘s name indoors compare to that? It can’t be considered suffering by any means. Therefore, we ought to recite diligently so we can attain the Buddha Recitation Samadhi.

After the lecture is over, we will do the Great Transference of Merit. Each one of you should transfer the merit with a true, sincere, and resolute heart. Don‘t let the time pass by in vain.

**Sutra:**

**Medicine-ruling Spirit Shining Pores gained a passage into liberation of hoisting a great compassion banner that quickly alleviates all states of illness.

Commentary:**

The next **Medicine-ruling Spirit** is named **Shining Pores**. She can emit light from her pores and is skilled at curing the illnesses of sentient beings. She **gained a passage into liberation of hoisting a great compassion banner that quickly alleviates all states of illness.** The banner of great compassion is a banner of kindness and compassion. Kindness brings joy, and compassion alleviates suffering. Kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity are the Four Unlimited Aspects of Mind of a Bodhisattva.

All good roots grow from these Four Unlimited Aspects of Mind, especially from the aspect of kindness. Thus the Flower Adornment Sutra Prologue has these lines:

By the power of the good roots of kindness,
The light of Moon Love and so forth is emitted.
The diseases of both body and mind
Are extinguished at once by mindfulness.

Kindness is the mother-substance of good roots. Without kindness, it would be impossible for good roots to grow. In order for your good roots to grow, you must cultivate the Samadhi of Kindness. Then you can radiate the light of the Moon Love Samadhi and so forth. It could be said that kindness makes possible the accomplishments of all the Hearers, Condition-Enlightened Ones, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. A kind heart generates all good roots. After all good roots are formed, the fruition of Buddhahood may be realized. Therefore, kindness and compassion are the most important requisite virtues for cultivators. If you use a kind heart to practice giving, such giving reaps boundless merit and virtue. If you hold precepts with a kind heart, your precepts carry boundless merit and virtue. If you cultivate patience with a kind heart, that patience has boundless merit and virtue. If you apply kindness and compassion to the practice of vigor, the merit and virtue of your vigor is boundless. If you cultivate dhyana concentration with a kind and compassionate heart, the merit and virtue of your concentration will soon be realized. If you cultivate the perfection of prajna wisdom with a kind and compassionate heart, prajna will constantly manifest its light. Therefore, it is essential for cultivators to have a kind and compassionate heart. They should also practice joy and equanimity. These are the Four Unlimited Aspects of Mind of a Bodhisattva. People who practice the Bodhisattva Path must possess kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. With these Four Unlimited Aspects of Mind as a foundation, all good roots will come forth. All good dharmas, and all the miraculous functionings of spiritual penetrations also come forth. Kindness is just the Buddha; the Buddha is simply kindness. Kindness is the Mahayana Teaching. The Mahayana Dharma does not go beyond kindness. If you have kindness, you are cultivating the Bodhi Path, for the Bodhi Path is just kindness. Kindness is the Thus Come One. Thus, kindness is extremely crucial.

Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated the Samadhi of Kindness and used it to subdue a drunken elephant. Devadatta was terribly jealous of the Buddha and wanted to kill him so that he could become the new Buddha. He collaborated with King Ajatashatru, whose name means “grudge before birth,” because he carried a grudge even before he was born. As the King, he had both position and power, and a word from him could decide whether a person would live or die. He was that powerful. He committed the worst evil deeds, including killing his father, killing his mother, killing an Arhat, breaking up the harmony of the Sangha, and shedding the Buddha’s blood. Although he committed those terrible offenses, because he still had some good roots, he was saved by the Buddha in the end.

Devadatta told King Ajatashatru [who at that time was still the Prince] to release the drunken elephant upon the Buddha, hoping that it would crush the Buddha to death under its feet. Being intoxicated, the elephant was intent upon running over and crushing anyone in its path, not caring whether that person was a Buddha or a Bodhisattva. Yet even in its intoxicated state, the elephant was still afraid of lions. The Buddha entered the Samadhi of Kindness, and then extended one hand out for the elephant to see. What do you suppose the elephant saw? It must have been truly drunk! It saw the Buddha’s fingers turn into five lions. The five lions started walking toward the elephant, scaring it right out of its drunken stupor. No longer drunk, the elephant was tamed by the Buddha. The five lions conjured up by the Buddha had subdued the drunken elephant. The Buddha told his disciples, “My fingers did not really turn into lions. They manifested as lions due to the strength of the good roots of kindness I cultivated.” The Buddha’s heart of great compassion subdued the drunken elephant.

What is meant by “the light of Moon Love and so forth”? It refers to the Moon Love Samadhi. When Shakyamuni Buddha was at the Grove of Twin Sala Trees, he observed that King Ajatashatru was gravely ill and on the brink of death. He was barely breathing. Contemplating the causes and conditions and seeing that it was time to save him, the Buddha entered the Moon Love Samadhi and emitted bright light. The light was not hot like that of fire; rather, it was as cool and refreshing as moonlight. One of the Forty-two Hands is the Moon Essence Mani Hand, which dispels fever and illnesses of heat. The Buddha sent forth a cool radiance that shone upon King Ajatashatru’s body, at which point the King recovered, his anxieties vanished, and he felt peaceful and refreshed. The King then asked Jiva, “The Buddha used the Moon Love Samadhi to cure me, but what exactly is the Moon Love Samadhi? Can you tell me?” Being a learned man, Jiva understood the principle behind the Moon Love Samadhi and explained its six meanings to the King.

1. Just as the moonlight causes all utpala blossoms to be fresh and beautiful, the Moon Love Samadhi causes sentient beings’ wholesome thoughts to blossom vigorously and their bodhi resolve to be long-lasting.

2. The moonlight delights all travelers, but it upsets thieves. However, the moon shines for the sake of travelers, not for thieves. Travelers like the moonlight, but thieves are afraid of it. The Moon Love Samadhi delights those who cultivate the path to nirvana. It brings happiness to anyone who cultivates the Buddhadharma.

3. Between the first and the fifteenth of the lunar month, the moon grows brighter and fuller day by day. Likewise, the Moon Love Samadhi causes the good roots of all sentient beings to grow day by day.

4. From the sixteenth to the twenty-third of the lunar month, the moon gradually wanes day by day. Similarly, the Moon Light Samadhi diminishes sentient beings’ afflictions day by day.

5. Just as moonlight can dispel heated and pent-up energies, which make one uncomfortable, the Moon Love Samadhi can rid all sentient beings of the heat of greed and affliction.

6. The moon, which is like a king among stars, gives off a light that everyone loves, like sweet dew. Likewise, the Moon Love Samadhi is the king of all goodness, and is like sweet dew in that all sentient beings love it. That’s why it’s called “Moon Love Samadhi.”

The last two lines of verse say,

The diseases of both body and mind
Are extinguished at once by mindfulness.

What are the diseases of body and mind? We will look into this a little later. Medicine-ruling Spirit Shining Pores attained a great compassion banner that quickly reaches all states of illness. Why does she want to quickly reach all states of illness? Does she want to become ill herself and die along with the patient? Not at all. She wants to go quickly to help those who are sick get better, to cure both their physical and mental diseases, so that their bodies and minds are free from illness. She gained a passage into liberation of quickly reaching all states of illness.

What are the illnesses of the body? The three evils of killing, stealing, and lust. These evils are diseases. The illnesses of the mind are greed, anger, and delusion. If you want to force an interpretation, you can explain it any way you like, but killing, stealing, lust, greed, anger, and delusion are a little easier to understand.

“Are extinguished at once by mindfulness.” As soon as you are mindful of kindness and of the Moon Love Samadhi, both mental and physical illnesses disappear and you feel cool and refreshed.

**Sutra:**

**Medicine-ruling Spirit Pure Destroyer of Darkness gained a passage into liberation of curing all blind and dull beings and purifying their wisdom eye.

Commentary:**

[To a disciple:] Do you know how to explain this passage? Come and explain! Start from the sixth section in the *Prologue*, where it says:

Section 6. Confused about principle and confused about retribution. With two kinds of ignorance, blind and dull beings become deluded, create karma, and undergo the myriad sufferings.

Continue explaining from there. I don’t have the text with me, but you do.

[Disciple explains.]

What is meant by the sentence, “It is not existent like empty space. It is not nonexistent like a hare with horns.” Is this referring to the absolute truth, the mundane truth, or the truth of the Middle Way?

Which finger represents the Middle Way? (Answer: The third.) Which one is the mundane truth? (Answer: The first.) Which one is the absolute truth? (Answer: The second.) How do you know? [Answer is inaudible.] Your wisdom is not bad.

In Roll Eight of the *Parinirvana Sutra*, the Bodhisattva Kashyapa addresses the Buddha, saying, “Why is it said that the Buddha nature is profound and difficult to perceive and enter?”

The Buddha answered, “Suppose there are a hundred blind men who go to a good doctor hoping to regain their sight. The doctor uses a miniature knife and cuts off the film over one man’s eyes. Then he puts up one finger and asks, ‘Do you see anything?’ The man says no.” The first finger represents the mundane truth, and so the man cannot see it. Even Bodhisattvas cannot see the Buddha nature. As for the second and third fingers, the man says he can see them slightly. The eye refers to the wisdom eye. Once your wisdom unfolds, you can understand true principle.

The *Prologue* text says, “Confused about principle and confused about retribution.” Such people understand neither true principle nor retribution, so they are comparable to blind men. Dull means not understanding anything. Confusion about principle: When one makes discriminations based on confusion about the principle, that is delusion of thoughts. Confusion about retribution could be considered delusion of views, so these are the two delusions of views and thoughts. They could also be called two kinds of ignorance. According to the commentary, the hundred blind men are Bodhisattvas of the Ten Grounds. At each Ground, the Ten Perfections are cultivated, so that makes a hundred blind men. The meaning is that even Bodhisattvas on the Ten Grounds do not see the Buddha nature or understand it. When the Buddha instructs them, they think it very peculiar. They say that all along in their cultivation, they have been confused by the concept of nonself, and thus have not understood the Buddha nature.

The hundred blind people represent people who do not understand and have not seen the Buddha nature, those who have not understood their own minds or seen their own natures. Even Bodhisattvas on the Ten Grounds have such a hard time perceiving the Buddha nature; how much harder it is for Hearers and Condition-Enlightened Ones to see it!

Another interpretation of the three fingers is that they represent the three great *asamkhyeyas* of eons. National Master Qingliang chooses the interpretation of the three fingers as representing the Three Truths, which is more reasonable.

**Medicine-ruling Spirit Pure Destroyer of Darkness gained a passage into liberation of curing all blind and dull beings**. “Curing all blind and dull beings” means destroying all their ignorance **and purifying their wisdom eye.** All sentient beings have the wisdom eye. Why did I tell you to explain this passage of the sutra? I wanted to see whether or not you have opened your wisdom eye. If you have opened your wisdom eye, you can see that the five *skandhas* are all empty and thoroughly understand the true appearance of all dharmas. You can also deeply enter the sutra treasury and have wisdom like the sea. People who have wisdom like the sea can explain a text without having studied it before. They are able to lecture on all the sutras without having studied them. Their ability to lecture is different from that of people who have studied it from others. If you have the wisdom eye, then the words just flow forth from your own nature. The wisdom eye destroys ignorance. Ignorant people are as if blind and dull. Dull, obstinate beings don’t listen to others and don’t want anyone telling them what to do. They don’t follow rules. Han Yu wrote an essay on “Sacrifice to an Alligator,” saying, “If you continue to be stubborn, I will lead an army of mounted soldiers here and have them shoot and kill you with poisoned arrows.” After that burst of temper, the alligator went away. Alligators are not dull and obtuse; they can understand. Here, “dull beings” refers to those who don‘t follow rules or listen to instructions. There is no way to teach them.

According to Confucian philosophy, such people cannot lead others; they don‘t have leadership ability. However, they won’t take orders either. They won‘t be bossed around by others. People who can’t lead others, and who won‘t be led by others, are useless, dead things.

If people are blind in the eyes, that’s not a big deal; it just means they cannot see things. If their hearts are blind, that’s serious, because then they don’t understand true principle. They are confused about principle. The text says, “purifying their wisdom eye.” When the wisdom eye is opened, you can understand any principle whatsoever. Some people are able to see ghosts and spirits, but they don’t see them with their physical eyes. Some people do have the ability to see these beings with their physical eyes; they have that kind of spiritual penetration as a reward for past cultivation.

Cultivators also have five other eyes, which are the Buddha eye, the Dharma eye, the wisdom eye, the heavenly eye, and the flesh eye. The flesh eye which is among the Five Eyes is not the same as the two physical eyes that we ordinary people have. There is another eye called the flesh eye, which can see things with shape and form and material substance. This flesh eye is different from the two physical eyes. There is only one flesh eye, one heavenly eye, one Dharma eye, one wisdom eye, and one Buddha eye. They come singly, not in pairs. Those who have attained the Five Eyes will understand this kind of state. Those who haven’t attained them only know what the sutras say, but can‘t make heads or tails of it. As it’s said, “The twelve-foot Vajra spirit can’t touch his own head.” Where exactly is your flesh eye? Your heavenly eye? Your wisdom eye? Your Dharma eye, and your Buddha eye? They are not apart from your mind. They are inherent in your own mind. However, because you are enveloped in ignorance, it’s as if you’ve lost the Five Eyes, although you haven’t really. Although you haven’t lost them, you still don’t know how to use them. And since you can’t use them, it’s just as if you’d lost them.

Suppose you cultivate the Way. Say you cultivate the contemplation of Sanskrit syllables. I‘ve explained how you can contemplate the Sanskrit syllables of the Six-Syllable Bright Mantra: *om ma ni ba mi hong*. [Actually the last syllable is *hong*, but a person once mistook it for *niu*, which means “ox”.] When your contemplation is perfected, then you can attain the Five Eyes and Six Spiritual Penetrations. Also, if you contemplate the Sanskrit syllables of the Mantra Heart at the end of the Shurangama Mantra “Da Zhi Tuo Nan E Na Li...” you can also attain the Five Eyes and Six Penetrations. There is also the Avatamsaka Syllabary. A praise says, “Forty-two syllables of the wondrous *dharani*, each syllable has many meanings...” That can also help you open your Five Eyes and gain the Six Penetrations. If you successfully contemplate every syllable, you will know the realm of the Five Eyes and Six Penetrations.

“Dharma Master, what about you?” someone asks.

I’m just the same as you. I’m not any different. I’ve been talking so much that I forgot about the time. I won’t ramble on any longer. Once you open the Five Eyes, there are a lot of hassles. When it happens, you‘ll know what I’m talking about. You‘ll be able see into the heavens and the hells; you’ll see people, and you‘ll also see ghosts. I will tell you this: Seeing so many things, if you can’t concentrate and don’t have enough *samadhi*, it’s easy to get possessed by a demon. Whether or not you open your Eyes is not important. You shouldn’t think there are great advantages to opening the Eyes. With your Eyes open, you get to spend more time watching movies, watching the radar screen, watching television. If you haven‘t opened your Eyes, you can be a country bumpkin, which is not bad! If you open your Eyes, it’s like going to the big city and seeing all the shows, movies, and casinos--seeing too many things. City dwellers and country dwellers lead different lifestyles, but some of them still manage to keep their minds free from affliction. Once you open the Five Eyes, it’s like you have five more radars that you have to monitor o see if a jet is flying by or an atomic bomb is coming your way. Wouldn’t you say it’s a lot of trouble? Without those radars, you wouldn’t know what was coming, and nothing would come anyway, so it’s pretty relaxing.

**Sutra:**

**Medicine-ruling Spirit Universally Roaring gained a passage into liberation of proclaiming the Buddha’s sound and expounding the different meanings of all dharmas.**Commentary:

**Medicine-ruling Spirit Universally Roaring** makes a sound that pervades the Dharma Realm, waking beings throughout the Dharma Realm up from their muddled dreams. She shouts, “Wake up now! Don’t sleep anymore! Those who work should go to work. Those who cultivate should cultivate. Those who eat should eat. Those who sleep should wait until nighttime to sleep.” Hearing her shout, people rub their eyes, chasing away the sleeping bugs, and go to Morning Recitation. Ding-ding-dong! The wooden fish goes Bo-bo-bo! After that, they sit in meditation, then recite the Buddha’s name. Why can they do this? It’s because the Medicine-ruling Spirit Universally Roaring woke us all up. When we hit the boards in the morning, they are speaking on behalf of that Medicine-ruling Spirit. I’m not joking with you. That’s just how insentient things speak the Dharma.

She **gained a passage into liberation of proclaiming the Buddha’s sound**. The true teaching substance in this region lies in the purity of sound. What is the Buddha‘s sound? What would you say is not the Buddha’s sound? Every sound in the world is the Buddha’s sound, is the appearance of the Buddha’s vast and long tongue. If you say a sound is not the Buddha’s sound, what sound would you call it?

“Well, people have the sound of people; horses have the sound of horses; oxen have the sound of oxen.”

True, each being has its own sound. But these are all transformations created through the wondrous functioning of the Thus Come Ones’ spiritual penetrations.

In the Land of Ultimate Bliss, there are:

...white cranes, peacocks, parrots and egrets, *kalavinkas*, and two-headed birds. In the six periods of the day and night, the flocks of birds sing forth harmonious and elegant sounds. Their clear and joyful sounds proclaim the Five Roots, the Five Powers, the Seven Bodhi Shares, the Eight Sagely Way Shares...

The Land of Ultimate Bliss is like that, and so is our Saha World, if you know how to listen. If you know how to listen, then all sounds are Buddha sounds. If you don‘t know how, then all sounds are ghost sounds. If you understand, it’s the Buddha mind. If you don’t, it‘s still the Buddha mind.

This spirit went about **expounding the different meanings of all dharmas.** What is meant by “all dharmas”?

“I know,” you say, “there are eleven form dharmas, eight mind dharmas, fifty-one dharmas interactive with the mind, twenty-four dharmas not interactive with the mind, and six unconditioned dharmas, making a total of hundred dharmas in all.”

Yes, the hundred dharmas are among “all dharmas.” “All dharmas” actually refers to just one dharma, not many dharmas. But the one dharma has a different meaning here.

A single source divides into a myriad things.
The myriad things all return to the single source.

One can become limitless; limitless can become one. The characters for “different” should be pronounced *chi bie*. Some people say that my pronunciation is wrong, that *chi* should be *cha*. [When pronounced *cha*, the word means “to err, to mistake.”] It’s not known who is mistaken here. Am I mistaken? Or are you? Since I don’t want to be mistaken, I read it as *chi*. *Chi bie* means distinction or difference. When one becomes limitless, all dharmas refer to many dharmas. When the limitless become one, it refers to one dharma.

The one does not obstruct the many; the many do not obstruct the one. A single dharma is simply all dharmas. All dharmas are but a single dharma. Speaking from the point of view of the Buddhadharma, there are 84,000 Dharma doors, which is also “all dharmas.” Eighty-four thousand Dharma doors do not go beyond a single thought. Being inseparable from a single thought, they are a single dharma. The 84,000 Dharma doors represent “all dharmas.” If we were to differentiate all those dharmas, we could take eons of time and still not finish. At present, we don’t want to tax our brains and engage in so much idle thinking. As Great Master Yongjia says in the *Song of Enlightenment*:

Distinguishing among names and terms,
not knowing how to stop,
Is like counting the grains of sand in the ocean,
exhausting oneself in vain.

Don’t bind yourself up. Instead, set yourself free. It’s better to cultivate the Dharma door of stilling thoughts. Once you succeed in stilling your thoughts, you will understand all dharmas. As another line of the *Song of Enlightenment* says:

Only get the root;
Have no concern for the branchtips.

Once you attain the root, you won’t worry about the branchtips. What is the root? It is the one dharma.

When the one is attained, all things are done.

If you attain the one, then you have completed everything. What does it mean to attain the one? Actually, attaining the one is not sufficient. “How is it insufficient?” you ask. “It is said, ‘When Heaven attains the one, it is clear. When Earth attains the one, it is peaceful. When people attain the one, they are Sages.’ If you attain the one, you are a Sage. How is that insufficient?”

Attaining the one is not enough. You must turn the one into zero. If you can understand the zero, you will have attained the root.

**Sutra:**

**Medicine-ruling Spirit Banner of Light Eclipsing the Sun gained a passage into liberation of acting as a good advisor for all sentient beings, causing all beholders to develop good roots.

Commentary:**

The next **Medicine-ruling Spirit** isnamed **Banner of Light Eclipsing the Sun**. To “eclipse” can also mean to “cover” or “block.” There are two interpretations to this spirit’s name. First, it can mean that she can cover up the sun, the way clouds do, so that its light cannot be seen. Secondly, it can mean that her banner outshines the sun, thus causing the sun and moon to appear dim. Hence, her name is “Medicine-ruling Spirit Banner of Light Eclipsing the Sun.” The principles of this sutra are profuse, and each individual has his or her own understanding. Wise people perceive wisdom; humane people see humaneness. Those of profound understanding see what is profound; those of shallow understanding grasp only what is superficial. Now, since my understanding is shallow, I cannot see the profundities of the sutra. I am just an ordinary person, not necessarily humane, and so my views are like those of average people. Even less could I make a claim to wisdom. I am not just being modest or polite; people should know themselves, and I am no exception.

This Medicine-ruling Spirit is able to understand a part of the Buddha’s state. That is, she has **gained a passage into liberation of acting as a good advisor for all sentient beings**. This is the state of a great Bodhisattva. If one is not a great Bodhisattva, one would not be a good advisor for all sentient beings. “All sentient beings” includes beings that fly, those that swim, those that move on land, plants, and beings born from wombs, eggs, moisture, and transformation. She is able to assume different forms in accord with different kinds of sentient beings and serve as their good advisor. There are great good advisors, average good advisors, and petty good advisors. Great good advisors adjust their teaching according to the situation and speak Dharma that is geared to each person’s needs. Average good advisors speak Dharma according to sentient beings’ desires, enabling them to change their defiled thoughts. Petty good advisors are only capable of getting sentient beings to get rid of their minor bad habits and faults. The good advisor being referred to in the text is a great good advisor. She is capable of **causing all beholders to develop good roots.** Sentient beings who see this Medicine-ruling Spirit or encounter the Buddha speaking Dharma are led to produce thoughts of kindness, compassion, joy, and giving, and these qualities in turn lead to the planting of good roots.

Just as there are good advisors for sentient beings, there are also people who act as evil advisors for sentient beings. What are evil advisors? They encourage sentient beings to have wrong views and ideas. They lead sentient beings astray, taking them into heterodox sects and cults. Such people are evil advisors. They incite jealousy in sentient beings who were not jealous to start with. They encourage sentient beings who were not greedy to become greedy. They make sentient beings who were not angry give rise to anger. And they arouse deluded thoughts in sentient beings who originally had no delusions.

For example, I encountered a heterodox sect when I was in Manchuria. This heterodox sect claimed that it could make people into emperors. The leader said, “If you join my sect, you can become a king in the future. However, if you don’t join, you may not even get to be an ordinary citizen.” Such talk provokes greed in people. Such a person was an evil advisor. Therefore, in cultivation, we must have Dharma-selecting vision and be able to distinguish between proper and deviant, right and wrong. When it is the Way, we should advance upon it. When it is not the Way, we should retreat from it.

Medicine-ruling Spirit Banner of Light Eclipsing the Sun serves as a good advisor who inspires people to make the resolve for *bodhi* so that in the future they can become Buddhas. That is her passage into liberation.

Sutra:

**Medicine-ruling Spirit Clear Vision of the Ten Directions gained a passage into liberation of using a treasury of pure, great compassion to expediently inspire faith and understanding in sentient beings. Medicine-ruling Spirit Universally Shining Majestic Radiance gained a passage into liberation of expediently causing sentient beings to recollect the Buddhas, thereby eradicating all their sicknesses.**

**At that time, Medicine-ruling Spirit Auspicious received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Medicine-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Medicine-ruling Spirit** is named **Clear Vision of the Ten Directions**. There must be clarity in order for vision to be possible. At the same time, vision must take place before there can be clarity. Clear Vision refers to possessing the light of great wisdom, which enables this Medicine-ruling Spirit to understand the dispositions of sentient beings throughout the ten directions, hence her name. If we were to discuss the name of the Medicine-ruling Spirit in detail, we would find that it contains infinite meanings and principles. We can only give a simple explanation right now. This Medicine-ruling Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of using a treasury of pure, great compassion**.

“Pure” means without defilement, that is, devoid of the defilement of love and views. “Treasury” has the connotation of containing and encompassing. It contains great compassion. Compassion is used to eradicate suffering. Why is this said to be a “treasury of pure, great compassion”? Because it is devoid of a defiled kind of love. The love that most sentient beings understand is a defiled love which is not pure. Pure loving-kindness is not tainted by defiled thoughts. The difference between this loving-kindness and worldly defiled love is very slight. Since the difference is so slight, one thought may be pure, and the very next thought may be defiled. The pure thought and the defiled thought are not really two different thoughts. They are actually a single thought. If this thought is not defiled, then it is pure. If it is not pure, then it is defiled. Compassionate love has the power to rescue all sentient beings. It is a kind of virtue. She has the virtue of compassionately loving sentient beings, enabling her **to expediently inspire faith and understanding in sentient beings.** She employs various kinds of expedient methods to help sentient beings develop faith and understanding. She inspires faith in the faithless, while helping faithful beings to deepen their understanding. That is her passage into liberation.

**Medicine-ruling Spirit Universally Shining Majestic Radiance** has an awesome presence, and sentient beings who see her magnificent light are cured of their illnesses. She has **gained a passage into liberation of expediently causing sentient beings to recollect the Buddhas, thereby eradicating all their sicknesses.** Through expedient Dharma doors, she leads sentient beings to have faith in reciting the Buddha’s name, make vows to recite the Buddha’s name, and cultivate by reciting the Buddha’s name. She employs various kinds of expedient methods, not only one. In general, she gives sentient beings whatever they like and then instructs them to recite the Buddha’s name.

For example, right now we are holding a session for reciting the Buddha’s name. This is an expedient Dharma door. “Reciting the Buddha’s name is not an expedient Dharma door,” you say. Actually, any Dharma door within the Buddhadharma can be considered an expedient Dharma door, or it can be considered not to be an expedient. That’s because the Buddhadharma is flexible and dynamic, not rigid and static. If you insist that it is a certain way, that becomes an attachment. You ought to not have any attachments. Be totally unattached.

Right now we are doing a Buddha recitation session. In China in the past, once a Buddha recitation session began, many people would attain the single-minded concentration of the Buddha recitation samadhi. Now we are promoting the Pure Land Dharma door in the West, and people are interested in reciting the Buddha’s name. However, it is not enough to simply recite. One must maintain continuous mindfulness in thought after thought, without letting the mind get distracted and wander off. One must recite to the point that the wind cannot blow in and the rain cannot seep in to disturb one’s mindfulness. One should be able to turn all the states one encounters into the state of Buddha recitation. For example, a child is making noise right now. If you have truly attained the Buddha recitation *samadhi*, his noise will sound like “Namo Amitabha Buddha” to you. Or perhaps it will sound like music to you--music to help you recite the Buddha’s name. Then you will not be annoyed by his noise.

In the Dharma door of Buddha recitation, it is said that one recitation of the Buddha’s name can eradicate the heavy offenses accumulated during eighty million eons of births and deaths. Thus, the merit and virtue of reciting the Buddha’s name is inconceivable, provided that you recite with a true and sincere heart.

Buddhism is just beginning in the West. We must produce some great Bodhisattvas, great Patriarchs, and great Sages. Where are these great Bodhisattvas, great Patriarchs, and great Sages to be found? I can tell you: They are right here at Gold Mountain Monastery. Anyone who is able to apply his or her effort to the utmost point, cultivating with a sincere heart, undaunted by suffering or difficulty, without being the least bit casual or letting a single second pass in vain, and without slacking off, will certainly come to achievement. You may sit in Chan meditation, recite the Buddha’s name, recite sutras, or bow repentances. No matter which Dharma door you cultivate, if you cultivate with concentration and utmost sincerity, you will be successful. Why are you unsuccessful? It’s because you have not worked as hard as the great Bodhisattvas, great Patriarchs, great wise teachers, and great cultivators.

There is an idiom, “To do less work and use inferior materials.” If you don’t understand what that means, it’s like the dharma of waiting around for nails. Probably most of you have attained this *samadhi*. Hearing about this dharma, everyone smiles, just as Venerable Mahakashyapa did when he saw the Buddha twirl a flower. But this is merely the dharma of waiting for nails. If you attain the dharma of hitting nails, then you’ll be set. If you hit nails instead of waiting for them, then you are not “doing less work.” Doing less work means that when you are supposed to do a day’s work, you do only half a day’s work but take the pay for a full day. An example of using inferior materials is, if you are supposed to use an ounce of gold, you use only eight-tenths of an ounce. You are basically stealing the gold. Our work in cultivation is worth more than diamonds. If you try to get by doing less work and using shoddy materials, you are only cheating yourself. This is the principle that, “If the husband cultivates, the husband gets enlightened. If the wife cultivates, the wife gets enlightened. If you don’t cultivate, you don’t attain anything.”

Reciting the Buddha’s name can eradicate any illnesses that sentient beings might have. “No way, Dharma Master, you’re cheating people! Before I recited the Buddha’s name, I was fine. Now that I’m reciting the Buddha’s name, I’ve also gotten sick. How can you say that reciting the Buddha’s name cures all illnesses? That’s an outright lie!” Actually, getting sick is also eradicating sickness. If you didn’t get sick, how could your sickness be eradicated? Think it over. If you get sick and then your sickness disappears, that’s the eradication of sickness. This should wake you up like a bop on the head, making you realize that not only will you get sick, you will also die. Did you know that? If you don’t hurry up and cultivate, then when impermanence arrives, you won’t be able to do anything about it, and what happens then will be miserable. Sickness is an omen warning you that you should quickly work hard on your cultivation and quickly wake up from your deluded dream. Don’t be unable to relinquish this and let go of that. When you die, you’ll have to let go of everything, whether you want to or not. I often recite this verse for you, and I’ll recite it again in case you have forgotten:

When I exhort you to do good,
you say you have no money, even if you do.
When disaster strikes,
you spend hundreds of thousands, even when you don’t have it.

When you are involved in some sort of accident, you manage to come up with millions of dollars, even if that money isn’t yours. If I invite you to a discussion on wholesome matters, you say you’d like to go, but you’re too busy.

You say, “It’s not that I don’t want to go, but unfortunately, I’m too busy to attend the sutra lecture.”

But the day your life ends and you go to the Yellow Spring\*, you may be busy, but you still have to go! (\*a reference to the underworld).

No matter how busy you are, King Yama is there waiting for you, saying, “I’m inviting you for a drink. Come right away! I won’t take no for an answer.” You go and drink his intoxicating liquor, and then forget about everything you did before. You don’t have any idea of what will happen in the future either. This is very dangerous.

Medicine-ruling Spirit Universally Shining Majestic Radiance has entered this passage into liberation of being able to eradicate all illnesses.

**At that time,** during the Dharma Assembly, **Medicine-ruling Spirit Auspicious received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Medicine-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One’s wisdom is inconceivable.
He completely understands the minds of all sentient beings.
He can employ all sorts of expedient powers,
Extinguishing the measureless woes of the confused multitudes.**

**Commentary:**

This is a verse in praise of the Buddha spoken by Medicine-ruling Spirit Auspicious. She says: **The Thus Come One’s** full, perfect **wisdom is inconceivable.** We sentient beings also have something which is inconceivable—our ignorance. What is ignorance? It is the inability to distinguish between right and wrong, proper and deviant. We do not know what is proper and what is deviant. We do not differentiate between black and white. We say that what is black is white, and what is white is black. Basically, the terms “black” and “white” are not absolute. If we had named the black color “white” in the beginning, it would be known as “white.” And the term “white” might be used to refer to black things. If we decide to call white things “black,” then white becomes black.

Although these terms are not absolute, most sentient beings identify black as black and white as white, because these names have been fixed by convention. In the beginning, if the names “black” and “white” had been used to name the opposite color, that would be one thing. But since sentient beings are already used to the conventional way of defining these terms, the terms are in effect fixed. Nevertheless, that *still* doesn’t distinguish the difference between black and white. Wouldn’t you say that’s inconceivable? Thus, the ignorance of sentient beings is inconceivable. Alas! They take what is bad to be good, and what is good to be bad. Transcendental dharmas ought to be cultivated, but they consider them to be completely wrong. Worldly dharmas ought to be renounced, but they insist on clinging to them. Since they cannot renounce worldly dharmas, it is difficult for them to successfully cultivate transcendental dharmas. Wouldn’t you say sentient beings are inconceivable?

Well, is it the case that sentient beings lack the wisdom of the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones? No. The sunlight is there for everyone, but sometimes it gets blocked by clouds. Dark clouds represent ignorance, while sunlight represents wisdom. When your dark clouds block out the sunlight, the day is dark and gloomy. Where do these clouds come from? They are produced from greed, anger, and delusion. Where does wisdom (sunlight) come from? It is produced from precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. If we sentient beings wish to recover our original wisdom, it is essential that we cultivate precepts, *samadhi*, and wisdom.

Precepts stop evil and prevent wrongdoing. They can be summed up as follows: Do no evil, and practice all good. If you can do that, then from observing precepts, you will acquire *samadhi* (concentration). If you practice good deeds, you will have merit and virtue, which in turn produces *samadhi*. *Samadhi* is a result of external merit and inner fruition. You must externally cultivate the Six Paramitas. Once you have a foundation in the Six Paramitas, you will have *samadhi*. Therefore, the first four *paramitas*--giving, holding precepts, patience, vigor—are aids to Chan *samadhi*.

You can establish merit by giving. There is also merit in holding precepts, being patient, and being vigorous. The merit of the four *paramitas* helps you to attain *samadhi*, and when that *samadhi* is full and complete, wisdom arises. If you lack merit and virtue, however, it is very easy to go astray. Merit and virtue help you to achieve *samadhi* more quickly. Therefore, in cultivation, take care not to be stingy and unable to give things away. You have to give, before you can get. Thus, it is essential to first practice giving, holding precepts, patience, and vigor, to help you gain *samadhi*. Once you have *samadhi*, wisdom can develop. When your skill in *samadhi* is deep, you will have wisdom. This is similar to studying. When you have studied a great deal, your character will become refined. There is a saying:

When one’s erudition is profound, one’s manner is calm.

People who are educated are naturally refined. Refinement refers to a lack of greed, anger, delusion, and ignorance. It is not easy to get rid of ignorance. However, you can gradually reduce it day by day. What do you use to lessen ignorance? *Prajna* wisdom. With *prajna* wisdom, you can destroy the darkness of ignorance.

An inconceivable state basically cannot be described in words. It is beyond conception and impossible to talk about. Nevertheless, I have “added a head on top of a head” in trying to say a few things about it. You should not follow my example and add yet another head on top of that, for then there would be three heads! Two heads is already a lot. If another head is added, then you would have three heads and six arms. You see that Guanyin Bodhisattva has more than three heads and six arms, and Junti Bodhisattva also has many hands and eyes. Guanyin Bodhisattva has a thousand hands and a thousand eyes, and he really has three heads. But the heads that you add on are dead.

The Buddha’s wisdom is such that **he completely understands the minds of all sentient beings.** How numerous are the thoughts of all sentient beings? We don’t know. The Buddha knows, though. As the *Vajra Sutra* says, “The Thus Come One completely sees and knows the various thoughts of all sentient beings.” However many sentient beings there are, there are equally many thoughts. How does the Thus Come One know about sentient beings’ thoughts? Strange! Doesn’t that mean that the Buddha knows everything that sentient beings are up to? That’s right. The Buddha knows everything that sentient beings do, and even knows the things they have not yet done. Just as the Thus Come One completely sees and knows the various thoughts of all sentient beings, he also completely sees and knows the various affairs of all sentient beings. The Thus Come One also completely sees and knows the various actions of all sentient beings. “How can the Thus Come One know about sentient beings’ thoughts?” I cannot explain the principle, but I can offer an example from science. This analogy is not quite apt, but I cannot find a better one. This faulty analogy is the only one I can give. What is it? It is that of a radar screen. No matter how many radio waves there are, the radar will detect them. It is also like a wireless set. As long as the correct number is dialed, the wireless set can receive news from all the various countries.

he Buddha is a great scientist. Not only does he have radar, his radar is invisible. It has no physical form, and comes into being spontaneously. Every sentient being’s nature has the Buddha nature, and the Buddha’s radar detects the Buddha nature. You shouldn’t be under the impression that this is a physical radar, because it is without shape or form. Nevertheless, the Buddha can read this radar. That’s why he is said to be a great scientist. The Buddha’s radar is just his wisdom eye. You may be thinking, “This analogy is completely off the mark. It is not at all apt.” Well, give me an analogy that is apt, and in the future I can use it when I explain sutras. Since I haven’t found any correct way of describing this state, I can only resort to this erroneous explanation.

In any case, that is how the Thus Come One knows the thoughts of sentient beings. What’s the use of knowing their thoughts? Is it so the Thus Come One can watch over sentient beings? For example, he might see them stealing things and think, “Oh, so this sentient being is stealing crackers to eat. That one is stealing peanuts.” Actually, the Buddha doesn’t watch over such trivial matters. “Probably the Buddha makes a note of it when a sentient being commits murder.” The Buddha doesn’t use his knowledge of sentient beings’ thoughts expressly for the purpose of recording their offenses and their merit. Offenses and merit do not exist in the Buddha’s record-book. Those are items that ordinary sentient beings make a record of. They keep daily journals of the events that happen. “Then why does the Buddha want to know sentient beings’ thoughts?”

Doesn’t the text say it clearly? **He can employ all sorts of expedient powers**. The Buddha wants to know sentient beings’ thoughts so he can teach and transform them. He wants to help sentient beings leave suffering and attain bliss, end birth and death, and attain Buddhahood soon. That’s his purpose. It is like opening a lock. Sentient beings’ minds are locked, and the door into wisdom cannot be opened. The Buddha uses the key of wisdom to open sentient beings’ door into wisdom and close the door to ignorance. Thus, he employs all sorts of expedient powers, **extinguishing the measureless woes of the confused multitudes.** Who are the confused multitudes? “*They* are,” you say. Are you part of them? Am I? The “confused multitudes” refers to you, me, and all sentient beings. Anyone who has not attained sagehood and transcended the Triple Realm is confused. Don’t think you’re so extraordinary, so great and lofty, an exceptional individual among humankind. Don’t think you’re that capable. What special ability do you have? Before you have destroyed your confusion, what ability do you have?

The Buddha is aware of the immense suffering of confused sentient beings, and he wishes to extinguish it. What is suffering? It is a lack of understanding of true principle. If you understand the truth, your suffering comes to an end. How can you come to understand truth? By studying the Buddhadharma. How can you study the Buddhadharma? By making a steadfast resolve. Vow to study the Buddhadharma to the ends of time. “In life after life, I will leave home to become a Bhikshu or Bhikshuni. Or, if I don’t leave home, then I will become a Upasaka or Upasika. In any case, I will study the Buddhadharma. In every life, I will immerse myself in the Buddhadharma and never be apart from it. Once I understand the Buddhadharma, I will explain it to others and propagate it.”

If you don’t have vows, it’s like not having a boat when you want to cross the river. Without a boat, you will certainly be drowned. Since I don’t wish my disciples to drown, I’m telling you to make vows. It doesn’t matter how great or small your vows are. If your vow is as small as a particle of dust, you still have a dust-particle-sized boat and you won’t fall into the sea of suffering, especially the sea of measureless woes being discussed in the sutra. If you make vows, you can “extinguish the measureless woes of the confused multitudes.” Your vows should be made in stone, not in a pile of ashes or sand. They shouldn’t be soft and weak, with no foundation. Your vows should be based on solid ground and reach up to the sky, as firm and hard as rock. Only then do they count. “If you want me to die, fine; but if you want me to give up studying the Buddhadharma, I won’t.” Your vows should be that strong. “If you want me to die, fine; but if you want me to eat meat, I won’t. I’ll die before I eat a bite of meat.”

Every year, on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month, the day of the Buddha’s Enlightenment, we should all make vows. We should bring forth the *bodhi* resolve to catch up to Shakyamuni Buddha and quickly realize Buddhahood ourselves. Before we catch up, we cannot stop. We must keep on chasing after him until we reach the fruition of Buddhahood. We can’t yield to our teacher. Our Original Teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha, has already become a Buddha. What are we waiting for, lingering in the back? We ought to get ahead of our teacher. At the very least, we should catch up to him.

**Sutra:**

**The Great Hero’s skillful expedients are hard to fathom.
Nothing that he does is ever in vain.
He is determined to rid sentient beings of all suffering.
Candana Forest spirit awakens thus.

Commentary:**

**The Great Hero’s skillful expedients are hard to fathom.** The Buddha is a great hero, a great man, and a great teacher. He is worthy of all these titles. We sentient beings call ourselves heroes, great men, and teachers, but we lack the true qualifications. The Buddha alone is deserving of these names. What is meant by Great Hero? It does not refer to one who draws his sword and is ready to fight. Great heroes are not aggressive and belligerent bullies who get others to obey orders by force. Great heroes can cultivate practices that others cannot cultivate, endure adversities that others cannot endure, and undergo suffering that others cannot undergo. Shakyamuni Buddha is an example of someone who cultivated practices that others cannot cultivate.

He cultivated blessings and wisdom for three asamkhyeyas of eons
And created the causes for the special marks and characteristics for a hundred kalpas.

During that incredibly long period of time, he was consistently vigorous and never lax. Thus, he cultivated what others could not. The Buddha also endured adversities that others would find unbearable. For instance, his limbs were severed from his body by King Kali. Most people would not have been able to endure that, but the Buddha did. Not only did he bear it, he vowed, “When I become a Buddha, you will be the first one I will take across to Buddhahood. Why? Because you are a genuine good advisor of mine. You are a true helper and protector. Out of concern for me, you have helped me succeed and develop my resolve for bodhi and reach the fruition of the Way. Therefore, I am determined to save you first.” Take a look. King Kali sliced off the Buddha’s flesh and his four limbs, yet the Buddha still vowed to save the king. Isn’t that a prime example of enduring adversities that others cannot endure?

He also underwent suffering that others cannot undergo. We of the present time are quite shameless. We eat one meal a day, and think we have some skill in cultivation. We think, “In the heavens and on earth, I alone am honored.” Observe how Shakyamuni Buddha endured the cold of the Snow Mountains. From the name “Snow Mountains,” it’s obvious that it was cold. The snow on those mountains was so thick that it didn’t melt even in summertime. Even though it was bitterly cold, the Buddha ate only one sesame seed and one grain of wheat each day. We, in comparison, drink milk and eat oatmeal, butter, bread, delicious white rice, and yellow ginger with purple sprouts. If we want seasonings such as chili, pepper, soy sauce, or salt, they are all available. When the Buddha was in the Snow Mountains, I doubt he had any of these seasonings. Why? Because the Buddha wasn’t as pathetic as we are. He wasn’t constantly wondering, “What are we going to have for lunch today? Will there be tofu? How about marshmallows?” Such are the idle thoughts we have. As we attend the Buddha recitation session, our thoughts take us right into the kitchen. Our minds wander into the kitchen to see what’s for lunch. It’s not a Buddha recitation session we’re holding; it’s a food session!

We ought to reflect on the kind of suffering our teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha, went through—suffering that most people cannot take. He was truly a great hero, an outstanding human being, a great teacher of gods and humans. He is truly worthy of being our teacher. With such a great hero for a teacher, we should certainly be disciples who are great heroes, not disciples who are as ignorant as country bumpkins--literally bags stuffed with straw, or cotton for that matter. We should put forth some effort for the sake of Shakyamuni Buddha, thinking, “Our teacher went through such bitter hardship in his time; why shouldn’t I be able to endure that kind of suffering? Why am I so willing to be a wine-bag, a rice-sack, and a clothes-hanger?” That’s what we ought to ask ourselves. That way, we won’t need to feel ashamed being disciples of a great hero.

“The Great Hero’s skillful expedients are hard to fathom.” Skillful, expedient methods are used to teach and transform sentient beings in a way that the teaching is adapted to the needs of the situation and the Dharma is taught on an individual basis, just as medicine is prescribed according to the patient’s illness. “Hard to fathom” indicates that the expedient methods employed by the Buddha are intrinsically different from the methods used by sentient beings. When we try to use expedient methods, people aren’t very receptive. The Buddha uses those same expedient methods, and sentient beings are receptive to his teaching. What’s the principle here? It’s not simply a matter of dharma, it’s also a matter of affinity. Since the Buddha has established affinities with sentient beings, they are receptive to his teaching. We, however, have not created such affinities, so sentient beings take no delight in listening to our exhortations. Therefore, we need to create affinities with sentient beings. What is more, the Buddha cultivated blessings and wisdom for three asamkhyeyas of eons, and created the causes for the special marks and characteristics for a hundred kalpas. With his merit and virtue perfected, he is able to influence others through his virtue instead of forcing them to submit. When people are oppressed by authority, they submit, but unwillingly. When people are inspired by virtue, they truly submit in their hearts. The Confucian school also teaches this:

When people are forced to submit, they do so unwillingly since they are powerless to do otherwise.
When people influenced by virtue, they submit willingly and with heartfelt sincerity.

Therefore, we ought to cultivate blessings and wisdom. By doing our best to benefit others, we cultivate blessings. We benefit ourselves when we cultivate wisdom. To be of benefit to others, we have to help them out. To be of benefit to ourselves, we should help ourselves. To help ourselves takes prajna. Helping others requires that we have the Four Unlimited Aspects of Mind of kindness, compassion, joy, and giving.

“Hard to fathom”: Ultimately, what kind of expedient method should we use? Which one is most suitable for the occasion? Only the Buddha knows. We sentient beings often think a certain method is right, but it turns out to be wrong. We think another method is wrong, but it is actually right. Therefore the line says that the Buddha’s expedient means are hard to fathom; they are not easy to understand.

**Nothing that he does is ever in vain.** The Buddha never engages in futile or useless endeavors. Everything the Buddha does and says brings benefit to sentient beings. We sentient beings, however, lack such understanding, and so we often do things wrong without realizing it.

**He is determined to rid sentient beings of all suffering.** The Buddha’s sole purpose, his only wish, is to completely eradicate the misery of sentient beings. The previous verse said,

The Thus Come One’s wisdom is inconceivable.
He completely understands the hearts of all sentient beings.
He can employ all sorts of expedient powers,
Extinguishing the measureless woes of the confused multitudes.

Extinguishing their measureless woes is easy to talk about, but not easy to do. In his every thought, the Buddha wishes to extinguish sentient beings’ woes. He has been doing this all the way to the present moment, and what happens is, each time he eradicates one sentient being’s woes, another sentient being’s woes begins. When he has put an end to that sentient being’s woes, yet another sentient being starts to suffer. Their sufferings are like endless waves coming one after another in the ocean. Like the woes of sentient beings, these waves are hard to stop. Nonetheless, the Buddha “is determined to rid sentient beings of all suffering.” So it’s impossible to extinguish their woes? Well, he’s determined to do it. Knowing full well that it cannot be done, he still insists on doing it against all odds. Aware of the difficulty of eradicating sentient beings’ woes, the Buddha is nonetheless willing to take on the tough work of teaching and transforming sentient beings.

This can be compared to when people make a resolve to save the world. How can the world be saved? One person alone cannot do it. It takes the effort of many people to save the world. However, if everyone just looks at one another and does nothing, the world will soon come to an end. You ought to bring forth the bodhi resolve to save sentient beings, not caring whether other people are doing this work. You should think, “I see that this is a job I ought to do, and so I’m just going to go ahead and do it.”

The work of saving the world is everyone’s responsibility. Since it’s everyone’s responsibility, I ought to do my share and not wait for others. That way, there’s a real possibility for the world to be saved.

**Candana Forest spirit awakens thus.** The Spirit Candana Forest understands the various principles and states discussed and enters this passage into liberation.

[In answer to a question about Venerable Master Hsu Yun] If he were comfortable and at ease, you still wouldn’t do what he does. If he were totally at ease and free of sickness, you would be even more inclined to think, “He’s an eighth ground Bodhisattva, whereas I’m a sixth ground Bodhisattva, so I can’t do the things he does.” Wouldn’t you reason in that way, thinking, “Since he’s an eighth ground Bodhisattva, the things he does are beyond my ability.”

According to your view, he is an eighth ground Bodhisattva who is totally at ease in the wonderful functioning of spiritual powers, so he ought not to get sick, right? In my opinion, as an eighth ground Bodhisattva, he shouldn’t even come to such a defiled world. He shouldn’t come into this Evil World of the Five Turbidities. Since he came, it means that he was looking for something to do when there was nothing to do. Being idle and unoccupied, he wanted to come and be in the play. Having joined the play—this is your samadhi — he wanted to try everything out. Having come to the world, he acted the same as other sentient beings--eating, sleeping, wearing clothes, getting sick, and dying. He wasn’t any different from others. People have to come to realization on their own. His every move was speaking the Dharma for sentient beings. He manifested the conduct of being sick and in pain and suffering. Basically, what was his Three Steps One Bow pilgrimage for? Ostensibly, it was a pilgrimage to Wutai Mountain to pay respect to Manjushri Bodhisattva. Was Manjushri Bodhisattva really at Wutai Mountain? If Manjushri Bodhisattva were only at Wutai Mountain, then the sentient beings in the United States could never hope to see him. Therefore, all of this is speaking Dharma for us.

Even our two Bhikshus, who are doing a Three Steps One Bow Pilgrimage—what are they bowing for? They say they are bowing to all Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time, to the Avatamsaka Assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as Vast as the Sea. Why do they need to do “three steps one bow” to pay homage to the Avatamsaka Assembly? The Avatamsaka Assembly’s Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are right here. The monks are just manifesting this practice as a way of speaking Dharma for sentient beings. There are many different ways of speaking Dharma. Even getting sick and dying are ways of speaking Dharma.

If you understand, then the person is speaking Dharma for you. If you don’t understand, then he is just doing something to keep from being idle. His work is superfluous and unnecessary. He thinks this world is a lot of fun, so he has come to play. The Bodhisattvas of the eighth, ninth, and tenth grounds have all come here to play. That’s called the playful samadhi. Therefore, why get attached to the matter of whether or not he gets sick? If you want to think along those lines, you ought to ask why an eighth ground Bodhisattva is not free from death. Why did he die? That’s the biggest question. Sickness is a minor matter in comparison.

The two “Three Steps One Bow” monks could be said to be great heroes. If they weren’t great heroes, they wouldn’t be able to do what they’re doing. In the future, all of you should become great heroes. We’ll become a hundred billion great heroes—heirs of Shakyamuni Buddha endowed with great might and great compassion.

**Sutra:**

**Contemplate how the Dharma of all Buddhas is this way.
Having cultivated diligently in measureless eons past,
They are detached from all that exists.
Radiance of Leaving Dust enters this passage.**

**Commentary:**

All sentient beings should **contemplate how the Dharma of all Buddhas** throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time—the past, present, and future—**is this way.** That’s just the way the Dharma is. What way? We could go into great detail talking about this, but for now we will only speak in general. There are the Three Bodies, the Four Wisdoms, the Five Eyes, and the Six Spiritual Powers. There are all the spiritual transformations, and the 84,000 Dharma doors. They are all like this. Like what?

The path of language is cut off.
The place of the mind’s activity is gone.
The mouth wants to speak, but words are gone.
The mind wants to think, but there are no thoughts.

There is nothing to say. That’s just how it is. The Dharma of all Buddhas is that way. How can one attain this Dharma? How can one attain unmoving thusness and constant, clear understanding? The next line says very clearly:

**Having cultivated diligently in measureless eons past** . How did he attain this Dharma? He attained it because for limitless eons, he diligently cultivated precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, and extinguished greed, anger, and delusion. Throughout these limitless eons until now, he has diligently cultivated all dharmas. Having cultivated the Dharma and the Way which is thus, he now realizes the Buddha fruition which is thus. Diligent cultivation is the primary cause for the realization of Buddhahood.

When the Buddha cultivated the Way, he was vigorous in the six periods of the day and night. For the sake of seeking the Buddhadharma and attaining the Buddha Way, the Buddha renounced both internal and external wealth. External wealth refers to one’s country, cities, wife, and children. Internal wealth refers to one’s body, mind, life, and parts of the body, such as the head, eyes, brains, and marrow. The Buddha was able to give all of those away. He truly practiced the teachings and honestly applied himself to cultivation.

**They are detached from all that exists.** All that exists encompasses everything within the Three Realms—the Desire Realm, the Form Realm, and the Formless Realm. What is it that exists in these Three Realms? Outflows, birth and death, ignorance, afflictions, and bad habits. Yet the Buddha was not attached to existence. He destroyed all attachments. Only when you have no attachments can you attain liberation. If you are still attached, you cannot be liberated. If you have the attachment to self and the attachment to dharmas, you cannot attain liberation. You have to get rid of all attachments whatsoever.

**Radiance of Leaving Dust enters this passage.** Medicine-ruling Spirit Radiance of Leaving Dust enters and understands this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha is hard to encounter in a hundred thousand eons.
If there are those who get to see him or hear his name,
It is not in vain, and they will certainly benefit.
Universal Renown spirit understands thus.**

**The Thus Come One, from every pore,
Emits bright light that extinguishes all disasters,
Putting an end to all the world’s afflictions.
Shining spirit enters this passage.**

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha is hard to encounter in a hundred thousand eons.** It is hard to get to hear the Buddhadharma. It is hard to obtain a human body. It is hard to get to be born in the United States. It is difficult to encounter a good advisor. As the verse goes,

The unsurpassed, profound, subtle and wonderful Dharma
Is difficult to encounter in a hundred million eons.
I now see and hear it, receive and maintain it,
And I vow to understand the Thus Come One’s true meaning.

Just as it is hard to encounter the Dharma in a hundred million eons, it is also not easy to meet up with the Buddha in a hundred million eons. Sometimes you meet him without recognizing him. Most people don’t realize they have met the Buddha until after the event. Zhu-ge Liang was able to know about things before they happened, but most people are confused when things happen and only figure out what’s going on later on.

**If there are those who get to see him or hear his name** . This is a hypothetical statement, “if…” Basically, this situation neither exists nor does not exist. But suppose there are people who see the Buddha or hear his name. **It is not in vain, and they will certainly benefit.** They will gain advantages, and the situation will not have been totally worthless. **Universal Renown spirit**, a Medicine-ruling Spirit with a great reputation, **understands thus** this passage into liberation.

**The Thus Come One, from every pore, / Emits bright light that extinguishes all disasters**. Every time the Buddha raises his hand, takes a step, emits light, or causes the earth to quake, there are causes and conditions for it. What causes and conditions? He wishes to benefit sentient beings and eradicate all disasters and hardships. Disasters and hardships are misfortunes. The Buddha wishes to bring people good fortune and get rid of their disasters. How do people’s disasters get eradicated? They simply have to see the Buddha’s light or the Buddha’s body, and their disasters will vanish.

**Putting an end to all the world’s afflictions.** There are all kinds of afflictions in the world. They are too numerous to describe in full. The Buddha displays great spiritual powers and eradicates the affliction-obstacles of all sentient beings. Once their affliction-obstacles are destroyed, their wisdom increases.

**Shining spirit**, a Medicine-ruling Spirit, **enters this passage** into liberation. She attains this kind of state.

**Sutra:**

**All sentient beings are blinded by ignorance.
Their delusion and karma lead to endless kinds of suffering.
The Buddha casts these out and reveals illuminating wisdom.
Destroyer of Darkness thus observes.**

**Commentary:**

**All sentient beings are blinded by ignorance.** We pitiful sentient beings consider ourselves intelligent, when in fact we have wandered unwittingly into the pit of birth and death. Why have we fallen into this pit of samsara without realizing it? Because we are ignorant. We are as if blind. Blind people can easily endanger their own lives by walking into the sea or into a river, or falling into a well. We foolish sentient beings may wish to be free from birth and death, but we cannot find our way out. We have no idea how to go about liberating ourselves from the cycle of rebirth in the six paths.

**Their delusion and karma lead to endless kinds of suffering.** “Delusion” means the same thing as ignorance. Sentient beings become deluded, create karma, and receive retribution, over and over again. They keep revolving in this cycle, never managing to get out. Turning around and around, they don’t know what they are doing. This results in limitlessly many kinds of suffering.

**The Buddha casts these out and reveals illuminating wisdom.** Seeing us wretched sentient beings, like trapped flies buzzing to and fro without being able to escape, the Buddha takes pity on us and casts out our delusion, karma, sufferings, and ignorance, causing our pure wisdom eye to open and illuminate everything like sunlight.

Medicine-ruling Spirit Pure **Destroyer of Darkness thus observes.** She understands this state and enters this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One’s single sound is unlimited.
It can open all Dharma doors, which are oceanic in extent.
Sentient beings who hear it gain complete understanding.
This is the liberation of Loud Sound.**

**Commentary:**The Thus Come One proclaims the Dharma with a single sound.
Sentient beings each understand it according to their kind.

Thus the text says: **The Thus Come One’s single sound is unlimited.** It has no limits or bounds. **It can open all Dharma doors, which are oceanic in extent.** That one sound is replete with all sounds, all dharmas, and all meanings. Therefore, it can open the ocean of all Dharma doors. **Sentient beings who hear it gain complete understanding.** Every sentient being who hears the Buddha’s voice feels as if the Buddha is speaking directly to him. This is as when the sun shines, everyone feels the sunlight shining on him. **This is the passage into liberation ofLoud Sound**, which refers to Medicine-ruling Spirit Universally Roaring**.**

**Sutra:**

**Observe the inconceivable wisdom of the Buddha.
He universally appears in every destiny to rescue all beings,
All who see him are transformed by his influence.
This is the deep insight of Banner Eclipsing the Sun.**

**Commentary:**

You ought to contemplate and **observe the inconceivable** great **wisdom of the Buddha**, gained through limitless eons of cultivation. It is difficult to imagine or describe such wisdom. The wisdom of sentient beings cannot fathom the state of the Buddha’s wisdom. For that reason, it is said to be “inconceivable.”

**He universally appears in every destiny to save all beings**. “Every destiny” includes the four evil destinies, wherein sentient beings with heavy offense karma dwell. With sincere compassion, the Buddha contemplates the sentient beings in the evil destinies—the asuras, hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals—and in the good destinies, such as the heavens. “Every destiny” encompasses all sentient beings, regardless of whether they are good or evil. With his great spiritual might, the Buddha manifests in every destiny, teaching and transforming sentient beings according to their kind. The Buddha appears within the destiny of asuras in order to teach and transform the stubborn, unruly, and incorrigible asuras. Asuras are perverse and totally unreasonable. The Buddha appears in their midst as one of their kind, in order to influence them. Animals are of many kinds, and the Buddha manifests in many animal forms to teach them. The Buddha also appears as a hungry ghost in order to teach and transform hungry ghosts. The Buddha also goes into the hells in order to teach the beings there. He universally appears in every destiny in order to save all sentient beings.

The good flock together.
The evil gather in gangs.

Everyone likes to be with those of their own kind. People search for and hang out with others who are like them. The Buddha, using his spiritual powers, teaches sentient beings according to their potentials. **All who see him are transformed by his influence.** Sentient beings are easily influenced by the Buddha, and they cultivate according to his teaching. **This** kind of state **is the deep insight of** Medicine-ruling Spirit **Banner Eclipsing the Sun.** She deeply understands and awakens to this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One’s great compassion and expedients are oceanic.
For the sake of benefiting those in the world, he appears.
He extensively explains the Proper Path for sentient beings.
The Spirit Vision of the Directions comprehends thus.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One’s great compassion and expedients are oceanic.** The expedient Dharma doors of great compassion employed by the Thus Come One are as vast and deep as the ocean.

**For the sake of benefiting those in the** sentient **world, he appears** in the world. **He extensively explains the Proper Path for sentient beings.** The Proper Path is to be distinguished from deviant paths. The Proper Path refers to the Proper Dharma. He extensively expounds the Proper Dharma in order to show sentient beings the way to escape the Triple Realm. **Medicine-ruling Spirit** Clear **Vision of the** Ten **Directions comprehends** this state **thus**. She enters this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One sends forth brilliant light everywhere.
It illumines every being in the ten directions without fail,
Causing them to recollect the Buddha and create merit and virtue. This is the passage into liberation of Shining Majestic Radiance.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One sends forth brilliant light everywhere**. The Buddha dwells in the Treasury of Great Brilliance, and he releases that brilliant light everywhere. “Everywhere” means that every place throughout empty space and the Dharma Realm is within the Treasury of Great Brilliance.

Let me tell you a principle that many people might find unbelievable, but that ghosts and spirits will believe. Because people are too intelligent, people may be unable to believe this because they are too intelligent. Or their disbelief could also be due to excessive ignorance. Why is that? Those who are overly intelligent will not believe because their intelligence takes them too far. Those who are overly dull will not believe either, because their dullness does not reach the mark. What is this principle? It has to do with the library. There are libraries in various places in the world, and we ought to take good care of them. For example, we can install wooden shelves with glass doors to protect the books from getting dusty. Despite the protective measures taken in libraries, sometimes damage does occur. The damage or loss might come from the overprotectiveness of the librarian. For example, for the sake of protecting the books, he might take them to his own home and put them on his bed.

“Dharma Master, what you’re saying about libraries is not a very profound principle. It’s quite common and easy to understand.” I haven’t gotten to the profound part yet. Don’t be impatient. I’ve just made the point that people go to a lot of trouble to protect the books in libraries. For example, the members of the Sangha have to protect the Tripitaka—the Buddhist Canon. If there is instability in one country, they will move it to another country. If that country becomes unsafe, they will transport it to yet another country. But when the Sangha members die, it’s not known who will protect the Canon.

“Is he talking about me?” someone is thinking to himself.

“What in the world is he talking about?” another person is wondering. “The more he says, the more ordinary it sounds.” Now I’ll tell you something out of the ordinary. When you open your Buddha eye, your Dharma eye, and your wisdom eye, take a look and you will see that throughout empty space and the Dharma Realm, there is an uncountable number of libraries. These libraries don’t need anyone to watch over them, and yet the books don’t get lost either. Do you believe this? What’s more, every Bodhisattva, Buddha, and Arhat is there reading the infinite, inexhaustible Dharma Treasury. Every sage is there reciting his own never-ending sutra. None of these sutras need to be protected. If you haven’t opened the Buddha eye, the Dharma eye, or the wisdom eye, then don’t even try to understand what this state is all about. I knew that if I spoke about it, no one would believe me. Nonetheless, I cannot hold back and not speak. When it’s time to speak, I must speak.

“Where are these sutras?” you ask. “There’s nothing there in space. How come you say there are all those sutras there?” You say there’s nothing in space? Space contains everything whatsoever. It’s just that blind people cannot see the state of wonderful existence. For example, although the Buddha sends forth brilliant light everywhere, people without eyes cannot see it.

**It illumines every** sentient being **in the** worlds of the **ten directions without fail**. No sentient being escapes being illumined by the Buddha’s bright light. We have a saying,

The Buddha’s light shines universally.
The dew water moistens equally.

The Buddha’s light shines on beings, **causing them to recollect the Buddha and create merit and virtue.** The Buddha inspires all sentient beings to recite the Buddha’s name. By reciting the Buddha’s name, they are freed from all sicknesses and karmic offenses. Once they get rid of their sicknesses and offenses, they create merit and virtue. With merit and virtue, they are able to bring forth the bodhi resolve, cultivate the Unsurpassed Way, and ultimately realize Buddhahood.

We who study Buddhism should avoid indulging in far-out fantasies. The higher and farther our thoughts take us, the less we understand what’s right in front of us. Some people devote all their time to investigating rocks on the moon. But do they completely understand the rocks on earth—how they are formed and how they develop? If they don’t even understand the rocks on earth, what are they studying moon rocks for? That’s a case of renouncing what is near to seek what is far away, neglecting what is fundamental to pursue what is superficial.

Seeing this, the Buddha wrinkles his brow and wonders, “What can be done? These sentient beings have forgotten about themselves and only ‘make wedding clothes for others.’” They use cloth to help other girls make wedding clothes, but don’t get married themselves. This is also known as “neglecting your own fields and going to till someone else’s fields.”

**This is the passage into liberation of** the Medicine-ruling Spirit **Shining Majestic Radiance.**

All right, I’m not going to say anymore.

Great Master Zhizhe of the Tiantai School recited the Lotus Sutra to the part which says, “This is true vigor. This is a true offering of Dharma.” At that point, he saw Shakyamuni Buddha’s Dharma Assembly at Vulture Peak--it was still going on and had not dispersed.

Let me tell all of you good advisors another unbelievable principle: The Dharma assemblies Buddhas of the ten directions are all in progress at present. Therefore, everyone should work hard on his or her cultivation!

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Forest-ruling Spirit Spreading Flowers Like Clouds gained a passage into liberation of an oceanic treasury of vast, great, boundless wisdom.**

**Commentary:**

**Moreover,** to elaborate further on the principles that were not fully discussed earlier, **Forest-ruling Spirit Spreading Flowers Like Clouds gained a passage into liberation of an oceanic treasury of vast, great, boundless wisdom.** This Forest-ruling Spirit spread and scattered a sea of lotus flowers in cloud-like formations. She attained a sea of vast, boundless wisdom. Such wisdom is immense and without boundaries, like an ocean, so it is said to be an “oceanic treasury.” She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Forest-ruling Spirit Helping Trunks Grow Tall and Pouring Forth Light gained a passage into liberation of extensively cultivating purity on a universal scale.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Forest-ruling Spirit** is named **Helping Trunks Grow Tall and Pouring Forth Light**. She helps all the trunks of trees to grow taller day by day, and she also emits a pure light. She cultivates the Dharma door of vast purity. Purity refers to the absence of defiled thoughts. Defiled thoughts are thoughts of emotional love. Cultivators of the Way must first cultivate their skill in cutting off desire and getting rid of love. When they have perfected this skill, everything will be pure. This spirit **gained a passage into liberation of extensively** leading all sentient beings to be engaged in **cultivating** the Dharma door of undefiled **purity on a universal scale.**

**Sutra:**

**Forest-ruling Spirit Producing Sprouts and Emitting Radiance gained a passage into liberation of causing sprouts of various kinds of pure faith to grow.**

**Commentary:**

These spirits rule over trees. All trees have spirits watching over them. Very large trees are known in Buddhism as “villages of ghosts and spirits,” because ghosts and spirits dwell in them. Be careful when you go near great, big trees, for you might encounter ghosts.

**Forest-ruling Spirit Producing Sprouts and Emitting Radiance gained a passage into liberation of causing sprouts of various kinds of pure faith to grow.** This Forest-ruling Spirit produces sprouts of pure faith and emits the light of wisdom. She causes all kinds of pure faith to sprout. These are sprouts of *bodhi*. She attained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Forest-ruling Spirit Auspicious Pure Leaves gained a passage into liberation of amassing all kinds of purity, merit and virtue, and adornment. Forest-ruling Spirit Overhanging Resplendent Treasury gained a passage into liberation of constantly beholding the entire Dharma Realm through a universal gateway of pure wisdom. Forest-ruling Spirit Wondrous Adorned Radiance gained a passage into liberation of universally knowing the ocean of all sentient beings’ practices and creating Dharma clouds.**

**Commentary:**

**Forest-ruling Spirit Auspicious Pure Leaves** is very auspicious, and the leaves of the trees she rules over are extremely pure. She **gained a passage into liberation of amassing all kinds of purity, merit and virtue, and adornment.** Her forests are pure, adorned, and endowed with an accumulation of merit and virtue. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Forest-ruling Spirit Overhanging Resplendent Treasury gained a passage into liberation of constantly beholding the entire Dharma Realm through a universal gateway of pure wisdom.** She causes all the trees to be pure, as if they had wisdom. She can constantly observe and pervade the Dharma Realm. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Forest-ruling Spirit Wondrous Adorned Radiance gained a passage into liberation of universally knowing the ocean of all sentient beings’ practices and creating Dharma clouds.** She knows the practices cultivated by every sentient being, and she disseminates all kinds of Dharma, which spreads over sentient beings like clouds.

This section of text on the Forest-ruling Spirits is quite easy to understand, so a brief explanation suffices.

**Sutra:**

**Forest-ruling Spirit Delightful Thunder Sound gained a passage into liberation of enduring all unpleasant sounds and uttering pure sounds. Forest-ruling Spirit Pervasive Glow and Perfume gained a passage into liberation of universally displaying in the ten directions the state of vast, great practices cultivated in the past. Forest-ruling Spirit Wondrous Light Unique and Sparkling gained a passage into liberation of using all dharmas of merit and virtue to benefit those in the world.**

**Commentary:**

**Forest-ruling Spirit Delightful Thunder Sound** . Delightful sounds are sounds that please the ear and that one is happy to listen to. This spirit **gained** a state of the Buddha and **a passage into liberation of enduring all unpleasant sounds and uttering pure sounds.** Unpleasant sounds are not delightful to hear, while pleasant sounds are delightful. Praise is an example of pleasant sound, while insults are examples of unpleasant sounds. Whether or not the sounds she hears are delightful, this spirit is able to bear them and produce pure Dharma sounds. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Forest-ruling Spirit Pervasive Glow and Perfume gained a passage into liberation of universally** and simultaneously **displaying in the ten directions the state of vast, great**, boundless doors of **practices** that she **cultivated in the past** in order to get rid of her bad habits and faults. That is her passage into liberation.

**Forest-ruling Spirit Wondrous Light Unique and Sparkling** , whose light stands out from that of other Forest-ruling Spirits, **gained a passage into liberation of using all dharmas of merit and virtue to benefit** all **those** sentient beings **in the world.**We who are students of the Buddhadharma should learn a little bit, and then put that little bit into practice. That’s the important thing. If you learn something, but fail to apply it, then it’s the same as not learning it. After listening to sutra and Dharma lectures, we must diligently reflect upon ourselves and actually practice the principles we have learned. Never fear that you know too little. Only fear that you cannot cultivate. No matter how much you know, your knowledge is useless if you don’t apply it

At Gold Mountain Monastery, we have sutra lectures and Dharma talks every single day. The Buddhadharma is like the blood in our veins. It cannot stop flowing. After listening to the Dharma, we must cultivate in accordance with it. Otherwise, we would be wasting our time.

In particular, if you are still young, if would be worthless to devote valuable time to the study of the Buddhadharma if you do not follow through with actual practice.

Whether you are Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Shramaneras, Shramanerikas, Upasakas, or Upasikas, you ought to bring forth great courage and vigor. Open your eyes and take a look at the present state of the world. There is not a single peaceful place in the world. People everywhere are nervous and fearful, as if walking on the edge of a cliff or treading on thin ice. That’s how dangerous the situation is. Everyone is afraid that a third world war is about to break out. If we want to avert such a disaster, we must reflect upon ourselves and change our own hearts and minds. Is the world messed up? No. Are human beings messed up? No. It is people’s minds that are messed up. Since people’s minds are messed up, there is no peace in the world.

When people’s minds are at peace,
Serenity prevails under heaven.
When serenity prevails under heaven,
The commonwealth of peace and prosperity is achieved.

The present state of the world is caused by the deterioration of people’s minds. Students of the Buddhadharma should aim to reform people’s minds. We should cure people’s mental illnesses, their illness of being born and dying. See how Asian Buddhism is declining day by day? We must not let American Buddhism decline, but should instead cause it to flourish more with each passing day.

If we want Buddhism to flourish, we must cultivate diligently. No one at Gold Mountain Monastery should be lazy and sneak off to take a break. Everyone should do the work together and cultivate together. Otherwise, there wouldn’t be much point to our living in this icebox together. We eat only one meal a day, and many people sleep sitting up. If, in spite of all this, we fail to cultivate diligently, then our efforts are in vain.

Take a look at Guo Zhan. Since I criticized him for dozing off during the sutra lectures, he now stands up to listen to the sutras. I see that Guo Hang is still dozing off as he listens to the lectures. He is constantly in the sleeping *samadhi*. I don’t know when he will come out of it.

Good advisors, time is precious. Don’t squander it casually. At all times, you should call your own name and ask yourself, “What am I doing here?” This evening it was originally Guo Zhan’s turn to lecture, not mine. However, since I am going to Seattle tomorrow, I will not be here tomorrow evening or Thursday. Therefore I am lecturing one night earlier. Tomorrow evening, since I will not be here, I invited Dharma Miaojing (“Wonderful State”) to lecture in my place. Even when I am here, I want to ask Dharma Master Miaojing to speak in my place, since I’m getting old and the younger generation should do more. However, he always excuses himself saying that his throat is hoarse. My throat is in much better condition than his. So I am only asking him to lecture on Wednesday and Thursday evening. He can probably lecture two evenings without getting tired out.

I’m telling everyone this good news tonight, so you can go home and tell your friends and relatives to come listen to the wonderful Dharma being lectured in a wonderful state. Don’t miss this marvelous opportunity. I’ll be back on Friday. During these two days, you will get to study some wonderful Dharma and then you can bury the crude dharma you learned before.

**Sutra:**

**Forest-ruling Spirit Luster and Flavor of Flowers and Fruits gained a passage into liberation of being adorned with a treasury of merit and virtue gained through enabling everyone to see the Buddhas appear and to recollect them with constant reverence and never forget them.**

**At that time, Forest-ruling Spirit Spreading Flowers like Clouds received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Forest-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

**Forest-ruling Spirit Luster and Flavor of Flowers and Fruits** causes sentient beings’ *prajna* flowers to bloom, so that they bear the fruit of *bodhi*. She emits the light of *prajna* and reveals the flavor of ghee. That’s the meaning of her name. She **gained** a state of the Buddha and **a passage into liberation of being adorned with a treasury of merit and virtue gained through enabling everyone**, all sentient beings, **to see the Buddhas appear** in the world **and to recollect them with constant reverence and never forget them.** Through such merit and virtue, she is adorned with particularly fine hallmarks. The abundance of merit and virtue makes it a treasury, a beautiful and adorned treasury of sublime merit and virtue. She attained that passage into liberation.

**At that time, Forest-ruling Spirit Spreading Flowers Like Clouds received the Buddha’s awesomespiritual power, universally contemplated all the multitudes of Forest-ruling Spirits,** boundlessly many of them, not just one, **and spoke the following verse** to explain certain principles which were not fully explained earlier.

**Sutra:**

**In the past, the Buddha cultivated practices for *bodhi*,
Achieving perfect blessings, virtue, and wisdom.
Endowed fully with all of the powers,
He emerges in the world with resplendent light.**

**Commentary:**

**In the past, the Buddha cultivated practices for *bodhi*** . In the past, the Buddha accumulated the practices for *bodhi*, so that starting out with a little, he gradually acquired a great amount. This accumulation took him from the near to the far, from the shallow to the profound, from not having any to having them. The Buddha started out being the same as sentient beings. However, he vigorously cultivated all manner of practices. In the beginning, he had no practices. So, he went from nothing to something. Then, when he had something, he went from one *bodhi* practice to many *bodhi* practices. He did not bypass even the smallest opportunity to do good. Therefore, starting out with a little, he accumulated a lot. He did all kinds of difficult ascetic practices. He was able to endure what most people found unendurable and cultivate what most people could not cultivate. In this way, he amassed a large quantity of *bodhi* practices, thereby **achieving perfect blessings, virtue, and wisdom.** Having perfected both blessings and wisdom, he is known as the Doubly Perfect Honored One.

**Endowed fully with all of the powers** . The Buddha has cultivated the Ten Powers to perfection. Upon realizing Buddhahood, **he emerges in the world with resplendent light.**

The Sino-American Buddhist Association at Gold Mountain Monastery was established out of the Buddhist Lecture Hall. In the beginning, some people founded the Buddhist Lecture Hall. Later on, it became the Sino-American Buddhist Association. Since the establishment of the Sino-American Buddhist Association in 1968, we have held Buddha recitation sessions and Chan sessions annually. These sessions have quietly gone by without much notice. Every year we hold them, but even the people right here in San Francisco are not aware of them, not to mention people elsewhere. Why not? First of all, it’s because we have not done any publicity. Our intention is to cultivate honestly. If other people hear about our sessions and wish to participate, they are most welcome. But even if no one knows, we continue to hold our sessions regardless. We don’t advertise, “Hey, there’s a Chan session going on! You ought to make offerings to these cultivators who have attained the state of freedom from thought.”

In China, the offerings given during a recitation session could last a monastery for a whole year. The income from one recitation session would more than cover a whole year’s expenditures. During Chan sessions, many people would make offerings in order to create affinities with the assembly. The offerings would pour in—huge quantities of rice, oil, flour, and so on. In the United States, on the other hand, since we have not resorted to any tactics to get offerings, we haven’t received any. If we were clever at using exploitative strategies, perhaps the offerings would be even more abundant than in China. Why do we refrain from using any strategies or maneuvers? We are determined to practice sincerely and leave it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to take care of us. When the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and the eight divisions of gods, dragons, and Dharma-protecting spirits see us truly working hard, we will naturally obtain a response. However, if we are not really applying ourselves, then we ought to be very ashamed of receiving offerings. There is a saying which goes:

Before the three thoughts are ended,
Even water is hard to digest.

If we constantly think about the past, present, and future, we will have difficulty receiving even the offering of a sip of water.

If the Five Contemplations are understood,
Even gold can be absorbed.

At noon we chant, “The Buddha told the Bhikshus: While eating, observe the Five Contemplations.” The Five Contemplations are:

* Consider the amount of work involved to bring the food to where it is eaten.
* Consider whether or not one’s virtuous conduct is sufficient to enable one to accept the offering.
* Guard the mind from transgression, of which greed is the principle cause.
* Properly taken, the food is like medicine, to keep the body from wasting away.
* This food is accepted only in order to realize the Way.

If we can practice these Five Contemplations, th e n we can digest even gold. Don’t take this literally and think that if you eat a piece of gold, your stomach will be able to break it down. This line means that you deserve to eat the finest and most expensive foods.

The Chan session begins tonight. Our Chan session differs from those held in China. In China, Chan sessions are basically “eating sessions.” In the evening the cultivators are served steamed dumplings with sesame oil. This is the case even at Gold Mountain and Gaomin Monasteries. The bigger the dumplings, the more energy the cultivators have. The more sesame oil, the more slippery their mouths. With slippery mouths, they get slippery heads. “Slippery heads” refers to people who join the session in order to eat sesame oil dumplings. Many old Chan cultivators, who have cultivated for so long that their hair has turned white, their teeth have fallen out, their ears have gone deaf, and their eyes no longer see well, are still attached to sesame oil dumplings. If one place doesn’t offer sesame oil dumplings, they will go to another. They search out the place with the best-tasting sesame oil dumplings. I am not slandering Chinese cultivators by saying that they are attached to food. I’m simply telling the truth. This is one point where our session differs from those in China.

In our session, no sesame oil dumplings or other snacks are served. What do I mean by snacks? Sometimes, during sessions in China, when you were sitting there you might be given two or four *guiyuan* (dried longans) to eat. Crackers might be passed out at another period. In yet another period, you might get a piece of rice-crisp to eat. That deep-fried rice-crisp tastes even better than what he had today. Sometimes you would be given peanut candy as a way to create affinity. The laypeople all wanted to make offerings to the cultivators who had attained non-thought, but they were actually causing them to have thoughts of eating. Sometimes tea is served, and one can tell whether a person is a seasoned cultivator by the way he holds his teacup. The teacup has to be held in a certain way. Drinking tea, eating crackers and sesame oil dumplings, one comes to have a perpetually stuffed belly. If one cannot even fit anything in one’s belly, how can one expect to accomplish anything?

In our Chan session, we start in the early morning and alternately walk and sit. Sometimes milk or tea is offered, but there is nothing to eat. It is quite austere. Our session is one of austere practice. We try to practice what others cannot practice. During this “birth and death” session, you must keep the words “birth and death” before your eyes. Don’t forget about birth and death. Don’t decide, “I haven’t had enough sleep. I’m really tired. I might as well sit here and enter the sleeping *samadhi*.” If you do that, you’ll achieve nothing. You must renounce life and forget about death as you participate in the session. Paying no heed to birth and death, diligently apply effort in the session. Be determined to attain the benefit you ought to attain. Don’t just follow the crowd, mindlessly walking and sitting when you see others doing so. Don’t think, “I just follow everyone else. When I see someone else doze off, I doze off too.”

I will tell you that in all the Chan sessions I participated in, the proctor never had to hit me with the incense board, because I never slept. I sat in the Chan Hall during the daytime, and at night I continued sitting in the hall. The words “rest” and “sleep” were not part of my vocabulary. In my student days, I never wasted a single second. I constantly worked at developing my skill.

All of you have deep, thick, good roots. You are endowed with intelligence and wisdom. You ought to realize the importance of this session. In this year’s Chan session, I insist that someone must get enlightened. If no one becomes enlightened, then after the session everyone will receive one hundred strokes of the incense board. If you feel you can bear that, then don’t get enlightened. If you don’t think you can take it, you’d better get enlightened. If you are really scared, you can back out before the Chan session starts. That’s acceptable. Once the session begins, however, you cannot retreat. Once you enter the Chan Hall, you bid farewell to birth and death, and you are not allowed to leave. Even if you die, we will simply stick your body under the meditation bench and not carry it out. If you haven’t died, then you have even less reason to casually leave. We are setting up the threshold of life and death. If you are not on the side of life, then you are on the side of death. If you are not on the side of death, then you are on the side of life.

If you cannot renounce death, you will not gain life in return.
If you cannot renounce the false, you will not achieve the true.

That is the threshold of Gold Mountain Monastery. This year’s Chan session differs from past sessions. First of all, we have a good advisor from Hong Kong with us. “What is a good advisor from Hong Kong coming to our Chan session for?” you ask. I’ll tell you, it’s not that he has not attended Chan sessions before. He has been in Chan sessions, but now he’s come to see what a Chan session in America is like. He wants to see if it is very beautiful. [Note: The Chinese name for America is ‘Beautiful Country’.] So, all you Americans should be nice and beautiful. Don’t show your ugly side. By your ugly side, I mean things like breaking down in tears during the session and crying, “How can I endure this? I’ve got to leave!” If the good advisor from Hong Kong sees that, he will laugh so hard his front teeth will fall out.

Secondly, there are two other good advisors. They are not from Hong Kong, Taiwan, or New York. They are from Gold Mountain Monastery. Who are they? You know them very well, and so do I. Before I tell you who they are, you feel they are very rare. Once I tell you, they will seem very ordinary.

“We have a lot of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas at Gold Mountain Monastery. Who could these two good advisors be?” you wonder.

One of them is Guo Yu, and the other is Guo Dao. Today, they took the bus from Garberville and have come back in time to join our Chan session. After the Chan session, they will resume their Three Steps One Bow pilgrimage to pray for world peace. The first time they telephoned, I asked them whether or not they were going to attend the Chan session. They said they would do as I told them. Today they called again to say that they were not going to follow instructions, but were going to come back for the Chan session. When they asked for my permission, I told them they were most welcome to join the session, but that they must get enlightened.

Everyone should make sure not to miss the opportunity to join this year’s Chan session. No matter what, you should be determined to recognize your own original face. If any of you fail to recognize your own face, don’t think about leaving Gold Mountain Monastery. You’ll be locked up in jail here. That’s a general introduction to this year’s Chan session.

Tell Guo Yi to go buy some more ginger. During the Chan session we will boil ginger soup to drink in the morning. I still have some ginseng left, so I will offer everyone ginseng tea. That way, no one will have to engage in idle thinking about stealing ginseng. Today somebody gave me some longan fruit, which I will offer to the assembly during the session.

During the session, we need not hold the full morning and evening recitations. The Three Refuges ceremony will suffice. We also need not hold the meal offering ceremony or recite the offering chant at the dining hall. We just go over to take our meal, and once we finish we should immediately return to the Chan Hall to do walking meditation. After the head of the assembly finishes his meal, he should strike the wall with the incense board, giving the wall more to “eat,” so to speak. The sutra lecture will be replaced with an instructional talk at 7 p.m. during the session.

In most places traditionally there is a “resting” sitting period, usually from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m., during which anyone who wants to sleep may do so, either sitting on the Chan bench, or going back to their own room. This year we can also have this expedient. We didn’t have this during the fourteen week Chan session. But this year if we allow people to sleep for an hour during that time, perhaps they will not doze off so much at night. All of you should look into it and see if you want to try it out. It doesn’t matter to me. If you want to sleep, go ahead. If you want to stick to the old way, you can keep on sitting. It’s up to you. I’m just making a suggestion.

Did we used to have a sutra lecture on Sunday during the Chan sessions? I don’t remember anymore. During this two-week Chan session, we won’t have a sutra lecture on Sundays. We will simply concentrate on attending the session.

From 9:30-10:30 in the morning, we can also have some instructional talks. Everyone should discuss it and see whether you can take turns giving talks. Find out who is willing to speak. If no one is willing, then we don’t have to have talks. Whoever is willing to speak may give instructional talks. However, during a Chan session, instructional talks are considered an interruption. So, it’s fine to have them, and it’s also fine not to have them.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One, in the past, universally purified
Limitless ways of compassion, equal to the number of sentient beings.
And so he can benefit beings in the world.
The Spirit Helping Trunks Grow Tall understands thus.**

**Commentary:**

**Limitless ways of compassion**. Compassion has the function of alleviating the suffering of all sentient beings. There are immeasurable, boundless ways of compassion. Exactly how many are there? Their number is **equal to the number of sentient beings.** However many sentient beings there are, that’s how many ways of compassion there are. **The Thus Come One, in the past, universally purified.** “Thus Come One” is one of the ten titles of a Buddha. It means that, “traveling the Way which is Thus, he ‘comes’ to realize Proper Enlightenment.” Once upon a time, the Buddha cultivated all kinds of practices, causing them all to be pure and regulated. **And so he can benefit beings in the world.** The Buddha is able to be of benefit to the sentient beings of the world. **The** Forest-ruling **Spirit Helping Trunks Grow Tall understands thus.** She understands this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**If beings see the Buddha but once,
He will surely lead them into the sea of deep faith,
Universally showing them the Path of the Thus Come Ones.
This is the liberation of the Spirit Wondrous Sprouts.**

**Commentary:**

**If there are beings who see the Buddha but once** . It is not easy for sentient beings to see the Buddha. It is even more difficult to get to hear the Buddhadharma. People who are able to go to a stupa or temple and see the Buddhas are people with tremendous good roots. Those without good roots have no opportunity to see the Buddhas, the Dharma, or the Sangha. The Triple Jewel—the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha—is not easy to get to see. If there are sentient beings who get to see the Buddha or an image of the Buddha, **he will surely lead them into the sea of deep faith**. The Buddha will enable these beings to gain a profound understanding the Buddhadharma, which is as vast as the sea, and to bring forth deep faith. The Buddha, by **universally showing them the Path of the Thus Come Ones**, enables sentient beings to cultivate the Buddha Path and realize Buddhahood. **This is the passage into liberation of the** Forest-ruling Spirit **Wondrous Sprouts**, who causes sprouts of various kinds of pure faith to grow.

**Sutra:**

**The merit and virtue accumulated in a single pore
Could not completely be described in oceans of eons.
The expedient means of the Buddhas are inconceivable.
Pure Leaves understands this profound meaning.**

**Commentary:**

**The merit and virtue accumulated in a single pore** . Within a single pore, the Buddha can display the lands of all Buddhas throughout the ten directions. Ordinary people do not understand this state. The merit and virtue accumulated in just a single one of the Buddha’s pores **could not completely be described in oceans of eons.** Even in measureless, boundless, innumerable, unspeakable, unspeakable eons, as profuse as an ocean, one could not finish talking about the merit and virtue in even a single one of the Buddha’s pores. Why? That merit and virtue is infinite. **The expedient means of the Buddhas are inconceivable.** The expedient Dharma doors of all Buddhas cannot be mentally conceptualized, nor can they be verbally expressed. Forest-ruling Spirit Auspicious **Pure Leaves understands this profound meaning.**

**Sutra:**

**“I recollect how the Thus Come One in the past
Made offerings to limitless Buddhas in lands like dust motes.
Before each and every Buddha, his wisdom gradually grew bright.”**

**The Spirit Resplendent Treasury understands thus.**

**Commentary:**

Forest-ruling Spirit Overhanging Resplendent Treasury says,**“ I recollect how the Thus Come One** , limitlessly many eons **in the past**, / **Made offerings** of various articles and money **to limitless Buddhas in lands like dust motes. /** Having made offerings **before each and every Buddha,** he became adorned with blessings and wisdom, and **his wisdom gradually grew bright** and increased day by day.” **The** Forest-ruling **Spirit** Overhanging **Resplendent Treasury understands thus.** She understands this state.

**Sutra:**

**In a single thought, the World Honored One fully apprehends
The ocean of the actions of all sentient beings
Such vast, great, unobstructed wisdom
Is understood by the Spirit Wondrous Adorned.**

**Commentary:**

**The ocean of the actions of all sentient beings** . All sentient beings includes those born from wombs, eggs, moisture, and transformation. Every sentient being has his own behavior, his own karma that he creates, and his own thoughts. This is the process of becoming deluded, creating karma, and undergoing retribution. Creating limitless karma, one must undergo limitless retribution. **In a single thought, the World Honored One fully apprehends**

all this. In a single thought, the Buddha can know the thoughts of all sentient beings. The *Vajra Sutra* says, “The Thus Come One completely knows and sees the various thoughts of all sentient beings.” There is nothing the Buddha does not know or understand. **Such vast, great,** boundless, **unobstructed wisdom, / Is understood by the** Forest-ruling Spirit **Wondrous Adorned** Radiance. She understands this state.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One’s tranquil, exquisite voice proclaims forever,
Evoking matchless, great happiness in everyone.
Comprehending according to their inclinations, each becomes enlightened.
This is the method of practice of Thunder Sound.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One’s tranquil, exquisite voice proclaims forever,** invariable and constant, **evoking matchless, great happiness in everyone.** Sentient beings are happy to the extreme; their joy is unparalleled. Having heard the Thus Come One’s quiet, subtle sound and **comprehending** it **according to their inclinations, each become s enlightened** to the profound principles therein. **This is the method of practice of** Forest-ruling Spirit **Thunder Sound.**

**Sutra:**

**Manifesting great spiritual powers, the Thus Come One
Extends throughout every land in the ten directions,
Enabling all to see the Buddha’s past cultivation.
Pervasive Glow and Perfume enters this passage.**

**Commentary:**

M**anifesting great spiritual powers** within the unmoving Way-place, whereby he can transform something into nothing and nothing into something, **the Thus Come One** has infinite transformations and can mysteriously appear and disappear. He **extends throughout every land in the ten directions** and manifests his Dharma body, **enabling all to see the Buddha’s past cultivation.** All sentient beings see the practices cultivated by the Buddha. Forest-ruling Spirit **Pervasive Glow and Perfume enters this passage** into liberation**.**

We have discussed the Thus Come One, the Buddha, and the World Honored One. The Thus Come One is just the Buddha; the Buddha is just the World Honored One; and the World Honored One is just the Thus Come One. These many names all refer to one entity—the Buddha. “Buddha” is an abbreviation of the Sanskrit word *Buddhaya*, which means “Awakened One.” An Awakened One is one who has gained great understanding. The Buddha is the most intelligent person around, both in the world and in the transcendental realm. Not only is he intelligent, he can teach all sentient beings to be intelligent and to become Buddhas. For that reason, Buddhism can also be called the Teaching of People and the Teaching of Sentient Beings. You are included in Buddhism, whether you believe in Buddhism or not. All sentient beings have the opportunity to become Buddhas sooner or later. Buddhism is absolutely egalitarian. It is public-spirited and impartial. Anyone who puts the Buddha’s teaching into practice can attain wisdom. Anyone who does not cultivate according to the Buddhadharma will not attain wisdom. One who attains genuine wisdom is truly liberated. One who is truly liberated has left suffering and attained happiness.

Why do sentient beings become sentient beings? Since they are totally upside down, mistaking right for wrong and wrong for right. They cannot distinguish right from wrong, and so they do many deluded things. People study the Buddhadharma in order to learn how not to be upside down. When we are not upside down, we will attain purity. Once we attain purity, we will be happy.

[Answer to a question:] The “ten thousand virtues” simply refer to the myriad virtues which adorn the Buddha. There is no other meaning. In asking this question, is he hoping to be upside down, or not upside down, or upside down yet not upside down?

All sentient beings wish not to be upside down, and yet they are upside down. The Buddha wishes not to be upside down, and indeed, he is not upside down. He truly understands things and is not muddled. If you can recite “Namo Amitabha Buddha,” then why is that after you die, your body cannot recite? If you have a soul or a Buddha nature, what does it look like? Who is it? That’s what we’re looking for: Who is the one who recites “Namo Amitabha Buddha”? That’s the way to develop the sense of doubt in investigating Chan.

**Sutra:**

**Sentient beings are deceitful and do not cultivate virtue.
Confused, they sink and flounder in birth and death.
For them he elucidates all principles of wisdom.
The Spirit Wondrous Light perceives thus.**

**Commentary:**

**Sentient beings are deceitful and do not cultivate virtue.** Sentient beings are not straightforward. They like to be crooked and to resort to flattery. Instead of telling the truth, they lie and give people “high hats” to wear. They have a hard time learning the proper path, but easily master deviant paths. They do not cultivate virtue. It’s difficult to teach them to be straightforward, for they have crooked minds. **Confused,** lacking understanding and full of doubt, **they sink and flounder in** the sea of suffering of **birth and death. / For them he elucidates all principles of wisdom**, so that these sentient beings can understand. **The** Forest-ruling Spirit **Wondrous Light** Unique and Sparkling **perceives thus.**

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha, for beings laden with karmic obstructions,
Appears but once every hundreds of millions of eons.
At other times, he is still visible to them in thought after thought.
The Spirit Luster and Flavor thus observes.

Commentary:**

**The Buddha, for beings laden with karmic obstructions, / Appears but once every hundreds of millions of eons.** The Buddha never forgets sentient beings with heavy karmic obstructions and in thought after thought wishes to save them. However, sentient beings’ karmic obstructions are so grave that they cannot gain a response in the Way. A very long time—countless hundreds of millions of great eons—must pass before the Buddha appears in the world. **At other times, he is still visible to them in thought after thought.** All sentient beings, in thought after thought, wish to see the Buddha. And the Buddha, in thought after thought, makes himself visible to sentient beings. Forest-ruling Spirit **Luster and Flavor** of Flowers and Fruits **thus observes.** She understands this principle.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Mountain-ruling Spirit Blooming Jeweled Peak gained a passage into liberation of entering the light of the samadhi of great tranquility. Mountain-ruling Spirit Flower Grove Wondrous Topknot gained a passage into liberation of bringing an inconceivable number of sentient beings to maturity through the cultivation of good roots of kindness.**

**Commentary:**

Mountains also have spirits ruling over them. Otherwise, the mountains would run about everywhere. But since the spirits are watching over them, the mountains dare not move. You shouldn’t think that the mountains are inanimate and motionless. If there were no spirits watching over them, they would go everywhere. Mountain-ruling Spirits are usually wild beasts that live in the mountains. For example, the tiger is the chief of the Mountain-ruling Spirits. **Moreover, Mountain-ruling Spirit Jeweled Peak Blossoms gained a passage into liberation of the light of entering the samadhi of great tranquility.** In the samadhi of great tranquility, this spirit is tranquil and unmoving as it watches over the mountains. She has attained this passage into liberation of the Buddha.

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Flower Grove Wondrous Topknot gained a passage into liberation of bringing an inconceivable number of sentient beings to maturity through the cultivation** and accumulation **of good roots of kindness** and charity. When her good roots have ripened, she can save an incredible number of sentient beings. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Lofty Banner Universally Shining gained a passage into liberation of contemplating the minds of all sentient beings to see what they enjoy and then adorning and purifying all faculties. Mountain-ruling Spirit Immaculate Pure Topknot gained a passage into liberation of being diligent and vigorous throughout boundless oceans of eons without growing weary or lax. Mountain-ruling Spirit Light Shining through the Ten Directions gained a passage into liberation of using the light of boundless merit and virtue to universally awaken beings.**

**Commentary:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Lofty Banner Universally Shining gained a passage into liberation of contemplating the minds of all sentient beings to see what they** like and **enjoy and then adorning and purifying all faculties** — their eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. To purify the six sense faculties, one must diligently uphold the precepts and be stern and dignified in one’s deportment. The eyes do not casually look at things, the ears do not casually listen to sounds, the nose does not casually smell, the tongue does not casually taste flavors, and so forth. **Mountain-ruling Spirit Immaculate Pure Topknot gained a passage into liberation of** seeing the Buddha **being diligent and vigorous throughout boundless oceans of eons without growing weary or lax.** Throughout boundless eons of time, so numerous they are like a great ocean, the Buddha practiced vigorously without ever growing lax or fatigued. That’s the passage into liberation this spirit attained. **Mountain-ruling Spirit Light Shining through the Ten Directions gained a passage into liberation of using the light of boundless merit and virtue to universally awaken beings.** When sentient beings saw her brilliance, they became enlightened. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Light of Great Strength gained a passage into liberation of gaining full personal maturity and then enabling sentient beings to renounce foolish and confused behavior.**

**Commentary:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Light of Great Strength gained a passage into liberation of gaining full personal maturity and then enabling sentient beings to renounce foolish and confused behavior.** She saw the Buddha attaining Buddhahood and realizing the fruition of perfect enlightenment on his own, and then preventing sentient beings from acting foolishly. Once sentient beings have great wisdom and a clear understanding of right and wrong, they cease to behave foolishly.

**Sutra:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Universally Supreme, Awesome Brilliance gained a passage into liberation of eradicating all suffering until none is left.**

**Commentary:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Universally Supreme, Awesome Brilliance gained a passage into liberation** , the state **of** seeing the Buddha **eradicating all suffering** of sentient beings **until none is left**, and bestowing every kind of happiness upon them. Eradicating all suffering is great compassion. Bestowing every happiness is great kindness. He got rid of all sufferings entirely, and gave sentient beings total happiness. None of the suffering is left, meaning that there isn’t even a little bit, much less a lot. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Orb of Subtle, Concentrated Light gained a passage into liberation of using light to expound the Dharma, revealing the merit and virtue of all Thus Come Ones.

Commentary:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Orb of Subtle, Concentrated Light gained a passage into liberation of using light to expound** all **the Dharma** teachings—the Three Stores and Twelve Divisions of the Buddhist Canon. This spirit emits light and uses light to speak the Dharma, **revealing the** past deeds of **merit and virtue of all Thus Come Ones.** Ordinary people who have not attained spiritual penetrations will not understand this state. Those who have attained spiritual penetrations will know that within this light are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Hearers and Those Enlightened to Conditions, and all other types of sentient beings. The Buddha is there proclaiming the Dharma, and sentient beings are listening to it. This is an incredible state. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Universal Eye Seeing the Manifest gained a passage into liberation of causing all sentient beings to grow in good roots, even in their dreams.

Commentary:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Universal Eye Seeing the Manifest gained a passage into liberation of causing all sentient beings to grow in good roots, even in their dreams.** This spirit’s eyes can see very far away, which is why he is called “Universal Eye.” “Seeing the Manifest” means that those faraway sights manifest up close, in plain view, so she can see them. What state of the Buddha has she attained? She can cause sentient beings to do good deeds, increase their good roots, and cultivate blessings and wisdom not only when they are awake, but even when they are asleep and dreaming.

In the past there was a Buddha who did not speak Dharma directly. First, he made all the people go to sleep. Then in their dreams, he spoke for them all kinds of Dharma—suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and no self. And when they awoke, they realized the Way. That was how that Buddha spoke the Dharma.

There was another Buddha who appeared as a rakshasa ghost in people’s dreams in order to frighten them into cultivating the Way. They would think, “Oh no! Impermanence has come upon me, and I have nothing to rely upon. I’d better cultivate!” Don’t consider nightmares to be inauspicious. Actually, they are extremely lucky. They make you awaken to the fact that life is unreal. Even in dreams, that Buddha made people’s good roots grow so that they brought forth the bodhi resolve to seek the Unsurpassed Path. Mountain-ruling Spirit Universal Eye Seeing the Manifest understands this state of the Buddha, thus attaining this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Mountain-ruling Spirit Solid Vajra Eyes gained a passage into liberation of making appear an ocean of boundless great meanings.**

**At that time, Mountain-ruling Spirit Blossoms All Around received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, contemplated all the multitudes of mountain-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Mountain-ruling Spirit** is named **Solid Vajra Eyes**. Her eyes are as bright, sharp, and solid as vajra. Such solid vajra eyes can discern all demon kings, yakshas, asuras, ghosts, and goblins. These eyes cannot be burned by fire or cut by knives. Thus her name is Mountain-ruling Spirit Vajra Solid Eyes. She **gained a** Buddha’s state, a **passage into liberation of making appear an ocean of boundless great meanings.** “Great meanings” refers to the meanings of great Dharma, which are as deep, vast, and measureless as the ocean. These principles are mysterious and profound, vast and great. She attained this passage into liberation.

**At that time, Mountain-ruling Spirit Blossoms All Around received the Buddha** Shakyamuni’s **awesomespiritual power,** by which she **universally contemplated the multitudes of Mountain-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.** She was able to do this through the Buddha’s spiritual power. She did not claim that she herself had such power and spiritual penetrations. Instead, she relied upon the Buddha’s great awesome spiritual power to contemplate the multitudes of Mountain-ruling Spirits in the Flower Adornment Dharma Assembly. There were not just one or two, but infinitely many Mountain-ruling Spirits. The ten mentioned earlier in the text are the leaders. Now, this spirit speaks a verse.

**Sutra:**

# Boundless supreme practices cultivated in the past ****Now yield spiritual penetrations beyond measure.**** ****Extensively opening Dharma doors in number like motes of dust,********The Buddha brings all sentient beings to deep, joyful awakening.****

**Commentary:**

Mountain-ruling Spirit Blossoms All Around uses verses to praise the **boundless supreme practices** that the Buddha **cultivated in the past**. How many practices were there? They were without bounds, innumerable. Those numerous supreme practices **now yield spiritual penetrations beyond measure.** How great are the Buddha’s spiritual penetrations? We don’t know. **Extensively opening Dharma doors in number like motes of dust**, **/The Buddhabrings all sentient beings to deep, joyful awakening.** The Dharma doors in the ocean of teaching are comparable to a great sea. The Buddha opens them on a vast scale. How many are there? However many fine motes of dust there are, that’s how many Dharma doors the Buddha has. Why are there so many Dharma doors? Because sentient beings are also as numerous as fine motes of dust. Dharma doors as many as dust motes are used to teach sentient beings as many as dust motes. The Buddha leads sentient beings to profoundly understand the Buddhadharma and be happy.

**Sutra:**

**His body, adorned with myriad hallmarks, pervades all worlds.
Light issues from his pores, purifying everything.
With expedients of great kindness he instructs all.
Flower Grove Wondrous Topknot awakens to this passage.**

**Commentary:**

**His body, adorned with myriad hallmarks, pervades all worlds.** The Thirty-two Hallmarks and Eighty Subtle Characteristics adorn the Buddha’s body, which pervades all worlds. The Buddha is nowhere and yet everywhere. His presence pervades the worlds. **Light issues from his pores, purifying everything.** Each of the Buddha’s pores emits limitless light. Within that limitless light, more limitless light pours forth, and so on, in multi-layered profusion and mutual illumination. The lights from his pores mutually shine upon one another and upon all worlds, making them pure.

**With expedients of great kindness he instructs all.** The Buddha uses his greatly compassionate heart to bestow every kind of happiness upon sentient beings and remove all their sufferings. He employs various expedient methods to lead sentient beings to have faith, make vows, and cultivate. He uses expedient Dharma doors to instruct sentient beings and quickly bring them to enlightenment. Mountain-ruling Spirit **Flower Grove Wondrous Topknot awakens to this passage.** She understands this passage into liberation.

When I was practicing filial piety by my mother’s grave, a cultivator named Zhi Yi sent me a big basket of dumplings called wowotou. Wowotou is the kind of food that the monk Zhao Zhou wanted to find out about. He embarked on a quest to discover what food was known as “two inside and eight outside.” The food is so named because to make it, one places two thumbs inside and eight fingers outside to shape the dough into the form of a bowl. Zhi Yi was a Bhikshu, and he maintained the practice of eating only one meal a day. He sent me a huge basket of these wowotou, over a hundred of them. I ate two per day and didn’t pay too much attention to them. One day I looked in the basket and found long, furry mold growing on the dumplings at the bottom. Those moldy dumplings tasted horrible—worse than excrement. The other day I mentioned that those who eat meat should be able to eat excrement. Well, if you gave me excrement, I could eat it. If those people can do that, then you can acknowledge that they have some skill, that they have no thoughts of discrimination. Those moldy wowotou were than excrement. They were spicy, stinky, and sour—truly awful. I removed the mold and ate them all the same. [To a disciple] You can also eat that kind of food. For example, if you want to be there for a month, you can make ninety steamed dumplings and eat three a day. You can make one-pound dumplings!

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha’s body appears everywhere--boundless,
Spreading to fill the worlds of the ten directions.
His faculties are adorned and pure, delighting all who see him.
Lofty Banner understands and enters this Dharma.**

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha’s** Dharma **body appears everywhere** throughout the Dharma Realm and space. His presence infuses every single mote of dust. Thus his body is said to be **boundless, / Spreading to fill the worlds of the ten directions.** The Buddha’s body does not appear only in one world. All worlds throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm and space are filled with the Buddha’s Dharma body. **His faculties are adorned and pure, delighting all who see him.** The Buddha’s body is adorned with the Thirty-two Hallmarks and Eighty Subtle Characteristics. All his faculties are perfect and pure. Therefore, everyone who sees the Buddha is delighted. Mountain-ruling Spirit **Lofty Banner understands and enters this Dharma.** She understands this state, this passage into liberation, and this principle.

**Sutra:**

**He practiced intensely for eons without growing lax.
Untainted by worldly things, he resembles space.
With various skillful means, he transforms the flocks of beings.
The one named Jeweled Topknot awakens to this Dharma door.**

**Commentary:**

**He practiced intensely** from beginningless time until now, **through** an unknown number of great **eons**, **without growing lax**. The Buddha was never lazy. He was brave and vigorous, never letting a second pass in vain. He cherished every second as if it were worth more than gold. Our Chan sessions and Buddha recitation sessions are examples of intense practice. During the Buddha recitation sessions, we rise at four in the morning and recite the Buddha’s name, putting effort in cultivation all day long and not resting until ten o’clock at night. This is diligent cultivation. We diligently cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, and extinguish greed, anger, and delusion, and in our cultivation we do not grow lax or lazy. We cultivate that way during Buddha recitation sessions. During Chan sessions, we are even more vigorous, starting at 2:30 in the morning and retiring at midnight. We sleep only two hours or so each night. That’s another case of diligent cultivation. But we cultivate this way only for a limited time. Our Buddha recitation sessions are one week long, and our Chan sessions are two weeks long. The Buddha isn’t as lazy as we are. He doesn’t have any fixed sessions. He is diligent day after day, month after month, year after year. In general, he is diligent at all times.

Since he never slacks off, he is **untainted by worldly dharmas,** such as fame, profit, wealth, beauty, fame, food, and sleep. Those are things that worldly people like. They like to eat good food. One kind is not enough; they demand a variety of dishes. And the better the food, the more their appetite grows. Thus, food is a worldly dharma, as is clothing. People enjoy wearing fine clothes. The better-dressed they are, the more they want to acquire even finer apparel. Wanting a fine house is also a worldly dharma. So is wanting to sleep longer hours. When one is defiled by worldly dharmas, one cannot achieve transcendental Dharma. When worldly dharmas prevail, transcendental Dharma seems insignificant. When transcendental Dharma takes precedence, worldly dharmas fade into the background.

The Buddha concentrated on transcendental Dharmas alone. Untainted by worldly dharmas, **he resembles space**. He is like clean and unpolluted air. Having cultivated the Unsurpassed Way and realized Buddhahood, **with various skillful means**, not just one, **he transforms the flocks of beings.** He uses many different expedient means to teach and transform the various kinds of sentient beings. **The one named Jeweled Topknot awakens to this Dharma door.** The Mountain-ruling Spirit who awakens to this Dharma door is called Immaculate Jeweled Topknot. She understands this state.

**Sutra:**

**Blind and in the dark, s entient beings enter dangerous paths.
Out of pity, the Buddha shines his light upon them,
Waking everyone in the world from their slumbers.
Upon realizing this, Awesome Light is jubilant.**

**Commentary:**

Sentient beings refers to people and all other beings endowed with blood and breath. **Blind** refers to the lack of eyesight, **and in the dark** means not being able to see the light. **Sentient beings** are extremely foolish. They wish to walk a good path, but because they have no eyes, they **enter dangerous paths** — paths filled with pits, puddles, jackals, wolves, tigers, leopards, rakshasa ghosts, or other ghosts and spirits.

Sentient beings in the world start out wanting to find a good method of practice, but in their foolishness they fail to recognize a good path and instead walk straight into deviant cults and heterodox sects. They go astray without even realizing it; they think they are on the right path. Even when they fall into the hells after death, they still don’t realize they are on a dangerous and evil path. This is very dangerous.

**Out of pity** for sentient beings who mistake right for wrong and wrong for right, who confuse black with white and white with black, who are so upside down that they mistake a thief for their son, **the Buddha shines his light upon them**, / **Waking everyone in the world from their slumbers**, causing them to bring forth great wisdom and attain enlightenment.

**Upon realizing this, Awesome Light is jubilant.** Mountain-ruling Spirit Light Shining through the Ten Directions, also known as Universally Shining Awesome Light, understands this passage into liberation and has insight into this principle, and this makes her tremendously happy.

**Sutra:**

**He cultivated extensively in all realms of existence,
Making offerings to Buddhas as countless as dustmotes in lands.
Upon seeing him, sentient beings bring forth great vows.
Great Strength understands and enters this ground.**

**Commentary:**

Before the Buddha achieved Buddhahood, he was the same as all sentient beings. But **he** brought forth a great resolve and **cultivated extensively in all realms of existence**, within the Three Realms and Twenty-five Planes of Existence. How did he cultivate? By **making offerings to Buddhas as countless as dustmotes in lands.** Why did he make offerings to Buddhas? Because Buddhas are the most virtuous, most cultivated, and most wise people both in and beyond the world. Buddhas are Doubly Complete Honored Ones of Perfect Enlightenment. Their blessings and wisdom are both complete, and they have achieved the fruition of Perfect Great Enlightenment. Thus, we ought to make offerings to Buddhas.

“Well, if I make offerings to Buddhas, can I also make offerings to sentient beings?” Sure. If you feed your pet dog, you are making offerings to it. If you raise a horse or a pig, you are also making offerings to it. However, such offerings accrue no merit or virtue. You are keeping them alive, but they cannot help you increase your blessings. The Sutra in Forty-two Sections says that making offerings to a hundred evil people is not as good as making offerings to a good person. That is, the merit and virtue are not as great. Making offerings to a thousand good people does not accrue as much merit as making offerings to one Upasaka or Upasika who has received and upholds the Five Precepts. The merit of making offerings to ten thousand Upasakas and Upasikas who uphold the Five Precepts is not as great as that of making offerings to a Bhikshu or Bhikshuni who has left the home-life. Making offerings to a million Bhikshus and Bhikshunis is not as meritorious as making offerings to a First Stage Arhat.

And so laypeople like to invite a thousand monks to a vegetarian meal, thinking that there will certainly be one Arhat among so many monks. Since it is impossible for one to be acquainted with so many monks, the Arhat can slip in among them without fear of being recognized.

Making offerings to ten million First Stage Arhats (Srotaapannas) is not as good as making offerings to one Second Stage Arhat (Sakridgamin). Making offerings to a hundred million Second Stage Arhats is not as good as making offerings to one Third Stage Arhat (Anagamin). Making offerings to ten billion Third Stage Arhats is not as good as making offerings to one Fourth Stage Arhat. There are that many distinctions in offerings made to Sages.

Making offerings to limitlessly many Fourth Stage Arhats is not as good as making offerings to “one who is without cultivation and without realization”—a Buddha. A Buddha need not engage in further cultivation or realization. He has already finished his cultivation and need not undergo further existence. He has perfected the three kinds of enlightenment and is endowed with the myriad virtues. Therefore, one should make offerings to a Buddha.

When Shakyamuni Buddha was cultivating at the level of planting causes, he also made offerings to Buddhas—not just to one Buddha, but to Buddhas as many as motes of dust in lands. Having made offerings to infinitely many Buddhas, he increased his good roots and become endowed with the special hallmarks and characteristics.

**Upon seeing him,** the Buddha, **sentient beings bring forth great vows.** All those who have left the home-life to become novices at Gold Mountain Monastery should make great vows to achieve a great fruition. If you don’t make great vows, you won’t realize any fruition. Those who have left home at Gold Mountain Monastery should become Fourth Stage Arhats at the very least. Then we will not let down the donors of the ten directions who have made offerings to us. Therefore, we must make great vows.

Mountain-ruling Spirit Light of **Great Strength understands and enters this ground.** She understands and awakens to this Dharma door, this state and passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**He witnesses the misery of sentient beings in transmigration,
Perpetually caught up in all their karmic hindrances.
With wisdom’s radiance he extinguishes their woes.
The Spirit Universally Supreme is liberated thus.**

**Wondrous sounds issue from each and every pore,
Praising the Buddhas in accord with sentient beings’ hearts.
This lasts for measureless eons throughout the ten directions.
Orb of Light enters this passage.**

**Commentary:**

**He witnesses the misery of sentient beings in transmigration** . The Buddha sees sentient beings going round and round without end in the six paths of rebirth, suffering piteously. Why do they flow and turn in birth and death? It’s because they are **perpetually caught up in all their karmic hindrances.** These karmic hindrances come about when they become deluded, create karma, and then undergo retribution. With such karmic hindrances, they cannot cultivate. They are perpetually tied up and shrouded by their karmic hindrances. **With wisdom’s radiance he extinguishes their woes.** The Buddha uses his wisdom to dispel sentient beings’ ignorance and obstacles of dark delusion. **The** Mountain-ruling Spirit **Universally Supreme is liberated thus.** She understands this passage into liberation.

**Wondrous sounds issue f rom each and every pore** on the Buddha’s body, speaking Dharma for sentient beings, proclaiming wondrous and inconceivable Dharma doors, **praising the Buddhas in accord with sentient beings’ hearts. / This lasts for measureless eons throughout the** worlds of the **ten directions.** It is not only in one world that the Buddha emits wondrous sounds to teach and transform sentient beings and speak Dharma for them. It is not only for a short time that he teaches and transforms sentient beings, butthroughout measureless eons. Mountain-Ruling **Orb of Light enters** and understands **this passage** into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha appears all throughout the ten directions.
Using various expedients, he speaks the wonderful Dharma.
With an ocean of practices, he benefits beings widely.
The Spirit Seeing the Manifest awakens thus.**

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha appears** before sentient beings **all throughout the ten directions. / Using various expedients, he speaks the wonderful Dharma**, teaching sentient beings and speaking Dharma for them even in their dreams. When they are awake, the Buddha uses a vast array of expedient means to teach them. **With an ocean of practices, he benefits beings widely.** The practices the Buddha cultivates to benefit sentient beings are as profuse and boundless as an ocean. **The** Mountain-ruling **Spirit** Universal Eye **Seeing the Manifest awakens thus.** She understands this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Dharma doors as boundless and measureless as the ocean
Are spoken with a single sound, yet understood by all.
The Buddha expounds endlessly throughout every eon.
Vajra Eyes enters this expedient means.**

**Commentary:**

The Buddha’s **Dharma doors**, which are **as boundless and measureless as the** great **ocean, / Are spoken with a single sound, yet understood by all.** The Buddha proclaims the Dharma with a single sound, and sentient beings each understand according to their kind.

**The Buddha expounds endlessly throughout every eon.** The Buddha never tires of speaking the Dharma. He speaks Dharma constantly in order to teach and transform sentient beings. Mountain-ruling Spirit Solid **Vajra Eyes enters this** passage into liberation of **expedient means** and understands this state.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Earth-ruling Spirit Pure Flower of Universal Virtue gained a passage into liberation of universally contemplating all sentient beings in thought after thought with a compassionate heart. Earth-ruling Spirit Solid Blessings and Adornment gained a passage into liberation of universally making appear all sentient beings’ power of blessings and virtue. Earth-ruling Spirit Wondrous Flowers Ornamenting Trees gained a passage into liberation of universally entering all dharmas and producing the adornments of all Buddhalands.**

**Commentary:**

**Moreover,** to elaborate further upon principles that were not fully explained before, the text brings up **Earth-ruling Spirit Pure Flower of Universal Virtue**, who universally inspires thoughts of merit and virtue in sentient beings. The earth has spirits watching over it. Without these spirits, all the dust on the earth would scatter and disperse, and there would be no earth to speak of. So, spirits have to watch over the earth. This spirit **gained** a state within the Buddhadharma, **a passage into liberation of** seeing the Buddha **universally contemplating all sentient beings in thought after thought with a compassionate heart.** In every thought, the Buddha is mindful of sentient beings and wishes to teach and transform them. With a compassionate heart, he wants to eradicate their suffering and give them joy.

**Earth-ruling Spirit Solid Blessings and Adornment** also inspires sentient beings to make the bodhi resolve and enter the sea of merit and virtue. She **gained a passage into liberation of universally making appear all sentient beings’ power of blessings and virtue.** She enables all sentient beings to increase the strength of their blessings and virtue through the cultivation of blessings, wisdom, and virtue. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Earth-ruling Spirit Wondrous Flowers Ornamenting Trees gained a passage into liberation of universally entering all dharmas and producing the adornments of all Buddhalands.** She causes the lands of all Buddhas in the ten directions to become subtly and wonderfully adorned. That was her passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Earth-ruling Spirit Universally Scattering the Myriad Gems gained a passage into liberation of cultivating all kinds of samadhis, enabling sentient beings to cast out obstructive defilements. Earth-ruling Spirit Pure Eyes Contemplating Time gained a passage into liberation of enabling all sentient beings to always travel about in joyful play. Earth-ruling Spirit Golden Color and Wondrous Eyes gained a passage into liberation of displaying all kinds of pure bodies to tame and subdue sentient beings.**

**Commentary:**

**Earth-ruling Spirit Universally Scattering the Myriad Gems** knows that sentient beings like precious things, so she scatters them everywhere—gold, silver, vaidurya, crystal, carnelian, red pearls, and coral. She strews the seven treasures about, and sentient beings who have affinities obtain them. She **gained a passage into liberation of cultivating all kinds of samadhis, enabling sentient beings to cast out obstructive defilements.** She understands that the Buddha cultivated all the different kinds of samadhi when he was at the level of planting causes. Since the Buddha obtained samadhi, he was able to help sentient beings get rid of their karmic hindrances and defiled thoughts. This spirit gained this passage into liberation.

**Earth-ruling Spirit Pure Eyes Contemplating Time gained a passage into liberation of enabling all sentient beings to always travel about in joyful play.** This Earth-ruling Spirit knows how to teach sentient beings according to their conditions. She knows that sentient beings like to play and be happy, and she understands how the Buddha always let sentient beings play and have fun, using that kind of samadhi to teach and transform beings. That is her passage into liberation.

**Earth-ruling Spirit Golden Color and Wondrous Eyes gained** a state of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation of** everywhere **dzisplaying all kinds of pure**, wonderfulDharma **bodies to tame and subdue sentient beings.** She subdues obstinate sentient beings until they are no longer obstinate; she makes angry and hateful beings become joyful. She tames all the sentient beings who are difficult to tame. This Earth-ruling Spirit attained this passage into liberation.

Sutra:

**Earth-ruling Spirit Fragrant Shining Hairs gained a passage into liberation of understanding the sea of merit and virtue and the tremendous, awesome power of all Buddhas.**

**Commentary:**

**Earth-ruling Spirit Fragrant Shining Hairs** must have a hairy body. Most people’s body hair smells of sweat and grime. Cowhair gives off a rank odor, and horse hair smells of horses. In America there is a kind of animal that causes a stink, and it can be said to have stinky fur. This Earth-ruling Spirit, however, has fragrant hair. Her hairs give off a fragrance. People who uphold the precepts purely emit fragrance. Those who are not pure in the precepts have a stench about them. They smell worse than fish. No matter what deodorant or perfume they apply, they still stink. This Earth-ruling Spirit’s hairs are not only fragrant, but also radiant. As a result of cultivating pure Dharma, she has a pure, fragrant light. She **gained a passage into liberation of understanding the sea of merit and virtue and the tremendous, awesome power of all Buddhas.** As a result of having cultivated a sea of merit and virtue, the Buddhas have great awesome power. All cultivators should possess such great awesome power. When you are afraid to lecture on the sutras in front of certain audiences, you have been intimidated and overwhelmed by the awesome presence of those audiences. If you yourself possess great awesome spiritual power, then no matter who comes to listen, you will not be afraid. Even if the president or the emperor is listening, it’s all the same to you. Earth-ruling Spirit Fragrant Shining Hairs entered this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Earth-ruling Spirit Delightful Still Sounds gained a passage into liberation of universally gathering in the sea of all sentient beings’ sounds of speech.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Earth-ruling Spirit** is named **Delightful Still Sounds**. “Still sound” actually refers to silence—the absence of sound—which is the sound of samadhi. This sound delights the minds of sentient beings. Although they cannot hear this sound, they sense it in their minds and feel extremely joyful. This sound can be likened to invisible waves of current that make one feel very happy. This Earth-ruling Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of universally gathering in the sea of all sentient beings’ sounds of speech.** This passage into liberation of universally gathering in sentient beings’ sounds and speech is comparable to the function of a radio. It is said, “Silence surpasses the presence of sound.” Silence gathers in all the sounds of sentient beings’ movements. Earth-ruling Spirit Delightful Still Sounds attains this state of the Buddha and enters this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Earth-ruling Spirit Topknot of Exquisite Flowers gained a passage into liberation of perceiving the immaculate nature filling up the lands of Buddhas.**

**Commentary:**

**Earth-ruling Spirit Topknot of Exquisite Flowers** has inconceivably many wondrous, fragrant flowers, which are coiled clockwise to form a precious topknot, hence her name. She **gained** a state of the Buddha in which she perceives the Buddha’s fragrant light shining everywhere. Clouds of fragrance and flowers come forth from every pore of the Buddha, pervading the Dharma Realms of the ten directions. This is **a passage into liberation of perceiving the immaculate nature filling up the lands of Buddhas.** The lands of the Buddhas are just the Dharma Realms of the ten directions. When sentient beings see these clouds and smell their fragrance, they renounce all defiled thoughts and regain their pure, original substance. This spirit attained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Earth-ruling Spirit Universally Supported by Vajra gained a passage into liberation of seeing the universal appearance of those who are gathered in and supported by the Dharma wheels of all Buddhas.**

**At that time, Earth-ruling Spirit Pure Flower of Universal Virtue received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Earth-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

**Earth-ruling Spirit Universally Supported by Vajra** rules over earth that is as solid and indestructible as vajra, hence her name. She **gained a passage into liberation of seeing the universal appearance of those who are gathered in and supported by the Dharma wheels of all** past, present, and future **Buddhas** throughout the ten directions. Although we have come into the world after Shakyamuni Buddha entered nirvana, the Buddhadharma being expounded now is still the same as the Dharma spoken by all Buddhas of the past. The Dharma is mutually supportive. This Dharma connects with that Dharma, and that Dharma connects with this Dharma. The Dharma spoken by this Buddha was already spoken by that Buddha. The Dharma spoken by that Buddha is now spoken by this Buddha. It all perfectly interpenetrates without obstruction. The Way of all Buddhas is the same, and the Dharma wheel of the Buddhas turns ceaselessly.

When the Buddha turns the Dharma wheel, all sentient beings are gathered in and guided to cultivate in accord with the Dharma, and in the future they will all come into the world and manifest the attainment of Buddhahood. Earth-ruling Spirit Universally Supported by Vajra attained this passage into liberation.

**At that time, Earth-ruling Spirit Universal Virtue Pure Flower received the Buddha’s awesome spiritualpower, universally contemplated the multitudes of Earth-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One, in thought after thought in the past, Employed ineffable means of great kindness and compassion. Cultivating in this way without end,
He thereby attained a solid, indestructible body.**

**Sentient beings and Bodhisattvas in the three periods of time,
As well as all the blessings accumulated,
Are fully manifest in the Thus Come One’s pores.
Blessings and Adornment sees this and rejoices.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One,** the Buddha, **in thought after thought** when he was cultivating all kinds of practices **in the past** at the level of planting causes**,** constantly cultivated the Samadhi of Kindheartedness. He continually practiced the Dharma doors of kindness, compassion, joy, and giving. He treated all beings with compassion. No matter how badly beings treated him, he would draw them in with compassion. For example, as the Bodhisattva “Never-Slighting,” he would bow to people as soon as he saw them and say, “I dare not slight you, for you will all become Buddhas.” Although he dared not slight sentient beings, they would beat and scold him, calling him stupid. In spite of this, he felt compassion for them. He never got mad at them. In one of his past lives, when he was a Patient Immortal, his limbs were sliced off by King Kali, yet he felt no anger at all. These were signs of his cultivation of great kindness and compassion.

He **employed ineffable means of great kindness and compassion.** “Ineffable” means there were so many means one could never finish speaking of them. **Cultivating in this way without end**…He cultivated the Samadhi of Kindheartedness and refrained from killing sentient beings out of great compassion. His cultivation was “without end,” meaning he cultivated compassion for countless great eons. Even after achieving Buddhahood, he continued to practice the Four Unlimited Aspects of Mind of kindness, compassion, joy, and giving. **He thereby attained a solid, indestructible body.** Since the Buddha refrained from hurting other sentient beings, his own body was as solid as vajra—it was invulnerable to harm or injury.

Therefore, we should be clear about cause and effect. Why would someone kill us? We must have killed someone in a past life. Why would people scold us? We must have scolded others in the past. Therefore, when the causes and conditions assemble, we must undergo our retribution. Since the Buddha refrained from killing, he attained an adamantine, invulnerable body. If all of us cultivated the Samadhi of Kindheartedness and refrained from killing, our bodies will also be solid, healthy, and free from illness. Why are we so unhealthy and prone to illness? We have not done a good job of holding the precept of not killing.

All **sentient beings and Bodhisattvas in the three periods of time**—past, present, and future, **as well as all the blessings accumulated, Are fully manifest in the Thus Come One’s pores.** Earth-ruling Spirit Solid **Blessings and Adornment sees this** state **and rejoices.**

Some people have a doubt about these four lines of verse. They think, “The Buddhas of the past and present should only be able to manifest sentient beings and Bodhisattvas of the past and present. Sentient beings and Bodhisattvas of the future have not come around yet, so how can the Buddhas make them appear? It doesn’t make sense.” You should know that the state of the Buddhas is inconceivable. They can move the past to the present, move the present to the future, and move the future to the past. Past, present, and future are three and yet one; one and yet three. Therefore, it is possible for them to display in their pores the merit and virtue of future sentient beings. This is like television, which also has the function of moving past to present, present to future, and future to past. If television can do this, how much the more can the Buddhas’ pores? Every pore on a Buddha’s body is like a television.

“I’m still not sure I believe this,” you say. Then let’s take dreams. Sometimes people dream about events that are not due to occur for several decades. Sometimes we also dream of long-forgotten events from decades past—events from childhood. This is also a case of moving the past into the present, the present into the future, and the future into the past. I remember that some forty years ago, I dreamed I was sitting on a Dharma seat and there were some foreigners lecturing on the Flower Adornment Sutra. I didn’t understand the vision then, but now it has become a reality! I saw this in a dream forty some years ago. Not only did I see this state, I dreamed of many others as well. Now I say to myself, “So that’s what it was.” How do you explain this? If we can see future events in dreams, then why do you doubt that the Buddha can manifest the entire Dharma realm within his pores, including the merit and virtue of past and present sentient beings?

If you have opened the Five Eyes, you can also see events of the past, present, and future. You can see, “Oh, when I was a little kid, I climbed around on the floor naked. So that’s how it was.” Or, “When I die, I’ll lie there and my breathing will stop. That’s how it will be.” Or, “I’m going to sit there and pass away.” You can see all these things. You can know what the circumstances of your death will be, how many disciples and laypeople will be at your side and who they will be.

**Sutra:**

**Within a samadhi that is vast, great, and tranquil,
Unborn, undying, neither coming nor going,
The Buddha adorns and purifies lands and instructs beings.
This is the liberation of the Spirit Trees’ Flowers.**

**Commentary:**

**Within a samadhi that is vast, great, and tranquil**…This samadhi is the vastest and greatest. At the same time, it is still and serene, devoid of sound. This vast, still samadhi is **unborn, undying, neither coming nor going**. This is the Buddha’s samadhi, the Buddha’s state.

**The Buddha adorns and purifies** all Buddhas’ **lands and instructs beings** in the Dharma door of ending birth and death. **This is the liberation of the Spirit Trees’ Flowers.** Earth-ruling Spirit Wondrous Flowers Ornamenting Trees gains this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

# The Buddha cultivated every sort of practice in the past ****To help sentient beings eradicate their heavy obstacles.**** ****Earth-ruling Spirit Universally Scattering the Myriad Gems**** ****Sees this liberation and gives rise to joy.****

**Commentary:**

The Buddha cultivated for the sake of sentient beings. He saw how sentient beings had such heavy obstacles and yet did not try to eradicate them. Thus, **the Buddha cultivated every sort of practice in the past / To help** all **sentient beings eradicate their heavy obstacles. / The Earth-ruling Spirit Universally Scattering the Myriad Gems / Sees this passage into liberation**, this state of the Buddha, **and gives rise to joy.**

**Sutra:**

**The realm of the Thus Come One has no bounds.
In thought after thought, he appears everywhere in all worlds.
Earth-ruling Spirit Pure Eyes Contemplating Time
Observes the Buddha’s deeds and rejoices in his heart.**

**Wondrous sounds, limitless and inconceivable,
Universally extinguish afflictions of sentient beings.
The Spirit Golden Color Eyes awakens to this
And sees the Buddha’s boundless, supreme merit and virtue.**

**The Buddha manifests transformations of all shapes and forms,
Filling up the ten directions of the Dharma Realm.
Fragrant Shining Hairs often observes the Buddha
Universally transforming sentient beings in this manner.**

**Commentary:**

**The realm** of cultivation **of the Thus Come Onehas no bounds** or limits. **In thought after thought,** the Buddha thinks of sentient beings, and so **he appears everywhere in all worlds** throughout the ten directions. **Earth-ruling Spirit Pure Eyes Contemplating Time / Observes the Buddha’s deeds**, his past cultivation and his present practice of teaching and transforming sentient beings, **and rejoices in his heart.** She feels tremendous joy.

**Wondrous sounds** proclaimed by the Buddha**, limitless and inconceivable, / Universally extinguish** the obstacles of **afflictions of sentient beings. / The Spirit Golden Color Eyes awakens to this** principle **and sees the Buddha’s** immeasurable, **boundless, supreme merit and virtue.**

**The Buddha manifests transformations of all shapes and forms**. The Buddha assumes the appearances of sentient beings of every shape and form, and then teaches and transforms those beings, **filling up the ten directions of the Dharma Realm.** The Buddha doesn’t do this in only one world; he does it throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm. Earth-ruling Spirit **Fragrant Shining Hairs often observes the** state of the **Buddha**. All the grains, fruits, and so forth, which are produced from the earth, are called “Fragrant Hairs.” The Buddha practices great kindness and compassion, **universally transforming** all **sentient beings in this manner.**

**Sutra:**

**His wondrous voice extends throughout the ten directions,
Speaking to the multitudes for measureless eons.
Having understood in her heart, the Earth Spirit Delightful
Feels deep reverence and joy in listening to the Buddha.**

**Fragrant, blazing clouds issue from the Buddha’s pores
And, according to sentient beings’ wishes, pervade the world.
All who behold this become mature.
Coiled Flowers contemplates thus.**

**Sturdy and indestructible as vajra,
Immovable as Mount Sumeru,
Thus does the Buddha’s body dwell in the world.
Universally Supported sees this and rejoices.**

**Commentary:**

**His wondrous voice** as the Buddha speaks the Dharma **extends throughout the ten directions, / Speaking to the multitudes for measureless eons.** The Buddha’s wondrous Dharma sounds pervade the ten directions, and the duration of his speaking of Dharma spans the three periods of time—past, present, and future. **Having understood** this state **in her heart, the Earth Spirit Delightful / Feels deep reverence and joy in listening to the Buddha** speak the wonderful Dharma.

**Fragrant, blazing clouds issue from the Buddha’s pores / And, according to sentient beings’ wishes, pervade the world. / All who behold this become mature.** Everyone who sees the Buddha’s state achieves maturity. **Coiled Flowers contemplates thus.** Earth-ruling Spirit Coiled Flowers understands this principle.

The Buddha’s body is **sturdy and indestructible as vajra**. How did the Buddha get such a sturdy body? It was through practicing great kindness and compassion, cultivating the Samadhi of Kindheartedness, and protecting the Dharma. His resolve to protect the Dharma enabled him to attain such a solid body. Dharma protectors do not hold the precepts and rules of deportment themselves, but they wield swords and other weapons to guard the Dharma.

Once there was a Bhikshu named Jiaode, who held the precepts, but who was mistreated by other Bhikshus who did not hold precepts. The King went to war with those Bhikshus who didn’t hold precepts, and in the end was killed by them. At death, he was reborn in the Eastern Land of Akshobya Buddha, where he become that Buddha’s foremost disciple. The Bhikshu Jiaode later entered perfect stillness and was also reborn in the Eastern Vaidurya Land, to become Akshobya Buddha’s second disciple. Therefore, the merit of the one who protected the Dharma surpassed that of the one who was protected. In any case, protecting the Dharma enables one to attain a body of vajra.

As steady and **immovable as Mount Sumeru, / Thus does the Buddha’s body dwell in the world.** The Buddha’s body is likened to vajra and to Mount Sumeru. Earth-ruling Spirit **Universally Supported sees this** state of the Buddha **and rejoices** immensely.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, City-ruling Spirit Jeweled Peak Illumination gained a passage into liberation of expediently benefiting sentient beings. City-ruling Spirit Wondrously Adorning Palaces gained a passage into liberation of knowing sentient beings’ faculties and teaching and transforming them to bring them to maturity. City-ruling Spirit Pure Jewels of Joy gained a passage into liberation of constantly delighting in enabling all sentient beings to enjoy blessings and virtue.**

**Commentary:**

**Moreover, City-ruling Spirit Jeweled Peak Illumination gained a passage into liberation of expediently benefiting sentient beings.** She uses various kinds of expedient methods to benefit sentient beings. She attained that state of the Buddha and that passage into liberation.

**City-ruling Spirit Wondrously Adorning Palaces** makes all palaces adorned and beautiful. She **gained a passage into liberation of knowing sentient beings’ faculties**, knowing whether their faculties are deep or shallow, and knowing what they like, **and** then using that knowledge in **teaching and transforming them to bring them to maturity.** She attained that passage into liberation.

**City-ruling Spirit Pure Jewels of Joy gained a passage into liberation of constantly delighting in enabling all sentient beings to enjoy blessings and virtue.** She likes to encourage sentient beings to bring forth the bodhi resolve and increase their good roots, blessings, and wisdom. She attained that passage into liberation .

**Sutra:**

**City-ruling Spirit Pure and Free from Worry gained a passage into liberation of a treasury of great compassion that delivers beings from all fear. City-ruling Spirit Flower Lamps and Blazing Eyes gained a passage into liberation of universal understanding and great wisdom.**

**City-ruling Spirit Clear Manifestation of Blazing Banners gained a passage into liberation of expediently manifesting everywhere.**

**Commentary:**

**City-ruling Spirit Pure and Free from Worry** makes sure that all the citizens in his city are free from worry and attain purity. She protects the city from danger, so the people have nothing to worry about. She **gained a passage into liberation of a treasury of great compassion that delivers beings from all fear.** With her compassionate heart, she rescues sentient beings from terrifying situations. She gives them fearlessness so that they feel no anxiety or fear. Her compassion is called a treasury because it is so immense. She attained that passage into liberation.

**City-ruling Spirit Flower Lamps and Blazing Eyes gained a passage into liberation of universal understanding and great wisdom.** All sentient beings attain universal understanding and have great wisdom. She attained that passage into liberation. **City-ruling Spirit Clear Manifestation of Blazing Banners gained a passage into liberation of expediently manifesting everywhere.** She uses expedient dharmas to appear universally before sentient beings, helping sentient beings to understand expedient dharmas and be liberated. That is her passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**City-ruling Spirit Flourishing Blessings Awesome Brightness gained a passage into liberation of universally contemplating all sentient beings and helping them to cultivate a vast sea of blessings and virtue.**

**Commentary:**

**City-ruling Spirit Flourishing Blessings Awesome Brightness gained a passage into liberation of universally contemplating all sentient beings** in the ten directions to see which sentient beings are ready to be saved, **and helping them to cultivate a vastsea of blessings and virtue.** Their blessings and virtue are as boundless as an ocean. This City-ruling Spirit attained this state of the Buddha and entered this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**City-ruling Spirit Body of Pure Radiance gained a passage into liberation of enlightening all foolish and dim-witted sentient beings.**

**Commentary:**

**City-ruling Spirit Body of Pure Radiance** has a body that is both pure and radiant. This spirit also rules over a city. She **gained** a state and **a passage into liberation of enlightening all foolish and dim-witted sentient beings.** She enables foolish beings to gain wisdom, and dim-witted beings to attain brightness and “enlightenment.” Those who are blind from birth know nothing at all. People who do not understand the Buddhadharma are likened to blind people. The Nirvana Sutra describes a person blind from birth who asked what color milk was. He was told it was the color of a (white) shell. People also compared it to the color of rice flour, the color of snow, and the color of a white crane. They used four analogies for fear that he might not understand. The person said, “If you say milk is like a shell, is it as hard as a shell? If you compare milk to rice flour, is it as soft as rice flour? If you say milk is the color of snow, is it as cold as snow? And what is snow like? If milk is white like a white crane, does it move around like a crane?” Even with four analogies, the person still had no idea what people were talking about. Foolish people who do not understand the four virtues of the Buddha’s nirvana—eternity, bliss, true self, and purity—are like the blind person who did not know what color milk was even after being given four analogies. In the overall analogy, the shell represented the virtue of eternity, rice flour represented the virtue of bliss, snow represented the virtue of purity, and the crane represented the virtue of true self. Ordinary, ignorant people do not understand what the Buddhadharma is all about. If you explain the transcendental Dharma to them, they say, “Transcendental Dharma is included within the worldly dharma.” What they say has some truth to it. As the Sixth Patriarch Sutra says,

The Buddhadharma is here in the world.
Enlightenment is not apart from the world.
To search for bodhi apart from the world
Is like looking for a hare with horns.

When people who do not understand the Buddhadharma see this verse, they think it means there is no transcendental Dharma. They have no idea what transcendental Dharma could be. They are only familiar with worldly dharmas. The meaning behind the Sixth Patriarch’s words is that the transcendental Dharma can be found right within worldly dharmas. He was not stating that there was no such thing as transcendental Dharma. Worldly dharmas, when turned around, become transcendental Dharma. But if you turn transcendental Dharma back into worldly dharmas, you will never find the transcendental Dharma. The transcendental Dharma can be found within worldly dharmas, provided you understand it. If you lack understanding, then there is neither worldly nor transcendental Dharma. Once you understand, then the worldly is itself transcendental. Right within the mundane, you can cultivate the transcendental Dharma. This is a fundamental principle of the Buddhadharma, which the Sixth Patriarch expressed in his verse, “The Buddhadharma is here in the world. Enlightenment is not apart from the world.” You have to attain enlightenment in the world. If you are not enlightened in the world, there is no Buddhadharma to speak of. If you are enlightened, then the Buddhadharma—the transcendental Dharma—exists. Don’t seek to find some other enlightenment apart from this world. “To search for bodhi apart from the world / Is like looking for a hare with horns.” To seek bodhi outside of worldly dharmas is like looking for horns on a rabbit.

The City-ruling Spirit Body of Pure Radiance is able to enlighten all foolish and dim-witted sentient beings. She attained this passage into liberation of wisdom and light.

**Sutra:**

**City-ruling Spirit Fragrant Cowl Adornment gained a passage into liberation of contemplating how the Thus Come One’s sovereign power pervasively tames sentient beings in all worlds.**

**Commentary:**

**City-ruling Spirit Fragrant Cowl Adornment** is also known as Fragrant Banner Adornment. She rules over a city. She **gained** a state of the Buddha and **a passage into liberation of contemplating how the Thus Come One’s sovereign** and awesome **power** of spiritual penetrations **pervasively tames sentient beings in all worlds** throughout the ten directions. That’s the passage into liberation of this City-ruling Spirit.

**Sutra:**

**City-ruling Spirit Jeweled Peak Bright Eyes gained a passage into liberation of using brilliant light to smash the mountain of all sentient beings’ obstructions.**

**At that time, City-ruling Spirit Jeweled Peak Illumination received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, contemplated all the multitudes of City-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

**City-ruling Spirit Jeweled Peak Bright Eyes** and the City-ruling Spirit Jeweled Peak Illumination are probably siblings, for their names differ by only one word. She **gained a passage into liberation of using brilliant light to smash the mountain of all sentient beings’ obstructions.** What is the mountain of obstructions? It is formed of greed, anger, delusion, and darkness. When the mountain of obstructions is smashed, the light of wisdom appears.

**At that time, City-ruling Spirit Jeweled Peak Illumination received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual might, universally contemplated the multitudes of City-ruling Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Sutra:**

**The Guiding Master is thus inconceivable.
His light pervasively illumines the ten directions.
Every sentient being sees the Buddha appear before him.
Innumerable beings are taught, transformed, and brought to maturity.**

**Commentary:**

**The Guiding Master** is one who guides sentient beings to the attainment of Buddhahood. As one who first became enlightened himself, he leads the way for sentient beings. The Buddha has already gone through the experience. Based on the practices he cultivated, he realized Buddhahood and then set about to teach sentient beings to attain Buddhahood as well. Hence, he is called “Guiding Master.” He **is thus inconceivable*.*** The word “thus” contains many principles. It refers to the method of cultivation—namely, the Middle Way. Those who understand the Middle Way are “thus,” while those who do not understand are not “thus.” The Middle Way is that basis for the realization of Buddhahood. It is inconceivable. The Middle Way gives rise to innumerable Buddhas, innumerable Bodhisattvas, innumerable Arhats, and innumerable Patriarchs. All the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Sages are born from the Middle Way. And so it is said to be conceivable. You can never finish describing the wonders of the Middle Way, nor can you ever fully understand them. You cannot realize Buddhahood without cultivating the Middle Way. The Middle Way is just true emptiness and wonderful existence. True emptiness is not empty, which is why it can produce wonderful existence. Wonderful existence does not exist, which is why it is called true emptiness. The transformations of the Middle Way are infinite; its esoteric mystery is incomparable. All Buddhas cultivate the Middle Way, and because of that, they have powerful *samadhi* and wisdom. Due to his powerful wisdom and his successful cultivation of the Middle Way, **his light pervasively illumines the ten directions** of the Dharma Realm. **Every sentient being** in the ten directions **sees the Buddha appear before him** and feels that the Buddha is speaking Dharma directly to him. **Innumerable beings are taught, transformed and brought to maturity.** The Buddha has taught and transformed sentient beings beyond number, leading them to attain Buddhahood. “Innumerable” means their number cannot be known; it is unspeakably, unspeakably many.

**Sutra:**

**Every sentient being’s disposition is unique.
The Buddha understands them all without exception.
City-ruling Spirit Wondrously Adorning Palaces
Enters this Dharma door and rejoices in her heart.**

**The Thus Come One cultivated through measureless eons,
Protecting and upholding the Dharma of past Buddhas.
Constantly focusing on reverent practice brought him joy.
The City Spirit Wondrous Jewels awakens to this passage.**

**Commentary:**

**Every sentient being’s disposition is unique.** Every sentient being has his own individual karma. Each one plants his own causes and reaps his own results. Consider human beings, for example. No two people have identical faces. Just as their faces are different, so are their karmic retributions and causes and effects. There are sentient beings with deep good roots and those with shallow good roots. Some have already cultivated for a very long time, whereas others have just started. Therefore, each sentient being has a distinct disposition. This makes it difficult to know all their dispositions. Nevertheless, **the Buddha understands them all** very, very clearly **without exception.** Knowing their temperaments, he can speak the appropriate Dharma for them. **City-ruling Spirit Wondrously Adorning Palaces** attains this state of the Buddha. She **enters this Dharma door and rejoices in her heart.** She is very happy.

**The Thus Come One cultivated through measureless eons** in the past. How did he cultivate? He acted as a Dharma protector, **protecting and upholding the Dharma of past Buddhas.** He did his best to protect the Buddhadharma. There are various kinds of Dharma protectors. In protecting the Dharma, the Buddha was **constantly focusing on reverent practice**, and it **brought him joy.** He revered the Dharma and cultivated in accord with it, and this made him very happy. Those who protect the Dharma use all sorts of expedient means to teach and transform sentient beings. One of the Buddha’s disciples, the Venerable Mahakatyayana, often taught and transformed sentient beings by appearing in their dreams to cause them to become enlightened and bring forth the Bodhi resolve. What proof is there that he taught through dreams? He once accepted a disciple who was a king named Xila. After King Xila left the home-life, he went to the mountains and engaged in *dhuta* or ascetic practices, eating one meal a day and not sleeping under the same tree two nights in a row. Not bothering to cut his hair or shave, he assumed a very “natural” appearance comparable to that of modern-day hippies. As he was cultivating there, another king went to the mountains to hunt, accompanied by a large entourage of lovely concubines. Tired out from hunting, that king fell asleep. Meanwhile, his beautiful women grew restless and decided to take a walk. They happened upon the ascetic King Xila, who looked like a freak. The ascetic explained the Buddhadharma for them. When the other king woke up and found his women gone, he searched around and found them chatting with a freak. Provoked by jealousy, he beat up King Xila. Although King Xila had studied martial arts in former days, he had forgotten those skills from lack of use and was sorely defeated. This so infuriated him that he vowed, “I’m going to return to the throne, and then I’m going to make war on you and defeat you.” Out of anger, he decided to return to lay life. Before doing so, however, he had to tell his teacher. He said, “I must take revenge on this king who defeated me.” His teacher, the Venerable Mahakatyayana, tried to dissuade him, saying, “Forget it. This is just cause and effect. In a past life you probably beat up this king, and that’s why he’s beaten you up. Just regard it as paying back a debt.”

“You muddle-headed teacher,” said King Xila. “How can you tell me I have to pay a debt when he’s the one who beat me up? The facts are clear. You sure don’t know how to teach. You’re really confused.” He scolded his teacher like that.

“Fine,” said his teacher. “If you want to return to lay life, go ahead. But why don’t you stay overnight and go back tomorrow?” Since it was getting late, the disciple reasoned that he might as well leave the next morning. That night, the Venerable Mahakatyayana appeared in his dream to teach him. In his dream, he returned to lay life and mobilized the country’s troops for war. He chose several great generals and led several tens of thousands of soldiers to attack the other king’s country. He lost every battle. At the end of every battle, his troops fled in defeat. Finally, all the troops and generals were dead, and he was the only one left. He was captured by the enemy king and interrogated, “Why did you invade my country? As a prisoner of war, you must die.” He was bound and taken to be executed. Right before his execution, he remembered his teacher and thought in remorse, “Teacher, I scolded you for being muddled. If only I had listened to you, I would not have suffered such utter defeat. Teacher, please be compassionate and save me.” Just as he was pleading, the executioner swung the knife and chopped his head off. Right then, he woke up and realized it was all a dream.

The next day he told his teacher, “I’m not going back to lay life. I had this dream and saw that I would be defeated and beheaded. I’d better cultivate the Way instead.” That’s how the Venerable Mahakatyayana taught and transformed his disciple in a dream. Since his disciple refused to listen to him when awake, he instructed him through a dream, making him come to his senses.

There are many different ways of teaching and transforming sentient beings.

**The City** -ruling Spirit **Wondrous Jewels** understands this state of the Buddha and **awakens to** and enters **thispassage** into liberation**.**

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One has long had the ability
To rid all sentient beings of fear and terror
And to feel constant kindness and compassion for them.
The Spirit Free from Worry has this joyful awakening.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One has long had the ability / To rid all sentient beings of fear and terror** and rescue them from worry, affliction, and frightening situations. He can take sentient beings away from all delusion and fear. **And** the Buddha is able **to feel constant kindness and compassion for them.** Out of pity, the Buddha guides sentient beings to separate from grief, sorrow, suffering, and vexation. His heart is filled with great kindness and compassion. Kindness enables one to make others happy, and compassion makes one try to alleviate suffering. Sometimes the Buddha uses a visible form of kindness and compassion to allay sentient beings’ distress and misery. At other times he employs compassion invisibly, without letting them know that he is removing their pain and making them glad.

It is hard for sentient beings to understand this state of the Buddha. However, **the** City-ruling **Spirit Free from Worry** understands this state and **has this joyful awakening*.*** She is immensely happy.

**Sutra:**

**The wisdom of the Buddha is vast and boundless.
Like the void, it cannot be measured.
The City Spirit Flower Eyes has this blissful insight
And learns the Thus Come One’s wondrous wisdom.**

**Commentary:**

**The wisdom of the Buddha is vast and boundless**. No person or sage has greater wisdom than the Buddha. The Buddha’s wisdom is **like the** limitless **void**; **it cannot be measured.** There is no way to measure how great the void is. **The City**-ruling Spirit **Flower Eyes** sees this state of the Buddha and **has this blissful insight***.* She understands this with joy **andlearns the Thus Come One’s wondrous wisdom**, which is infinitely great.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One’s forms are equal to the number of sentient beings.
According to their inclinations all are caused to see him.
Clear Manifestation of Blazing Banners realizes this.
Practicing this expedient makes her happy.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One’s forms are equal to the number of sentient beings.** The Thus Come One appears in all places. As long as sentient beings wish to see him, the Buddha fulfills their wish. The Buddha’s physical forms are as numerous as sentient beings. **According to their inclinations all are caused to see him.** Whatever sentient beings want to see, they get to see. City-ruling Spirit **Clear Manifestation of Blazing Banners realizes this** state and principle. Studying and **practicing this expedient** Dharma door **makes her happy.** She enjoys cultivating this Dharma door.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One cultivated a sea of many blessings,
Pure, vast, great and without boundaries.
Blessings and Virtue Banner Light
Contemplates and understands this passage with joy.**

**Deluded beings in the realms of existence
Are like those born blind in the world who see nothing at all.
For their benefit, the Buddha appears in the world.
Pure Radiance spirit enters this passage.**

**Commentary:**

When **the Thus Come One** was cultivating blessings and wisdom in the past, he would not neglect to cultivate even blessings as minute as a strand of hair or a speck of dust. In everything he did, he made sentient beings happy and did not upset them. He **cultivated a sea of many blessings,** blessings as profuse as an ocean. The Thus Come One’s blessings are **pure, vast, great and without boundaries.** City-ruling Spirit **Blessings and Virtue Banner Light** attains this state and passage into liberation. She carefully **contemplates** this state **and understands this passage with joy.**

**Deluded beings in the realms of existence** . All sentient beings drift and revolve in the Three Realms and Twenty-five Levels of Existence, not knowing how to escape. They **are like those born blind in the world who see nothing at all.** They can hear sounds, but cannot see anything. If you ask them what the sun looks like, they might say that it is triangular. If you ask them about the moon, they may say, “I know the moon is square.” If asked to describe people, they might say, “People all have a nose, eyes, a mouth, and ears, but their eyes cannot see.” Since they themselves are blind, they assume that everyone else is, too. People who are born blind are in a miserable plight. But not knowing the Buddhadharma, not knowing how to escape the Three Realms and cultivate, is the most miserable situation to be in. To understand how to cultivate and be accepted into monastic life is not an easy accomplishment.

Never say that leaving home is easy.
It is only possible due to good roots planted in many past lives.

If you lack good roots, then even if you wish to leave home, you won’t be able to. If you possess good roots but the circumstances are unfavorable, you still won’t be able to fulfill your wish. Some people say things like, “So-and-so is supposed to leave home, and so he has. I’m not supposed to, and so I haven’t.” What does “supposed to” mean? It simply means if you do leave home, then you’re supposed to. If you don’t leave home, then you’re not supposed to. If you’re supposed to leave home and you don’t, then you’re actually not supposed to leave home. If you’re not supposed to leave home but you do leave home, then you’re really supposed to. So, with the Path, it all depends on whether or not you walk it. Take Guo Lian [a young disciple under ten years of age], for example. He was supposed to leave home, but some people wouldn’t let him, so he couldn’t. Today he was in a car accident. You could say that’s a warning for him. He often talked about committing suicide. He should have been killed in the car accident, but he survived. On the other hand, he was supposed to leave home, but he didn’t. Therefore, nothing is definite. As the sutras say, “There are no fixed dharmas.” If a person is supposed to die, but he cultivates, then he won’t die. If someone is not supposed to die, but he doesn’t cultivate, then he might meet his death.

This reminds of when I was in Manchuria and I went with the Abbot of my temple to a village called Erdaogou (Double Trench) to solicit offerings. There was a boy named Sheng, whose father was named Wang. The boy was eleven or twelve years old—I don’t remember exactly because it was so long ago. He suffered from chronic stomach aches, and all the doctors’ treatments were to no avail. When we went to his house, the father knelt down, blocking the doorway, so we couldn’t go inside. Some people thought he didn’t want to give us offerings and was trying to make us leave. When we asked him why he was kneeling, he said, “My son, Sheng, has been ill for a long time. Now that the Elder Good One is here, he can save him.” Buddhists called the Abbot “Elder Abbot,” whereas those who did not understand the Buddhadharma addressed him as “Elder Good One,” “Old Cultivator,” or “Filial Son Wang.” He had many names.

This man begged the Abbot to save his son’s life and cure him. The Abbot turned to me and told me to do something. I said, “What can I do?”

He said, “When we were at Daba, you saved the life of a dying child. Why don’t you take a look at him?”

“Tell your boy to come here,” I told the father. The father called the son, and both of them knelt before me. I saw at once that the boy looked just like a monk. “If you want him to get well, send him to the temple to leave home. He will certainly get well.”

“If he gets well, I will certainly send him to leave home,” said the father.

“Fine,” I said. “He will get well in less than half a month.” The father was very happy. Basically he was very poor, but he gave an offering of ten dollars. We took our leave. Later, the son did get well. I kept my eye out for the boy, hoping he would leave the home-life. After a month, I passed through his village again and made a special visit to his home. When I asked his father, the father said the boy was well, and I said, “You’d better send him to the temple to leave home.”

“In a few days,” said the father. I left. After another month passed, I went to see them again. “Is the boy well?” I asked.

“He is,” said the father.

“Then you’d better send him to the monastery to leave home right away. Otherwise, his sickness will recur. This is the second time I have come to see you. If he gets sick again, I will not pay any attention.” The father thought I was trying to scare me and didn’t take me seriously. Once his son was well, he could not bear to give him up.

The third time I passed by their village, I heard that the boy had fallen ill again more than ten days earlier. That time, I did not visit their home. However, the boy knew—he saw—when I passed by his home and said to his father, “This time I’m not going to get well. Today the monk from Three Conditions Temple passed our house but didn’t come to see us. I probably won’t get well.”

“Don’t worry,” said the father. “Tomorrow I’ll go find him at the temple and take you to leave the home-life.” The father walked three or four miles to the temple. The boy stayed home, but strangely enough, his spirit followed the father to the temple. He saw which room his father was sitting in, the people he met, and everything that was in the temple. He saw it all very clearly. I was out that day, and so the father did not find me. When the father returned, the boy told him, “I followed you to the temple today.”

“But I didn’t see you,” said the father.

“But I saw you,” said the boy. “You talked to the Abbot, then you went to the Merit and Virtue Hall where there were a lot of plaques.” And he described the people who had been at the temple.

“Strange!” said the father. “You didn’t go, and yet you know exactly what I said and who I met, and all the people who were there.”

On my way back to the temple, I passed by their village again, and again the boy was aware of it. He told his father, “So-and-so from Three Conditions Temple has passed by our house again without coming to call on us. It probably means I can’t leave home.” That evening, the boy called out, “Father, light the lamp and see if I’m sitting properly.” The father lit the lamp and saw the boy sitting there in full lotus posture. He was sitting very erect, but he had already died. He was supposed to leave the home-life and someone told him to leave home, but after he got well his father could not bear to give him up. In the end, he died. This goes to show that whether or not a person leaves home is not fixed. Basically he was supposed to leave home; I saw that he had the appearance of a monk. However, his parents could not bear to let him go. Consequently, he didn’t get to leave home. This child, even after his death, still follows me all the time. Although he did not leave home when he was alive, after death he understood that he should cultivate the Way. The problem of birth and death is not easy to resolve.

**For their benefit,** for the sake of sentient beings, **the Buddha appears in the world.** Body of **Pure Radiance spiritenters this passage** into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One’s self-mastery is boundless.
Like a cloud, it spreads pervasively through all worlds.
He even appears in dreams to tame and subdue beings.
Fragrant Banner thus observes.**

**Dark and deluded sentient beings are as if blind,
Shrouded by various obstacles and coverings.
The Buddha’s light shines through, opening their wisdom.
Jeweled Peak enters thus.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One’s self-mastery**, his wonderful functioning of spiritual penetrations, by which he teaches and transforms all sentient beings, pervades the ten directions of the Dharma Realm. Therefore, it **is boundless** and without limits. An analogy is given. It is **like a cloud** in the sky, in that **it spreads pervasively through all worlds.** The Buddha teaches and transforms sentient beings when they are awake and conscious. What is more, **he even appears in dreams to** teach, transform, **tame and subdue** those **beings** who have affinities with him, leading them to bring forth the resolve for *bodhi*. City-ruling Spirit **Fragrant Banner thus observes** this state of the Buddha. She attains this passage into liberation.

**Dark and deluded sentient beings are as if blind** and sightless. In their ignorance, they are **shrouded by various obstacles and coverings.** They are like monkeys always getting into mischief. Have you noticed how monkeys are always carrying something in each hand? They are never idle, but they never accomplish anything either. Sentient beings are the same way. They cannot relinquish their desires. For example, money-grubbers crave wealth. If they realized that money is not such a good thing, they’d be able to relinquish it. But once they cease to crave money, they start desiring beautiful forms or other things. “Various obstacles and coverings” includes the desires for wealth, lust, fame, food, and sleep. All these obstacles and coverings bind them up and cover them over so they cannot get free.

**The Buddha’s light shines through, opening their wisdom.** The Buddha sends out rays of brilliant wisdom, which penetrates and destroys sentient beings’ delusion and darkness. This wisdom-light resembles the sun shining in a clear blue sky, causing the wisdom of foolish beings to unfold. City-ruling Spirit **Jeweled Peak enters** and understands this state **thus**.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Bodhimanda Spirit Banner of Pure Adornment gained a passage into liberation of manifesting great power of vows to make offerings of vast, great adornments to Buddhas.**

**Commentary:**

The *Flower Adornment Sutra* is infinitely multi-layered and inexhaustible. The word “**moreover** ” signifies that the text will continue discussing principles of the sutra which have not yet been fully explained. **Bodhimanda Spirit Banner of Pure Adornment** is pure and adorned, like a precious banner. There are precious banners in *bodhimandas*, or Way-places. This spirit protects Way-places, of which there are numerous kinds. There are Chan Way-places, where people investigate Chan meditation. There are also Way-places where people study and explain the teachings. There are Way-places where one specializes in observing the Vinaya or precepts, Way-places where one cultivates secret practices, and Way-places where Pure Land practices are cultivated. There are infinitely many kinds of Way-places. Cultivators need to have a place where they can cultivate the Way. They also need Dharma protectors, spirits that protect the Way-place.

This Bodhimanda Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of manifesting great power of vows to make offerings of vast, great adornments to Buddhas.** She attained a state in which he saw the *bodhi* practices cultivated by the Buddha in former lifetimes. She witnessed the Buddha cultivating the *paramitas* of vigor, *dhyana* concentration, patience, holding precepts, giving, and *prajna*. The Buddha cultivated the Six Paramitas and the myriad practices. And she saw that what the Buddha liked best was to make offerings to Buddhas. He made offerings not just to one Buddha, but to all Buddhas of the ten directions throughout the three periods of time, to the ends of space throughout the Dharma Realm. He brought forth a vast, great resolve to make offerings to the Buddhas and adorn the Buddhas’ Way-places, thereby perfecting his merit and virtue. Such was the great power of his vows—his *bodhi* resolve—to extensively save sentient beings and guide them all to Buddhahood. Bodhimanda Spirit Banner of Pure Adornment attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Sumeru Jeweled Brilliance gained a passage into liberation of appearing before all sentient beings and accomplishing vast practices of *bodhi*.**

**Commentary:**

Sumeru is a Sanskrit word meaning “wonderfully tall.” Thenext **Bodhimanda Spirit** is named **Sumeru Jeweled Brilliance**, Wonderfully Tall Jeweled Brilliance. She **gained** a state of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation of appearing before all sentient beings and accomplishing vast practices of *bodhi*.** The Buddha does not forsake any sentient being. While at the level of planting causes, the Buddha cultivated the Six Paramitas and myriad practices, vowing to help sentient beings cultivate and realize the Buddha Path. Vast practices of *bodhi* refer to lengthy practices that ordinary sentient beings must cultivate in order to realize Buddhahood. This spirit attained this passage into liberation.

Nobody has had a question for many days. If anyone has a question today, you can ask it now. If there are no questions, you should look for one to ask.

Q: Should we try to remember our dreams?

A: It depends on the dream. Some dreams are muddled; some are clear; some are stupid; some are wise. It depends on the kind of dream. If it ought to be remembered, one can remember it. If it shouldn’t be remembered, and one can forget it, that’s pretty good too.

Q: Should we look for a function or significance in our dreams?

A: People who are greedy for food often dream about eating. In their dream, they stuff their bellies eating their favorite food, and then they wake up with the taste still in their mouth. “What was I eating that was so sweet and delicious?” they wonder. “I wish I could have that dream again.” Would you call that a useful dream? I’d say it’s a most useful dream—you get full without having eaten anything! You eat your fill in your dream, and then you’re not hungry. You should always have this kind of dream. Then you don’t need to eat. Other dreams are pretty much the same.

When people feel hot, they dream of fire. Those who are cold have dreams about ice or water. For example, if you get chilled as you sleep because your blanket falls away, you might dream that someone poured cold water over you. If you like to meditate, then in your dream you might sit very still and motionless in meditation, sitting even better than when you are awake. If you like to recite the Buddha’s name, you might do that in your dreams. If you enjoy bowing in repentance, you may find yourself bowing in your dreams. If you like to hold the precepts, you won’t break the precepts even in your dreams. These are good dreams, because they help you cultivate. If your dreams are not beneficial to your cultivation, then you should not attach much significance to them. Tomorrow’s Sutra text talks about dreams, so we won’t say too much today.

As for these Dharma doors, you can cultivate all of them or just one. Whether you cultivate all of them or concentrate on just one, you can be successful. The purpose of cultivating a Dharma door is help us get rid of idle thinking and renounce all attachments. Once you are free of attachments and idle thinking, you will gain a response in whatever Dharma door you cultivate. If you become attached to the Dharma, creating a concept of “Dharma” in addition to the Dharma itself, you will not succeed at any Dharma you cultivate.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Thunderclap and Banner-like Characteristics gained a passage into liberation of according with what sentient beings like and enabling them to see the Buddhas speak Dharma for them in their dreams.**

**Commentary:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Thunderclap and Banner-like Characteristics gained** a state of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation of according with what sentient beings like**, what makes their hearts happy, **and enabling them to see the Buddhas speak Dharma for them in their dreams.** All sentient beings get to see the Buddhas in their dreams, and the Buddhas speak Dharma for them. People have all kinds of dreams. The states they see and encounter during the day sometimes appear in their dreams. These are dreams of recollection. Sometimes events that have not yet happened appear in dreams. These dreams are premonitions. All these various dreams involving the past, the present, or the future are impure. Pure dreams are dreams in which you see Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, or Arhats speak Dharma for you, enabling you to develop great wisdom.

Dreams are basically unreal. Occasionally, however, they may manifest something real. There are different kinds of dreams. Therefore, the very best thing is to awaken as you are dreaming. If you see the Buddha and he speaks Dharma for you, your dream is a good one.

Bodhimanda Spirit Thunder-Sound and Banner-like Characteristics attained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Raining Down Flowers Wondrous Eyes gained a passage into liberation of raining down all kinds of adornments made of a myriad treasures that are hard to give up.**

**Commentary:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Raining Down Flowers Wondrous Eyes gained a passage into liberation of raining down all kinds of adornments made of a myriad treasures that are hard to give up.** She made offerings of a myriad treasures in such profusion that they resembled rain. These treasures were the rarest of precious things, so rare that they could not be acquired at any price. Therefore, once one possesses them, one holds them very dear and cannot bear to give them up. In this state of the Buddha, she could give away these cherished treasures which most people cannot bear to give. She gave away all kinds of adorned articles made of these precious things.

Bodhimanda Spirit Raining Down Flowers Wondrous Eyes understood the Buddha’s state of being able to renounce that which is difficult to renounce. For example, she was able to give away external things such as her material possessions, properties, and family members. She was also able to give away her internal wealth—her body, mind, and life, including her head, eyes, brain, and marrow. She attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:

Bodhimanda Spirit Pure Blazing Form gained a passage into liberation of displaying marvelously adorned *bodhimandas* for the sake of extensively transforming sentient beings and bringing them to maturity. Bodhimanda Spirit Flower Garlands Draped from the Cowl gained a passage into liberation of speaking Dharma according to beings’ faculties so that they produce proper thoughts. Bodhimanda Spirit Raining Down Jeweled Ornaments gained a passage into liberation of everywhere raining down boundless aspects of happiness by means of eloquence.**

**Commentary:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Pure Blazing Form gained** astate of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation of** everywhere **displaying marvelously adorned *bodhimandas* for the sake of extensively transforming** all **sentient beings and bringing them to maturity**, that is, helping them quickly attain the Buddha Way. She attained this passage into liberation.

**Bodhimanda Spirit Flower Garlands Draped from the Cowl gained a passage into liberation of speaking Dharma according to beings’ faculties** and dispositions. For those with great faculties and wisdom, the Buddha speaks the Dharma of the Great Vehicle, which is superior. For people of average faculties and wisdom, the Buddha speaks the Dharma of the Middle Vehicle. For people of inferior faculties and wisdom, the Buddha speaks the Dharma of the Small Vehicle. The Buddha speaks Dharma according to sentient beings’ faculties, **so that they produce proper thoughts**, renouncing the deviant and returning to the proper. What are deviant thoughts? They are thoughts of attachment to greed, anger, and delusion. Proper thoughts involve diligent cultivation of precepts, concentration, and wisdom. So, the Buddha enables all sentient beings to extinguish greed, anger, and delusion; and to diligently cultivate precepts, concentration, and wisdom. This Bodhimanda Spirit attained this passage into liberation.

**Bodhimanda Spirit Raining Down Jeweled Ornaments**, similar to one of the previous Bodhimanda Spirits, rains down myriads of wondrous treasures to adorn every Way-place. She **gained a passage into liberation of everywhere raining down** and sprinkling **boundless aspects of happiness by means of** her unobstructed **eloquence**, making all sentient beings happy and joyful. This spirit speaks this kind of Dharma and attains this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Heroic Fragrance and Vision gained a passage into liberation of extensively praising the merit and virtue of the Buddhas.**

**Commentary:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Heroic Fragrance and Vision** understood the state of the Buddha and **gained a passage into liberation of extensively praising the merit and virtue of the Buddhas.** “Extensively praising” means extolling the Buddhas’ merit and virtue not only in one place, but in all Buddhalands throughout the ten directions, to the ends of space and the Dharma Realm.

When some people hear this explanation, they interpret it in a worldly way, thinking, “Oh, so the Buddhas like to be praised, too! Liking to be praised is a quality of sentient, emotional beings. This proves that the Buddhas also have emotions.” There is a type of pseudo-Buddhism that says, “Buddhas are sentient beings, and sentient beings are Buddhas.” But is this the case? No. Buddhas do not really enjoy being praised by sentient beings. You may praise them, but they won’t be delighted. You may slander them, but they won’t be upset. Praise and slander do not affect them. In both favorable and adverse circumstances, they remain totally unperturbed, for they thoroughly understand the true state of things.

The Buddhas are individuals possessed of all-encompassing understanding. They understand all principles. Therefore, they are serene and unperturbed, enlightened and always clear. They are unlike sentient beings, for whom a word of praise is as delightful as candy, and a negative comment is more bitter than *huanglian* [the most bitter of Chinese herbs] and more pungent than hot pepper. That’s how sentient beings take things.

“Well, why should we praise the Buddhas, then?” you ask. When we praise the Buddhas, our merit and virtue grows. In praising the Buddhas, we are actually affirming ourselves. Affirmation of the individual is also praise of the Buddhas.

“In that case, I’ll just praise myself all the time,” you say. “I will say: ‘In the heavens and below, I alone am honored. I am the most intelligent and wise person in the world.’” If you really are, then it’s alright to say that. If you aren’t and you hope to create a false reputation by praising yourself, it won’t work. You must have genuine *gongfu* [spiritual skill]. Then you will be victorious in every battle, no matter who your opponent is. If you lack *gongfu*, you may claim to be a hero and a martial arts champion, but as soon as someone challenges you, you will be defeated. You will lose every battle. And so, such false claims are useless.

How did the Buddha get to be a Buddha? He extensively praised the merit and virtue of all Buddhas, and so, later on, he himself realized Buddhahood. Bodhimanda Spirit Heroic Fragrance and Vision attained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhimnda Spirit Vajra-colored Cloud gained a passage into liberation of making appear trees of boundless shapes and colors to adorn *bodhimandas.***

**Commentary:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Vajra-colored Cloud gained** astate of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation of making appear trees of boundless shapes and colors to adorn *bodhimandas*.** She made these trees appear out of nowhere. These trees have various shapes and everyone can see them. All these beautiful, ornamental trees appeared beneath the Bodhi tree. For what purpose did they appear? They embellish the Way-place and generate infinite energy for the Way. When you see those trees, like the “seven rows of jeweled trees,” you want to bring forth the resolve to attain supreme *bodhi*. This Bodhimanda Spirit attained this state and entered this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Lotus Flower Brilliance gained a passage into liberation of being still and serene beneath the Bodhi tree and yet pervading the ten directions.**

**Commentary:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Lotus Flower Brilliance gained** a state of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation of being still and serene**, sitting in *samadhi* **beneath the Bodhi tree and yet pervading the ten directions.** Although she remains unmoving, her brilliance pervades the ten directions of the Dharma Realm and teaches and transforms all sentient beings. She gained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Dazzling Wondrous Light gained a passage into liberation of manifesting the various powers of the Thus Come One.**

**At that time, BodhimandaSpirit Banner of Pure Adornment received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Bodhimanda Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

**Bodhimanda Spirit Dazzling Wondrous Light gained a passage into liberation of manifesting the various powers of the Thus Come One.** Although we speak of the Thus Come One as having Ten Powers, if listed in detail, the Thus Come One’s powers would number in the hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands…he has infinitely many powers.

**At that time, Bodhimanda Spirit Banner of Pure Adornment received the Buddha’s awesome** spiritual **spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Bodhimanda Spirits, and spoke the following verse** to reiterate the principles already expressed in prose.

**Sutra:**

**I recollect how the Thus Come One, in ages past,
Cultivated throughout limitless eons.
Making offerings to every Buddha appearing in the world,
He accrued merit and virtue as great as space.**

**Commentary:**

Bodhimanda Spirit Banner of Pure Adornment spoke the following verse: **I recollect** and think about **how the Thus Come One, in ages past,** at the level of planting causes, **cultivated throughout limitless eons**. What Dharma door did he cultivate? He cultivated the Dharma door of extensively making offerings, which is the third of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva’s Ten Kings of Vows.

**Making offerings to every Buddha appearing in the world, / He accrued merit and virtue as great as space.** When each Buddha throughout the ten directions appeared in the world, Shakyamuni Buddha would be sure to make offerings to him. In this way, he earned indescribably great merit and virtue.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha did practice infinite acts of giving,
Equal in number to fine dust motes in measureless lands.
The Bodhi Spirit named Sumeru Brilliant Illumination**
**Recollects the Well Gone One with jubilation.**

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha did practice infinite acts of giving**. The Buddha cultivated not only the giving of wealth, Dharma, and fearlessness, but infinitely many kinds of giving—too many to speak of. His deeds of giving were **equal in number to fine dust motes in measureless lands.**

**The Bodhi Spirit**, that is, the Bodhimanda Spirit, **named Sumeru Brilliant Illumination / Recollects the Well Gone One with jubilation.** The thought of the Buddha’s past practices inspired in her tremendous joy, praise, and the wish to emulate the Buddha.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One’s forms are endless.
His transformations circulate through all lands.
Even in dreams he makes constant appearances.
Thunder Banner is delighted to see this.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One’s forms are endless.** The Buddha’s Dharma body, Reward body, and transformation bodies are all inexhaustible. **His transformations circulate through all lands.** The Buddha’s spiritual penetrations are ineffably wonderful. Like swirling water, they circulate everywhere, going from one country to the next, teaching and transforming sentient beings. **Even in dreams he makes constant appearances.** The Buddha teaches and rescues sentient beings not only when they are awake, but even in their sleep. He often appears in their dreams to teach sentient beings, inspiring them to bring forth the resolve for bodhi and make great vows to cultivate the Bodhisattva Path and realize the supreme Buddha fruit.

Bodhimanda Spirit **Thunder Banner is** very **delighted to see this** state.

**Sutra:**

**In the practice of giving during measureless eons in the past,
The Buddha gave an oceanic quantity of eyes, which are so hard to give.
He practiced giving in this manner for the sake of sentient beings.
Wondrous Eyes spirit awakens thus and rejoices.**

**Commentary:**

**In the** Buddha Shakyamuni’s **practice of giving during measureless eons in the past,** when he was planting causes, he was able to give what other people could not part with. **The Buddha gave an oceanic quantity of eyes, which are so hard to give.** Just the eyes that he gave away were as profuse as an ocean. People cherish their eyes above all other faculties, but the Buddha gave away a limitless, ocean-vast amount of them. He was able to renounce what others could not. **He practiced giving in this manner for the sake of** teaching and transforming all **sentient beings. / Wondrous Eyes Spirit awakens thus** state **and rejoices.**

**Sutra:**

**His boundless forms, like precious, resplendent clouds,
Appear in Bodhi places throughout all worlds.
Bodhimanda Spirit Pure Blazing Form**
**Happily observes the Buddha’s self-mastery.**

**Commentary:**

**His boundless forms** refer to the Buddha’s special marks and adornments. The Buddha’s forms travel through numerous lands, **like precious, resplendent clouds,** and **appear in Bodhi** Way-**places throughout all worlds. / Bodhimanda Spirit Pure Blazing Form /**

**Happily observes the Buddha’s self-mastery.** Observing the Buddha’s wonderful use of spiritual powers and transformations, and his inconceivable self-mastery, she is delighted and full of praise.

**Sutra:**

**Boundless is the ocean of sentient beings’ deeds.
The Buddha rains the Dharma rain everywhere,
Dispelling delusions according to their faculties and understanding.
Flower Garlands awakens thus with delight.**

**Commentary:**

The karma created by sentient beings resembles a huge ocean. Thus the text says: **Boundless is the ocean of sentient beings’ deeds.** The ocean of deeds is just the ocean of karma. The karma that sentient beings create and the retribution they receive are boundless like a vast ocean. **The Buddha rains the** great **Dharma rain everywhere,** extinguishing sentient beings’ karmic hindrances, teaching and transforming them all, and **dispelling delusions according to their faculties and understanding.** Bodhima{#aSpirit **Flower Garlands awakens thus with delight.** She understands this principle and is very happy.

**Sutra:**

**Measureless Dharma doors, each distinct in meaning,
The Buddha can enter with eloquence like a vast ocean.
Bodhimanda Spirit Raining Down Jeweled Ornaments
Always recollects thus in thought after thought.**

**Throughout all lands, unspeakable in number,
The Buddha used the epitome of praises to laud all Buddhas,
Thus achieving renown and great merit.
The Spirit Heroic Vision thus recalls.**

**Boundless trees of various shapes and forms
All appear beneath the Bodhi tree, the king of trees.
Vajra-colored Cloud awakened and made this passage
And joyfully, constantly beholds the Tree of the Way.**

**Just as the boundaries of the ten directions are beyond our grasp,
So, too, is the wisdom of the Buddha seated in the bodhimanda.
Lotus Flower Step Brilliance gives rise to pure faith
And enters this liberation with deep delight.**

**Marvelous sounds issue from everything in the bodhimanda,
Praising the Buddhas’ inconceivable pure strength
And bringing to success all practices at the level of planting causes.
Wondrous Light spirit hears and receives thus.**

**Commentary:**

**Measureless Dharma doors, each distinct in meaning, / The Buddha can enter**…Since there are limitless Dharma doors, there are also limitless meanings, which makes for limitlessly many distinctions. To enter all Dharma doors and the wondrous meaning of all dharmas, one must be endowed **with eloquence like a vast ocean**. Since the Buddha possesses an eloquence of oceanic scope, he is able to enter the ocean of all Dharma doors. **Bodhimanda SpiritRaining Down Jeweled Ornaments / Always recollects thus** and understandsthis passage into liberation **in thought after thought.**

**Throughout all lands, unspeakable in number,** as numerous as motes of dust, when the Buddha was at the level of planting causes, **he exhausted** and used all **worldly phrases** and languages **in praise of the Buddhas, / Thus obtaining** the reward of great **renown and great merit.** Bodhimanda**Spirit Heroic Vision thus recalls** and understand this passage into liberation.

**Boundless trees of various** distinct **shapes and forms / All appear beneath the Bodhi tree, the king of trees.** Bodhimanda Spirit **Vajra-colored Cloud awakened and made this passage** into liberation **and joyfully, constantly beholds the Tree of the Way.** She observes the King of Trees with perpetual delight.

**Just as the boundaries of the ten directions are beyond our grasp, / So, too, is the wisdom of the Buddha seated in the bodhimanda.** Just as the worlds of the ten directions have no boundaries, the Buddha’s wisdom is the same. Bodhimanda Spirit **Lotus Flower Step Brilliance** understands this passage into liberation and **gives rise to pure faith / And enters this liberation with deep delight.** Entering this passage into liberation gave her profound joy.

**Marvelous sounds issue from everything in the bodhimanda**. All Way-places broadcast wondrous sounds, **praising the Buddhas’ inconceivable pure strength / And bringing to success all practices** of sentient beings as well as her own practices **at the level of planting causes. Wondrous Light spirit**, this Bodhimanda Spirit, **hears and receives thus** and understands this principle.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Spirit of Foot Travel Jeweled Seal Hand gained a passage into liberation of raining down myriad treasures everywhere and producing vast happiness. Spirit of Foot Travel Lotus Light gained a passage into liberation of manifesting a Buddha’s body seated upon the throne of lotuses of all colors and lights, delighting all beholders. Spirit of Foot Travel Supreme Floral Cowl gained a passage into liberation of establishing bodhimandas in thought after thought for the assemblies of all Thus Come Ones. Spirit of Foot Travel Gathering In Good Views gained a passage into liberation of completely subduing boundless sentient beings each time one lifts one’s foot to take a step.**

**Commentary:**

**Moreover,** to continue the discussion, **Spirit of Foot Travel Jeweled Seal Hand** has a precious seal which can subdue all adherents of outside ways. Spirits of Foot Travel have many legs, like centipedes and millipedes. People also walk on their legs, but these spirits also include such beings as those in the eightfold division. Mahoragas, for example, are Spirits of Foot Travel. Beings who possess any number of feet—not necessarily two, four, six, eight, ten, or a hundred—are considered Spirits of Foot Travel. These are spirits that walk on their feet. This particular spirit **gained** a state of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation**, **of raining down myriad treasures everywhere and producing vast happiness.** This spirit is skilled at giving. She makes all kinds of precious things rain down, and sentient beings are delighted to obtain them. This one gets a piece of gold, that one a 100 karat diamond. They are all happy.

The next **Spirit of Foot Travel** is named **Lotus Light** because she radiates that kind of light. She **gained a passage into liberation of manifesting a Buddha’s body seated upon the throne of lotuses of all colors and** radiating assorted **lights, delighting all beholders.** Everyone is delighted to see her. She attained this passage into liberation.

**Spirit of Foot Travel Supreme Floral Cowl gained a passage into liberation of establishing bodhimandas in thought after thought for the assemblies of all Thus Come Ones** In every thought, she sets up bodhimandas for the Buddhas’ Dharma assemblies in lands throughout the ten directions. She attained this passage into liberation.

**Spirit of Foot Travel Gathering In Good Views** collects all the wholesome views that sentient beings have. She **gained** a state of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation**, **of completely subduing boundless sentient beings each time one lifts one’s foot to take a step.** Every time the Buddha raises his hand or lifts his foot, his intention is to tame and subdue sentient beings and make them happy. Not only does he tame one sentient being, he tames limitlessly many of them and makes them happy.

**Sutra:**

**Spirit of Foot Travel Star Banner of Wondrous Jewels gained a passage into liberation of in every thought manifesting all kinds of radiant nets of lotuses that rain down a multitude of treasures out of which come wondrous sounds.**

**Commentary:**

**Spirit of Foot Travel Star Banner of Wondrous Jewels gained a passage into liberation of in every thought manifesting all kinds of radiant nets of lotuses that rain down a multitude of treasures out of which come wondrous sounds.** Her every thought is a treasury of Dharma. Therefore she can conjure up various kinds of nets of lotuses, not just one kind. These beautiful lotuses woven into nets release boundless light, within which boundless Dharma treasures rain down. From within the lotus nets, the lights, and the treasures, wondrous sounds come forth that proclaim the profound, unsurpassed, wonderful Dharma in order to teach and transform all sentient beings. This Spirit of Foot Travel attained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Spirit of Foot Travel Happily Making Wondrous Sounds gained a passage into liberation of producing a boundless sea of happiness. Spirit of Foot Travel Radiant Candana Tree gained a passage into liberation of using fragrant breezes to universally enlighten the assemblies in all bodhimandas.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Spirit of Foot Travel** is named **Happily Making Wondrous Sounds**. This spirit likes to sing songs and express Dharma by means of sounds. She **gained a** state of the Buddha and **a passage into liberation of producinga boundless sea of happiness.** She emits innumerable wondrous sounds, and when sentient beings hear them, they feel tremendous happiness as vast as the sea. She attained this passage into liberation. **Spirit of Foot Travel Radiant Candana Tree** gives off a fragrance like that of the candana tree. She **gained a passage into liberation of using fragrant breezes to universally enlighten the assemblies in bodhimandas.** She uses her fragrant breezes to speak the Dharma. When sentient beings get a whiff of her fragrance, they bring forth the bodhi resolve—the resolve to seek enlightenment. All the assemblies in every bodhimanda bring forth the resolve for enlightenment. She gained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Spirit of Foot Travel Lotus Brilliance gained a passage into liberation of radiating light from every pore, broadcasting the wonderful sounds of Dharma. Spirit of Foot Travel Subtle Radiance gained a passage into liberation of having her whole body radiate various nets of light that illumine everything. Spirit of Foot Travel Gathering Lovely Flowers gained a passage into liberation of enlightening all sentient beings so that they bring forth an ocean of good roots.**

**At that time, Spirit of Foot Travel Jeweled Seal Hand received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Spirits of Foot Travel, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

**Spirit of Foot Travel Lotus Brilliance gained a passage into liberation** , a state of the Buddha, **of radiating light from every pore, broadcasting the wonderful sounds of Dharma.** Within the light, the unsurpassed, profound Dharma is proclaimed. She attained this passage into liberation. **Spirit of Foot Travel Wondrous Radiance gained** a state of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation of having her whole body radiate various nets of light that illumine everything** in the trichiliocosm. Those nets of light shine upon all sentient beings throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, dispelling the darkness so that they experience light.

**Spirit of Foot Travel Gathering Lovely Flowers gained a passage into liberation of enlightening all sentient beings so that they bring forth an ocean of good roots.** Not only did she enlighten sentient beings, she enabled those without good roots to develop extensive good roots. That was her passage into liberation.

**At that time, Spirit of Foot Travel Jeweled Seal Hand received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Spirits of Foot Travel, and spoke the following verse.**

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha cultivated for measureless eons,
Making offerings to every Thus Come One.
He constantly rejoiced, never growing weary.
His practice of joy was deep and vast like an ocean.**

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha cultivated** all kinds of practices **for measureless eons** in the past**,** but his main practice was **making offerings to every Thus Come One.** He extensively practiced the giving of offerings to all Buddhas. **He constantly rejoiced, never growing weary.** In making offerings to all Buddhas at the level of planting causes, he never grew weary and said, “I’ve had enough. There are too many Buddhas to make offerings to.” The more Buddhas he made offerings to, the happier he was. He never got tired of doing this. **His practice of joy** and giving **was** extremely **deep and vast like an ocean.**

**Sutra:**

**In every thought, immeasurable spiritual powers
Bring into being lotuses of various fragrances.
Buddhas seated upon them travel everywhere.
Scarlet Light spirit observes all of this.**

**Commentary:**

Spirit of Foot Travel Scarlet Lotus Light attained the following state of the Buddha: **In every thought,** she thinks of the Buddha’s **immeasurable spiritual powers**, which **bring into being** marvelous **lotuses of various fragrances. / Buddhas seated upon them travel everywhere** to all lands in the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, in order to teach and transform sentient beings. **Scarlet Light** spirit **observes all of this**. That Spirit of Foot Travel understands this state and enters this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Thus is the Dharma of each Buddha, Thus Come One
His extensive assemblies pervade the ten directions.
He displays inconceivable spiritual powers everywhere.
Supreme Floral Cowl spirit completely sees and understands all of this.**

**In every place throughout the lands of the ten directions,
Whether raising his foot or setting it down,
He brings all beings to accomplishment.
Good Views spirit realizes this with joy.**

**The Buddha displays as many bodies as there are sentient beings.
Each and every body fills up the Dharma Realm.
All of them radiate pure light and rain down a myriad treasures.
Star Banner enters this liberation.**

**The realm of the Thus Come One is boundless.
He sends down Dharma rain that fills all places.
The assembled multitudes behold the Buddha in delight.
Wondrous Sound thus observes.**

**Commentary:**

**Thus is the Dharma of each Buddha, Thus Come One.** The Buddhadharma of all Buddhas throughout the ten directions is this way. What way? **His extensive assemblies pervade the ten directions.** Each Buddha manifests a vast assembly in a great Way-place. These vast, great Way-places are everywhere throughout the ten directions. **He displays inconceivable spiritual powers everywhere. / Supreme Floral Cowl spirit completely sees** this kind of state **and understands this** passage into liberation.

**In every place throughout the lands of the ten directions, / Whether raising his foot or setting it down, he brings all beings to accomplishment.** Every move the Buddha makes and every word he says is for the sake of teaching and transforming sentient beings and bringing them to accomplishment. **Good Views spirit**, that Spirit of Foot Travel, **realizes this** principle **with joy.**

The Buddha displays **as many bodies as there are sentient beings. / Each and every body fills up the Dharma Realm. / All of them radiate pure light and rain down a myriad treasures.** Spirit of Foot Travel **Star Banner enters** and understands **this** passage into **liberation.**

**The realm of the Thus Come One is boundless. / He sends down Dharma rain that fills all places.** This universal Dharma rain fills up the Dharma Realm. **The assembled multitudes** in all Way-places throughout the ten directions **behold the Buddha in delight.** Spirit of Foot Travel **Wondrous Sound thus observes.** She understands this state.

**Sutra:**

**The range of the Buddha’s voice equals the void.
Every kind of sound is encompassed therein.
It subdues all sentient beings without exception.
Candana hears and accepts this.**

**Transformed sounds come out of every pore,
Proclaiming the names of all Buddhas of the three time periods.
Those who hear are filled with happiness.
Lotus Brilliance spirit thus perceives.**

**The Buddha’s body undergoes inconceivable transformations.
In every step his forms are like the ocean.
He shows himself according to sentient beings’ wishes.
This is the attainment of Subtle Radiance.**

**Displaying great spiritual powers throughout the ten directions,
The Buddha brings all beings to enlightenment.
Myriads of Lovely Flowers spirit sees this Dharma,
And having seen it, feels tremendous delight.**

**Commentary:**

The state of the Flower Adornment Sutra completely fills the Dharma Realm. Not to speak of hearing it explained, simply reciting it or listening to the way it sounds will enable one to plant measureless good roots. If one can understand its meanings, one will further increase in measureless good roots. The Flower Adornment Sutra is wonderful beyond words.

You should not think, “The sutra is being lectured every day, but I already understand it. There’s not much point in this.” You have these idle thoughts all day long. “Wouldn’t I be better off spending my time doing something else?” You ought to know that if you do something else instead of listening to the sutra, you will do even more idle thinking. For that reason, every day at this time, we lecture the sutra and speak Dharma. We get up early to do morning recitation and sit in meditation. These daily practices are to help you eliminate our bad habits and faults and prevent you from engaging in false thinking. However, you insist on indulging in your fantasies. What a pity!

**The range of the Buddha’s voice equals the void.** The Buddha’s sound pervades empty space and the Dharma realm. There is not a single place where the Buddha’s sound is absent. The measure of the Buddha’s sound is as great as empty space.

**Every kind of sound is encompassed therein.** The Buddha’s sound is such that,

With one sound he proclaims the Dharma,
And sentient beings each understand it according to their kind.

Although the Buddha has only one sound, every sentient being hears it in that sentient being’s own language. Asians hear it and interpret it as being an Asian language. Westerners perceive the Buddha’s sound as being in a Western language. Without need for translation, the Buddha’s sound is transformed into every language. And this happens faster than could be done with any advanced scientific technology.

**It subdues all sentient beings without exception.** The Buddha’s voice subdues every stubborn being. When tigers hear the Buddha’s sound, they take refuge with the Triple Jewel and faithfully accept and practice the teachings. When lions hear it, they do the same. Every kind of creature can be tamed. The Buddha speaks the Dharma for all creatures in the realm of sentient beings. Spirit of Foot Travel **Candana** Tree Light **hears and accepts this** state and passage into liberation, and understand it.

**Transformed sounds** of wonderful Dharma **come out of every pore** of the Buddha’s body, **proclaiming the names of all Buddhas of the three time periods**—past, present, and future—and praising all Buddhas. **Those who hear are filled with happiness.** Every sentient being who hears these sounds is delighted. **Lotus Brilliance spirit**, that Spirit of Foot Travel**, thus perceives.** This is what she sees.

**The Buddha’s body undergoes** infinite and **inconceivable transformations. In every step his forms are like the ocean.** The wonderful forms manifested by the Buddha are as vast and inconceivable as an ocean. **He shows himself according to sentient beings’ wishes.** The Buddha appears to sentient beings according to their thoughts. **This is the attainment of** Spirit of Foot Travel **Subtle Radiance.** She understands this state.

Constantly **displaying great spiritual powers** everywhere **throughout the ten directions, he brings all beings to enlightenment**, leading them from ignorance to wisdom. **Myriads of Lovely Flowers spirit**, that Spirit of Foot Travel, **sees this** wonderful **Dharma, / And having seen it, feels tremendous delight**, being filled with the joy of Dharma.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Multi-bodied Spirit State of Pure Joy gained a passage into liberation of recollecting the sea of the Buddha’s past vows. Multi-bodied Spirit Light Illumining the Ten Directions gained a passage into liberation of radiating light universally upon boundless worlds. Multi-bodied Spirit Taming and Subduing with an Ocean-like Sound gained a passage into liberation of using a great voice to enlighten all sentient beings, making them happy and subdued.**

**Commentary:**

**Moreover,** since the meaning of the sutra has not been fully explained, the explanation will continue. **Multi-bodied Spirit State of Pure Joy** is so-named because she has attained a state of pure happiness. What state of the Buddha has she attained? She **gained a passage into liberation of recollecting the sea of the Buddha’s past vows.** She remembers the vows that Shakyamuni Buddha made in the past, which are as profuse as an ocean. Cultivators of the Way should not look lightly upon vows. You must have great vows, so that your cultivation can be great and you can achieve a great result. Cultivating without making great vows is like trying to cross the ocean without a boat—you cannot get across. Great vows are comparable to a boat that ferries you across the sea. Therefore, it is essential that cultivators make great vows, so that they can attain a great fruition. Shakyamuni Buddha’s past vows are as numerous, as extensive, and as deep as the great sea; they are measureless and boundless. As his disciples, we ought to make great, vast vows to cultivate the unsurpassed Way. The spirit named State of Pure Joy gained this passage into liberation. **Multi-bodied Spirit Light Illumining the Ten Directions gained a passage into liberation of radiating light universally upon boundless worlds.** Her light illumines the entire Dharma Realm, reaching all worlds, which are infinite in number. She attained that passage into liberation.

**The** next **Multi-bodied Spirit** is named **Taming and Subduing with an Ocean-like Sound**.She uses a voice like the ocean tide to tame and subdue sentient beings. When sentient beings hear her Lion’s Roar, they become liberated. This Multi-bodied Spirit **gained a passage into liberation of using a great voice to enlighten all sentient beings, making them happy and subdued.** Her voice is so loud that it wakes everyone up. All sentient beings are delighted to hear it. Obstinate beings change their bad habits and faults, tamely allowing this spirit to teach and transform them. Those without feet cannot be called Spirits of Foot Travel; those without bodies cannot be called Multi-bodied Spirits. Spirits are present even among the tiniest creatures and insects. There are even spirits among ants, to take the example of a tiny creature with legs. These spirits assume the form of ants in order to teach and transform ants. If you observe the ant society, you will find there are ants that do good and ants that commit evil. Good ants help other ants out. Evil ants try to seize the food of other ants, acting like thugs and robbers. The only difference between them and human robbers is that they have tiny bodies, so the things they do are on a tiny scale. As for bees, just think of how many of them are robbers who steal honey from others. Are you aware of what they do?

**Sutra:**

**Multi-bodied Spirit Cowl Adorned with Pure Flowers gained a passage into liberation of developing a body that is omnipresent like space. Multi-bodied Spirit Limitless Aspects of Awesome Comportment gained a passage into liberation of displaying the states of Buddhas to all sentient beings.**

**Commentary:**

**Multi-bodied Spirit Cowl Adorned with Pure Flowers gained** a state of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation of developing a body that is omnipresent** throughout the Dharma Realm **like space.** She attained that passage into liberation. **Multi-bodied Spirit Limitless Aspects of Awesome Comportment gained a passage into liberation of displaying the states of** all **Buddhas to all sentient beings.** That was her passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Multi-bodied Spirit Supreme Light Adornment gained a passage into liberation of replenishing the physical strength of all starving and exhausted sentient beings. Multi-bodied Spirit Pure Light and Clouds of Fragrance gained a passage into liberation of ridding all sentient beings of defiling afflictions. Multi-bodied Spirit Protecting and Gathering In gained a passage into liberation of transforming the delusion and demonic karma of all sentient beings. Multi-bodied Spirit Universally Manifesting to Gather In and Transform gained a passage into liberation of universally manifesting an adorned appearance in the palaces of all world leaders.**

**Commentary:**

**Multi-bodied Spirit Supreme Light Adornment** understood a state of the Buddha and **gained** the samadhi of **a passage into liberation of replenishing the physical strength of all starving and exhausted sentient beings.** “Starving and exhausted” means being impoverished, having nothing to eat and no strength or energy. Here, “starving” refers to being deprived of the food of Dharma and “exhausted” means lacking the awesome strength of spiritual penetrations. This Multi-bodied Spirit is replete with physical strength. In other words, she is in good health. Being healthy means being nourished by the bliss of *dhyana* and filled with the joy of Dharma. When sentient beings have not attained *dhyana* concentration, they can be said to be starving and exhausted. When they have not attained the joy of Dharma, they lack energy and vigor. Now that they are nourished by *dhyana* bliss and filled with Dharma joy, they are full of energy. This spirit attained this passage into liberation.

**Multi-bodied Spirit Pure Light and Clouds of Fragrance gained** astate of the Buddha and **a passage into liberation of ridding all sentient beings of defiling afflictions.** Afflictions are a form of defilement, and defilement is a form of affliction. In cultivating the Way, if you cannot turn afflictions around, *bodhi* cannot manifest. Once you turn afflictions into *bodhi*, purity is obtained. Before they are turned into *bodhi*, defilement exists. If those who have left the home-life still cannot renounce their polluted afflictions, then there is not much point in their leaving home. Whether you are a Bhikshu or a Bhikshuni, you should not compete with others to see who has the biggest temper. Instead, you should see who has more patience. Don’t compete to see who has the most afflictions, saying, “See how great my afflictions are? They’re bigger than yours!” If you act on your afflictions, you will never amount to anything; you will never achieve *samadhi*. Therefore, no matter what you’re doing, you should get rid of afflictions and produce the *bodhi* resolve. Multi-bodied Spirit Pure Light and Clouds of Fragrance attained this passage into liberation.

The next **Multi-bodied Spirit** is named **Protecting and Gathering In** because she guards, protects, and gathers in all sentient beings. She **gained a passage into liberation of transforming the delusion and demonic karma of all sentient beings.** Transforming means changing, such as when afflictions are changed into *bodhi* and delusion is changed into wisdom. The delusion of all sentient beings can be transformed so that wisdom is produced. Cultivation is all about bringing about such transformations. Demonic karma refers to impure karma and defiled dharmas. This Multi-bodied Spirit attained this passage into liberation. **Multi-bodied Spirit Universally Manifesting to Gather In and Transform gained** a state of the Buddha and **a passage into liberation of universally displaying the splendor of the palaces of all world leaders.** She causes the palaces of worldly kings and emperors, as well as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, to become extremely beautiful and adorned in appearance, inspiring faith and reverence in all who see them. This spirit gained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Multi-bodied Spirit Unmoving Radiance gained a passage into liberation of gathering in all sentient beings and causing them to produce pure good roots. At that time, Multi-bodied Spirit State of Pure Joy received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, contemplated the multitudes of Multi-bodied Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

The **Multi-bodied Spirit Unmoving Radiance** is so named because of her cultivation of unmoving light. This implies that she used to be very restless and active. Little by little, she cultivated until she became unmoving. In what way was she active? Her afflictions were active. She was constantly getting afflicted. Later, through cultivation, her afflictions changed into wisdom and *bodhi*, and thus she attained unmoving radiance. She **gained a passage into liberation of** pervasively **gathering in all sentient beings and causing them to produce pure good roots.** She attained a state of the Buddha of drawing in sentient beings and causing them to grow pure good roots through doing good deeds without outflows, deeds of ultimate goodness and purity. In other words, they did not get attached to the good deeds they did. Once they did them, they forgot about them. In that way, their good roots were pure and clean, free from attachments. This spirit attained this passage into liberation. **At that time, Multi-bodied Spirit State of Pure Joy received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, contemplated the multitudes of Multi-bodied Spirits** everywhere**, and spoke the following verse** to restate the principles of the preceding prose passage.

**Sutra:**

**I recall that as many eons ago as the motes of dust in Sumeru,
Wondrous Light Buddha appeared in the world**.
**The World Honored One, in the presence of that Thus Come One,
Resolved to make offerings to each and every Buddha**.**The Thus Come One’s body radiates bright light.
His light fills the entire Dharma Realm, missing no place.
When sentient beings encounter it, their minds are tamed.
The Spirit Illumining Directions thus perceives.**

**The Thus Come One’s voice rocks the lands of the ten directions.
All his speech and sounds are full and perfect**.
**Universally enlightening beings without exception.
Hearing this, Taming and Subduing rejoices in her heart.**Commentary:

**I recall that as many eons ago as the motes of dust in** Mount **Sumeru, / The Buddha** named **Wondrous Light appeared in the world** and realized Buddhahood. **The World Honored One** Shakyamuni**, in the presence of that Thus Come One,** Wondrous Light, made a great vow. He **resolved to make offerings to each and every Buddha** pervading space and the Dharma Realm.**The Thus Come One’s body radiates bright light.** Why does the Thus Come One’s body give off light? It’s because he has gotten rid of all his bad habits and faults. He has changed all his afflictions into wisdom and *bodhi*, so his body shines brightly. When a cultivator attains great wisdom, he will emit light which dispels all darkness, and those with whom he has affinities will see that light. Having seen the light, they will eventually resolve their minds. Even if they don’t make the resolve in this life, they will in a future life. After being illuminated by the Buddha’s bright light, they are bound to resolve their minds. That’s why the Buddha constantly emits bright light.

**His light fills the entire Dharma Realm, missing no place.** The Buddha’s light reaches to the ends of space and the Dharma Realm. Every place has the Buddha’s light. If we could change our ignorance and afflictions into wisdom and *bodhi*, we would see the Buddha’s light. **When sentient beings encounter it, their minds are tamed.** When sentient beings see the Buddha’s light, their minds become gentle and compliant. Obstinate sentient beings are no longer obstinate. Deluded sentient beings are no longer deluded. Sentient beings with heavy ignorance and afflictions are no longer plagued by ignorance and afflictions. They are tamed, so that their bad habits and faults disappear. **The** Multi-bodied **Spirit Illumining Directions thus perceives.** She understands this passage into liberation. **The Thus Come One’s voice rocks the countries of the ten directions.** The Thus Come One’s voice pervasively fills the Dharma Realm, as does his light. The Thus Come One’s body also fills the ten directions of the Dharma Realm. **All his speech and sounds are full and perfect**. The Buddha’s words and the sound of his voice are perfect. **Universally enlightening beings without exception.** The Buddha awakens all sentient beings, not leaving any out. **Hearing** about **this** state, the Multi-bodied Spirit **Taming and Subduing rejoices in his heart.** He is extremely happy.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha’s body is pure and ever tranquil.
He displays a myriad forms everywhere yet is devoid of characteristics.
In this way he pervasively dwells in all worlds.
The Spirit Pure Flowers enters thus.**

**The Guiding Master is inconceivable like this:
He is seen by sentient beings according to their wishes--
Perhaps sitting, or walking, or sometimes standing.
Limitless Aspects of Awesome Comportment awakens to this passage.**

**It is difficult to encounter a Buddha in a hundred thousand eons.
He comes forth to benefit beings with mastery and ease,
Delivering all the world’s beings from poverty’s woes.
Supreme Light Adornment enters this state.**

Commentary:

**The Buddha’s body is pure and ever tranquil.** The Buddha’s body does not leave its original place, yet pervades the ten directions. **He displays a myriad forms everywhere yet is devoid of characteristics.** The Buddha’s body is still and tranquil. “All dharmas, from the very beginning, are always still and tranquil, and cannot be described in words.” The Buddha displays all bodies of wonderful existence, but these bodies are apart from marks; they are part of true emptiness. True emptiness reveals wonderful existence; wonderful existence is simply true emptiness. **In this way,** within true emptiness and wonderful existence, **he pervasively dwells in all worlds** throughout the ten directions.

**The Spirit Pure Flowers enters thus** this state and this passage into liberation. **The Guiding Master is inconceivable like this.** The great Guiding Master who receives and guides sentient beings can neither be conceived of with the mind nor described in words. **He is seen by sentient beings according to their wishes.** Sentient beings are able to see the Buddha, **perhaps sitting, or walking, or sometimes standing.** They may see the Buddha sitting there, strolling about, and just standing. Whether the Buddha is walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, **Limitless Aspects of Awesome Comportment awakens to this passage.** “Limitless aspects of awesome comportment” refers to the three thousand modes of awesome comportment and the eighty thousand subtle practices. This Multi-bodied Spirit has seen the Buddha’s awesome comportment and understands this passage into liberation.

**It is difficult to encounter a Buddha in a hundred thousand eons.** We have all been born after the time of a Buddha. This is one of the Eight Difficulties. We have come into the world when the Buddha has already entered nirvana. Since our affinities with the Buddha are not deep enough, we have not been born during the Buddha’s time. It is hard to meet a Buddha even in a hundred million eons. It is not easy at all. **He comes forth to benefit beings with mastery and ease**. The Buddha appears in the world to benefit sentient beings through the wondrous functioning of his sovereign spiritual powers, **delivering all the world’s beings from poverty’s woes** so they can attain the benefit of the Dharma. People who do not understand the Buddhadharma are the poorest of all. Those who do understand the Buddhadharma are the richest. Multi-bodied Spirit **Supreme Light Adornment enters this state** and attains this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**From the gaps between the Thus Come One’s teeth,
Brilliant, blazing clouds like fragrant lamps issue forth,
Extinguishing the delusions of all sentient beings.
Immaculate Cloud spirit thus observes.**

**Sentient beings’ defiling delusions become heavy obstructions
They constantly drift and wander along demonic byways.
The Thus Come One reveals the path of liberation.
Protecting and Supporting awakens thus and enters.**

**Commentary:**

**From the gaps between the Thus Come One’s teeth, / Brilliant, blazing clouds like fragrant lamps issue forth**. These lamps give off various kinds of fragrance and light that form blazing clouds, **extinguishing the delusions of all sentient beings.** All beings’ confusion and doubts vanish upon being illuminated by that light. **Immaculate Cloud spirit**, that Multi-bodied Spirit, **thus observes** and understands this passage into liberation. **Sentient beings’ defiling delusions become heavy obstructions**. Sentient beings are deluded by defiled phenomena, so they lose their purity. In that state of impurity, all sorts of weighty impediments arise, obscuring their inherent natures until the light of *prajna* cannot shine forth.

**They constantly drift and wander along demonic byways.** Take a look. Only a few people attend Dharma assemblies where the Dharma is lectured. There are only twenty people or so here studying the Buddhadharma. Rock concerts, however, are attended by thousands or tens of thousands people who have to buy tickets to get in. If a famous rock star’s records are being given away, everyone goes crazy trying to grab one; people even come to blows over it. This is exactly what this line is referring to—being influenced by demons’ insanity and constantly drifting and wandering. Dancing is a defiled dharma, as are watching movies or plays. Nevertheless, people want to do these things and are willing to pay for them.

Our Dharma lectures are free, yet they don’t come. Maybe if we charged an entrance fee, they would want to come. If there is a striptease show, people will even go without sleep so they can watch it. Really, what is there worth seeing? What benefits are there in watching it? Even some who plan to leave the home life want to see one last striptease show. Isn’t that pathetic? That’s another example of following the insanity of demons and running about. People also know that taking drugs is harmful, yet they still buy it and take it. That is also to follow the insanity of demons and run about. **The Thus Come One reveals the path of liberation** for all these confused sentient beings. **Protecting and Supporting awakens thus and enters.** Multi-bodied Spirit One Who Protects and Gathers In is able to understand and awaken to this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**I contemplate the Thus Come One’s power of self-mastery.
His light spreads throughout the Dharma Realm, filling it entirely.
Dwelling in the royal palace, he transforms sentient beings.
This is the state of Universally Manifesting spirit.**

**Sentient beings, confused by falseness, suffer a myriad woes.
The Buddha is in their midst, constantly rescuing and protecting them.
He helps them to dispel delusions and develop joyful hearts.
Unmoving Radiance spirit thus observes.**

**Commentary:**

**I contemplate the Thus Come One’s** spiritual **power of self-mastery. / His** brilliant **light spreads throughout the Dharma Realm, filling it entirely. / Dwelling in the royal palace, he transformssentient beings.** The Buddha lived in a king’s palace, and he taught and transformed all sentient beings. **This is the state of Universally Manifesting spirit.** That Multi-bodied Spirit understands this state.

**Sentient beings, confused by falseness,** having strayed off the proper path and gotten caught up in a profusion of false thoughts, **suffer a myriad woes.** Their numerous false thoughts are like birds flying every which way. These haphazard false thoughts bring on every kind of suffering—the three sufferings, the eight sufferings, and the limitless sufferings. They undergo all these woes. **The Buddha is in their midst** in the six paths, **constantly rescuing and protecting them. / He helps them to dispel delusions and develop joyful hearts. Unmoving Radiance spirit**, that Multi-bodied Spirit, **thus observes** and understands this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Vajra-wielding Spirit Wondrous Narayana Physique gained a passage into liberation of seeing the Thus Come One manifest bodies of boundless forms.**

**Commentary:**

Who can explain the word Narayana? What does it mean? [A disciple explains.] You cannot completely explain the meaning. If people want to know more, they have to investigate on their own. In lecturing the sutra, you cannot explain everything in full, for if you did, it’s not known when we would finish lecturing this sutra. You cannot fully explain all the meanings even in a short sutra, not to mention a long one. Even if a sutra is short, it takes a long time to completely explain its meanings.

For example, the Great Master Zhi Zhe of Tiantai spent ninety days explaining the word *miao* “wonderful.” You might say that he went into too much detail in his explanation. Actually, not to speak of ninety days, even nine months, nine years, or ninety years would not be enough time to fully explain the meaning of “wonderful,” simply because it *is* wonderful. One can only give people an general idea of what it means, regardless of whether the meaning of the term is good or not. People who want to know more will spend time investigating in greater depth on their own.

**Moreover,** to continue the discussion of the meanings mentioned previously, **Vajra-wielding Spirit Wondrous Narayana**…*Narayana* means strong and solid. How do I know? Well, the text says that he is a Vajra-wielding Spirit. If he were not strong and solid, how could he wield a *vajra* jeweled pestle? If his arms were as weak as a baby chick’s, how could he hold a *vajra* jeweled pestle? *Vajra* jeweled pestles and *vajra* jeweled swords are weapons wielded by Dharma protectors. Vajra-wielding spirits are Dharma protectors. This particular spirit **gained a passage into liberation of seeing the Thus Come One manifest bodies of boundless forms.** He sees the Buddha manifest these bodies. The word “manifest” indicates that these bodies are not real. They appear out of nothing. Originally they did not exist. The Buddha manifests boundlessly many of such bodies. This spirit attained that passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Vajra-wielding Spirit Banner as Swift as the Sun gained a passage into liberation of seeing how every hair on the Buddha’s body displays assorted clouds of light, just like the sun. Vajra-wielding Spirit Flower Light of Mount Sumeru gained a passage into liberation of conjuring up measureless bodies and tremendous spiritual transformations. Vajra-wielding Spirit Pure Thundercloud gained a passage into liberation of uttering boundless sounds that accord with the categories of beings.**

**Commentary:**

**Vajra-wielding Spirit Banner as Swift as the Sun** is very speedy. He **gained** a state of the Buddha, **a passage into liberation of seeing every hair on the Buddha’s body displaying assorted clouds of light, just like the sun.** Every hair on the Buddha’s body sends forth a ray of light, just like the sun. This ray of light is not of a single color. It is actually a cloud of light of rainbow colors, like a five-colored auspicious cloud floating in the sky. That is this spirit’s passage into liberation.

The next **Vajra-wielding Spirit** is named **Flower Light of Mount Sumeru**. *Sumeru* means “wonderfully tall.” The light he emits has flowers in it, and the flowers in turn give off light. This spirit **gained a passage into liberation** and understood the Buddha’s state **of conjuring up measureless bodies and tremendous spiritual** powers and **transformations.**

Demons have the appearance of demons, and Buddhas have the appearance of Buddhas. Sometimes, in order to subdue a demon, the Buddha himself may manifest as a demon. However, he manifests in a form that is larger than the demon. For example, if the demon is five thousand feet tall, the Buddha might manifest as a ten-thousand-foot-tall demon, so that he is five thousand feet taller than the demon. When the demon sees how small he is in comparison to the Buddha, he submits and pays obeisance, promising to follow the Buddha’s instructions. After the demon surrenders, the Buddha reappears in his own body. When the demon sees the Buddha’s tremendous spiritual powers of transformation, he dares not disobey the Buddha’s teaching.

If you know how to apply the Buddhadharma, it is infinitely wonderful and mysterious. If you don’t know how to use it, it is like not being aware of a bright pearl that is sewn in your clothing. Once you discover the bright pearl, you can use it. The bright pearl can give you all kinds of treasures. You can use it forever, and it will never wear out. If you find the pearl in your clothing, you will be the richest person. If you wish for money, the pearl produces money. If you want gold, it produces gold. If you prefer silver, it gives you silver. You can have whatever you want. That is an analogy for the passage into liberation of conjuring tremendous spiritual transformations.

The next **Vajra-wielding Spirit** is named **Pure Thundercloud**. She **gained a passage into liberation of uttering boundless sounds that accord with the categories of beings.** He understood the Buddha’s state where the Buddha is able to appear in the appropriate form for different kinds of sentient beings, speak in a way that they can understand, and proclaim the wonderful Dharma for them. You shouldn’t have the idea that the Buddha always appears as a Buddha. The Buddha can take on any form at all. For example, if he wants to save fish, he appears in a fish’s body and goes into the water to teach and transform fish, speaking to them in fish language. If he wants to save dragons, he manifests as a dragon. If he wants to save other animals, he appears in their forms. Not only does he take on the same form as them, he communicates with them in their own language. This spirit attained the Buddha’s passage into liberation of uttering sounds that accord with the categories of beings.

Sutra:

**Vajra-wielding Spirit Celestial Lord with Splendid Arms gained a passage into liberation of manifesting as all worldly leaders and enlightening sentient beings.**

Commentary:

**Vajra-wielding Spirit Celestial Lord with Splendid Arms gained a passage into liberation of manifesting as all worldly leaders and enlightening sentient beings.** The wonderful thing about this spirit is that he can rub oil on his head using his hand. After rubbing, he turns into a slippery-head. When one hand is done rubbing, the other hand rubs some more. What is more, one hand can turn into countless hands, and those countless hands can turn back into one hand. One hand can become ten million hands, and ten million hands can become one hand, so he is said to have “splendid arms.” Splendid means inconceivable. With his hands, he can pick up as many things as he wishes.

**Sutra:**

**Vajra-wielding Spirit Delightful Brightness gained a passage into liberation of expounding all the different entrances into the Buddhadharma, so that they are fully understood without exception. Vajra-wielding Spirit Great Tree Thunderclap gained a passage into liberation of using delightful ornaments to gather in all tree spirits.**

**Commentary:**

**Vajra-wielding Spirit Delightful Brightness** understood the Buddha’s state and **gained a passage into liberation of expounding all the different entrances into the Buddhadharma,so that they are fully understood without exception.** He makes all sentient beings understand all the entrances into the different meanings within the Buddhadharma. They thoroughly understand all the principles of Buddhadharma without exception. That was this spirit’s passage into liberation.

**Vajra-wielding Spirit Great Tree Thunderclap gained** a Buddha’s state and **a passage into liberation of using delightful ornaments**, including toys, **to gather in all tree spirits.** He uses toys and adornments to keep the tree spirits under control. Probably tree spirits love to play and have fun. That was this spirit’s passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Vajra-wielding Spirit Brilliant Lion King gained a passage into liberation of being fully endowed with and understanding the adornments accumulated from vast blessings.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Vajra-wielding Spirit** is named **Brilliant Lion King**. This spirit is very awesome and dignified, like the lion, the king of beasts. This spirit also has the radiance of wisdom. He **gained** a state of the Buddha and **a passage into liberation of being fully endowed with and understanding the adornments accumulated from vast blessings.** Because the Buddha never passed up even the smallest opportunity to create blessings, he eventually accumulated vast blessings. When blessings and wisdom are abundant, adornments naturally come about. Absolutely everything is adorned—the land is adorned; the palace is adorned; his Dharma visage is adorned. The Buddha is fully endowed with both blessings and wisdom. With perfect blessings and wisdom, he has the great wisdom to understand the dispositions of sentient beings. That is this Vajra-wielding Spirit’s passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Vajra-wielding Spirit Covert Blazing Auspicious Eyes gained a passage into liberation of universally contemplating the evil thoughts of sentient beings and appearing before them in a majestic body. Vajra-wielding Spirit Lotus Gem-like Cowl gained a passage into liberation of universally raining down all Bodhisattva adornments and *mani* topknots.**

**At that time, Vajra-wielding Spirit Wondrous Form Narayana received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, contemplated all the multitudes of vajra-wielding spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Commentary:**

**Vajra-wielding Spirit Covert Blazing Auspicious Eyes** often has a blazing appearance and enjoys good fortune, but he is unknown to most people. He helps people secretly, benefiting all sentient beings. He **gained a passage into liberation of universally contemplating the evil thoughts of** the most malicious **sentient beings**, those who have not one whit of goodness in their hearts, **and appearing before them in a majestic body.** He displays a stern, imposing, powerful, meritorious, and dignified appearance. His body is both majestic and adorned, inspiring awe and reverence in sentient beings. They submit immediately, bowing and making obeisance to him and doing whatever he says. This spirit attained this passage into liberation. **Vajra-wielding Spirit Lotus Jeweled Topknot gained a passage into liberation of universally raining down all Bodhisattva adornments**, the ornaments that Bodhisattvas use, such as necklaces, precious gems, **and *mani* topknots.** He attained this passage into liberation.

**At that time, Vajra-wielding Spirit Wondrous Form Narayana received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the multitudes of Vajra-wielding Spirits, and spoke the following verse.**

**Sutra:**

**You ought to contemplate the Dharma King.
The Dharma of the Dharma King is thus.
His physical appearance has no bounds
As it universally manifests in all worlds.**

**Commentary:**

Vajra-wielding Spirit Wondrous Form Narayana said: **You ought to contemplate the Dharma King.** What should you contemplate about the Dharma King? Contemplate his Dharma. **The Dharma of the Dharma King is thus.** The Dharma body manifested by the Dharma King is such that **his physical appearance has no bounds / As it universally manifests in all worlds** throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm in order to teach and transform sentient beings.

**Sutra:**

**Every hair on the Buddha’s body
Emits inconceivable nets of light,
Which, like the sun, pure and clear,
Universally illumine the lands of the ten directions.**

**Commentary:**

The Buddha’s body has Thirty-two Hallmarks and Eighty Subtle Characteristics. This is common knowledge. Let’s not talk about the Buddha’s whole body. Actually, **every hair** and pore **on the Buddha’s body / Emits inconceivable nets of light**. Every hair releases measureless light. The light from all the hairs and pores mutually shines and interpenetrates, weaving inconceivable nets of light, **which,** to give an analogy, are **like the sun** in space, **pure and clear.** Like the sun, they **universally illumine the** Buddha **lands of the ten directions.** The Buddha’s light shines upon all sentient beings in the ten directions.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One’s spiritual powers
Pervade the entire Dharma Realm.
Before all sentient beings,
He manifests infinitely many bodies.**

**No one in the ten directions fails to hear
The sound of the Thus Come One speaking Dharma.
It satisfies the hearts of sentient beings
According to their categories.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One’s** great, awesome **spiritual powers / Pervade the entire Dharma Realm.** The Buddha’s spiritual powers reach to the ends of empty space and the Dharma Realm. **Before all sentient beings, / He manifests infinitely many bodies.** Every sentient being in the Dharma Realm gets to see the Buddha. Since there are infinitely many sentient beings, the Buddha appears in infinitely many bodies. With infinitely many bodies, he saves infinitely many sentient beings.

**No one in the ten directions fails to hear / The sound of the Thus Come One speaking Dharma.** Since the Buddha’s body pervades the entire Dharma Realm, his Dharma sound also pervades the Dharma Realm. All sentient beings in the worlds of the ten directions hear the Buddha speaking the Dharma. **It satisfies the hearts of sentient beings / According to their categories.** The Buddha speaks the Dharma for all the various categories of beings, filling their hearts with the joy of Dharma.

***S*utra:**

**The multitudes see Muni, the Honored One,
Dwelling in his palace in the world.
For the sake of all beings,
He expounds and propagates the Great Dharma.**

**In the whirlpools of the Dharma ocean,
All the different meanings
And various expedient doors
Are endlessly proclaimed.**

**With boundless great expedient means**,
**The Buddha responds to those in all regions.
Upon encountering the pure light of the Buddha,
All being see the Thus Come One’s body.**

**Commentary:**

**The multitudes see Muni, the Honored One**. All sentient beings see Shakyamuni Buddha, **dwelling in his palace in the world** and proclaiming the Buddhadharma. **For the sake of all beings, / He expounds and propagates the Great Dharma.** The Buddha explains and sets forth the Dharma, so that it can spread and flourish. The Buddhadharma is also the Great Dharma, the Wonderful Dharma, and the Dharma of the Infinite Treasury.

**In the whirlpools of the Dharma ocean** . Within the Dharma there are 84,000 Dharma doors, which are used over and over. All sorts of expedient Dharma doors are employed to clarify the meaning. The Dharma is explained over and over. This can be likened to the circular flow of water in a whirlpool. [note 30] That was a whirlpool; the water spins around and around. The whirlpool analogy represents the repeated speaking of Dharma. **All the different meanings** within the Dharma are explained, **and various expedient doors/Are endlessly proclaimed.** One principle is explained, and then another, followed by another. Infinitely many principles are proclaimed.

**With boundless great expedient means** , infinitely many expedient Dharma doors, **the Buddha responds to those all regions** throughout the ten directions, going to teach and transform sentient beings. **Upon encountering the pure light of the Buddha, / All see the Thus Come One’s body.** When sentient beings encounter the Buddha speaking Dharma, see the Buddha’s radiance, or behold the Buddha’s body, those who have affinities with the Buddha see his body adorned with the special hallmarks and characteristics.

**Sutra:**

**Having made offerings to all Buddhas
In billions of lands as numerous as dustmotes,
He has merit like space
And is admired and esteemed by all.**

**His spiritual powers are impartial.
He appears in all lands.
Peacefully dwelling in sublime *bodhimandas*,
He manifests before all sentient beings.**

**His blazing clouds shine upon all worlds,
Perfectly formed of many kinds of light.
They reach every place in the Dharma Realm,
Displaying the aspects of the Buddha’s practice.**

**Commentary:**

The Buddha **made offerings to all Buddhas**. When the Buddha was still at the level of planting causes, he made vows to make offerings to all Buddhas in the ten directions and the three periods of time. **In billions of lands as numerous as dustmotes,** infinitely many lands, he made offerings to Buddhas as numerous as dustmotes. Having made such great vows and having given offerings to so many Buddhas, **he has merit like space**, vast and boundless. **And** the Buddha **is admired and esteemed by all.** All sentient beings admire, revere, and worship the Buddha.

**His spiritual powers are impartial.** The Buddha uses his spiritual powers to impartially rescue all sentient beings. **He appears in all lands** throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm. **Peacefully dwelling in sublime *bodhimandas*** in those lands throughout the ten directions, the Buddha realizes the Way beneath the Bodhi tree. **He manifests before all sentient beings*.***

**His blazing clouds shine upon all worlds** in the ten directions. They are **perfectly formed of many kinds of light*,*** not just one kind. The Buddha’s lights pervasively **reach every place in the Dharma Realm,** shining everywhere, **displaying the aspects of the Buddha’s practice.** They teach sentient beings about how the Buddha cultivated and realized Buddhahood, so that sentient beings understand how to realize Buddhahood themselves.

Students of the Buddhadharma should recognize the importance of the Dharma. If we study the Dharma every day without realizing the importance of the Dharma, we will not take our cultivation seriously. If we fail to cultivate, we will attain nothing and have no wisdom. Wise people do not live in places characterized by ignorance.

Ignorant people do not live in places of wisdom. Places of ignorance refers to dark places. Ignorant people live in darkness and don’t feel that it is dark. Wise people know that darkness is wrong and so they seek a place of light. Light represents the lack of anger. Ignorance is anger. If you get angry, you are ignorant. If you have no anger, you are wise.

We ought to reflect upon ourselves daily and watch ourselves so that we do not entertain ignorant thoughts all the time. Instead we should develop wisdom in thought after thought. Once we develop wisdom, we will not get angry at others. Ignorant people like to lose their tempers.

As we study the Buddhadharma, every day we should become more and more intelligent, not more and more confused. If you can endure being scolded by others, then you have real skill in patience. Don’t scold others or lose your temper at them. Not to mention your Dharma peers, you shouldn’t even get mad at those who are your juniors. It’s understandable that you might lose your temper once in a while out of ignorance. But you cannot let your ignorance flare every day.

There is a saying:

The fire of ignorance and a tiger-like spirit
Are rooted in offenses created in past lives.

Since you have these offenses, you ought to root them out and get rid of them. If instead of eradicating your offenses, you increase them day by day, you will take a great loss in your cultivation. Cultivators must be very careful to avoid this kind of mistake.

When cultivators encounter adversity, they should take it in stride and not get upset. “Great Master Yongjia’s Song of Enlightenment” puts it well:

Contemplate vicious words as merit.
Then the speaker becomes your good advisor.
Without his slander leading you to choose
between hostility and friendship,
How could you demonstrate the power of compassion
and patience with nonproduction?

When someone scolds you, you should regard his malicious words as helping you to earn merit. Regard that person as your good advisor. He is helping you to cultivate the Way. He is testing your skill in patience. If he did not slander you and goad you to get angry, how could you prove that you had compassion? When someone scolds you or tries to kill you, he is testing you to see if you have *samadhi* power. You shouldn’t be overjoyed by a few words of praise or upset by a few words of criticism. That is to be blown about by the Eight Winds. When the Eight Winds cannot blow you about, then you are not even aware of being scolded. You treat the scolding as a song that people are singing for you. Since you don’t scold others, when you hear a scolding it doesn’t even register. You don’t understand what the person is saying. You think the person is speaking Japanese, English, German, French, and some other language that you don’t know. So, it’s no problem. When someone scolds you, just pretend they are singing a song for you, praising you—except that the praise is from the reverse side. In cultivation, you must take what you cannot take and bear what you cannot bear. Skilled cultivators are those who can be patient and who can yield to others. Without these abilities, you cannot be said to have skill.

Some people say, “The world has gone bad.” That is a mistaken view. The world itself cannot go bad. Others say, “Well, the world may not have gone bad, but people have gone bad.” That’s also wrong. People have not gone bad. What has gone bad then? The human mind. Since people’s minds have gone bad, it has ruined the world and the people in it. When the mind is bad, it creates evil karma and consequently incurs an evil retribution. When evil retribution is incurred, there is no peace in the world. Thus, if you want people to be good and the world to be good, you must start with the mind. When the mind is good, there will be no more wars in the world. In order for everyone to be a peace-loving person, we must start by ridding our minds of contention, hatred, greed, anger, and foolishness. Then the world will become peaceful.

Why is there no peace in the world right now? It’s because people are too greedy. People in high positions are greedy on a large scale. Those in low positions are greedy on a small scale. Each person has his own greed. However many citizens there are in a nation, that’s how many greedy people there are. When people’s desires are not satisfied, they are greedy. They are greedy for fame and profit. Among ordinary people, businessmen are greedy to make more money and strike it rich. From the time they are born until they die, they live for money. If they don’t have money, it’s as if they don’t have blood. This attitude pervades every nation. Farmers have the greed of farmers. They plant their seeds and then hope to reap a big harvest in the fall. That’s the greed of farmers. Scholars are greedy to quickly complete their studies and get a high position in the government. Laborers are greedy to make more money, just like businessmen. Government officials already have a high position, fame and status, yet they too are greedy for money.

There is an ancient saying about greed:

All day long a person stays busy just to keep from starving.
After eating his fill, his thoughts turn to clothing.
When he has abundant food and clothing,
He finds that his home lacks a beautiful wife.
Having acquired an elegant wife and pretty mistress,
He lacks a sedan-chair and a horse for his transportation.
Once he has a herd of mules and horses and a sedan-chair as well,
He still gets scorned because he doesn’t have an official post.
At fifth and fourth ranks, he is but a minor official.
Even in the third and second ranks, he considers his rank too low.
As prime minister, he becomes the top-ranking official in court.
Yet his ambition now is to ascend the throne and face the south.
One day he does ascend the throne and presides over the royal court.
But then he wants to play a game of chess with the immortals.

A sedan chair then, would be a car, a ship, or a plane now. But those with material possessions might still be mistreated if they didn’t become government officials. Ascending from petty officer to emperor, this person is still not satisfied. He wants to play chess with the immortals so as to gain immortality. This goes to show how the human mind is never satisfied. It is like a snake trying to swallow an elephant. How could the snake do it? That’s how people are. Due to their greed, they can never be content.

A Buddhist is a Buddhist. You cannot “be” a Buddhist. A Buddhist is a Buddhist, period. You cannot “be” a Buddhist or not be one. Buddhism encompasses all sentient beings. No sentient being can run outside of Buddhism. Why not? All sentient beings have the Buddha nature and can become Buddhas. Whether or not they believe in the Buddha, they are all Buddhists. It’s not the case that you are a Buddhist if and only if you believe in the Buddha. As long as you are a sentient being, you have the Buddha nature. Whether or not you believe in the Buddha, you have the Buddha nature. The only reason you might not have a Buddha nature would be that you were not a sentient being. But you wouldn’t dare say that you are not a sentient being.

Even the Bodhisattvas Manjushri, Universal Worthy, Guanyin, and Great Strength are sentient beings, so how could we not be sentient beings? Since we *are* sentient beings, we are of the same family as the Buddha. You may say that you are or are not a Buddhist, but that is your own opinion. In Buddhism, this is not even an issue. Not only are believers and nonbelievers both considered Buddhists, even those who scold the Buddha, beat the Buddha, or kill the Buddha are Buddhists; none of them have gone beyond the boundaries of Buddhism. Buddhism encompasses the whole scheme of things, not just one small piece of the picture. Even if you belong to another religion, you are included in Buddhism; you have not gone beyond Buddhism.

No matter which part of you is ailing, it is still a part of your body. Therefore, whether or not the sentient beings in the world believe in the Buddha, they are like a piece of flesh on the Buddha’s body; they all have the Buddha nature. They are one with the Buddha.

Six Types of Harmony:

When one’s nature is calm and demons are subdued,
one is happy every day.
When no discursive thoughts arise,
one is at peace everywhere.

Cultivators of the Way have to cultivate *samadhi*. How does one cultivate *samadhi*. First of all, one must hold the precepts. The precepts stop evil and prevent wrongdoing. Refrain from all evil and practice all good deeds.

Holding precepts requires that we constantly restrain and examine ourselves. We ask ourselves, “Have I created merit or offenses in the deeds I have done today? If I have created merit, then I ought to continue. If I have created offenses, I should quickly repent and reform.” Those who hold precepts should avoid obstructing other people. They must be careful never to cause anyone to retreat in their cultivation. That amounts to obstructing others from making the resolve for *bodhi*. If you obstruct others from making the *bodhi* resolve, you will not achieve rapid success in your own cultivation. You cannot disturb any sentient being, how much less one who has made the *bodhi* resolve. No matter who he is, if that person has made the Bodhi resolve, you ought to help him to succeed instead of ruining his resolve. If you do not hold the precepts clearly and you try to oppress others with your authority, you will not be able to cultivate the Way. Cultivators should be kind, humble, and reverent toward all. They must observe Six Types of Harmony:

* Harmony of bodies through dwelling together. You cannot say, “I can be here, but you cannot.” You have to live together. You cannot engage in physical, verbal, and psychological battles with your Dharma peers and fellow cultivators all day long. You have to live together in harmony. You should not be so absorbed in yourself that you have no consideration for anyone else. Don’t use your authority or status to oppress others. That’s not allowed. If you oppress people, you are not practicing “harmony in body through dwelling together.”
* Harmony of mouths through refraining from argument. Don’t use your mouth as a vehicle for debate and contention, always arguing your own case and putting others down. You should not think that you are better than everyone else.
* Harmony of minds through shared joy. In your thoughts you are in harmony with everyone. You should realize that the Way-place does not belong to you alone. It belongs to the entire assembly. Therefore, you cannot use force or oppression with people.
* Harmony of views through a common understanding. You cannot set yourself up as someone special and criticize everyone else as wrong, saying that your own view is superior. Everyone should have a shared understanding. You should not think you are special. What’s so special about you? If you don’t eat, you will starve just like anyone else. If you can go without food for a hundred days, you can consider yourself special. But can you do it? Humph! After seven days without food, you want to steal some food to eat. So, what’s so special about you?
* Harmony of precepts through common cultivation. Everyone must hold the precepts. You cannot say, “You have to hold these precepts, but I don’t.” The precepts must be held in common by everyone.
* Harmony of benefits through shared enjoyment. If there are any benefits, they should be shared by all. If one person enjoys all the benefits by himself, he is being selfish and unfair. He is partial to himself.

Those who have left the home-life should always be clear about the Six Types of Harmony. They should never obstruct or oppress their fellow cultivators. This is of foremost importance. You Yourselves Must Cultivate

You should all take yourselves seriously. Don’t see yourselves as worthless. Each person should fulfill his own duties, so as to avoid making mistakes in cause and effect. If you do not fulfill your duties according to your position, you are making mistakes in cause and effect. Therefore, I said, “When one’s nature is calm and demons are subdued, one is happy every day.” If your nature is calm and you can hold the precepts, no demon will bother you.

When one’s Way is lofty, dragons and tigers are subdued.
When one’s virtue is weighty, ghosts and spirits pay respect.

If you possess virtue, the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division will protect and support whatever you say. If you lack virtue, your words will not be efficacious. If you have virtue, everything you say will be efficacious. The line says, “When one’s Way is lofty, dragons and tigers are subdued.” When you attain the Way, the dragons coil up and the tigers crouch down in submission. When you have sufficient virtue, ghosts and spirits will respect you. They will bow and make obeisance as soon as they see you. They won’t be disrespectful.

When one’s nature is calm and the demons are subdued, one is happy every day. When false thoughts no longer arise, everywhere is peaceful and auspicious. If you indulge in false thinking all the time, no place that you go will be peaceful. When you’re on this mountain, that mountain looks higher to you. When you get to that mountain, you’re ready to go on to the next mountain. If cultivators cannot reflect upon themselves and find their own faults, but instead direct their attention outwards, they are making a grave mistake.

*Samadhi* is *gongfu* or skill in cultivation. If you lack *samadhi*, you lack skill. If you have *samadhi*, you have skill. To develop *samadhi*, you must first hold precepts. That will help you to gain *samadhi*. Holding precepts simply means stopping all evil. It means refraining from evil and doing all good. You should do good deeds, not bad ones. Then *samadhi* can arise. Once samadhi arises, you have to be able to pass tests. Adverse situations that don’t go your way are all tests. People who slander, scold, or beat you are testing you to see if you have samadhi. If you do, then when scolded, you think, “Who is being scolded. I don’t have a self, so who is he scolding?” You have no sense of self and no sense of others. Therefore, who is being scolded, and who is doing the scolding?

Just now I said you should not oppress people. If others dare to oppress you, they are truly your good and wise advisors. It is truly a case of:

Contemplate vicious words as merit.
Then the person becomes your good advisor.
Without his slander leading you to choose between hostility and friendship,
How could you demonstrate the power of compassion and patience with nonproduction?

If someone can scold you, no matter who he is, he is actually helping you to cultivate. However, if you help others to cultivate in that way, you yourself will accrue offenses. Who helped Shakyamuni Buddha to achieve Buddhahood? It was Devadatta, who tried to ruin the Buddha but failed. The Buddha realized Buddhahood, and Devadatta fell into the hells alive.

Good and evil are two different paths.
You can cultivate the one or commit the other.

If you want to cultivate the Way, you can; if you want to commit offenses, you can do that. It’s up to you. The teacher can only bring you in the door. You yourself must cultivate. If you don’t cultivate, your teacher can do nothing. You must end your own birth and death, just as you must eat your own food to get full.

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Worthy entered passages into inconceivable liberation full of seas of expedients, thus entering the Thus Come One’s sea of merit.**

**Commentary:**

**Moreover** indicates that the principles in the sutra which were not completely explained previously will now be further elucidated. **Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Worthy** has the greatest vows and practice. He made the Ten Great Kings of Vows, which encompass all vows within it. That is why they are kings among vows. The state of his cultivation is inconceivable, and the state he has entered is also inconceivable. Having entered this inconceivable state, he hopes all sentient beings will also enter it. The great Bodhisattva Universal Worthy **entered passages into inconceivable liberation full of seas of expedients**. What is inconceivable can neither be conceived by the mind nor expressed in language. What is a sea of expedients? The Buddha’s state and the inconceivable state entered by Universal Worthy Bodhisattva is such that when they are in the Pure Land of Eternal Stillness and Light, they need not formulate the thought to come to this world to teach and transform sentient beings. Without leaving the noumena of absolute truth, they are able to accomplish mundane deeds in accord with conventional truth. This is the inconceivable state of nonobstruction of phenomena and noumena.

The noumena are inconceivable, and so are the phenomena. The noumena do not obstruct the phenomena, and the phenomena do not obstruct the noumena. It is right within the noumena that phenomena are found. The phenomena themselves is the noumena. Thus, this is the expedient sea of the nonobstruction of phenomena and noumena.

There is another expedient: Right within the mind at the level of planting causes, the enlightenment of the ground of fruition is perfectly realized. The fruit of perfect enlightenment is achieved at the level of planting causes. Therefore, the cause is just the result, and the result is just the cause. Cause and result are interconnected. This is the expedient sea of the nonobstruction of phenomena and phenomena. Usually phenomena are mutually obstructive, but here they are not. Previously we mentioned the inconceivable state of the nonobstruction of phenomena and noumena. Now we are discussing the inconceivable state of the nonobstruction of phenomena and phenomena, which is an expedient sea.

**And** having entered these inconceivable expedient seas, the Bodhisattva **thus entered the Thus Come One’s sea of merit.** The Buddha did not pass up the opportunity to do a meritorious deed even if it was as tiny as a particle of dust. Over the days and months, the Thus Come One’s merit accumulated until it was a vast as an ocean.

**Sutra:**

**These include a passage into liberation called adorning and purifying all Buddhalands and taming sentient beings, enabling them to ultimately gain transcendence; and a passage into liberation called universally visiting all Thus Come Ones and cultivating states of perfect merit.**

**Commentary:**

**These include a passage into liberation**. Universal Worthy Bodhisattva cultivated these entrances into liberation. Now that we sentient beings know about them, we can also cultivate according to these entrances into liberation. One of these passages into liberations is **called adorning and purifying all Buddhalands and taming sentient beings.** He can make all Buddhas’ lands especially adorned—not only adorned, but pure and immaculate. Mundane types of decoration have a gaudy worldliness about them; they are not removed from defilement. But this adornment is pure and free from all defilement. What is defilement? Greed, anger, and delusion are all defilements.

Lust is also defiled. With these types of defilement, you cannot transcend the Three Realms. Now, the Bodhisattva can adorn and purify all Buddhas’ lands in the ten directions throughout space and the Dharma Realm. He can also tame and subdue sentient beings. Why does he adorn the Buddhas’ lands? Is it because the Buddhas like everything to be pretty and beautiful? No, it’s for the sake of taming sentient beings. Sentient beings are hard to subdue, teach and transform. But when the lands are purified, sentient beings’ defilements of greed, anger, and delusion disappear and no longer arise. To tame and subdue sentient beings means to help those with bad habits get rid of their bad habits, to help those with tempers get of their tempers, to help angry beings dispel their anger, the help beings with defiled thoughts get rid of those defiled thoughts. When sentient beings’ bad habits and faults are all gone, they can return to their original source. That is to tame sentient beings, **enabling them to ultimately gain transcendence** and escape the great sea of birth and death.

All of us in the world are in the bitter sea of birth and death. When we feel that a certain thing is good and something else is bad, there is suffering. When we dislike one thing and like another, we will also suffer. Our false thoughts send us spinning around, and we undergo rebirth in the six paths. Rebirth does not only occur when someone dies and gets reborn as a cow, a horse, a hungry ghost, a hell-being, an *asura*, or a god. By merely having a good thought, we can be reborn in the heavens. Or by having an evil thought, we can fall into the hells. If we have an ordinary thought, we can be people again. When we have an angry thought, we become *asuras*. Our false thoughts make us turn on the wheel of rebirth. Since we have these false thoughts in the field of our eighth consciousness, false karma is created externally. Without these false thoughts, karma would not be created. All karma is created out of delusion—falseness. Deluded, beings create karma, and consequently must undergo the retribution. That’s why we cannot escape the turning wheel of the six paths of rebirth.

If we want to escape the six paths of rebirth, we must enter the passage into liberation of adorning and purifying all Buddhalands and taming sentient beings. If we enter this passage into liberation, we can escape the Three Realms and ultimately gain transcendence.

**And** he entered another **passage into liberation called universally visiting all Thus Come Ones**, going to the lands of all Buddhas, **and cultivating states of perfect merit.** The merit of the Buddha is full and perfect, neither deficient nor excessive. The Buddha is doubly adorned with blessings and wisdom. His blessings are perfect, and so is his wisdom. His state is one of adornment with blessings and wisdom. This passage into liberation is named “universally visiting all Thus Come Ones and cultivating states of perfect merit.”

**Sutra:**

**Another passage into liberation is called establishing all Bodhisattva grounds and an ocean of great vows. Another passage into liberation is called everywhere manifesting measureless bodies as numerous as the dust motes in the Dharma Realm. Another passage into liberation is called proclaiming the inconceivable numbers of distinct names throughout all lands.**

**Commentary:**

Among the passages realized by Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, **another passage into liberation is called** securely **establishing all Bodhisattva grounds**. To establish all Bodhisattva grounds means to cultivate all Bodhisattva practices and to achieve the Bodhisattvas’ merit . **And** having accomplished that merit, the Bodhisattva has **an ocean of great vows.**

**Another passage into liberation is called everywhere manifesting measureless bodies as numerous as the dust motes in the Dharma Realm.** The Buddhas’ Dharma bodies and the bodies of Bodhisattvas are measureless in number. **Another passage into liberation** cultivated by Universal Worthy Bodhisattva **is called proclaiming the inconceivable numbers of distinct names throughout all lands.** He expounds the different names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas every day, not only in one land, but in all lands.

**Sutra:**

**Another passage into liberation is called displaying in every mote of dust the states of the spiritual powers of boundless Bodhisattvas.**

**Commentary:**

**Another passage into liberation is called displaying in every mote of dust the states of the spiritual powers of boundless Bodhisattvas.** This is referring to the motes of dust not in merely one world, but in worlds as numerous as motes of dust. How many worlds is that? Suppose each particle of dust is a world, and in each world are boundless, innumerable, and limitless Bodhisattvas. Each Bodhisattva has his own spiritual powers and states of mind. Although they may be in the same particle of dust, their spiritual powers and states of mind differ. Infinitely many particles of dust display infinitely many Bodhisattvas, who in turn reveal infinitely many states of spiritual powers. That is one of the passages into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Another passage into liberation is called, within a single thought, displaying the eons of formation, destruction, and so on in the three periods of time. Another passage into liberation is called manifesting the sea of all Bodhisattvas’ faculties, each of which enters its own state. Another passage into liberation is called using the strength of spiritual powers to manifest various bodies that pervade boundless dharma realms.**

**Commentary:**

**Another passage into liberation is called, within a single thought, displaying the eons of formation, destruction, and so on in the three periods of time.** Within the briefest instant of time—a single thought—all past, present, and future *kalpas* are revealed. *Kalpa*, translated as “eon,” is a Sanskrit word meaning “division of time.” Measureless *kalpas* or eons represent a measureless duration of time. Eons in the three periods of time cover the past, present, and future. One eons equals 139,600 years. One thousand of these eons makes a small eon.

Another way to explain it is: The average human life span begins at 84,000 years and decreases by one year every hundred years. The average human height also decreases by one inch every hundred years. When the average life span has decreased to ten years, it begins to increase again, increasing by one year every hundred years. Human height also grows by one inch every hundred years. The life span will again reach 84,000 years, and that will complete one eon. One thousand of these eons (consisting of one period of increase and one period of decrease) makes one small eon. Twenty small eons make a medium eon. Four medium eons make one great eon. It takes twenty small eons for a world to form. After formation, the world dwells for twenty small eons, decays for twenty small eons, and finally returns to emptiness for twenty small eons. The four stages of formation, dwelling, decay, and emptiness comprise one great *kalpa*. Formation, dwelling, decay, and emptiness occurred in the past, are occurring in the present, and will occur in the future. The four medium eons of formation, dwelling, decay, and emptiness together make one great eon. Thus the phrase “eons of formation, destruction, and so on” refers to formation, dwelling, decay, and emptiness.

People go through formation, dwelling, decay, and emptiness as well, except that the stages are named birth, dwelling, change, and extinction. The stage of birth, lasting twenty years, corresponds to the eon of formation. During those first twenty years, a person cannot accomplish much. The next stage, that of dwelling, can be quite productive. It is followed by the stages of change and extinction, which means one ceases to be. The first twenty years of life belong to the stage of birth. The next twenty years correspond to dwelling, the next twenty to change, and the final twenty to extinction. That is how an eighty-year human life span can be divided into stages of formation, dwelling, decay, and emptiness. These states manifest in a single thought.

**Another passage into liberation is called manifesting the sea of all Bodhisattvas’ faculties, each of which enters its own state.** The faculties of Bodhisattvas refer to their eyes, ears, noses, tongues, bodies, and minds. Their faculties differ from our human ones. A Bodhisattva’s eyes can see, hear, smell, taste, feel, and know things. His eyes possess all of these abilities. Ears are basically used for hearing, but they can also see, eat, smell good and bad scents, and taste flavors. The tongue can taste, yet the ears have this ability as well. The six faculties can be used interchangeably. The ears can see; the eyes can hear and eat. Take a look at the Bodhisattva’s state of six faculties functioning interchangeably. Each faculty enters its own different state.

**Another passage into liberation is called using the strength of spiritual powers to manifest various bodies that pervade boundless Dharma realms.** They manifest various kinds of bodies, not necessarily the bodies of Bodhisattvas, gods, *Yakshas*, or *gandharvas*.

Speaking of *gandharvas*, let me tell you an anecdote. I used to pronounce the Chinese term for *gandharva* “*qian ta po*,” but when we were in Hong Kong, one of my disciples said my pronunciation was incorrect. He said it should be pronounced *gan da po*, so now I will correct myself and pronounce it *gan da po*. I don’t know if anyone else took note of this. He says that the Sanskrit is pronounced more like *gan da po*, so now we will pronounce it that way. Although he is my disciple, I am ready to accept his criticisms. This is because we are in a democratic country, so we should learn the democratic way of doing things. It should not be that the teacher is high and mighty, while his disciples are beneath his feet, so that when the teacher asserts that chicken eggs grow on trees, his disciples have to say, “Yes, yes.” It cannot be that way. Chinese Buddhism is that way. Those good advisors say, “You know where eggs come from? They grow on trees.” And no one dares to oppose them. This tyrannical method will not work here. We have to be democratic.

So, in the future, remember to pronounce *gandharva* in Chinese as *gan da po*. The same character in Chinese can be pronounced *qian* or *gan*. My disciple’s logic isn’t that sound, because Chinese is not his native language. However, since I like to listen to my disciples, I will go along with him.

**Sutra:**

**Another passage into liberation is called revealing the sequential doors of dharmas cultivated by all Bodhisattvas, by which they enter the vast, great expedients of All Wisdom.**

**At that time, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Worthy, by his own merit and further by receiving the Thus Come One’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the sea of the assembled multitudes and spoke the following verses.**

**Commentary:**

**Another passage into liberation is called revealing the sequential doors of the dharmas cultivated by all Bodhisattvas by which they enter the vast, great expedients of All Wisdom.** This passage into liberation reveals how Bodhisattvas cultivate the Six Paramitas and the myriad practices. There is a sequence to their cultivation: for example, they start out with giving, then uphold precepts, then practice patience, vigor, *dhyana* concentration, and *prajña*. They cultivate step by step until they have perfected them all. Having perfected the cultivation of the Six Paramitas and the myriad practices, they enter All Wisdom, which comprises the vastest of expedients. It includes limitless expedient means.

**At that time, the** great **Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Worthy, by his own merit** cultivated in past lives throughout seas of eons, **and further by receiving the Thus Come One’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the sea of the assembled multitudes**, sentient beings as profuse as an ocean, **and spoke the following verses** to elucidate what had already been spoken in prose.

**Sutra:**

**The vast, great lands adorned by the Buddha
Are equal in number to all the fine motes of dust.
They are filled with pure disciples of the Buddha.
He rains down inconceivable Dharma of utmost wonder.**

**Commentary:**

**The vast, great lands adorned by the Buddha**. The Pure Dharma body Vairochana Buddha adorns the vast, great lands of all Buddhas. How many lands are there? They **are equal in number to all the fine motes of dust** pervading space and the Dharma realm. **They are filled with pure disciples of the Buddha**. Each Buddha land is filled with Buddhist disciples who practice purity. There are three kinds of disciples of the Buddha:

1. *Outer disciples.* These are ordinary beings. They are outside of the Buddhadharma because they have not yet understood it, yet they are still considered outer disciples of the Buddha. That’s why we say, “All sentient beings have the Buddha nature and can become Buddhas.” Since all sentient beings can become Buddhas, they are all disciples of the Buddha. The only way you would not have the opportunity to become a Buddha would be if you were not a sentient being. If you are a sentient being, then regardless of whether or not you believe in the Buddha, you have the opportunity to become a Buddha one day. Ordinary people are outer disciples of the Buddha.

2. *Common disciples:* “Common” means a great number—the masses. What kinds of sentient beings are common disciples? Arhats, that is, those of the Two Vehicles (Hearers and Sages Enlightened by Conditions) are. Hearers and Sages Enlightened by Conditions are not born from the genuine great Dharma of the Buddha. That’s why they are called common disciples.

3. *True disciples*:. True disciples are born from the Buddha’s mouth and transformed from the Dharma. They are born from the true and proper Dharma.

Which kind of disciple is the text referring to here? It refers to true disciples—we know because they are “pure disciples pure in body and mind. When the karma of the body is pure, there is no killing, stealing, or lust. When the karma of the mind is pure, there is no greed, anger, or delusion. When the karma of the mouth is pure, there is no frivolous speech, lying, harsh speech, or divisive speech. Thus, they are called pure disciples of the Buddha. They are the Buddha’s true disciples—great Bodhisattvas—and they pervasively fill all Buddhalands.

**He rains down inconceivable Dharma of utmost wonder.** The Buddha’s speaking of Dharma is like rain—a rain of the most subtle, wonderful Dharma, which cannot be conceived of by the mind or expressed in words.

**Sutra:**

**Just as the Buddha is seen seated in this assembly,
It is the same in every particle of dust.
The Buddha’s body neither goes nor comes,
Yet it appears with clarity in every land.**

**He elucidates the practices that Bodhisattvas cultivate,
Their measureless grounds and all expedients,
And expounds the inconceivable true principle,
Enabling the Buddha’s disciples to enter the Dharma Realm.**

**He creates transformation Buddhas as numerous as dustmotes,
Universally responding to the wishes of all beings.
He enters the profound Dharma Realm’s expedient doors—
They are vast and boundless, yet he proclaims them all.**

**The Thus Come One’s names are equal to the world,
Completely filling the lands of the ten directions.
None of the expedients are used in vain;
They tame sentient beings, freeing them from defilement.**

**Commentary:**

**Just as the Buddha is seen seated** on the lion’s throne **in this assembly,** speaking the Dharma for sentient beings, **it is the same in every particle of dust**. In all lands as numerous as dust motes, there are Buddhas holding Dharma assemblies, speaking Dharma for sentient beings, each from his lion’s throne.

**The Buddha’s body neither goes nor comes**. Does the Buddha go to all those other lands? No. Then does the Buddha come to this land? No. The Buddha’s body is thus, thus, unmoving, clear and constantly bright, neither coming nor going. **Yet it appears with clarity in every land.** Although the Buddha neither comes nor goes anywhere, his body appears in every land.

**He elucidates the practices that Bodhisattvas cultivate, / Their measureless grounds and all expedients** . The Bodhisattvas’ dharma doors, their positions, their vows, their ten supreme practices and ten kinds of expedients are clarified. If you would like to know more about the ten supreme practices and ten kinds of expedients, you can look them up in a Buddhist dictionary. **And expounds the** wondrous, **inconceivable true principle** of the Ten Suchnesses, **enabling the Buddha’s disciples to enter the Dharma Realm.** The minds of all disciples of the Buddha pervade the Dharma Realm, as do their spiritual powers and their speaking of Dharma.

**He creates** limitlessly many **transformation Buddhas as numerous as dustmotes, / Universally responding to the wishes of all beings.** He speaks whatever Dharma each sentient being likes to hear. **He enters the profound Dharma Realm’s expedient doors— / They are vast and boundless, yet he proclaims them all.** The Buddha expounds all of these inconceivable, vast and boundless dharma doors.

**The Thus Come One’s names are equal to the** number of dustmotes in the **world**,

**Completely filling the lands of the ten directions.** The Buddha’s Dharma and his titles fill all lands in the ten directions. **None of the expedients are used in vain**. None of the expedient Dharma-doors the Buddha uses to teach and transform sentient beings are applied in vain. **They tame sentient beings, freeing them from defilement.** He tames all the obstinate sentient beings, getting them to renounce defiled dharmas and develop pure minds. Defiled dharmas refer to the activities of worldly people. Pure dharmas refer to the transcendental activities of those who have renounced the household life. You should understand what defiled dharmas and pure dharmas are.

**Sutra:**

**In every fine mote of dust, the Buddha
Displays boundless, great spiritual powers.
Seated in every *bodhimanda*, he proclaims
The Buddha’s past practices for *bodhi*.**

**Throughout vast eons in the three periods of time,
The Buddha manifests in thought after thought.
His inconceivable wisdom fully perceives
All the events of formation and decay therein.**

**Commentary:**

**In every fine mote of dust** , that is, in lands as numerous as dust motes, **the Buddha displays boundless, great spiritual powers. / Seated in every *bodhimanda*** in every land**, he proclaims** the unsurpassed, wonderful Dharma, revealing **the Buddha’s past practices for *bodhi***, causing all sentient beings to make a commitment to *bodhi*.

**Throughout vast eons in the three periods of time**—the past, present, and future—**the Buddha manifests** these states **in thought after thought. / His inconceivable wisdom fully perceives / All the events of formation and decay therein.** This refers to the events of formation, dwelling, decay, and emptiness in the past, the present, and the future. Four medium eons make one large eon. The processes of formation, dwelling, decay, and emptiness are clearly revealed. The Buddha has inconceivable, wonderful wisdom, which allow him to thoroughly understand all these states.

**Sutra:**

**The assembly of the Buddha’s disciples is limitlessly vast.
They all wish to fathom the realm of the Buddhas.
The Buddhas’ dharma doors are without bounds.
It is difficult indeed to completely understand them all.**

**Commentary:**

**The assembly of the Buddha’s disciples is limitlessly vast.** There are innumerable Bodhisattvas, Sages of the Two Vehicles, and ordinary beings in the Dharma assembly. **They all wish to fathom** and understand **the realm of the Buddhas. / The Buddhas’** states and **dharma doors are without bounds. / It is difficult indeed to completely** fathom and **understand them all.** It is not easy to do.

**Sutra:**

**Free from differentiation, the Buddha resembles space.
The impartial true Dharma Realm relies upon nothing.
He manifests as going to every location without exception
To sit in the *bodhimanda* and realize right enlightenment.**

**The Buddha teaches extensively with a wondrous voice
Making all the grounds clearly understood.
Appearing before each and every sentient being,
He exhaustively gives them the Thus Come One’s impartial Dharma.**

**Commentary:**

**Free from differentiation, the Buddha resembles space.** The Buddha’s Dharma body pervades all places, nowhere present and nowhere absent. The Buddha is exactly the same as space. You may say he exists, yet you cannot see him. You may say he doesn’t exist, yet he permeates all of space. Would you say that space exists or not? You may say there is no space, yet space exists. You may say there is such a thing as space, yet it is empty. The Buddha’s Dharma body is the same way, being without differentiations.

**The impartial true Dharma Realm relies upon nothing.** The One True Dharma Realm itself depends on nothing, yet it is what all the myriad things depend upon. **He manifests as going to every location without exception**. The Buddha’s Dharma body transforms itself and manifests in every land. His transformation bodies can be found in all lands as numerous as particles of dust. His Dharma body goes to all places and all lands **to sit in the *bodhimanda*** beneath the *bodhi* tree **and realize right enlightenment.**

**The Buddha teaches extensively** the Buddhadharma in every place **with awondrous** Dharma **voice**, in a way that people can understand, **making all the grounds** from the First Ground to Equal Enlightenment **clearly understood.** Those between the First Ground and Equal Enlightenment are called Great Knights of the Dharma body. They cultivate the Dharma and attain the truth, and so they understand all the grounds.

**Appearing before each and every sentient being, / He exhaustively gives them the Thus Come One’s impartial Dharma.** The Buddha speaks the Dharma for every sentient being, giving them the Thus Come One’s impartial, wonderful Dharma, which does not discriminate between one or the other.

VII. C.4.b. Ten “Universal” Bodhisattvas each gain one door

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Pure Virtue’s Wondrous Light gained a passage into liberation of traveling to all the magnificent *bodhimandas* of the Bodhisattva assemblies in the ten directions. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Supremely Luminous Lantern of Universal Virtue gained a passage into liberation of displaying, in a single thought, infinite passages for realizing proper enlightenment; and teaching, transforming, and bringing to maturity inconceivable realms of sentient beings. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Lion Banner of Universal Light gained a passage into liberation of cultivating the Bodhisattva’s blessings and virtue in order to adorn and create all Buddhalands.**

**Commentary:**

**Moreover, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Pure Virtue’s Wondrous Light gained a passage into liberation of traveling to all the adorned *bodhimandas* of the Bodhisattva assemblies in the ten directions.** He can go to all the adorned *bodhimandas* of the multitudes of Bodhisattvas throughout the ten directions. That is his passage into liberation.

**Bodhisattva Mahasattva Supremely Luminous Lantern of Universal Virtue gained a passage into liberation of displaying, in a single thought, infinite passages for realizing proper enlightenment; and teaching, transforming, and bringing to maturity inconceivable realms of sentient beings.** In a single thought, he reveals infinitely many Buddhas realizing proper enlightenment, and he also teaches and transforms sentient beings and brings them to maturity. This is an inconceivable state in the realm of sentient beings, as well as being his passage into liberation.

**Bodhisattva Mahasattva Lion Banner of Universal Light gained a passage into liberation of cultivating the Bodhisattva’s blessings and virtue**—cultivating the Six Paramitas and the myriad practices and doing all kinds of good deeds—**in order to adorn and create all Buddhalands.** Originally the Buddhalands were not there, but he can adorn them and make them manifest. That is his passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhisattva Mahasattva Splendid Light of Universal Jeweled Flames gained a passage into liberation of contemplating the state of the Buddha’s spiritual powers without being confused. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Voice with Merit and Virtue Like a Banner or Ocean gained a passage into liberation of displaying the adornments of all Buddhalands in the *bodhimanda* of a single assembly. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Wisdom-Light Illuminating the Thus Come One’s Realm gained a passage into liberation of following the Thus Come One to contemplate the profound, vast, great treasury of the Dharma Realm.**

**Commentary:**

**Bodhisattva Mahasattva Splendid Light of Universal Jeweled Flames gained a passage into liberation of contemplating the state of the Buddha’s spiritual powers without being confused** himself. That is his passage into liberation.

**Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Voice with Merit and Virtue Like a Banner or Ocean gained a passage into liberation of displaying the adornments of all Buddhalands in the *bodhimanda* of a single assembly.** Within a single Dharma assembly, he can display all the adorned lands and splendid Way-places of the Buddhas of the ten directions. That is his passage into liberation.

**The** next **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Universal Wisdom-Light Illuminating the Thus Come One’s Realm**. His light illumines the realm of the Thus Come One. He **gained a passage into liberation of following the Thus Come One**—the Buddha—**to contemplate the** unsurpassed, **profound, vast, great treasury of the Dharma Realm.** He could understand the principle of the Dharma realm.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhisattva Mahasattva Delightful Sounds that Bring Universal Enlightenment gained a passage into liberation of drawing near to and serving all Buddhas and presenting a plethora of offerings. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Purity and Majestic Light of Infinite Blessings gained a passage into liberation of producing all spiritual transformations to vastly bestow aid. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Jeweled Cowl and Flower Banner gained a passage into liberation of universally entering all worldly practices and giving rise to the Bodhisattva’s boundless methods of practice. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Supreme Light from Universal Characteristics gained a passage into liberation of displaying all Buddhas’ states within a Dharma Realm that is devoid of characteristics.**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Pure Virtue’s Wondrous Light received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the ocean of all the Bodhisattvas’ passages into liberation, and spoke the following verses.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Delightful Sounds that Bring Universal Enlightenment** .He enlightens sentient beings and makes them happy. Sentient beings are saved upon hearing the sound of his voice, hence his name. He **gained a passage into liberation of drawing near to and serving all Buddhas and presenting a plethora of offerings.** He constantly attends upon the Buddhas and makes offerings to them. That is his passage into liberation.

**Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Purity and Majestic Light of Infinite Blessings gained a passage into liberation of producing all spiritual transformations to vastly bestow aid** upon sentient beings, inspiring them to commit themselves to realizing *bodhi*. **Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Jeweled Cowl and Flower Banner gained a passage into liberation of universally entering all worldly practices and giving rise to the Bodhisattva’s boundless methods of practice.** He attained that passage into liberation.

**Bodhisattva Mahasattva Supreme Light from Universal Characteristics gained a passage into liberation of displaying all Buddhas’ states within a Dharma Realm that is devoid of characteristics.** Within a Dharma Realm that is basically free from characteristics and appearances, he can manifest the states of all Buddhas. That is his passage into liberation.

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Pure Virtue’s Wondrous Light received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the ocean of all the Bodhisattvas’ passages into liberation, and spoke the following verses** to further explain the principles.

**Sutra:**

**Every land in the ten directions
Is adorned and purified in an instant.
With a wondrous voice he turns the Dharma wheel.
Throughout all worlds, there is none equal to the Buddha.**

**Commentary:**

**Every land** in worlds **in the ten directions**—the zenith, the nadir, the four cardinal and four intermediate directions. In every Buddhaland, there is a Buddha speaking Dharma and turning the great Dharma wheel. Every land in the ten directions **is adorned and purified in an instant**—an extremely short time. **With a wondrous**, inconceivable **voice he turns the** great **Dharma wheel** and speaks the Dharma for sentient beings. **Throughout all worlds, there is none equal to the Buddha.** Throughout the worlds of the ten directions, there is no sound more wondrous than that of the Buddha. Nor is there any principle more perfect that that expounded by the Buddha. Therefore, throughout the world, there is none equal to the Buddha.

**Sutra:**

**Boundless is the realm of the Thus Come One.
In a single thought he completely fills the Dharma Realm.
In every dust mote a *bodhimanda* is established,
Where all can realize *bodhi* and develop spiritual transformations.**

**The World Honored One cultivated all practices
For measureless hundreds of thousands of eons.
He adorns each and every Buddhaland,
Manifesting freely like space.**

**The Buddha’s spiritual powers are limitless.
They completely fill boundless eons.
One could spend innumerable eons
Observing them continually without tiring.**

**Behold the state of the Buddha’s spiritual powers:
They adorn and purify all lands in the ten directions.
In each and every land, they manifest**—
**Limitless in variety, different in every thought.**

**Commentary:**

**Boundless is the realm of the Thus Come One.** The realm of the Thus Come One cannot be fathomed, for it is boundless and infinite. **In a single thought he completely fills the** ten directions of the **Dharma Realm. / In every dust mote a *bodhimanda* is established** by the Buddha, **where** he turns the great Dharma wheel to teach and transform sentient beings, so **all can realize *bodhi* and develop spiritual transformations.** The Buddha enables all sentient beings within dharma realms as numerous as motes of dust to set up Way-places as numerous as motes of dust, causing sentient beings as measureless as motes of dust to realize *bodhi*, the Way of Enlightenment, and be endowed with spiritual transformations.

**The World Honored One**, one of the ten titles by which the Buddha is known, **cultivated all practices**—the Six Paramitas and the myriad practices—**for immeasurable hundreds of thousands of** great **eons**—such a long time. **Adorning each and every Buddhaland, / He manifests freely like space.** The Buddha can make an appearance in any land he wishes. Nothing can hinder him, because his Dharma body is like space.

**The Buddha’s** Dharma body pervades the Dharma realm, and his **spiritual powers are limitless.** No one can quantify them. **They completely fill boundless** great **eons. / One could spend innumerable eons, / Observing them continually without tiring.**

**Behold the state of the Buddha’s spiritual powers: / They adorn and purify all lands in the ten directions.** The lands of all Buddhas are ornamented and pure. **In each and every land,** before every sentient being, **they manifest— / Limitless in variety, different in every thought.** The Buddha displays different spiritual powers before each sentient being. His spiritual powers differ from one thought to the next and are limitless in variety.

**Sutra:**

**For measureless hundreds of thousands of eons, contemplate the Buddha
With totally undivided attention.
The Thus Come One has unobstructed expedient doors.
This light universally shines upon inconceivable lands.**

**In former eons when Thus Come One was in the world,
He attended upon Buddhas as boundless as an ocean.
Therefore all beings, like madly rushing streams,
Come to make offerings to the One Honored by the World.**

**The Thus Come One appears pervasively in the ten directions,
In measureless lands within each and every mote of dust.
All the states therein are measureless,
Dwelling throughout boundless and infinite eons.**

**In eons gone by, when the Buddha was a sentient being,
He cultivated an ocean of boundless great compassion.
Entering *samsara* along with sentient beings,
He universally transforms the multitudes, making them pure.**

**In the treasury of the Dharma Realm of True Suchness, the Buddha dwells—
Devoid of forms and characteristics, free from all defilement.
When sentient beings behold his various bodies,
Their woes and difficulties vanish one and all.**

**Commentary:**

**For measureless hundreds of thousands of eons, contemplate the Buddhas / With totally undivided attention.** Observe the Buddhas for that huge amount of time without resting for even a moment or shifting your attention away by even a hairsbreadth. **The Thus Come One has unobstructed expedient doors.** The Buddha has expedient dharma doors that are mutually nonobstructing. **This** Buddha **light universally shines upon** measureless, **inconceivable** Buddhas’ **lands** throughout hundreds of thousands of eons.

**In former eons when Thus Come One was** a sentient being **in the world, / He attended upon Buddhas as boundless as an ocean.** He cultivated all their Dharma, made offerings to them all, made obeisance to them, and served them with the utmost sincerity. He serve not just one Buddha, but measurelessly and boundlessly many Buddhas in the ten directions—Buddhas so numerous that they resembled an ocean. **Therefore all** sentient being**s**—including all the Bodhisattvas and Arhats—**like madly rushing streams** flowing into the ocean, **come to make offerings to the One Honored by the World**, the Buddha.

**The Thus Come One** constantly **appears pervasively in the** lands of the **ten directions, / In measureless lands within each and every mote of dust. / All the states** of the Buddha **therein are measureless** and distinct from one another. **Dwelling throughout boundless and infinite eons.** The Buddha’s spiritual powers and transformations, as well as his other qualities, are infinite and boundless. He has perfected them through infinite eons of cultivation.

**In eons gone by, when the Buddha was a sentient being, / He cultivated an ocean of boundless great compassion.** The Buddha cultivated a heart of great compassion, a heart which grieves with Heaven and pities the people. He could not bear to see sentient beings in suffering, and the sight of it called forth his great compassion. His great compassion, which gave him the ability to save all beings, resembles an ocean. He cultivated that ocean of great compassion every day, so that it grew ever larger. **Entering *samsara* along with sentient beings,** the Buddha underwent births and deaths. In order to teach sentient beings, the Buddha gave himself up for the sake of sentient beings, often entering the great ocean of birth and death with them. **He universally** teaches and **transforms the multitudes** of sentient beings**, making them pure**, helping them to attain their inherent pure substance.

**In the treasury of the Dharma Realm of True Suchness , the Buddha dwells— / Devoid of forms and characteristics, free from all defilement.** Why is the Buddha devoid of forms and characteristics? He has gone beyond all forms and characteristics. He has separated from all impure, defiled dharmas and has attained the bliss of *nirvana* —the happiness of True Suchness, self-mastery, and impartiality. He has no more defiled thoughts and is thus “free from all defilement.” **When sentient beings behold his various bodies, / Their woes and difficulties vanish one and all.** The sight of the Buddha’s various different bodies dispels sentient beings’ woes and calamities.

VII. C.4.c. Ten Bodhisattvas of distinct names each gain one dharma door

**Sutra:**

**Moreover, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Ocean Moonlight’s Great Radiance gained a passage into liberation of using expedient means in bringing into being all Bodhisattva grounds and *paramitas*, teaching and transforming sentient beings, and adorning and purifying all Buddhalands.**

**Commentary:**

**Moreover,** to elaborate further upon the principles of the sutra, **Bodhisattva Mahasattva Ocean Moonlight’s Great Radiance gained a passage into liberation of using expedient means in bringing into being all Bodhisattva grounds** . This great Bodhisattva can manifest all the Bodhisattva grounds, from the First Ground all the way up to Equal Enlightenment, **and** all the ***paramitas***—methods for reaching the other shore. *Paramita* is a Sanskrit word that means “arriving at the other shore.” These methods are for the purpose of **teaching and transforming sentient beings, and adorning and purifying all Buddhalands.** This is an expedient dharma door of liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhisattva Mahasattva Immaculate Treasury of Thunderclouds and Shining Seas gained a passage into liberation of universally entering various, distinct locations in all dharma realms in thought after thought. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Jeweled Cowl Born of Wisdom gained a passage into liberation of displaying pure, great meritorious virtues before all sentient beings throughout inconceivable eons. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Pure Light of Meritorious Virtues and Majestic Freedom gained a passage into liberation of universally viewing the various adornments of all Bodhisattvas in the ten directions upon their arrival at the *bodhimanda*. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Lotus Headdress of Proficient Courage gained a passage into liberation of universally revealing all Buddhadharmas according to the ocean of sentient beings’ faculties and understanding.**

**Commentary:**

The next **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Immaculate Treasury of Thunderclouds and Shining Seas** . He **gained a passage into liberation of universally entering various, distinct locations in all dharma realms in thought after thought.** That is, he enters all kinds of different Way-places in each of the dharma realms. Thenext **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Jeweled Cowl Born of Wisdom**. This great Bodhisattva **gained a passage into liberation of displaying pure, great meritorious virtues before all sentient beings throughout inconceivable eons**. Throughout that vast span of time which can neither be mentally conceived nor verbally expressed, he can manifest for sentient beings a great treasury of merit which is pure, unsullied by greed, anger, and delusion. The absence of greed, anger, and delusion is a great treasury of merit . The lack of defilement is also a great treasury of merit. He entered this passage into liberation.

The next **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** isnamed **Pure Light of Meritorious Virtues and Majestic Freedom.** This great Bodhisattva **gained a passage into liberation of universally viewing the various adornments of all Bodhisattvas in the ten directions**—including Bodhisattvas of the past, the present, and the future—**upon their arrival at the** Buddha’s ***bodhimanda*.** When those Bodhisattvas first arrive at the Buddha’s Way-place, all kinds of adornments and inconceivable states are seen. This Bodhisattva attained this passage into liberation.

The next **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Lotus Headdress of Proficient Courage** . This great Bodhisattva **gained a passage into liberation of universally revealing all Buddhadharmas according to the ocean of sentient beings’ faculties and understanding.** Each sentient being has his own disposition and its own unique understanding of the principles. Sentient beings’ faculties may be sharp or dull; that is, they may be intelligent or dull-witted. Between the most intelligent and the dullest beings, there is an ocean of different variations in faculties and understanding. This line of text can be interpreted as referring to all sentient beings with their differing faculties and understanding, or to one particular sentient being, whose faculties are very keen and whose understanding is as vast as an ocean.

“How can this line be interpreted as referring to one sentient being?” you ask. If it can be explained as referring to many sentient beings, why can’t it also be explained as talking about one sentient being?

The many are just the one ; the one is just the many. One and many are nondual.

The many come about from the one. The one is a portion of the many. Therefore, the one represents the many; the many, the one. The realm of the *Flower Adornment Sutra* is such that it destroy people’s attachments. Any explanation that is logically sound and not self-contradictory is acceptable. Therefore, the word for “all” can be explained as “one.”

Since sentient beings’ faculties and understanding resemble an ocean, it is not sufficient to reveal only a few dharmas to them. They would not be satisfied. That’s why this passage into liberation is that of “universally revealing all Buddhadharmas.” The Bodhisattva instructs sentient beings in all Buddhadharmas until they understand it all. That Bodhisattva obtained this passage into liberation.

**Sutra:**

**Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universal Wisdom Resembling Banners of Clouds and Sun gained a passage into liberation of perfecting the Thus Come One’s wisdom and eternally dwelling throughout immeasurable eons. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Adamantine Navel of Great Vigor gained a passage into liberation of universally entering the power derived from the imprint of boundless Dharma seals. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Banner of Fragrant Blazing Light gained a passage into liberation of displaying all present Buddhas’ initial cultivation of Bodhisattva conduct up to their perfection of accumulated wisdom. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Resplendent Virtue and Beautiful Sound gained a passage into liberation of peacefully dwelling in the ocean of all the great vows of Vairochana. Bodhisattva Mahasattva Light of Great Blessings Born of Wisdom gained a passage into liberation of displaying the profound state of the Thus Come One’s omnipresence in the Dharma realm.**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Ocean Moonlight’s Great Radiance received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the adorned, oceanic multitudes of all the Bodhisattvas, and spoke the following verses.**

**Commentary:**

The next great **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Universal Wisdom Resembling Banners of Clouds and Sun** . That is his virtuous title. He **gained a passage into liberation of perfecting the Thus Come One’s wisdom and eternally dwelling throughout immeasurable eons.** Having attained the Buddha’s wisdom, he can stay in the world for infinitely many eons to practice the Bodhisattva Way. That is his passage into liberation. Thenext **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Adamantine Navel of Great Vigor** . His great vigor includes both physical and mental vigor. He has a healthy body, and so his name is Adamantine Navel of Great Vigor. This great Bodhisattva **gained a passage into liberation of universally entering the power derived from the imprint of boundless Dharma seals.** He has thoroughly understood the true appearance of all dharmas. All dharmas are perfectly interpenetrating and have connected with his own mind. He attained this passage into liberation of the power of Dharma seals.

The next great **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Banner of Fragrant Blazing Light**. That is his virtuous title. He **gained a passage into liberation of displaying all present Buddhas’ initial cultivation of Bodhisattva conduct up to their perfection of accumulated wisdom.** The word “present” encompasses past and future as well, but the focus is on the present time. The interval from when the Buddhas first began cultivating the Bodhisattva Way until they realized the Buddha’s wisdom and enlightenment is a very long span of time. As the saying goes,

For three *asamkhyeyas* of eons they cultivated blessings and wisdom;
For a hundred eons they developed the fine marks and characteristics.

This Bodhisattva attained this passage into liberation.

The next great **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** has the virtuous title **Resplendent Virtue and Beautiful Sound**. He **gained a passage into liberation of peacefully dwelling in the ocean of all the great vows of Vairochana.** That is, he understands how to practice Vairochana’s great vows, which are like an ocean. He is able to embody the great vows of Vairochana Buddha. He can practice the vows made by Vairochana Buddha. Vairochana is the name of the Dharma Body Buddha. Nisyanda is the Perfect Reward Body Buddha. This Bodhisattva attained this passage into liberation. The next great **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** named **Light of Great Blessings Born of Wisdom** was born from the wisdom of great blessings and light, hence his virtuous title. He **gained a passage into liberation of displaying the profound state of the Thus Come One’s omnipresence in the Dharma Realm.** The state of the Thus Come One’s body pervading the Dharma Realm is not easy to understand; it is profound and difficult to fathom.

**At that time,** after all those Bodhisattvas finished describing their dharma doors, **Bodhisattva Mahasattva Ocean Moonlight’s Great Radiance received the Buddha’s** great, **awesome**, **spiritual power, universally contemplated the adorned, oceanic multitudes of all the Bodhisattavas**. The Bodhisattvas adorning the Buddha’s Dharma assembly in the Way-place were so numerous they resembled an ocean. He contemplated these causes and conditions **and** then **spoke the following verses** to reiterate what had already been expressed in prose.

**Sutra:**

**All the *paramitas* and all the grounds,
Vast and inconceivable, have completely been perfected.
Measureless sentient beings have all been tamed.
All Buddhalands have been adorned and purified.**

**The Buddha’s teaching and transforming of the realms of beings
Fills and pervades the lands of the ten directions.
In a single thought he turns the Dharma wheel,
Universally responding to all sentient beings, missing none.**

**The Buddha, for immeasurable vast eons,
Universally appeared before all sentient beings,
Just as in the past he cultivated on a vast scale,
Showing them the pure aspects of this practice.**

**I perceive all in the ten directions without exception;
I also see the Buddhas displaying spiritual powers.
Seated in the *bodhimanda*, they all perfect right enlightenment.
The multitudes gather ‘round to hear the Dharma.**

**Commentary:**

When you explain the sutra, your explanation should neither be too profound nor too shallow. It should be easy for people to understand. If your explanation is so profound that people cannot understand it, you have missed the Buddha’s intent. If your explanation is so simple that the Buddha’s original meaning is lost, you have also missed Buddha’s intent. Ideally, your explanation should be such that all sentient beings can accept it. In the future when you go out to lecture sutras or when you listen to sutra lectures, never think of the Buddhadharma as being hard to understand or too profound. If it is too profound, you cannot relate to it. If it is too simple, then you won’t be interested in it and so will also fail to relate to it. Therefore, just think of it as ordinary. What’s ordinary is the best.

**All the *paramitas*** refers to all the methods used for reaching the other shore, **and all the grounds** means the Ten Bodhisattva Grounds. The *paramitas* and grounds are extremely **vast and inconceivable**. “Inconceivable” does not mean you cannot understand. It simply means you cannot fathom the state immediately. Although the *paramitas* are vast and the grounds are difficult to cultivate and understand, they **have** all **completely been perfected. Measureless sentient beings have all been tamed.** Obstinate sentient beings are no longer obstinate. Greedy ones are no longer greedy. Angry ones have let go of their anger, and deluded ones have gotten rid of their delusion. They have all been tamed. Originally they were obstinate and incorrigible beings, but now they are tame and docile. **All Buddhalands have been adorned and purified.** The lands of all Buddhas are adorned and pure.

**The Buddha’s teaching and transforming of the realms of beings / Fills and pervades the lands of the ten directions. / In a single thought he turns the** great **Dharma wheel, / Universally responding to all sentient beings, missing none.** All sentient beings are included. None are left out. **The Buddha, for immeasurable vast eons, / Universally** and constantly **appeared before all sentient beings, / Just as in the past he cultivated** the Six Paramitas and the myriad practices **on a vast scale,** getting rid of his bad habits and faults, **showing them the pure aspects of this practice.** The Buddha reveals to sentient beings the pure places where he cultivated.

**I perceive all** Buddhas **in the ten directions without exception;** there are none I fail to see. **I also see the Buddhas manifesting** great **spiritual powers. / Seated in the *bodhimanda*, they all perfect right enlightenment.** Right after they become enlightened, **the multitudes gather ‘round to hear the Dharma.** The multitudes of Bodhisattvas, Hearers, Sages Enlightened by Conditions, gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division, humans and nonhumans, all gather ‘round to pay respects and make offerings to each Buddha.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha’s Dharma body is vast, great, and brilliant.
He can expediently appear in the world.
Universally complying with what sentient beings like,
He rains down Dharma matching their faculties.**

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha’s Dharma body is vast, great, and brilliant.** What is meant by vast? What is meant by great? Vast means profuse to the extreme. Great means there is nothing more magnificent. “Brilliant” refers to the Buddha’s wisdom coming forth. Due to his *prajña* wisdom, the Buddha manifests measureless, vast, great brilliance. This is a function of the Buddha’s Dharma body.

**He can expediently appear in the world.** Basically, the Buddha’s brilliance, vastness, and Dharma body are formless and invisible. However, he can use expedient methods to appear in the world. That is, what was originally formless now takes on form.

**Universally complying with** all sentient beings’ dispositions, **what sentient beings like,** what makes them happy, **he rains down Dharma matching their faculties.** The Buddha dispenses exactly the right amount of Dharma, neither too little nor too much. Each sentient being obtains the amount of Dharma rain that he is supposed to receive. It is all fair and equal. Sentient beings are analogous to flowers, grasses, and trees. Those with great roots and stems receive more of the Dharma rain which pours down, while those with small roots and stems receive a smaller amount. Some sentient beings have keen faculties, while others have dull faculties. Some are wise; others are ignorant. Each being receives the amount of Dharma rain he ought to receive.

**Sutra:**

**The markless body of impartial True Suchness,
The immaculate, bright, pure Dharma body,
Limitless bodies of wisdom and still tranquility
Universally respond in the ten directions and proclaim Dharma.**

**The powers of the Dharma King are entirely pure.
His wisdom is boundless like the void.
He reveals all, omitting and hiding nothing,
Universally enabling sentient beings to awaken and enter.**

**Just as the Buddha once cultivated and trained himself
To the point that he realized All Wisdom,
He now radiates light pervading the Dharma Realm,
Revealing everything therein with total clarity.**

**Following his past vows, the Buddha displays spiritual powers.
Nothing in the ten directions escapes his illumination.
The practices the Buddha cultivated in the past
Are fully proclaimed within his brilliant aura.**

**The states of being in the ten directions are infinite.
Peerless and unbounded, they are each distinct.
The Buddha has unhindered power and radiates brilliance,
Clearly revealing each and every land.**

**Commentary:**

The Buddhadharma is absolutely equal. **The** Buddhas perfect **the markless body of impartial True Suchness**. True Suchness is also known as the True Mark, or the One True Dharma Realm. The markless body refers to the substance of the Buddha’s Dharma body. The Dharma body is essentially free from characteristics. It is truly such and impartial, neither less in common beings nor more in sages, but totally equal. Even when one falls into the three paths, one has not lost the original substance of the Dharma body. And when one realizes Buddhahood, one has not gained anything. That’s the markless body of impartial True Suchness.

**The** Buddhas perfect the **immaculate, bright, pure Dharma body**. “Immaculate” means undefiled, removed from all obstructions of afflictions and obstructions of knowledge. All afflictions and ignorance are left behind. Since these defilements are left behind, light appears. Light represents wisdom.

The Buddhas have **limitless bodies of wisdom and still tranquility**. These bodies are replete with *prajña* wisdom, the Wisdom of All Modes, and all types of wisdom. One is still and unmoving, yet one can respond and connect. “Still and unmoving” describes the Buddhas’ Perfect Reward Body. “Responding and connecting” is done by the Buddhas’ billions of transformation bodies. Not only do Buddhas have transformation bodies , each of us human beings also has transformation bodies. What are our transformation bodies? For example, suppose you are a professor who teaches your students the doctrines you understand. If your students also come to understand those doctrines and act in accord with your intentions, then they are just like your transformation bodies. Therefore, teachers and professors can also produce billions of transformation bodies. When your students teach their own students, there are even more transformation bodies—infinitely many. Doesn’t that amount to billions of transformation bodies? The Buddhadharma should be brought to life. You shouldn’t explain it in a rigid way, sticking to only one kind of reasoning. Why do Buddhas manifest billions of transformation bodies? It is in order to **universally respond** to the potentials of sentient beings **in the ten directions and proclaim** the wonderful **Dharma** for them.

**The powers of the Dharma King are entirely pure.** The Dharma King is the Buddha, and the powers are the Buddha’s Ten Powers. Does anyone know what they are? You can tell us in a little while. I won’t explain them now. These powers are all pure, perfect, and full. **His wisdom is boundless like the void.** The Buddha’s wisdom is like empty space; it has no boundaries. “If it has no boundaries, does it exist?” you ask. Well, does empty space exist? Although empty space is empty, we still have the concept of ‘empty space.’ **He reveals all** the Dharma to sentient beings**, omitting and hiding nothing**. He explains everything fully to sentient beings, **universally enabling sentient beings to awaken and enter.** His hope is that all sentient beings will become enlightened and realize Buddhahood.

**The Buddha once cultivated and trained himself** by cultivating the Six Paramitas and the myriad practices. He is said to have “cultivated blessings and wisdom for three *asamkhyeyas* and planted the fine marks for a hundred eons,” in the process smelting away the ignorance, habits, afflictions accumulated over many eons and lives. He cultivated **to the point that he realized All Wisdom,** that is, Buddhahood. **Just as** he did that then, **he now radiates** tremendous **light pervading the Dharma Realm, / Revealing everything therein with total clarity.** There is nothing that cannot be seen when bathed in his radiance.

**Following his past vows, the Buddha displays spiritual powers.** The Buddha uses his spiritual powers as a result of his past vows to teach and transform sentient beings. **Nothing in the ten directions escapes his illumination.** Everything throughout the ten directions is illuminated by the Buddha’s great *prajña* light. **The practices** and dharma doors **the Buddha cultivated in the past / Are fully proclaimed within his**, the Buddha’s, **brilliant aura.** The Buddha’s past practices are explained for sentient beings.

**The states of being in** the lands of **the ten directions are infinite**, as are the Buddha’s spiritual penetrations. **Peerless and unbounded, they are each distinct.** Nothing can equal the Buddha’s spiritual penetrations and wondrous functionings. They are boundless, and yet each one is different. **The Buddha has unhindered power and radiates brilliance.** The Buddha’s great power causes him to produce brilliant light, **clearly revealing each and every land*.*** All worlds throughout the ten directions appear in the Buddha’s treasury of bright light.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
A. Description of where they come from
B. Revelation of the type of beings

**Sutra:**

**At that time, out of the Thus Come One’s lion throne, multitudes of gems, wondrous flowers, wheels, terraces, the base and the steps to the throne, and the doors and windows—out of each and every adorned object such as these—came Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas as numerous as the fine motes of dust in Buddhalands.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time, out of the Thus Come One’s lion throne**. The seat that the Buddha sits upon is called the lion throne, and the Buddha’s proclamation of the Dharma is likened to a lion’s roar. The lion is the king of beasts. When the lion roars, all other animals are terrified. That’s why Great Master Yongjia wrote in his *Song of Enlightenment*:

The roar of the lion
Is fearless proclamation.
When the hundred wild beasts hear it, their brains split,
And the musk-elephant flees in confusion, losing his awesomeness.
The gods and dragons listen in stillness and in great joy.

Great Master Yongjia compares the Buddha’s speaking of Dharma to the fearless roar of the lion. In this metaphor, the hundred wild beasts represent all the heavenly demons and externalists. The Buddha is the lion making his fearless proclamation which scares the rest of the creatures out of their wits and subdues the huge elephants. Elephants are also kings of beasts in terms of their immense size, but a single roar from the lion causes them to submit. The gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division are delighted to hear the lion’s roar.

Thus the Buddha sits upon the lion’s throne to speak the Dharma for all sentient beings.

Next to the Buddha’s lion throne were **multitudes of gems**, which refers to many treasures, not just the seven treasures. In addition, there were **wondrous** lotus **flowers** of many beautiful varieties—blue colored of blue light, white colored of white light, yellow colored of yellow light, and red colored of red light. **Wheels** could refer to wheeled carriages or to the Dharma wheel being turned by the Buddha. There were also **terraces, the base and the steps to the throne** from which the Buddha spoke Dharma**, the doors and windows—out of each and every adorned object such as these**. The text has only given a brief list of adornments. There are many other detailed and small objects adorning the Way-place, such as lamps, candles, censers, candlestick-holders, and so forth. Out of each and every adorned object **came Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas as numerous as the fine motes of dust in Buddhalands.** These were great Bodhisattvas, not ordinary small Bodhisattvas. Great Bodhisattvas are Knights of the Dharma-body, different from ordinary Bodhisattvas.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
C. Their names

**Sutra:**

**Their names were: Bodhisattva Mahasattva King of Oceanic Wisdom and Sovereign Spiritual Powers, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universally Resounding Thunderclap, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Radiant Topknot of All Jewels, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Sun of Great Knowledge and Courageous Wisdom, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Inconceivable Meritorious Virtues and Precious Seal of Wisdom, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Hundred Eyes and Lotus Flower Topknot, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Perfect Radiance of Golden Flames, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Sound Pervading the Dharma Realm, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Cloud Sound and Pure Moon, and Bodhisattva Mahasattva Bright Banner of Wholesome Courage. Those were some of the leaders.**

**Commentary:**

All the Bodhisattvas as numerous as motes of dust in Buddhalands, who emerged from the above-mentioned objects of adornment, had their own names. What were they? **Their names were: Bodhisattva Mahasattva King of Oceanic Wisdom and Sovereign Spiritual Powers**. This Bodhisattva’s wisdom is as immense as an ocean. Moreover, he is free and at ease, endowed with spiritual powers. Since his spiritual powers are tremendous, he is called a King of Sovereign Spiritual Powers. Without moving, he can appear by transformation in the ten directions. Therefore, the name of this great Bodhisattva is King of Oceanic Wisdom and Sovereign Spiritual Powers.

There is also **Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universally Resounding Thunderclap**. His proclamation of Dharma resembles the roll of thunder. “Universally resounding” means that when he speaks the Dharma in one location, his Dharma sound is heard throughout the Dharma Realm. Therefore, this great Bodhisattva’s name is Universally Resounding Thunderclap. He awakens sentient beings who are asleep and dreaming, guiding them out of confusion back to enlightenment. This Bodhisattva’s awesome virtue is inconceivable.

Then there is **the Bodhisattva Mahasattva** by the name of **Radiant Topknot of All Jewels**. This great Bodhisattva uses all kinds of gems to fashion a brilliant topknot, hence his name.The fourth great **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Sun of Great Knowledge and Courageous Wisdom**. His wisdom is as bright as the sun, and he uses that wisdom to focus his courage and vigor. He avoids unbeneficial ascetic practices. His vigorous practice is guided by wisdom, hence his name, “Sun of Great Knowledge and Courageous Wisdom.”

The next **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Inconceivable Meritorious Virtues and Precious Seal of Wisdom**. There is no way to understand his merit and virtue—they are inconceivable. His great wisdom is like a precious seal. There is also **Bodhisattva Mahasattva Hundred Eyes and Lotus Flower Topknot**. Actually, a hundred eyes are not that many; Guanyin Bodhisattva has a thousand eyes, and Medicine King Bodhisattva has ten thousand eyes. Thenext **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Perfect Radiance of Golden Flames**. The flames this great Bodhisattva puts out are golden in color, and his light is full and perfect, hence his name. The eighth great **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** has the name **Sound Pervading the Dharma Realm,** since his sound resonates throughout space and the Dharma Realm.

The next great **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** is named **Cloud Sound and Pure Moon,** for he displays luminous clouds and a perfect, full moon. And the tenth **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** has the name **Bright Banner of Wholesome Courage.** These ten Bodhisattvas represent all the great Bodhisattvas from Buddhalands as numerous as motes of dust pervading space and the Dharma Realm, where each mote of dust transforms into Buddhalands as many as motes of dust, and in each land appear ineffably ineffable numbers of great Bodhisattvas. The ten Bodhisattvas mentioned above represent all the rest.

The tenth Bodhisattva named “Bright Banner of Skillful Courage” is astute at being courageous and would never retreat. Not only is he courageous, he is especially proficient in heroic vigor. Wholesome courage involves using all kinds of skill-in-means to teach and transform sentient beings. As a result of his wholesome courage, this great Bodhisattva gained radiant wisdom akin to a jeweled banner, hence his name, “Bright Banner of Wholesome Courage.”

**Those were some of the leaders.** The ten great Bodhisattvas mentioned earlier serve as the leaders and representatives of all Bodhisattvas.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
D. Their number
E. They create clouds of offerings

**Sutra:**

**Multitudes of such Bodhisattvas as numerous as the motes of dust in Buddhalands simultaneously appeared. All of these** **Bodhisattvas** **created clouds of assorted offerings.**

**Commentary:**

In the preceding passage we discussed the Bodhisattva named Bright Banner of Wholesome Courage. His courage was wholesome, not evil.

The founder of a certain religious sect was very courageous. However, his attitude was that if people believed in his religion, they would be allowed to live. If people didn’t believe in and worship the Lord of his religion, he would kill them. See how powerful that kind of religion is? That’s an example of evil courage: “If you believe in me, you live. If not, you die.” Another way to put it is, “Those who obey me will live; those who oppose me will die.” What kind of religion is that? It’s the religion of *asuras*—beings who love to fight and go to war.

**Multitudes of such Bodhisattvas as numerous as the motes of dust in Buddhalands simultaneously appeared.** There were Buddhalands as many as motes of dust. **All of these** great **Bodhisattvas** and all the other Bodhisattvas accompanying them **created clouds of assorted offerings.** All these Bodhisattvas came to make offerings to the Buddha. Among all offerings, the offering of Dharma is supreme. Thus, these Bodhisattvas created clouds of Dharma to offer to the Buddha.

The realm of the *Flower Adornment Sutra* is infinitely multi-layered. Whether those who spoke this sutra are talking about spirits, ghosts, people, or Bodhisattvas, they will list ten of the kind of being under discussion to represent an infinite number. The clouds of offerings now being discussed also represent the *Flower Adornment Sutra*’s multi-layered infinitude, just as clouds in the sky often appear in layer after layer without end. The wonderful Dharma of the *Flower Adornment Sutra* is infinitely multi-layered in all aspects.

**Sutra:**

**That is to say, there were clouds of flowers of all *mani* jewels; clouds of lovely fragrance from all lotuses; clouds of the full brilliance of all jewels; clouds of boundless states of fragrant flames; clouds of sun treasury *mani* wheel light; clouds of all delightful sounds of music; clouds of boundless forms and bright flames from all jeweled lamps; clouds of branches, flowers, and fruits from all jeweled trees; clouds of infinite, precious, pure light of magnificent *mani*; and clouds of all kinds of ornaments of magnificent *mani*. Such clouds of offerings were as numerous as motes of dust in Buddha worlds. Each of those Bodhisattvas created such clouds of offerings, raining them continuously and without end over the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*.**

**Commentary:**

**That is to say, there were clouds of flowers of all *mani* jewels; clouds of lovely fragrance from all lotuses; clouds of the full brilliance of all jewels; clouds of boundless states of fragrant flames**. Various kinds of states manifested within these clouds. There were also **clouds of sun treasury *mani* wheel light; clouds of all delightful sounds of music**. When people heard the music being played in these clouds, they felt happy. There were **clouds of boundless forms and bright flames from all jeweled lamps; clouds of branches, flowers, and fruits from all jeweled trees; clouds of infinite, precious, pure light of magnificent *mani*** jewels**; and clouds of all kinds of ornaments of magnificent *mani*.  Such clouds of offerings**—the ten kinds mentioned earlier—**were as numerous as motes of dust in Buddha worlds.**

**Each of those** great **Bodhisattvas created such clouds of offerings, raining them continuously and without end over the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*.** Clouds and jewels fell like rain to adorn the Way-places. It was a continual downpour of one kind of clouds after another in endless manifestations.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
G. They reverently circumambulate the Buddha
H. They each seat themselves in their own direction
I. Acclamation of their virtues and abilities

**Sutra:**

**Having manifested these clouds, they circumambulated the World Honored One to the right countless hundreds of thousands of times. Then, in their own direction not far from the Buddha, they each created a lion throne of a countless variety of jeweled lotuses and seated themselves in full lotus upon it.**

**All these Bodhisattvas had cultivated purity as vast as the ocean. They had attained the dharma of a universal passage to illuminating wisdom. Having followed the nonobstruction practiced by all Buddhas, they were able to enter the Dharma ocean of all types of eloquence. They had attained the dharma door of inconceivable liberation and dwelt on the ground of the Thus Come One’s universal door. Having attained all *dharani* doors, they were able to take in all Dharma seas. They skillfully dwelt on the ground of the impartial wisdom of the three periods of time. They had attained deep faith and immense happiness. Having accumulated boundless blessings, they were wholesome and pure to the utmost. Throughout space and the Dharma Realm, nothing escaped their contemplation. Whenever a Buddha appeared in any land in the worlds of the ten directions, they would all diligently make offerings.**

**Commentary:**

**Having manifested** all **these** various **clouds, they**—these great Bodhisattvas—**circumambulated the World Honored One to the right countless hundreds of thousands of times.  Then, in their own direction**—whether in front of the Buddha, behind the Buddha, or to the left or right of the Buddha—**not** too **far from the Buddha, they each** used their spiritual powers and **created a lion throne of a countless variety of jeweled lotuses and seated themselves in full lotus upon it.** Each Bodhisattva sat in full lotus upon the lion throne he had created.

**All these Bodhisattvas had cultivated purity as vast as the ocean.** The dharma doors these Bodhisattvas had cultivated were pure and as vast and abundant as an ocean. **They had attained the dharma of a universal passage to illuminating wisdom.** They had attained the brilliance of genuine wisdom, with which they could rescue all sentient beings. They had attained the “universal door” dharma of impartial manifestation. **Having followed the nonobstruction practiced by all Buddhas** in the past**, they were able to enter the Dharma ocean of all types of eloquence.** These Bodhisattvas all had measureless *samadhis* and types of eloquence. Their eloquence was as profound and unfathomable as the ocean. **They had attained the dharma door of inconceivable**, sublime, and unfathomable **liberation and dwelt on the ground of the Thus Come One’s universal door** of equality. **Having attained all *dharani* doors,** all dharmas of uniting and upholding, **they were able to take in all Dharma seas.** They could accept the Dharma seas of all Buddhas. **They skillfully dwelt on the ground of the impartial wisdom of the three periods of time.** These great Bodhisattvas all understood the impartial wisdom of all Buddhas of the three periods of time; that’s what’s meant by dwelling on the ground of impartial wisdom—the fruition of wisdom. **They had attained deep faith** **and immense happiness.** They had absolutely no doubts and were filled with the happiness of Dharma.

**Having accumulated boundless blessings** to adorn themselves, **they were wholesome and pure to the utmost. Throughout space and the Dharma Realm, nothing escaped their contemplation.** They observed everywhere throughout space and the Dharma Realm. **Whenever a Buddha appeared in any land in the worlds of the ten directions, they would all diligently make offerings.** They would go and make offerings to every Buddha who appeared in the worlds of the ten directions.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
J. They speak verses in praise
1. Oceanic Wisdom Bodhisattva praises the Buddha’s body and throne

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva King of Oceanic Wisdom and Sovereign Spiritual Powers received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva King of Oceanic Wisdom and Sovereign Spiritual Powers received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual** **power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes** assembled **in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses** to explain the principles mentioned earlier.

**Sutra:**

**He already knows that to which all Buddhas awaken.**
**Unimpeded like space, he clearly illumines everything.**
**His brilliance pervades countless lands in the ten directions.**
**His very presence adorns and purifies all assemblies.**

**Immeasurable, the Thus Come One’s merit**
**Completely fills the dharma realms of the ten directions.**
**Under every King of Trees, the Buddha is seated.**
**And those of great self-mastery gather ‘round like clouds.**

**The Buddha has such mighty spiritual powers**
**That he can manifest infinite forms in a single thought.**
**The realm of the Thus Come One is boundless.**
**Each being perceives it according to his liberation.**

**Commentary:**

**He already knows that to which all Buddhas awaken.** The Buddha has already enlightened to that which all Buddhas are enlightened. He already knows all dharmas. **Unimpeded like space, he clearly illumines everything.** The Buddha has attained wisdom resembling space and a Dharma body that is also unimpeded like space. Since nothing obstructs him, he universally illumines everything throughout space and the Dharma Realm. **His brilliance pervades countless lands in the ten directions.** The light of Buddha shines upon infinite lands throughout the worlds of the ten directions. **His very presence adorns and purifies all assemblies.** All *bodhimandas* and Dharma assemblies become adorned and pure.

**Immeasurable, the Thus Come One’s merit.** No one can figure out how much merit the Buddha has. It **completely fills the dharma realms of the ten directions.** The Thus Come One’s merit is ubiquitous throughout space and the Dharma Realm. **Under every King of Trees, the Buddha is seated.** In every land throughout space and the Dharma Realm, a Buddha sits in his Way-place under the *bodhi* tree, becomes enlightenment, and realizes Buddhahood. **And those of great self-mastery gather ‘round like clouds.** “Those of great self-mastery” refers to all the great Bodhisattvas. Only great Bodhisattvas have great self-mastery. Other beings do not. Great self-mastery refers to freedom from all afflictions. All the great Bodhisattvas surround the Buddha like clouds gathering.

**The Buddha has such mighty spiritual powers / That he can manifest infinite forms in a single thought.** In a single thought, the Buddha can display endlessly many images and states of the past, present, and future.

Limitless eons can appear in a single thought.
A single thought can encompass limitless eons.

Limitless eons can shrink to become a single thought; a single thought can extend to become limitless eons. The Buddhas’ spiritual powers make such transformations possible. **The realm of the Thus Come One is boundless.** If you wish to understand the realm of the Thus Come One, contemplate the boundlessness of space. **Each being perceives it according to his liberation.** The Buddha uses different methods to liberate each sentient being according to his or her own potential. All these sentient beings can see the wonderful functionings of the Buddha’s inconceivable spiritual powers.

**Sutra:**

**Long ago, through oceanic eons, the Thus Come One**
**Practiced diligently in all realms of existence.**
**He used various expedients to transform all beings,**
**So they could accept and practice all Buddhadharmas.**

**Commentary:**

**Long ago, through oceanic**, limitlessly many great **eons, the Thus Come One / Practiced diligently in all realms of existence.** Before he became a Buddha, the Buddha lived in the twenty-five planes of existence within the Triple Realm, just like us. Within these twenty-five planes, he underwent repeated births and deaths. However, at the same time, he cultivated with diligence. He was not the least bit lazy. In every moment, he practiced vigorously and never slacked off.

Not only did he cultivate himself, **he used various expedients to transform all beings**. After he understood the principles himself, he taught those principles to other sentient beings, **so they could** understand them and benefit from Buddhism, and **accept and practice all Buddhadharmas.** Sentient beings took the Buddhadharma that he taught them to heart and put it into actual practice. “All Buddhadharmas” refers to the Dharma of all Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time. He taught all sentient beings to practice the dharma doors of all Buddhas.

**Sutra:**

**Adorned with every hallmark, Vairochana**
**Is seated upon a lotus treasury lion throne.**
**All the assembled multitudes are purified.**
**Serenely, everyone gazes up at him.**

**Commentary:**

**Adorned with every hallmark, Vairochana** is the Buddha of the Pure Dharma Body. His body is adorned with the Thirty-two Hallmarks and the Eighty Subsidiary Characteristics. He **is seated upon a lotus treasury lion throne.** His throne is made of giant, precious lotuses. The Buddha sits upon his lion’s throne and speaks the Dharma to teach and transform sentient beings. Even the most incorrigible sentient beings become tame and well-behaved. **All the assembled multitudes are purified.** All the Buddha’s Dharma assemblies throughout the lands of the ten directions are simultaneously pure. **Serenely**, without making a sound, **everyone gazes up at him**. Everyone in the Dharma assembly gazes at the Buddha with an unwavering gaze. They can’t bear to take their eyes from him for even a second. The Buddha is incredibly difficult to encounter, so upon encountering him, they very earnestly gaze at him.

**Sutra:**

**The treasury of *mani* jewels shimmers with light,**
**Everywhere releasing boundless clouds of fragrant flames.**
**Countless strands of flowers trail down.**
**On such a throne the Thus Come One is seated.**

**At the auspicious entrance-way, assorted ornaments**
**Perpetually send forth jeweled, blazing clouds of lamplight.**
**Such tremendous effulgence illuminates everything,**
**Enhancing the fine hallmarks of the Muni seated therein.**

**All kinds of *mani* embellish the beautiful windows,**
**Wonderful precious lotuses ornamentally trail down.**
**Lovely sounds are emitted, delighting all who hear.**
**Seated there, the Buddha assumes special eminence.**

**The throne is supported by precious wheels shaped like half moons.**
**The dais of *vajra* has a fiery, brilliant color.**
**Bodhisattvas with topknots constantly gather ‘round.**
**Among them, the Buddha is most resplendent.**

**Various transformations fill the ten directions,**
**Proclaiming the Thus Come One’s vast vows**
**And manifesting all scenes and images.**
**The Buddha sits serenely upon such a throne.**

**Commentary:**

**The treasury of *mani* jewels shimmers with light**. The multitude of *mani* gems glows radiantly. That light shines forth, **everywhere releasing boundless clouds of fragrant flames** which pervade the Dharma Realm. **Countless strands of** many varieties of **flowers trail down**, adorning those clouds. **On such a throne** of *mani* jewels adorned with fragrant clouds **the Thus Come One is seated** as he speaks the Dharma.

**At the auspicious entrance-way, assorted ornaments / Perpetually send forth jeweled, blazing clouds of lamplight. / Such vast effulgence illuminates everything.** No place fails to be illumined by this dazzling light. It shines everywhere, **enhancing the fine hallmarks of the Muni seated therein.** On top of the *mani* jewels, his adorned hallmarks are increased.

**All kinds of *mani* embellish the beautiful windows.** The doors and windows are decorated with exceptionally sublime and **wonderful precious lotuses** that **ornamentally trail down.** From the doors and windows, **lovely** and inconceivably wondrous **sounds** of Dharma **are emitted, delighting all who hear.** No matter what kind of sentient beings hear this Dharma sound, each is delighted. **Seated there, the Buddha assumes special eminence.** The Buddha has an exceptional radiance about him as he sits upon the Dharma seat.

**The throne is supported by precious wheels shaped like half moons.** Beneath the Buddha’s lion throne are jeweled wheels in the shape of half moons. **The dais** from which the Buddha proclaims the Dharma is made **of *vajra*** and **has a fiery, brilliant color.** It shines amazingly. **Bodhisattvas with topknots constantly gather ‘round.** Bodhisattvas by the name of “Holding Topknots” always surround the Dharma throne. **Among them, the Buddha is most resplendent.** Among the Bodhisattvas, the Buddha is the most dazzling and eminent.

**Various** clouds of **transformations fill the ten directions** of the Dharma Realm. Sounds are heard within the clouds, **proclaiming the Thus Come One’s vast vows**, the various great resolutions pronounced by the Buddha in times past. **And manifesting all scenes and images.** Images of the situations in which the Buddha made those past vows appear within the clouds. **The Buddha sits serenely upon such a throne.** The Buddha speaks the Dharma from his throne within the clouds.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
J. They speak verses in praise
2. Thunderclap Bodhisattva praises the throne and the ground

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universally Resounding Thunderclap received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the bodhimanda, and spoke the following verses.**

**While accumulating practices for bodhi, the World Honored One**
**Made offerings to countless Buddhas in the ten directions.**
**Aided by the awesome power of the Well Gone One,**
**All can see the Thus Come One on his throne.**

**Fragrant, brilliant mani, the magnificent, wish-fulfilling gem,**
**Is inlaid on the lion throne of wondrous flowers.**
**Various decorations are reflected in its surface.**
**The whole assembly clearly beholds all of this.**

**The Buddha on his throne assumes an adorned appearance.**
**The forms he manifests vary from thought to thought.**
**According to their different conceptions, sentient beings**
**Each perceive the Buddha seated upon his throne.**

**Jeweled branches hang down, forming a net of lotuses.**
**When the flowers bloom, Bodhisattvas emerge.**
**Each speaks with a splendid, charming voice,**
**Extolling the Thus Come One seated upon the throne.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Universally Resounding Thunderclap received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual** **power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes** who had come to the Dharma assembly **in the bodhimanda, and spoke the following verses** to elaborate upon the Buddha’s merit and virtue.

**The World Honored One, while accumulating** merit by undertaking **practices for bodhi** during measureless eons in the past—how did he cultivate? He **made offerings to countless Buddhas in the ten directions.** Before the Buddha realized Buddhahood, he made offerings to infinitely and measurelessly many Buddhas in the ten directions and the three periods of time. Wherever there was a Buddha, he would go and perform offerings. **Aided by the awesome power of the Well Gone One**. “Well Gone One” is one of the Buddha’s titles. This line could be explained as referring to former Buddhas aiding the present Buddha, or to the present Buddha aiding the present Way-place. Through aid, one who originally lacks spiritual powers comes to possess them. Aiding allows one without wisdom to attain wisdom. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas can aid you, enabling you to attain such wisdom and radiance. **All can see the Thus Come One on his throne.** As the Buddha sits upon his throne, none of the Bodhisattvas fail to see him.

**Fragrant, brilliant mani, the magificent wish-fulfilling gem, / Is inlaid on the** Buddha’s **lion throne of wondrous** lotus **flowers. / Various decorations** of all kinds, not just a single kind, **are reflected in its surface.** All types of adornments appear in the light, like frame after frame appearing on a movie screen. **The whole assembly clearly beholds all of this.** Everyone in the great assembly can see this state.

**The Buddha on his throne assumes an adorned appearance.** The Buddha universally takes on his adorned Dharma appearance. **The forms he manifests vary from thought to thought.** In every thought-instant, he manifests measureless radiance and infinite shapes and forms. The colors and forms differ from one instant to the next. The Buddha manifests states according to sentient beings’ dispositions. Each sentient being has his or her own view and understanding. **According to their different conceptions, sentient beings / Each perceive the Buddha seated upon his throne.** Despite their differences in terms of outlook, understanding, and wisdom, each sentient being perceives the Buddha seated right in front of him or her. This is like how the sun is in the sky, and yet everyone perceives the sun as shining upon himself or herself. Like the sun in the sky, the Buddha is perceived as appearing above and in front of every sentient being.

**Jeweled branches hang down, forming a net of lotuses.** The jeweled branches hang down from the jeweled trees, forming a net of lotuses. **When the** lotus **flowers** in the net **bloom,** infinitely many **Bodhisattvas emerge** from them. **Each** Bodhisattva **speaks with a splendid, charming voice** that sounds like music, **extolling the Thus Come One seated upon the throne.** Their sublime voices praise the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha, in particular extolling the Thus Come One, who sits on his Dharma throne and speaks Dharma for sentient beings.

**Sutra:**

**Vast as space, the Buddha’s meritorious virtue**
**Gives rise to all his adornments.
His work of adornment at each and every ground**
**Surpasses the comprehension of any sentient being.**

**Paved with indestructible vajra,**
**The ground is vast, pure, and completely level.**
**Mani-studded nets drift and flutter in the air.**
**While beneath the bodhi tree, the Buddha pervades everywhere.**

**Boundless and sublime in appearance,**
**The ground is covered with dust of pure gold**
**And spread with fine flowers and multitudes of gems,**
**All brightening the Thus Come One’s throne.**

**Commentary:**

**Vast as space** is **the Buddha’s meritorious virtue /** **Gives rise to all his adornments.** If we tried to quantify the Buddha’s merit and virtue, we wouldn’t be able to come up with a numerical amount. No number can represent the Buddha’s merit and virtue. Thus, we are forced to use space to represent it, and say that the Buddha’s merit and virtue is as great as all of space—infinite, inexhaustible, measureless, and boundless. How great would you say space is? You can’t put a number on it.

All of the Buddha’s Thirty-two Hallmarks and Eighty Subsidiary Characteristics come from the measureless merit and virtue he created long ago over limitless eons. These adorning characteristics were born from his merit and virtue. They verify **his work of adornment at each and every ground**. All the merit and virtue he created and the adornments of the Dharma body he attained as he traveled through the positions of the Bodhisattvas of the Dharma body—from the First Ground through the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, and all the way to the Tenth Ground, and then Equal Enlightenment—**surpass the comprehension of any sentient being.** No sentient being can fathom the Buddha’s merit and virtue, because it is boundless and immeasurable. It is beyond their understanding.

**Paved with indestructible vajra, / The ground is vast, pure, and completely level.**.  Nothing can harm ground made of vajra, which is spacious, clean, and extremely flat. **Mani** gem**-studded nets drift and flutter in the air. /** **While beneath the bodhi tree, the Buddha pervades everywhere.** While sitting under the bodhi tree, the Buddha is simultaneously present everywhere in the Dharma Realm.

The ground where the Buddha speaks Dharma is **boundless and sublime in appearance.** This place has an exceptional appearance. What makes it so special? **The ground is covered with dust of pure gold / And spread with fine flowers and multitudes of gems**. The ground is sprinkled with precious flowers and precious gems, **all brightening** and adorning **the Thus Come One’s** Dharma **throne.**

I once met a sick person who went to the Land of Ultimate Bliss in his ill state. He only reached the outer border of the Land of Ultimate Bliss, but even there, the ground was paved with golden sand, just like the line of verse here, “covered with dust of pure gold.” As a result, that sick individual became an ardent believer in the practice of reciting the Buddha’s name. After he recovered, he cultivated that practice and was born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss at the end of his life. He knew beforehand when he would go. His was an inconceivable state.

**Sutra:**

**The earth spirits leap up in joy and happiness**
**As the Buddha makes infinite revelations in an instant**
**And everywhere creates beautiful clouds.**
**The spirits constantly fix their gaze upon the Buddha.**

**Commentary:**

**The earth spirits leap up in joy and happiness.** Each place has its local earth spirit. Earth spirits also like to see the Buddha, and in their happiness they leap and frolic about. **As the Buddha makes infinite revelations in an instant.** In a brief instant’s time, the Buddha displays infinite manifestations of light **and everywhere creates beautiful**, auspicious **clouds. / The spirits constantly fix their gaze upon the Buddha.** The earth spirits are always in front of the Buddha and gazing at him.

**Sutra:**

**Gigantic, jeweled lamps of fiery splendor**
**Pour forth redolent, blazing light without cease,**
**Manifesting states that vary over time.**
**Earth spirits present these as offerings.**

**All the lands throughout the ten directions**
**And all adornments in those lands**
**Without exception now appear in this bodhimanda**
**By virtue of the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power.**

**Commentary:**

Also adorning are **gigantic jeweled lamps of** incredibly **fiery splendor**. The fires in them blaze brilliantly. From those jeweled lamps **pour forth redolent, blazing light without cease.** The fragrance and light stream forth continuously without cease, **manifesting states that vary over time.** Different images and states appear at different times. **Earth spirits present these** states of adornment **as offerings** to the Buddha.

**All the** Buddha**lands of the ten directions / And all adornments in those lands / Without exception now appear in this bodhimanda.** All those adornments appear in the Buddha’s Way-place **by virtue of the Buddha’s awesome** virtue and great **spiritual power.**

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
J. They speak verses in praise
3. Radiant Topknot of All Jewels Bodhisattva praises the unique qualities of the ground

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Radiant Topknot of All Jewels received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the bodhimanda, and spoke the following verses.**

# While practicing long ago, the World Honored One****Observed the perfection of all Buddhas’ lands.********In this way he saw infinitely many grounds.********All is now clearly revealed in this**** bodhimanda****.****

##### With immense spiritual powers, the World Honored One**Releases light that everywhere rains down** mani **jewels.****Strewn throughout the** bodhimanda**, these jewels****Ornament the grounds and surroundings.**

**By the Thus Come One’s blessings, virtue, and spiritual powers,**
**Wondrous jewels of mani decorate everywhere.**
**The ground as well as the bodhi tree**
**Mutually expound with light and sound.**

**Countless jeweled lamps fall through the air like rain,**
**Intermingling with magnificent jewels to become adornments.**
**They all emit wondrous sounds proclaiming the Dharma.**
**This is what the earth spirits manifest.**

**Clouds of lovely radiance appear all across the precious ground.**
**Precious torches blaze as brilliantly as lightning.**
**Precious nets extend afar, providing shade from above.**
**Precious branches are scattered throughout as ornamentation.**

**Commentary:**
**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Radiant Topknot of All Jewels received the Buddha’s awesome** **spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the** Buddha’s **bodhimanda**—the assembly was as vast as an ocean—**and spoke the following verses.**

This verse praises the Buddha when he was cultivating all types of practices at the level of planting causes. **While practicing long ago, the World Honored One / Observed the perfection of all Buddhas’ lands.** The Buddha perceived all Buddhalands in their adorned perfection. **In this way he saw infinitely many grounds**. The eons that the Buddha cultivated were infinite in number, and thus the perfectly adorned grounds that he saw were also infinite. **All is now clearly revealed in this bodhimanda.** All the grounds of the Buddha’s past cultivation are now manifest in the Way-place where he realized Buddhahood.

**With immense spiritual powers, the World Honored One / Releases light that everywhere rains down mani jewels.** **/ Strewn throughout the bodhimanda, these** precious mani **jewels / Ornament the grounds and surroundings.** Such a treasury of jewels showers down and disperses through the Way-place, making its grounds and surroundings adorned and beautiful.

**By the Thus Come One’s blessings, virtue, and spiritual powers, / Wondrous jewels of mani decorate everywhere**, embellishing the ground. **The ground as well as the bodhi tree / Mutually expound** and communicate **with light and sound.**

**Countless jeweled lamps fall through the air like rain, / Intermingling with magnificent jewels to become adornments** decorating the ground of the bodhimanda as well as the bodhi tree. “Magnificent jewels” (bao wang) should actually be “precious jade” (bao yu) [Note: The Chinese characters wang and yu differ by only one stroke], but “magnificent jewels” also makes sense—it can refer to mani, the “king” of jewels. **They all emit wondrous sounds proclaiming the Dharma.** The jeweled lamps and maÜi jewels are interwoven as adornments. From within the lamplight and the jewels come wondrous sounds of Dharma. **This is what the earth spirits** who guard the bodhimanda **manifest.** They display such states of adornment.

**Clouds of lovely radiance appear all across the precious ground. / Precious torches blaze as brilliantly as lightning.** The light of the torches is as bright as a flash of lightning. **Precious nets extend afar, providing shade from above.** Jeweled nets are spread out over the precious torches. **Precious branches** of the bodhi tree **are scattered throughout as ornamentation** in the Way-place.

**Sutra:**

**Everyone! Thoroughly contemplate this earth**
**Embellished with all kinds of marvelous gems.**
**It reveals the sea of sentient beings’ karma,**
**Leading them to understand the true Dharma nature.**

**All Buddhas throughout the ten directions**
**As well as all perfect bodhi trees**
**Appear without exception in the bodhimanda**
**To expound the Thus Come One’s pure Dharma.**

**According to sentient beings’ inclinations,**
**Wondrous sounds issue forth from all over the earth.**
**Just as when the Buddha proclaims from the throne,**
**Each and every dharma door is expounded in full.**

**Commentary:**

**Everyone** in the great assembly should **thoroughly contemplate this earth / Embellished with all kinds of marvelous gems.** The ground is made of and decorated with assorted wondrous gems. **It reveals the sea of** all **sentient beings’ karma**. What’s the purpose of revealing this? It is for the sake of **leading them**—all sentient beings—**to understand the true Dharma nature**, which is just their own inherent nature.

**All Buddhas throughout the ten directions / As well as all perfect bodhi trees**, the great kings of trees, **appear without exception in the bodhimanda / To expound the Thus Come One’s pure Dharma.** They propagate the Buddha’s pristine and wondrous Dharma.

**According to sentient beings’ inclinations,** according to what they like and what makes them happy, **wondrous**, delightful **sounds issue forth from all over the earth.** The sounds are just like the Dharma the Buddha is supposed to proclaim from the Dharma throne. **Just as when the Buddha proclaims from the throne, / Each and every dharma door** **is expounded in full.** The wondrous sounds emitted from the ground proclaim all 84,000 dharma doors. All sentient beings become enlightened upon hearing the Dharma and soon realize Buddhahood.

**Sutra:**

**A subtle, scented radiance rises constantly from the earth.**
**Pure and clear voices pervasively resonate within the light.**
**All sentient beings who are ready for the Dharma**
**Can hear it and let their afflictions melt away.**

**Each and every ornament is totally perfect.**
**Even in a billion eons, they could not be described.**
**The Thus Come One’s spiritual power reaches all places.**
**Hence the earth is all beautiful and pure.**

**Commentary:**

**A subtle, scented radiance rises constantly from the earth** at the Dharma assembly where the Buddha speaks Dharma. Sentient beings resolve their minds on bodhi at the sight of this light. They also resolve their minds upon smelling its fragrance. **Pure and clear**, sublime **voices pervasively resonate within the** wondrous, redolent **light**, proclaiming pure and sublime Dharma. **All sentient beings who are ready for the Dharma**, beings who have affinities with this Dharma and who are ready to accept it, **can hear it and let their afflictions melt away.** When the Buddha speaks Dharma, some sentient beings hear it, while others don’t, although they are all present. Sentient beings who have affinities with the Dharma can hear it, while those lacking affinities cannot. If they hear it, their afflictions will disappear.

**Each and every ornament** of the ground **is totally perfect. / Even in a billion eons, they could not be described.** One could not finish describing this state of perfect adornment even in several great eons or billions of eons. **The Thus Come One’s spiritual power** and the manifestation of his light **reaches all places.** There is no place they fail to pervade. **Hence the earth is all beautiful and pure.** All the land is clean, pure, and beautiful.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
J. They speak verses in praise
4. Sun of Great Knowledge Bodhisattva praises the palace in which the Buddha dwells

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Sun of Great Knowledge and Courageous Wisdom received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the bodhimanda, and spoke the following verses.**

**The World Honored One sits absorbed in the Dharma Hall,**
**A clear and dazzling presence within the palace.**
**According to the delights of sentient beings,**
**He manifests throughout the lands of the ten directions.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Sun of Great Knowledge and Courageous Wisdom received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the bodhimanda, and spoke the following verses.**

**The World Honored One sits absorbed in the Dharma Hall.** His gaze remains still as he sits in the Dharma Hall. He is **a clear and dazzling presence within the palace**, like a bright star in the sky. **According to the delights of sentient beings,** what they like and prefer, **he manifests throughout the lands of the ten directions.** The Buddha not only fulfills the wishes of one sentient being or the sentient beings in one land, he appears in the dharma realms of the ten directions so that all sentient beings see him and hear him speak the Dharma.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One’s palace is inconceivable,**
**Adorned with a treasury of mani gems.**
**The ornaments shine and dazzle, one and all.**
**Seated among them, the Buddha is especially eminent.**

**There are columns of mani in various hues**
**And bells of pure gold suspended like clouds.**
**There are jeweled staircases lining the four sides**
**And doors that open in every direction.**

**Among silken banners adorned with beautiful blossoms,**
**Ornamental jeweled branches,**
**And** **mani** **beads draped on all four sides,**
**The Ocean of Wisdom sits serenely.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One’s palace is inconceivable.** This line extols the Buddha’s palace. All the states therein are inconceivable. It is **adorned with a treasury of mani gems.** All palaces of Buddhas are decorated with mani jewels. **The ornaments shine and dazzle, one and all.** All the decorative objects and vessels glow with light. **Seated in their midst, the Buddha is especially eminent.** Seated in his palace, the Buddha’s exceptional radiance illuminates the ten directions.

**There are columns** in the palace made **of mani in various hues / And bells of pure gold suspended like clouds** around the four sides of the palace. **There are jeweled staircases lining the four sides.** Assorted precious gems make up the neatly aligned terraces. **And** there are also **doors** and windows **that open in every direction.** There are openings in every direction.

**Among silken banners adorned with beautiful blossoms**—those flowers and silk-like materials are used to make precious curtains—there are also **ornamental jeweled branches**. The branches of mani jewels are breathtakingly beautiful. **And** one also finds mani **beads draped on all four sides** of the palace. Surrounded by these adornments, **the Ocean of Wisdom**, the Buddha, **sits serenely.** He sits in perfect tranquility.

**Sutra:**

**Nets of mani and banners of wondrous fragrance,**
**Bright as blazing lamps and arrayed in cloud-like formation,**
**Hang above the assorted ornaments.**
**The Transcendent One of Right Knowledge sits in their midst.**

**Magical clouds appear throughout the ten directions.**
**These clouds proclaim Dharma for all in the worlds,**
**Taming and subduing all sentient beings.**
**All this is manifested from the Buddha’s palace.**

**Wondrous flowers bloom on the tree of mani.**
**Nothing in the ten directions can compare.**
**The adornment of the lands of the three periods of time**
**Is entirely revealed in this state.**

**Clusters of mani are everywhere to be found,**
**Blazing with infinite kinds of brilliance.**
**Well-spaced doors and windows open in every direction.**
**The entire building is elegant and of the utmost beauty.**

**The Thus Come One’s palace is inconceivable,**
**Pure, luminous, and filled with every kind of image.**
**All other palaces appear within it,**
**Each with a Thus Come One seated inside.**

**The Thus Come One’s palace is boundless.**
**The Enlightened One naturally dwells within it.**
**The multitudes throughout the ten directions**
**All gather at the Buddha’s without fail.**

**Commentary:**

**Nets** made **of mani** jewels **and banners of wondrous fragrance** adorn the Buddha’s palatial hall. **Bright as blazing lamps and arrayed in cloud-like formation,** those nets **hang above the various ornaments.** The mani nets blaze as bright as lamps, resembling endless layers of clouds in the sky. **The Transcendent One of Right** and Universal **Knowledge sits in their midst.** “One of Right and Universal Knowledge” refers to the Buddha, who dwells in the palace.

All kinds of **magical clouds appear throughout the ten directions. / These clouds proclaim for all in the worlds.** Dharma sounds proclaiming the true appearance of all dharmas come forth from the clouds and fill the world, **taming and subduing all sentient beings.** The Dharma is proclaimed for the sake of taming all sentient beings, even those who are difficult to subdue. **All of this is manifested from the Buddha’s palace.** These clouds and proclamations are magically created within the Buddha’s palace.

**Wondrous flowers bloom on the** bodhi **tree of mani** jewels, with which **nothing in the ten directions can compare.** No other tree in the ten directions can compare to the bodhi tree. **The adornment of the lands of the three periods of time / Is entirely revealed in this state.** The adorned circumstances of lands of the past, present, and future all appear in the Buddha’s magnificent light and wondrous flowers.

**Clusters of mani are everywhere to be found** in the palace of the Buddha, serving as ornaments. They appear to be **blazing with infinite kinds of brilliance.** They radiate infinite kinds of light and colors, not just one kind. **Well-spaced doors and windows open in every direction.** The doors and windows are built to open in precisely the right directions and placed at just the right places. **The entire building is elegant and of the utmost beauty.** The pillars, walls, and ceilings are beautifully adorned and extremely fine.

**The Thus Come One’s palace is inconceivable** and would require endless expression to describe. The palace is **pure, luminous, and filled with every kind of image.** The palace is filled with a pristine radiance, which manifests all types of images. **All other palaces** of Buddhas in the ten directions **appear within it,** and this palace also appears in the palaces of the Buddhas in the ten directions. There is an endless mutual reflection of light and images. All the palaces appear, **each with a Thus Come One seated inside** speaking Dharma.

**The Thus Come One’s palace is boundless.** Not to mention anything else, the palace of the Buddha by itself has boundless aspects of wonder. **The Enlightened One naturally dwells within it.** Very naturally, there is a Buddha in each of the Buddha-palaces. **The multitudes throughout the ten directions / All gather at the Buddha’s** palace **without fail.** Like clouds gathering in the sky, they all convene at the Buddha’s Dharma assembly.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
J. They speak verses in praise
5. Inconceivable Bodhisattva praises the majestic virtues of the tree

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Inconceivable Meritorious Virtues and Precious Seal of Wisdom received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses.**

**The Buddha cultivated an ocean of blessings**
**As numerous as the motes of dust in all lands.**
**His spiritual powers and vows made this possible.**
**The *bodhimanda* is adorned, pure, and unsullied.**

**The roots are made of magnificent, wish-fulfilling jewels.**
**The body of the tree is made of *vajra* and *mani***.
**Jeweled nets cover it from high above.**
**A mist of sublime fragrance circulates around it.**

**Myriads of jewels adorn the branches of the tree.**
**Its trunk of *mani* vigorously stretches upward.**
**The dense covering of branches resembles layered clouds.**
**The Buddha sits in the *bodhimanda* below.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Inconceivable Meritorious Virtues and Precious Seal of Wisdom received the Buddha’s awesome** virtue and **spiritual** **power, universally contemplated the oceanic** assembled **multitudes in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses.**

In the past when **the Buddha** was cultivating the Way, he **cultivated** blessings and wisdom. He cultivated all kinds of blessings, so many that they are said to be **an ocean of blessings, /** **As numerous as the motes of dust in all lands.** That’s how abundant his blessings were. **His spiritual powers and vows made this possible.** Such abundant blessings were transformations resulting from the Buddha’s spiritual powers and the vows he made while cultivating. **The *bodhimanda* is adorned, pure, and unsullied.** Each Way-place is immaculate and beautiful, untainted by filth.

**The roots** of the tree **are made of magnificent, wish-fulfilling jewels. / The body of the tree is made of *vajra* and *mani*** jewels. **Jeweled nets cover it from high above. / A mist of sublime fragrance circulates around it.** The tree is constantly surrounded by a rare fragrance.

**Myriads of jewels adorn the branches of the tree.** The tree’s branches are elegant and decorated with all kinds of gems. **Its trunk of *mani* vigorously stretches upward.** The trunk of *mani* jewels grows ever higher. **The dense covering of branches resembles layered clouds.** The branches and twigs are closely interwoven like layers of clouds in the sky. **The Buddha sits in the *bodhimanda* below**, teaching and transforming sentient beings. The *bodhi* tree serves as the Buddha’s Way-place for propagating the Dharma.

**Sutra:**

**The *bodhimanda* is vast beyond conception—**
**Covered entirely by the shade of the tree.**
**Its flourishing leaves and flowers protect and reflect one another.**
**A *mani* fruit grows in each blossom.**

**Shimmering rays shine between the branches,**
**Lighting up the entire *bodhimanda*.**
**Such pure, infinite resplendence**
**Appears by the power of the Buddha’s vows.**

**The flowers are made of *mani* gems in abundance.**
**The shadows and radiance resemble exquisite clouds,**
**Enshrouding the tree with all-pervasive fragrance**
**And decorating every part of the *bodhimanda*.**

**Commentary:**

**The *bodhimanda*** formed by the *bodhi* tree **is vast** and great **beyond conception. / Covered entirely by the shade of the tree.** The *bodhi* tree has a huge circumference and covers an immense area. **Its flourishing leaves and** prolific jeweled **flowers protect and reflect one another.** The leaves reflect the flowers, and the flowers shine upon the leaves. **A *mani* fruit grows in each blossom.** Each flower will bear a fruit of *mani* jewels.

**Shimmering rays shine between the branches** of the tree, **lighting up the entire *bodhimanda*. Such pure, infinite resplendence** has no heat to it. It is cool, clean, and undefiled, yet has the appearance of a blazing fire. This light **appears by the power of the Buddha’s vows.** The *bodhi* tree manifests this kind of state as a result of the vows the Buddha made in the past.

**The flowers are made of *mani* gems in abundance. / The shadows and radiance resemble exquisite**, five-colored **clouds** in the sky—extremely beautiful. **Enshrouding the tree with all-pervasive fragrance / And decorating every part of the *bodhimanda*.** The entire *bodhimanda* is beautifully adorned and filled with a fine fragrance.

**Sutra:**

**Look inside the *bodhimanda* of the Well Gone One.**
**The precious nets of lotuses are pure and clean.**
**Emerging from them are flaming orbs of light.**
**Bells tinkling and tolling are heard in the clouds.**

**All beautiful trees of wondrous colors**
**That grow in the lands of the ten directions**
**Appear within the *bodhi* tree.**
**Beneath that tree, the Buddha transcends all defilement.**

**Commentary:**

**Look inside the *bodhimanda* of the Well Gone One.** This line beckons you, me, and the sentient beings of the present to take a look. At the time when the Buddha was speaking the Dharma, this line was telling those sentient beings who were in the Dharma assembly to take a look. Now we are far from the time of the Buddha, so when we explain this Sutra, we interpret this line as telling all of us to take a look. If we don’t look, the sutra is useless to us. The Buddha spoke the Dharma to liberate sentient beings. You and I are both sentient beings. We are among the sentient beings taught and transformed by the Buddha. Thus, you should not think that this line of the sutra has nothing to do with you. You should connect it to your own body and mind. It is fully your own business, nobody else’s. If you have that kind of attitude, the sutra will mean something to you.

What should you look at? Look at the Well Gone One. “Well Gone One” is one of the ten titles of a Buddha. Literally, it means one who has gone to a good place, but in the sutra it refers to the Buddha. You are to look inside the Way-place where the Buddha dwells.

Due to the Buddha’s presence in the Way-place, **the precious nets** woven **of lotuses are pure and clean. / Emerging from them are flaming orbs of light.** The lotuses radiate many kinds of light of various colors, resembling flames. The flames naturally assume a circular shape, like wheels. Not only are there wheels in the light, there are sounds of bells. **Bells tinkling and tolling are heard in the clouds.** [Note: In Chinese there are two words, *ling* and *duo*, for bells. *Ling* are small round bells, and *duo* are bells with clappers, usually wooden.] In China, a disciple of Confucius once said, “Heaven is about to use the Master [Confucius] as a bell with a wooden clapper [to arouse the age].” In other words, Heaven would employ Confucius to make a great sound like the tolling of a bell. Within the clouds various lights and forms appear, and various sounds of bells are heard.

**All beautiful trees of wondrous colors / That grow in the** Buddhas’ **lands of the ten directions**—the four cardinal directions, the four intermediate directions, and above and below. This refers to all types of trees, not just a single type. *Bodhi* trees also come in many shapes and colors, but they are always exceptionally handsome and magnificent. The mere sight of a *bodhi* tree causes people to bring forth the resolve for *bodhi*. Having made that resolve, they will eventually bear the *bodhi* fruit and realize Buddhahood.

All those trees **appear within the *bodhi* tree.** In all the years that the *Flower Adornment Sutra* has been lectured, we have seldom discussed the *bodhi* tree. It just so happens that the editor and distributor of the Taiwanese journal *Bodhi Tree* are here today, and we are also talking about the *bodhi* tree in the sutra. As mentioned earlier, people who see the *bodhi* tree are bound to bring forth the aspiration for *bodhi*. Similarly, when people who have no understanding of Buddhism read the *Bodhi Tree* magazine, they gain a little taste of Buddhism and want to study in greater depth. The wish to study in greater depth amounts to bringing forth the aspiration for *bodhi*. They want to investigate the principles discussed in *Bodhi Tree* magazine. That is what is meant when the sutra says all the trees “appear within the *bodhi* tree.” There is nothing that does not appear there. The Five Roots, the Five Powers, the Seven Bodhi Shares, the Eightfold Proper Path, the Four Applications of Mindfulness, the Four Right Efforts, and the Four Psychic Bases are all manifested there.

The *bodhi* tree expounds Theravada doctrines, such as the Four Noble Truths and the Twelve Links of Conditioned Causation. It also expounds Mahayana doctrines—the Six Perfections and the Ten Thousand Practices—and speaks of how by practicing the Bodhisattva Way, one eventually realizes the perfect fruition of Buddhahood, attains the three types of enlightenment and the ten thousand virtues, and is replete with both blessings and wisdom. Thus, nothing does not appear in the *bodhi* tree. The *bodhi* tree encompasses all phenomena. All 84,000 dharma doors appear in the *bodhi* tree. What’s the purpose of revealing so many dharma doors? They counteract an equal number of sentient beings’ illnesses and problems. Sentient beings afflicted by illnesses need these dharmas to save themselves. If sentient beings ceased being ill, these dharmas would be rendered useless.

Every conceivable thing appears in the *bodhi* tree—all kinds of images, sounds, and dharma doors.

**Beneath that tree, the Buddha transcends all defilement.** This text ought to be changed. It says that the Buddha transcends all defilement beneath the tree. Of course the Buddha has renounced defilement. Otherwise, how could he be a Buddha? How should it be altered? It should say: “Beneath that tree, sentient beings transcend all defilement.” When sentient beings go to the base of the *bodhi* tree, they renounce all defilement. Although I say this, the sutra was spoken by the Buddha and cannot be altered. However, you should understand that the Buddha is free from defilement. We sentient beings are the ones who are impure. The Buddha had returned to original purity. You cannot say that the Buddha transcended all defilement only after he sat beneath the *bodhi* tree. Even before he went to the *bodhi* tree, the Buddha was already free from all defilement. If we sentient beings were to sit beneath the *bodhi* tree, bring forth the resolve for *bodhi*, practice the Bodhisattva Path, and realize the *bodhi* fruit, then we would also transcend all defilement.

Therefore we should not think that this line is talking about the Buddha transcending all defilement. The Buddha did that long ago. He didn’t have to wait until he was sitting under the *bodhi* tree to transcend defilement. What we need is for sentient beings to leave all defilement behind. Defilement characterizes sentient beings, not the Buddha. Since he had left defilement, what is there for him to transcend?

**Sutra:**

**The vast, expansive *bodhimanda* results from blessings.**
**Jewels rain down endlessly from the branches.**
**From each jewel emerge Bodhisattvas,**
**Who serve and make offerings to Buddhas in the ten directions.**

**The realm of the Buddhas is inconceivable.**
**They universally cause their trees to make music.**
**Hearing the sound, the multitudes are able to see**
**The Buddhas’ past practices on the *bodhi* path.**

**Commentary:**

How did **the** Buddha’s incredibly **vast, expansive *bodhimanda*** come about? It **results from** the cultivation of **blessings** and wisdom. The full realization and adornment of blessings and wisdom brought that great Way-place into being. **Jewels rain down endlessly from the branches**, twigs, and leaves of the *bodhi* tree. There is no end to the shower of precious gems. **From each jewel emerge** transformation **Bodhisattvas, / Who serve and make offerings to** all **Buddhas in the ten directions.**

**The realm of all Buddhas is inconceivable.** You cannot conceptualize it using an ordinary frame of mind or use ordinary language to describe it. The Buddhas’ realm is beyond mental conceptualization and verbal expression **They universally cause their** *bodhi* **trees to make music.** Upon **hearing the sound, the multitudes** of sentient beings produce the aspiration for *bodhi* and **are able to see** **the Buddhas’ past practices** that they cultivated and accumulated **on the *bodhi* path.** When those in the great ocean-like Flower Adornment assembly hear such sounds, they are able to see such states.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
J. They speak verses in praise
6. Hundred Eyes Bodhisattva praises the tree’s perfect virtues and its masterful proclamation of the
Dharma to transform beings

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Hundred Eyes and Lotus Flower Topknot received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses.**

**The *mani* gems all emit marvelous sounds**
**Praising the names of Buddhas of the three periods of time.**
**The numberless miraculous deeds of those Buddhas**
**Are entirely visible within this *bodhimanda*.**

**Arrayed like jeweled necklaces, the flowers compete in beauty.**
**Clouds of light drift and spread through the ten directions.**
**The spirits of the *bodhi* tree present these to the Buddhas,**
**Using their single-minded gaze as an offering.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time,** when the assembly was listening to the Buddha speak the Dharma, **Bodhisattva Mahasattva Hundred Eyes and Lotus Flower Topknot** came forth. This Bodhisattva was introduced earlier, so we need not say anything now. He **received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power**—that of Sãkyamuni Buddha and all Buddhas of the ten directions. This Bodhisattva was not like ordinary people, who are attached and say, “I did this. I did that.” Such people cannot forget their own importance. They think that nothing can be accomplished without their help. This Bodhisattva very modestly said, “I myself cannot speak verses. I am able to pronounce these verses only by virtue of the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power. Without such power to back me up, I couldn’t do it.” The Bodhisattva gave all the credit to the Buddha. He **contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda***—the assembly was so prolific it was like an ocean, **and spoke the following verses** to elaborate further upon the principles he had been discussing, so that sentient beings—such as you and I—would find them easier to understand. From his attitude, we can perceive the compassion and understanding that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have for us sentient beings. They take care of everything for us down to the very last detail. There is nothing they neglect to remember.

**The *mani* gems all emit marvelous**, inconceivable **sounds**. How are these sounds marvelous? When deluded beings hear them, they become wise. Isn’t that marvelous. Originally deluded, they hear the Dharma and develop great wisdom. They “deeply enter the Sutra Treasury and have wisdom like the sea.” Isn’t that wonderful? Think about it. That’s the first effect.

When angry sentient beings hear these wonderful sounds, they unconsciously forget their anger. They don’t know where their anger goes, but they can’t get it back. Wouldn’t you say that’s wonderful? What is more, when greedy beings hear these sounds, they cease being greedy. Before, they were insatiably greedy; now they are satisfied and happy. Instead of craving things, they start giving. Aren’t those wonderful sounds? They convert people’s greed, anger, and delusion into morality, concentration, and wisdom. Wouldn’t you say it’s wonderful? They are that powerful, but that still can’t be considered wonderful. What other wonderful effects are there? When sentient beings who are dying hear these wondrous sounds, they are pulled back from the brink of death. When sick beings hear these marvelous sounds, their sicknesses vanish. Those who were chronically ill instantly become well upon hearing those sounds.

“Dharma Master, this is totally illogical. How could such things happen?” you ask. If it weren’t that marvelous, how could these be marvelous sounds? Marvelous sounds bring about effects that you never imagined. The most important effect concerns our interminable afflictions. When we hear these marvelous sounds, we can finally end our afflictions. What is more, these sounds are constantly **praising the names of Buddhas of the three periods of time.** Why do these sounds cause fools to become wise, greedy beings to renounce their greed, and angry beings to stop being angry? Why are these sounds able to heal the sick and bring the dead back to life? It’s because these marvelous sounds praise the names of the Buddhas of the three periods of time. That’s why all afflictions turn into *bodhi*, all greed into generosity, all anger into compassion, and all foolishness into wisdom. Through merely praising the Buddhas’ names, these sounds have an inconceivable power.

“What proof is there that there are such inconceivable, marvelous sounds with such inconceivable powers?” The next lines of verse says clearly: **The numberless miraculous deeds of those Buddhas / Are entirely visible within this *bodhimanda*.** The Buddhas’ limitlessly many spiritual penetrations and wonderful functions can be seen at the Way-place beneath the *bodhi* tree. What I have explained of these inconceivable states is equivalent to one drop in the huge ocean or to a single mote of dust. I have brought up one aspect to hint at something limitless. Once you understand this one aspect, you will understand infinitely many aspects.

The responses from his spiritual powers and wonderful functionings are not limited to causing fools to become wise. If you have not ended birth and death, you will be able to do so upon hearing those marvelous sounds. In fact, you will eventually realize Buddhahood, so getting rid of delusion is a trivial matter in comparison.

**Arrayed like jeweled necklaces, the flowers compete in beauty.** *Bodhi* flowers bloom on the *bodhi* tree. There is an infinite variety of *bodhi* flowers; they are not all the same kind. These myriads of flowers compete with each other: “You look quite lovely, but I am even lovelier.” These blossoms resemble jewels floating in the air. This lovely sight inspires people to bring forth the unsurpassed *bodhi* resolve.

**Clouds of light drift and spread through the ten directions.** These flowers have a radiance that resembles clouds drifting about in the ten directions. **The** *bodhi* **spirits of the *bodhi* tree present these** flowers and lights **to the Buddhas** of the ten directions, **using their single-minded gaze as an offering.** They focus their gaze upon the Buddhas, not letting their eyes leave the Buddhas for even a second. They constantly want to behold the Buddha. They seem as if catatonic, but they are not. The *bodhi* tree spirits are lucid as they gaze at the Buddha. They can’t bear to blink or shut their eyes, so they keep their eyes open for several days and nights.

The analogy between the *bodhi* tree spirits and those who are catatonic is an interesting one.  If those who are catatonic could stare at the Buddha without blinking, they might soon become Buddhas themselves. However, if they met the Buddha they might simply close their eyes, not knowing who he was.

Who is the Buddha? What would you say? Well, let me finish explaining this verse first. The *bodhi* tree spirits can’t bear to divert their gaze from the Buddha for even a second, so the text says, “Using their single-minded gaze as an offering.” Such sincerity is rare indeed!

**Sutra:**

**Blazing light from *mani* forms a banner.**
**The glowing banner produces an exquisite fragrance.**
**The fragrance permeates the entire assembly,**
**Making the place entirely adorned and pure.**

**Commentary:**

**Blazing light from *mani* forms a banner.** The *mani* jewels on the *bodhi* tree in the Way-place give off blazing light, which form a great Dharma banner. **The glowing banner produces an exquisite fragrance.** The Dharma banner is all aglow and flaming, and from the flames comes a sublime fragrance that no one has ever inhaled before. **The fragrance permeates the entire assembly,** causing everyone to bring forth the *bodhi* resolve and **making the place entirely adorned and pure.** The entire *bodhimanda* becomes especially beautiful and pure. This fine ambience inspires everyone in the assembly to develop the unsurpassed resolve for the Way.

**Sutra:**

**Lotus blossoms sprinkle golden rays of light.**
**Within the light, the Buddha’s wondrous sounds—like clouds**
**Spread and cover all lands in ten directions,**
**Quelling sentient beings’ burning afflictions forever.**

**The magnificent *bodhi* tree, with sovereign power,**
**Constantly releases rays of the purest light.**
**The boundless assemblies in the ten directions**
**Are all reflected without fail in the *bodhimanda*.**

**The effulgence from jeweled branches resembles bright lanterns.**
**That brilliance pronounces great vows.**
**The Buddha’s past cultivation**
**In all levels of existence is fully told.**

**The spirits beneath tree, as numerous as dustmotes in lands,**
**Have all drawn near to this *bodhimanda.***
**At the tree where each Tathagata realizes the Way,**
**They proclaim passages to liberation in thought after thought.**

**Commentary:**

In the *bodhimanda*, wondrous **lotus blossoms sprinkle golden rays of light** all around. **Within the light, the Buddha’s wondrous sounds** can be heard **like clouds**. The Buddha’s Dharma sound can be heard within the light. For sentient beings, it is like listening to the radio. They very naturally hear the sound of Dharma. These clouds of sound **spread and cover all lands in ten directions,** not just in one location; rather, they broadcast the Dharma to sentient beings throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm. These clouds cover all the sentient beings in all Buddhalands throughout the ten directions, **quelling sentient beings’ burning afflictions forever.** This light travels to the worlds of the ten directions to speak the Dharma. When sentient beings hear the Dharma sounds within the light clouds, their afflictions and ignorance are obliterated. Their greed, anger, and delusion disappear, and sentient beings have no idea where these poisons went.

**The magnificent *bodhi* tree, with sovereign power, / Constantly releases rays of the purest light. / The** Way-places and their **boundless** Dharma **assemblies in the ten directions / Are all reflected without fail in the *bodhimanda*.** All the *bodhimandas* in the ten directions manifest in the *bodhimanda* of the magnificent *bodhi* tree. The *bodhimanda* of the magnificent *bodhi* tree in turn appears in every *bodhimanda* throughout the ten directions. There is this mutual inter-reflection of light between this *bodhimanda* and all *bodhimandas* throughout the ten directions.

**The effulgence from jeweled branches resembles bright lanterns.** The branches of the *bodhi* tree all radiate light. **That brilliance** emits a sublime Dharma sound that **pronounces** the past **great vows** of all Buddhas. **The Buddha’s past cultivation / In all levels of existence is fully told.** The Buddha’s past cultivation in the Three Realms and the twenty-five levels of existence—the methods and dharma doors he cultivated—are proclaimed little by little. It is almost like watching a television show—you can see it all.

**The** infinitely many **spirits beneath** *bodhi* **tree** are **as numerous as dustmotes in lands**. These spirits **have all drawn near to this *bodhimanda*** to protect it. **At the tree where each Tathagata realizes the Way, / They proclaim passages to liberation in thought after thought.** Each Buddha attains the Way beneath a *bodhi* tree. When the *bodhi* tree spirits come to protect the *bodhimanda*, they help the Buddha propagate the Dharma. Thus, in every thought they proclaim the principles of the passage into liberations in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*.

**Sutra:**

**Every practice cultivated by the World Honored One:**
**His making of offerings to all Thus Come Ones, and**
**All his past cultivation and renown**
**Appear entirely in the *mani* pearl.**

**Commentary:**

Look at **every practice cultivated by the World Honored One.** World Honored One is one of the ten titles of the Buddha, who is honored both in and beyond the world. Among all the practices he cultivated—the Six Perfections and Ten Thousand Practices—primarily there was **his making of offerings to all Thus Come Ones**.
[Universal Worthy Bodhisattva’s ten great kings of vows begin:]

The first is to worship and respect all Buddhas.
The second is to praise the Thus Come Ones.
The third is to extensively make offerings.

He extensively made offerings to all Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time. **All his past cultivation and renown**. The Buddha gained great renown for his cultivation. Everyone came to know how he cultivated the Way. All these scenes from the past **appear entirely in the *mani* pearl** on the *bodhi* tree, inspiring those who see them to bring forth the *bodhi* resolve.

**Sutra:**

**Everything in the *bodhimanda* makes marvelous sounds**
**Far-reaching sounds that pervade the ten directions.**
**Sentient beings who are receptive to the Dharma**
**All become purified and subdued.**

**Commentary:**

**Everything in the *bodhimanda***—the trees, the lion throne, the light emitted from the *bodhi* tree, the flowers—**makes marvelous sounds** proclaiming the wonderful Dharma. These **far-reaching sounds** emitted from all the adornments in the *bodhimanda* **pervade the ten directions. /** **Sentient beings who are receptive to the Dharma / All become purified and subdued.** Sentient beings who are receptive to this Dharma are completely tamed and purified by it. Purity refers to the absence of greed, anger, delusion, and all afflictions. Sentient beings hear these marvelous sounds and become happy.

**Sutra:**

**Long ago, the Thus Come One everywhere cultivated**
**Innumerable deeds that developed these adornments.**
**All the *bodhi* trees in the ten directions**
**Have a measureless variety of adornments.**

**Commentary:**

This set of ten verses praises the *bodhi* tree and describes how everything appears in that tree.

**Long ago,** when **the Thus Come One** was cultivating, he cultivated all kinds of Dharma, not just one kind. Thus the text says, he **everywhere cultivated / Innumerable deeds that developed these adornments.** Since he cultivated every dharma door, he perfected every kind of adornment—innumerable adornments. **All the *bodhi* trees in the** Buddha worlds of the **ten directions / Have a measureless variety of adornments.** Each tree and each *bodhimanda* has its own unique adornments. Measureless *bodhimandas* thus have measureless adornments.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
J. They speak verses in praise
7. Golden Flames Bodhisattva praises the meritorious qualities of the Buddha’s Ten Powers

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Full Radiance of Golden Flames received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses.**

**As the Buddha cultivated practices for *bodhi*,**
**He clearly understood all states of being.**
**Whether they were right or wrong, he remained pure and doubtless.**
**This is the first of the Thus Come One’s powers of wisdom.**

**Commentary:**

The next set of verses extols the inconceivable realm of the Buddha’s Ten Powers.

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Full Radiance of Golden Flames received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual** **power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda***. Some were members of the influential assembly, while others were those for whom the Dharma was being spoken. This great Bodhisattva contemplated the entire assembly **and spoke the following verses** to explain the preceding passages of prose.

**As the Buddha cultivated practices for *bodhi***—as he cultivated the Path to Enlightenment consisting of the Six Perfections and the myriad practices—**he clearly understood all states of being. / Whether they were right or wrong, he remained pure and doubtless.** The Buddha understands all dharmas, all principles, and all states. All dharmas are clear to him. He also understands the minds and intentions of all sentient beings. In general, whether something is right or wrong in a situation, he is free from doubts. Why does he have no doubts? He understands everything. **This is the first of the Thus Come One’s powers of wisdom.** This is the first of the Buddha’s Ten Powers of wisdom. Endowed with these wisdom powers, he is not confused by ignorance or afflictions.

Are there any questions?

*Disciple:* How should mantras be recited?

*Venerable Master:* Everything is made from the mind. In general, when you are teaching others, mantras should be recited slowly.  Once you have mastered the mantra, you can recite it quickly yourself. Mantras should be recited swiftly. A response can be almost simultaneous with the recitation. When you don’t know the mantra, of course you should slow down. Once you have mastered it, you can speed up.

For example, in the time it takes an ordinary person to recite a mantra once, one who has attained the first stage of sagehood can recite it a hundred times. He is a hundred or more times faster than you. A Sage of the Second Stage can recite it a thousand times in the time it takes you to recite it once. A Sage of the Third Stage can recite the mantra ten thousand times in that time. Wouldn’t you call that fast? A Sage of the Fourth Stage can recite the mantra one million times in the time it takes you to recite it once. In that amount of time, a Bodhisattva can recite the mantra ten million times and a Buddha can recite it a hundred million times. That’s how great the difference is.

If you can recite quickly without mistake, the faster you recite, the better. The faster you recite, the faster the responses. Not even a single thought-instant passes in vain.

**Sutra:**

**Just as in the past he impartially viewed the nature of dharmas\***
**And clearly fathomed the sea of all karma,**
**All of this, now, in the net of radiance,**
**Is universally enacted in the ten directions.**

\*Note: The Ven. Master reads this line with one character different, so that the meaning becomes: “The Thus Come One impartially viewed the nature of dharmas.”
There may be more than one version of the sutra.

**Commentary**:

The preceding verse spoke of the wisdom power of knowing what is right or wrong in every condition. This verse speaks of the wisdom power of knowing the karma of the three periods of time.

What is meant by “what is right or wrong”? This was not explained fully earlier. If you plant a good cause and experience happiness as a result, then this is proper and reasonable. If you plant a good cause and receive suffering as a result, then that is wrong and unreasonable.

**[Just as in the past he impartially viewed the nature of dharmas.]** **The Thus Come One impartially** and universally **viewed the nature of** all **dharmas.** In other words, he contemplated how people were deluded, created karma, and underwent retribution in the past; are deluded, create karma, and undergo retribution in the present; and will be deluded, create karma, and undergo retribution in the future. **And** thus he **clearly fathomed the sea of all karma**. The karmic obstacles of the past, present, and future can be likened to a huge ocean, yet the Buddha’s wisdom power enables him to fully comprehend such karma. **All of this**—the states of the ocean of karma—**now, in the net of radiance** woven of lights emitted by the *bodhi* tree, **is universally enacted in the ten directions.** These states appear not only under a single *bodhi* tree in a single Buddhaland; they manifest in every Buddha’s Way-place, under every *bodhi* tree throughout the ten directions to the ends of space and the Dharma Realm. This particular Buddha’s Way-place and *bodhi* tree appear in the ten directions, and the Way-places and *bodhi* trees in the ten directions likewise appear here, creating a situation of infinite levels of interreflection.

**Sutra:**

**In former eons he cultivated great expedients,**
**Transforming and guiding sentient beings according to their roots,**
**And purifying the minds of all in the assembly.**
**Thus the Buddha perfected the wisdom power of faculties.**

**Commentary:**

This verse speaks of the Buddha’s wisdom power of knowing whether sentient beings’ faculties are superior or inferior. Superior faculties refers to good roots. Inferior faculties refers to the lack of good roots. **In former eons he cultivated** the Bodhisattva Path and attained **great**, skillful **expedients, / Transforming and guiding sentient beings according to their roots**. He expediently educated sentient beings, according to the saying:

To lead someone to enter the Buddha’s wisdom,
First bait the hook with something they like.

If you wish to teach and transform a sentient being and convert him, you might not want to speak the Dharma to him right away. You ought to observe what he likes and give him some of that, and then teach him the Dharma. That is what it means to “transform and guide.” For example, children all like candy. You can first give them some candy and then tell them a story, and they will be delighted. If you tell them the story without giving them candy first, they won’t listen. The Buddha “using his empty fist to rescue a child” was a case of expediently “transforming and guiding” sentient beings.

What is meant by “using an empty fist to rescue a child”? When the Buddha was in the world, once he came across a crawling toddler who of course liked candy. The child was crawling toward a well, and the Buddha knew that if the lad fell into the well, he would drown. If someone were to chase the child from behind to try to stop it, the child would only crawl faster and fall into the well more quickly. Instead, the Buddha held out his fist and said, “Little one, come here! I have candy for you!” The toddler heard the word “candy” and crawled back to the Buddha. Of course the Buddha didn’t have any candy in his hand. “So the Buddha tells lies, too,” you say. That was not a lie; it was an expedient that saved the child’s life. Therefore, it cannot be considered a lie. Cultivators should not be too rigid in their thinking. You have to know how to apply the Buddhadharma in a versatile way.

Not only children, but adults also need to be taught with all sorts of expedients. If you know people’s dispositions—what they like and dislike—you can talk to them about what they like and avoid talking about what they dislike. Cultivators should be able to understand the disposition and outlook of any person they meet. They should know whether that person has good roots. Therefore students of the Buddhadharma need to have an understanding of psychology—the study of the mind. Once you understand the psychology and faculties of sentient beings, you will be able to teach and transform them.

**And purifying the minds of all in the assembly.** Since the Buddha understands the dispositions of sentient beings, he can purify the minds of sentient beings in all Way-places and Dharma assemblies in this world and limitlessly many other worlds in the ten directions. All sentient beings’ minds become pure and free from false thoughts. All false thinking vanishes. One returns to the pure source. **Thus the Buddha accomplished the wisdom power of faculties.** Since the Buddha cultivated great expedients, he is able to know whether sentient beings’ faculties and potentials are superior or inferior. He obtained that wisdom power.

**Sutra:**

**Sentient beings’ understandings are not the same.**
**Their inclinations and ways of behaving are each distinct.**
**Accordingly he speaks the Dharma that they should hear.**
**The Buddha, by his wisdom power, can be this way.**

**Commentary:**

**Sentient beings’ understandings are not the same.** This four-line verse speaks of the Buddha’s wisdom power of knowing various understandings. Having identified sentient beings’ dispositions, one can then understand the distinct characteristics of sentient beings. Sentient beings understand different things, and the Buddha understands that sentient beings have different understandings. Sentient beings of every kind have their own particular dispositions. Humans have human dispositions; dogs have dog natures; cats have the temperaments of cats. Mice have mice natures. Frogs leap; rabbits hop; fish swim in the water; birds fly in the air. Every kind of sentient being has its own unique capabilities and wisdom.

Moreover, different kinds of sentient beings like different things. **Their inclinations and ways of behaving are each distinct.** Dogs, for example, will bite strangers. Cats eat mice, yet are friendly with humans. Rabbits run off when they see people. Frogs also leap away at the sight of people. Tigers see people and want to eat them. Thus, different kinds of creatures have different tendencies and different things that they like. And you can’t force them to all be the same. Instead, you have to recognize what they understand, and then you will be able to teach and transform them.

**Accordingly he speaks the Dharma that they should hear.** The Buddha sees what kind of Dharma a sentient being needs to hear to be liberated, and speaks that Dharma for him.  For example, adherents of different religions hold different views and understandings. In Taiwan there was a Buddhist layman who lived on the grounds of a monastery. Although he was a Buddhist, his son originally professed himself a Catholic. While the father had no wish to convert his son, the son wanted to convert the father, so the son explained the Bible to him. The son once told his father, “Let me give you an analogy. Your believing in Buddhism is like standing in the middle of a crowded thoroughfare. Sooner or later, you are bound to get run over and lose your soul.” The father did not say anything.

Later when the son was in college, he read in the Bible about the Crusaders killing many people. He questioned a priest, saying, “Believing in Christ should lead one to be good. Why did it lead to killing?” The priest answered, “You don’t understand enough yet, so I can’t answer you right now.”

The son was not satisfied with that reply. Eventually he encountered a good Buddhist teacher and became a Buddhist. Now he is translating sutras. Originally he wanted to convert his father, but his father was firm in his faith and did not give in to his influence. Instead, the son was converted by the father. This is a case of how each person has his or her individual conditions. The Buddha is able to speak for each sentient being just the Dharma which that particular being can accept. **The Buddha, by his wisdom power, can be this way.** The Buddha can contemplate each situation and speak the appropriate Dharma for the sentient beings involved. That is his wisdom power of knowing various understandings.

**Sutra:**

**Oceans of lands to the ends of the ten directions**
**And all realms of sentient beings as well**
**Manifest within the Buddha’s pores**
**By virtue of his impartial, space-like wisdom.**

**Commentary:**

**To the ends of the ten directions / And all** countries and **realms of sentient beings as well, / Manifest within the Buddha’s pores / By virtue of his impartial, space-like wisdom.** The Buddha’s wisdom is equally impartial like space. Although all the Buddhas’ lands and realms of sentient beings are vast and boundless, the huge can appear inside the tiny. The Buddhas’ pores are tiny, yet what is huge can appear within them. The tiny can also manifest inside the huge. Huge and tiny are mutually nonobstructive. The Buddha’s wisdom power can thoroughly fathom all kinds of realms of sentient beings. He can use various dharmas to transform the different realms of beings.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha knows where every path leads.**
**A single thought exhausts the three periods completely.**
**He can entirely reveal and manifest**
**All eons, sentient beings, times, and lands in the ten directions.**

**Commentary:**

This verse describes the wisdom power of knowing where all paths lead, also known as the wisdom power of traveling to all destinies. If the path you cultivate is pure and free from defiled dharmas, you will quickly attain enlightenment. If you cultivate impure, defiled dharmas, then you cannot leave suffering and attain happiness, nor can you become enlightened. Since the Buddha understands all this, the text says: **The Buddha knows where every path leads.** If you want to leave suffering and attain happiness, you must cultivate pure dharmas. If you have no wish to leave suffering and gain happiness, you can simply follow along with defiled dharmas. The Buddha has the wisdom to know where all paths and practices take one.

**A single thought exhausts the three periods completely.** The past, present, and future can completely be manifested in the space of a single thought. Not only that, but **he can entirely reveal and manifest / All eons, sentient beings, times, and lands in the ten directions.** The Buddha can instruct sentient beings and enable them to perceive and understand these kinds of states.

**Sutra:**

**Just as his *dhyana* concentration and liberation are boundlessly strong,**
**So, too, are his *samadhi* and expedient means.**
**The Buddha appears for the delight of sentient beings**
**And cleanses away their dismal afflictions.**

**Commentary:**

**Just as his *dhyana* concentration and liberation are boundlessly strong.** *Dhyana*, a Sanskrit word, is translated to mean “thought cultivation” and “stilling reflection.” Liberation implies freedom and ease; the absence of all restraints. The Buddha has the wisdom power of *dhyana*, liberation, and *samadhi*, and the power of this wisdom is measureless and boundless. **So, too, are his *samadhi* and expedient means.** The power of his *samadhi* and expedient means is also measureless.

**The Buddha appears for the delight of** **sentient beings / And cleanses away their dismal afflictions.** The Buddha uses the water of *samadhi* and wisdom to cleanse away sentient beings’ dismal afflictions. These dismal afflictions refer to greed, anger, and delusion. Greed, anger, and delusion are nothing but affliction! Once these afflictions are washed away, sentient beings return to their origin.

**Sutra:**

**Unhindered, Buddha’s wisdom encompasses the three periods,**
**Which instantaneously appear in his pores.**
**The Buddhadharma, countries, and sentient beings**
**All manifest by his power of knowing upon reflection.**

**Commentary:**

This verse describes the eighth of the Buddha’s Ten Powers, the power of knowing past lives upon reflection. The Buddha knows all the events and conditions of sentient beings’ past lives. This is basically the spiritual power of the knowledge of past lives.

**Unhindered, Buddha’s wisdom encompasses the three periods.** The Buddha’s wisdom is unimpeded. There is nothing he does not understand. He knows everything in the past, the present, and even the future. His wisdom contains the three periods, **which instantaneously appear in his pores.** In a brief instant, he can manifest the causes and conditions of the three periods of time right in his pores. **The Buddhadharma,** all the Buddhas and how they turn the Dharma wheel and speak the Dharma, all the Buddhas’ **countries, and sentient beings / All manifest by his** wisdom **power of knowing** past lives **upon reflection.**

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha’s eyes are as pervasive as space.**
**They see the entire Dharma Realm, missing nothing.**
**On the ground of nonobstruction, he achieved peerless functioning.**
**Only Buddhas can describe the depth of his eyes.**

**Commentary:**

This verse describes the wisdom power of the unobstructed celestial eye, also known as the wisdom power of the unobstructed Buddha eye. **The Buddha’s eyes are as pervasive as space.** The Buddha eye is one of the Five Eyes. Here, “the Buddha’s eyes” includes all kinds of eyes. The Buddha’s eyes are huge to the point of being boundless. Think about how huge that is. You cannot even see the edges of these eyes. They are as immense as all of space. This line describes the Buddha’s wisdom eyes being as great at space.

**They see the entire Dharma Realm, missing nothing.** The Buddha can see everything throughout space to the ends of the Dharma Realm. Not only that, but the Buddha can see all the thoughts of sentient beings. He knows what any given sentient being is thinking at any time. **On the ground of nonobstruction, he achieved peerless functioning.** When the Buddha was at the level of planting causes, he cultivated the dharma door of nonobstruction. As a result, his functioning is incomparable. **Only Buddhas can describe the depth of his eyes.** Only Buddhas are able to give expression to this state of having eyes endowed with such measureless, great functioning and power.

**Sutra:**

**Every sentient being is tied up in knots**
**And bound by all the derivative afflictions and habits.**
**The Tathagata appears everywhere in the world**
**And expediently releases those bonds.**

**Commentary:**

This verse speaks of the wisdom power of non-outflows. The Buddha has the wisdom to help sentient beings attain nonoutflows and become Buddhas. Since the Buddha himself has already put an end to outflows and realized Buddhahood, he can teach and transform sentient beings to do the same. **Every sentient being is tied up in knots**. These knots are the karmic obstacles and offenses they have created. These knots keep them from being liberated. What keeps them tied up? Their karmic obstacles. Originally, they were pure. When they created karma and became defiled, they lost the light of wisdom and were left in darkness. They are obstructed by karmic obstacles **and bound by all the derivative afflictions and habits.** The knots refer to karmic obstacles of the present. Derivative afflictions are seeds planted in the field of the eighth consciousness. These are seeds for the future creation of karma. Habits refer to things you have become accustomed to doing in life after life.

Here are some simple examples of habits. Sometimes smokers manage to quit smoking, but once in a while their former habit comes back and they get the urge to smoke again. In that case, their habit still has some energy left in it.

Some people quit drinking, but still often fantasize or dream about drinking. These are leftover habit-energies. They have not pulled their habits out by the roots. There are gamblers who vow to quit gambling, but then always find an excuse to go back and visit the casinos. These are all examples of leftover habits.

Greed, anger, delusion, and pride are also habits. The Buddha’s disciple, Kalodayin, “Black Light,” was one with the leftover habit of greed. People with the habit of anger can be compared to Sãriputra. Although Sãriputra had great wisdom, he also had a big temper. People with the habit of delusion are like Suddhipanthaka, who, even after becoming enlightened, still had the appearance of a fool because of his habitual delusion which carried over from the past.

Pilindavatsa had the habit of arrogance. His tremendous conceit was a carry-over from past lives. **The Tathagata** **appears everywhere in the world, / And expediently releases those bonds.** Using expedient dharmas, the Buddha gets rid of sentient beings’ habits.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
J. They speak verses in praise
8. Dharma Realm Bodhisattva praises the Buddha’s perfect practice of the Ten Paramitas leading to his present attainment of a perfect fruition

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Sound Pervading the Dharma Realm received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses.**

**The Buddha’s awesome spiritual power pervades the ten directions.**
**Vast and great, he manifests without discrimination.**
**Great *bodhi* practices and *paramitas*—**
**All beings see how he perfected these in the past.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Sound Pervading the Dharma Realm received the Buddha’s awesome** **spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses** to further explain the principles mentioned earlier.

This next verse is spoken by the Bodhisattva named Sound Pervading the Dharma Realm. In fact, the next ten verses are all spoken by him. This differs from the earlier sets of verses, which were spoken by ten spirits, ten Bodhisattvas, ten *yaksha* kings, ten *rakshasa* kings, ten *gandharva* kings, and so on, each one speaking one verse. Here, these eleven verses are all spoken by the same Bodhisattva. The first verse is a general summary, and the following ten verses individually describe the Ten Paramitas.

People who cultivate the Buddhist path must put the Ten Paramitas into true practice. They must personally and sincerely practice them and not have a sloppy attitude. There are the Six Paramitas and the Ten Paramitas.

**The Six Paramitas are:**

1.   giving
2.   morality (holding precepts)
3.   patience
4.   vigor
5.   *dhyana* *samadhi*
6.   *prajña* wisdom

**The last four *paramitas* are:**

7.   expedient means
8.   vows
9.   power
10.  knowledge

That makes Ten Paramitas in all. **The Buddha’s awesome** **spiritual power pervades the ten directions.** The Buddha’s awe-inspiring virtue, great spiritual powers, and tremendous strength fill all of space to the ends of the Dharma Realm. The Buddha is **vast and great. He manifests** everywhere **without discrimination**. He appears impartially without discriminating. He cultivated **great *bodhi* practices**, made a great resolve to seek enlightenment, **and** cultivated great ***paramitas***. Practicing what was difficult to practice and enduring what was hard to endure, he vigorously cultivated all the dharma doors for arriving at the other shore. **All beings see how he perfected these in the past.** Everyone in the Dharma assembly now personally sees these dharma doors of the Ten Paramitas and myriad practices that the Buddha perfected in the past.

**Sutra:**

**Giving rise to great compassion for sentient beings,**
**He cultivated the *paramita* of giving.**
**Thus his body is most sublime and wondrous,**
**Causing delight in the beholder.**

**Commentary:**

The first verse discusses the *paramita* of giving. The Buddha cultivated the perfection of giving in the past. Why should we cultivate giving? It’s said that, “giving money is as painful as cutting off a piece of flesh.” There are six kinds of faults that block the path of *bodhi* for sentient beings. The first is stinginess, the inability to give. When a stingy person earns a penny, he would rather clutch it so tightly that it melts than spend it. How far does his stinginess go? He reckons his accounts very clearly. When he gives a present, he does his best to save money. Everything costs money, so on his friend’s birthday, he decides to draw a picture of a birthday cake. Then he takes it to his friend, saying, “I don’t have anything good to give as a present, so I’m giving you this cake.” The friend, not to be outdone in stinginess, says, “Fine, when your birthday comes around, I won’t even bother to draw a cake on paper; I’ll simply give you an invisible cake and show you how big it is with my hands.” That’s how stingy people behave. One guy is so miserly that he gives his friend a picture of a cake; his friend returns the gesture by simply pointing to an invisible cake in the air and talking about it. The first person draws a cake on paper; the second one draws a cake in the air. Stinginess is the first fault.

Another fault is that of violating the precepts. After taking the precepts, some people fail to carefully uphold the *vajra* jeweled precepts. They often transgress them by telling lies, killing, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, and taking intoxicants. When they received the precepts, they promised not to lie. Yet later on, they lie. They say, “I won’t kill, I won’t kill,” and then they swat a mosquito, killing it. They say, “I won’t steal, I won’t steal,” but then they take a fancy to someone else’s belong and take it for themselves. Violating the precepts is the second fault.

The third fault is anger. People with this fault blow up at the least provocation. Their tempers seem to appear out of nowhere. They themselves don’t even understand how they get angry. They feed on anger and the fire of ignorance, consuming these things gluttonously, as if they tasted better than steamed buns, dumplings, pork chops, and steak.

The fourth fault is laziness. Lazy people are bored with everything. They feel most comfortable when they’re doing nothing at all.

The fifth fault is scatteredness. If one is lazy, one will lack wisdom and be scattered.

After scatteredness comes the fault of malicious intelligence. Instead of wholesome wisdom, they have unwholesome wisdom. An example of this would be the Seven Snakes Gang in the United States. Would you say they are stupid? They are highly intelligent, yet their intelligence is used for evil ends. The sixth fault is malicious intelligence.

With these six faults, one cannot practice giving. One thinks, “Why should I give you anything? Why don’t you give me something?” Even some left-home people don’t want to give anything to others, yet hope that others will make offerings to them. All day long they calculate how much money each layperson can give. Their thoughts run: “How rich is this layman? How much can that layman give?” How pathetic!

**Giving rise to great compassion for sentient beings, / He cultivated the *paramita* of giving.** The Buddha has tremendous compassion for sentient beings. Compassion can alleviate suffering. How? When sentient beings are suffering, you can practice charity. Thus, the Buddha practiced the *paramita* of giving. Wishing to relieve sentient beings’ suffering and make them happy, he gave to them.

Cultivation is a gradual process. You advance one small step at a time. No matter how small a deed is, if it is part of cultivation, you have to do it. You can’t skip the small deeds and do only the big ones, or skip the big deeds and do just the small ones. In cultivation, you have to practice all deeds, large and small.

There are three types of giving: the giving of wealth, the giving of Dharma, and the giving of fearlessness**.** As to the giving of wealth, there is inner wealth and outer wealth. Inner wealth includes one’s head, eyes, brain, and marrow—all of these can be given. Outer wealth includes one’s country, city, wife, and children. One can give large things, such as one’s entire country or city. It’s not easy to give away one’s wife, but one is willing to yield her to others. And if anyone wishes to have one’s children, one can give them away as well.

The giving of Dharma takes place when one lectures the sutras and speaks the Dharma. Of all offerings, the gift of Dharma is supreme. It is a wonderful thing to bestow the gift of Dharma upon someone. The gift of Dharma is more valuable than material gifts. The giving of fearlessness refers to consoling those who are scared and making them feel safe.

The Sanskrit word *paramita* means “arriving at the other shore,” that is, finishing the task at hand.

**Thus his body is most sublime and wondrous**. Due to the Buddha’s cultivation of the *paramita* of giving, his body is adorned with the Thirty-two Hallmarks and Eighty Subsidiary Characteristics. The Buddha practiced giving to the ultimate. He was not like ordinary people, who consider it foolhardy to give their money away to others. The Buddha gave away whatever he had. He was able to give his very body, mind, and life to sentient beings. What great kindness, compassion, joy, and renunciation—the Four Limitless Aspects of Mind—he had! That’s why the Buddha had such a superb physical appearance, **causing delight in the beholder.** Everyone was overjoyed to see the Buddha. Since the Buddha had cultivated affinities with sentient beings in the past, everyone happily made offerings to him and adored him.

**Sutra:**

**During oceanic, boundless great eons in the past,**
**He cultivated the *paramita* of pure precepts.**
**Thus, he gained a pure body pervading the ten directions,**
**And he extinguishes intense sufferings in all worlds.**

**Commentary:**

This four-line verse speaks of the *paramita* of holding the precepts, which is one of the Six Paramitas. The precepts serve to stop evil and prevent wrongdoing. The precepts can be summed up as follows: “Do no evil. Practice all good.” When you do no evil, then the karma created by your body, mouth, and mind are pure. You do not commit the three evils of the body, the three evils of the mind, or the four evils of the mouth. By refraining from the four evils of the mouth, you are actually doing four good deeds. By refraining from the three evils of the mind and the three of the body, you are doing six good deeds.

In general, when you refrain from the ten evils, you are practicing the ten good deeds. The three evils of the body are killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. The three evils of the mind are greed, anger, and delusion. The four evils of the mouth are indecent speech, lying, harsh speech, and divisive speech. When you refrain from the ten evils, thereby practicing the ten good deeds, then the karma of your body, mouth, and mind is pure. That is to do no evil.

To practice all good means to carry out every act that is beneficial to others. Practicing all good also means diligently cultivating precepts, concentration, and wisdom. Doing no evil means extinguishing greed, anger, and delusion. The precepts protect you and keep you from committing offenses, and they also encourage you to practice good.

**During oceanic, boundless great eons in the past,** uncountably many eons resembling an ocean in their boundlessness, **he cultivated the *paramita* of pure** *vajra* bright, jeweled **precepts**. There are the Five Precepts which prohibit killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxicants. There are also the Eight Fasting-Day Precepts for laypeople, the Ten Sramanera Precepts for novice monks and nuns, the 250 Bhikshu Precepts, the 348 Bhikshuni Precepts, and the Ten Major and Forty-eight Minor Bodhisattva Precepts. If one can wholeheartedly uphold these pure precepts, one will arrive at the other shore of purity and nirvana. *Paramita* means “to reach the other shore.”

The Buddha maintained all the precepts and cultivated all kinds of skillful dharmas for teaching and transforming sentient beings. **Thus he gained a pure** Dharma **body pervading the ten directions** of the Dharma Realm**, / And he extinguishes intense sufferings in all worlds** so that all sentient beings can experience happiness.

**Sutra:**

**In the past he cultivated the purity of patience.**
**His faith and understanding were true and undiscriminating.**
**Therefore he has perfect features and characteristics.**
**And his radiance lights up the ten directions.**

**Commentary:**

In the past the Buddha also cultivated the dharma of patience. The previous *paramita* of holding precepts prevents us from disturbing others. In cultivation, we should constantly reflect upon ourselves to see if we have afflicted or disturbed anyone. The dharma of patience applies in a situation where we are disturbed, insulted, or bullied by others. We have to endure what others cannot endure. Even if we feel something is unbearable, we have to be patient. Since we understand the Buddhadharma, we should keep it in mind at all times, particularly the dharma of patience under insult. If someone berates us, we endure it. If someone beats us up, we can take it. Even if someone kills us, we are not afraid and we endure it. This requires the greatest patience.

When someone castigates us and we do not retaliate, even in our hearts, then we are being patient. If someone hits us and we don’t strike back, we are also being patient. If you can bear what most people cannot, then you will also accrue merit which surpasses that of others.

I often tell you this verse:

Patience is a priceless jewel
That no one knows how to mine.
If you were able to use it,
Everything would turn out fine.

Patience is an invaluable treasure. It is worth more than anything. Unfortunately, no one is able to practice it. If you could practice it, things would all go smoothly and there would never be any trouble. Maitreya Bodhisattva also spoke a verse. I’ve often recited it to you, but you’ve probably forgotten over time, so I’ll tell you again.

The Old Fool wears a tattered robe,
And fills his belly with plain food.
He mends the rags to keep his body warm,
And lets the myriad affairs just take their course.
Should someone scold the Old Fool,
The Old Fool just says, “Fine.”
Should someone strike the Old Fool,
He just lies down to sleep.
“Spit right in my face,” he says,
“And I’ll just let it dry.
That way I save energy
And you don’t get afflicted.”
This kind of *paramita*
Is the jewel in the wonderful.
Now that you know this news,
How can you worry about not attaining the Way?

The old monk wears a robe of patched up rags. He fills himself with simple food, to keep from going hungry. When his robe gets ripped, he mends it with more patches to chase off the cold. He lets all things, good and bad, take their natural course, and does not become attached to them. He takes everything in stride. If someone were to rebuke him, he would say, “Fine! Okay!” Should someone beat the old man up, he would simply fall to the ground and fall asleep. If someone were to spit on his face, he wouldn’t even bother to wipe it off, but would let it dry there. This *paramita* of patience is the most wonderful treasure. If you know about this, you need not fear that you will not attain the Way.

If any of you can cultivate the *paramita* of patience, your belly will be huge. A verse in praise of Maitreya Bodhisattva says,

His mouth is open wide in laughter.
Seldom does he speak.
His cloth bag is not as large as his belly.
Blessings constantly come his way,
For he is able to take everything in stride.

There was a monk in China known as the Cloth Bag Monk, who was recognized as an incarnation of Maitreya Bodhisattva. He always carried a large cloth bag around, but it wasn’t as big as his belly. He enjoyed plenty of blessings, because of his ability to accept whatever came his way. He could hold the myriad things in his belly. There is a saying, “The prime minister’s belly can sail a ship.” The prime minister’s tolerant, magnanimous heart is like a belly that is large enough to sail a ship in. This is the opposite of someone who is so sensitive that he cannot withstand the slightest criticism or adversity, and so petty-minded that he is constantly calculating who did what to him. His “belly” is so full of such petty thoughts that there is no room for a ship to sail.

**In the past he cultivated the purity of patience.** The Buddha formerly cultivated the pure dharma door of *patience* under insult. **His faith and understanding were true and undiscriminating.** He regarded all sentient beings in same way, as his parents in past lives and as future Buddhas. Contemplating them as his past-life parents, he could not be unfilial to them. Seeing them as Buddhas-to-be, he could not be disrespectful them. Thus, he cultivated patience under insult. **Therefore he has perfect features and characteristics.** The Buddha had flawless features and a handsome appearance. His body had the thirty-two hallmarks and eighty Subsidiary Characteristics. Having cultivated patience, **his radiance universally lights up the ten directions**, enabling sentient beings who are able to cultivate patience to quickly realize Buddhahood.

**Sutra:**

**Long ago, for many oceans of eons, he cultivated with vigor**
**And managed to reverse the weighty obstacles of sentient beings.**
**Therefore his division-bodies pervade the ten directions**
**And appear beneath the majestic *bodhi* tree.**

**Commentary:**

**Long ago, for many oceans of eons, he cultivated with vigor.** The World Honored One cultivated with ever-increasing zeal and vigor. He was never lazy. To cultivate vigorously has three meanings:

1. To don the armor of vigor. In ancient times, soldiers wore armor to protect them from lances and halberds. Wearing the armor of vigor, one can only advance, not retreat. No matter what happens, one cannot surrender. One must win! How can one gain victory? With the help of great vows. One must make expansive vows and resolves. The only direction to go is forward. There is no possibility of retreat.

For example, after you have left the home-life, you must advance daily in your cultivation. You may not entertain thoughts of returning to lay life, or else you won’t be wearing the armor of vigor. You must sacrifice everything and work zealously for the cause of Buddhism each day. One dons the armor of vigor and makes great vows. Great vows are themselves the armor of vigor.

2. To gather in the good. This means to apply assorted expedient means to advance oneself along the *bodhi* path, as well as to help other sentient beings cultivate and advance.

3.  To benefit beings and make them happy. One exhorts and transforms sentient beings, bringing them all to realize *anuttarasamYakshambodhi* and to attain a happy reward.

The Buddha cultivated through great eons so numerous they resemble oceans **and managed to reverse the weighty obstacles of sentient beings.**  These karmic obstacles blocked the *bodhi* path. The Buddha was able to transform them. He turned afflictions into *bodhi*, and birth and death into nirvana. **Therefore his division-bodies pervade the ten directions /** **And appear beneath the majestic *bodhi* tree.**The Buddha’s division bodies pervade all lands in the ten directions, and they all appear in the Way-place beneath the *bodhi* tree.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha long cultivated—for measureless eons—**
**Purifying the entire great ocean of *dhyana samadhi*.**
**Upon seeing him, beings rejoice profoundly**
**And completely cast out their turbid, obstructive afflictions.**

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha long cultivated—for measureless eons.** The Buddha didn’t just cultivate one or two days to realize Buddhahood. He cultivated month after month, year after year, for infinitely many great eons without slacking off, thus **purifying the entire great ocean of *dhyana samadhi***. We sit in *chan* for a couple hours and think we’re pretty special. The Buddha sat in meditation for millions of great eons. Within that great ocean of *dhyana* concentration, his false thoughts subsided and disappeared and his wisdom came forth. With false thoughts gone, one is no longer stupid. With all kinds of wisdom arising, one becomes smart. The Buddha purified the entire ocean of *dhyana samadhi*. **Upon seeing him, beings rejoice profoundly.** Sentient beings who see the Buddha are filled with happiness and adoration **and completely cast out their turbid, obstructive afflictions.** The happiness obliterates all defiling obstacles of afflictions. In other words, sentient beings’ idle thoughts vanish and their wisdom unfolds; they regain their original source.

**Sutra:**

**The Thus Come One cultivated a sea of all practices,**
**Fully perfecting *prajña paramita***
**Thus he releases universal illumination,**
**Dispelling all ignorance and gloom.**

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One cultivated a sea of all practices**. “Thus Come One” is one of the Buddha’s ten titles. The Buddha cultivated an ocean of all practices in his quest for wisdom, thus **fully perfecting *prajña paramita*.** The perfection of wisdom signifies crossing over the sea of delusion and affliction to reach the opposite shore, representing nirvana and wisdom. He cultivated wisdom; **thus he releases** wisdom’s **universal illumination, / dispelling all ignorance and gloom.** The Buddha’s light of wisdom dispels the obscurity of delusion and false thoughts, enabling all sentient beings to bring forth their own inherent light of wisdom.

**Sutra:**

**With various expedients he transforms sentient beings,**
**Leading them to succeed in their every practice.**
**He travels pervasively through the ten directions,**
**Never resting during boundless eons.**

**Commentary:**

This verse corresponds to the *paramita* of expedients, one of the Ten Paramitas. **With various expedients he transforms sentient beings, / Leading them to succeed in their every practice.** The Buddha teaches and transforms sentient beings expediently, so that they can eventually attain actual benefit. Through various expedients, he makes sure all sentient beings succeed in whatever practice they undertake. **He travels pervasively through** limitless Buddhalands in **the ten directions**, not staying in one location. **Never resting during boundless** great **eons.** The Buddha never gets lazy in teaching and transforming sentient beings. He has no concern for himself; he only wants to save sentient beings. If we sentient beings want to repay the Buddha’s kindness, we must cultivate the way the Buddha does.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha cultivated for seas of great eons,**
**Purely perfecting the *paramita* of all vows.**
**Hence, he appears throughout all worlds**
**And rescues sentient beings to the end of time.**

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha cultivated for seas of great eons,** eons so unreckonably numerous they are like a sea, **purely perfecting the *paramita* of all vows.** The *paramita* of vows is the eighth of the Ten Paramitas. Each cultivator must make vows and practice in accord with them. It should not be that one makes a vow today and forgets about it tomorrow. At all times, one must cultivate in accord with one’s vows. Then one will not daydream too much or be too sloppy. Vows are like a boat that transport one from one side of the ocean to the other side. Without the boat of vows, one will have a hard time crossing the ocean. Since the ocean is too huge to cross without a boat, one must make one’s vows and then practice accordingly.

Why was the Buddha able to become a Buddha? He made a vow to realize Buddhahood. Let’s take another example. If we vow to never lie down, then we must always sleep sitting up. If we vow to teach and transform sentient beings, then we must focus on doing that at all times. If we vow to eat only one meal a day, then we must uphold that vow faithfully. If we vow not to hold money, then we should not regard money as being that important. If we vow to leave the home-life and study the Buddhadharma in life after life, then we should not have thoughts about returning to lay life. If we vow to be Dharma protectors, then we ought to always protect and support Buddhism. Again, it is essential that our vows guide our cultivation, so that we can reach the other shore.

**Hence**—since the Buddha cultivated the *paramita* of vows—**he appears throughout all worlds / And rescues sentient beings to the end of time.** The Buddha has vowed to save sentient beings forever.

**Sutra:**

**For countless eons, the Buddha cultivated and cured**
**The *paramita* of the power of all dharmas,**
**Thereby accomplishing spontaneous strength**
**And appearing in all lands of the ten directions.**

**Commentary:**

**For countless eons, the Buddha cultivated and cured**… Cultivation is not always a smooth process. Sometimes when one resolves to cultivate, one will be tested by demonic obstacles. For example, one may want to practice the *paramita* of giving. But then one has second thoughts: “If I give my money away, then I won’t have any money for food or for the bus.” At that point, you need to counteract these thoughts and cure the illness (of stinginess): “But that guy is really suffering! I can skip a meal and still survive.” So you give him some money and counteract your stinginess. If it’s a matter of your bus money, you can cure your stinginess and think, “I’ll still give to the guy and walk instead.”

This is only one example of “cultivating and curing,” but it applies to everything. If you experience some difficulties as you start out cultivating, you can use all sorts of expedients to overcome the problems. The previous verse used the phrase “purely perfecting,” which has the connotation of purifying. When you have a lot of false thoughts that you cannot get rid of, you can purify them. When there is a great deal of defilement, you can purify yourself.

**The *paramita* of the power of all dharmas**. The Buddha cultivated the power of the 84,000 dharma doors to the point of reaching the other shore, **thereby accomplishing spontaneous strength** of wisdom. Such wisdom is effortless and full of light. **And appearing in all lands of the ten directions.** The Buddha’s Dharma body and wisdom light appear in all Buddhas’ lands to proclaim the Dharma.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha cultivated the wisdom of the universal door.**
**The nature of all wisdom resembles the void.**
**Thus he achieved unobstructed power**
**And shines his light upon lands in the ten directions.**

**Commentary:**

The Buddha was able to cultivate all Ten Paramitas, and in particular, the *paramita* of wisdom. **The Buddha cultivated the wisdom of** manifestation through **the universal door.** Universal door wisdom is simply level and equal wisdom.

**The nature of all wisdom resembles the void.** The fundamental substance of wisdom is devoid of form, like empty space. **Thus he achieved unobstructed power**. Nothing obstructs him. This state of nonobstruction encompasses the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, the Wisdom of Wonderful Contemplation, and the Wisdom of Accomplishment.

**And** then the Buddha **shines his light upon** all **lands** in darkness **in the ten directions**, in order to teach and transform sentient beings in the six paths so that they will quickly develop great wisdom and realize Buddhahood.

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
J. They speak verses in praise
9. Cloud Sound Bodhisattva praises the Buddha’s past cultivation of the Ten Grounds and its results

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Cloud Sound and Pure Moon received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses.**

**The realm of his spiritual penetrations equals the void.**
**No sentient being in the ten directions fails to see them.**
**The grounds he achieved in past cultivation**
**Are fully explained within the fruit of *mani*.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time** refers to the time after the completion of the discussion of the Ten Paramitas and prior to the discussion of the Ten Grounds in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*. The next set of eleven verses on the Ten Grounds are spoken by one Bodhisattva, just as the previous set of verses on the Ten Paramitas were spoken by a single Bodhisattva, not by ten different Bodhisattvas. This can be inferred since only one Bodhisattva is mentioned by name. In a section of text lectured earlier, there were ten Bodhisattvas listed, so you could not say that one Bodhisattva represented all the others in speaking the verses. Here, one Bodhisattva speaks eleven verses. Who is he? He is **the** great **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** named **Cloud Sound and Pure Moon**. Is he speaking these verses based on his own wisdom and spiritual powers? No, he **received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual** **power**. As a Bodhisattva, he is a true disciple of the Buddha, and thus he pays deference to the Buddha in everything. The Buddha bestowed this kind of wisdom upon him. He wouldn’t say, “I’m doing this all by myself. I’m going to speak my own verses. See what great wisdom I have! My wisdom is even greater than the Buddha’s!”

This Bodhisattva did not pretend to be more qualified than he was, unlike people who say, “Everyone is a Buddha!” Those who claim to be Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, or Arhats are telling major lies. This Bodhisattva was very prudent and cautious. He did not recklessly blurt out verses without thinking, hoping to show off his wisdom. Instead, he first **universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*** to see who was in the assembly and what Dharma they hoped to hear. He first made sure the verses he was about to speak would fit the potentials of the listeners, **and** then **spoke the following verses.**

This verse is a good one. It goes: **The realm of his spiritual penetrations equals the void.** The state of the Buddhas’ spiritual powers is as vast and boundless as empty space. **No sentient being in the ten directions fails to see them.** Everyone can see the Buddhas’ spiritual powers. **The grounds** of fruition **he achieved in past cultivation / Are fully explained within the fruit of** *mani***.** The fruit of *mani* is just the fruition of a Buddha. Upon becoming a Buddha, the Buddha can completely proclaim the realm of his spiritual powers and their wonderful functions.

**Sutra:**

**Through countless eons of pure and diligent practice,**
**He enters the First Ground of utmost happiness.
He brings forth wisdom vast as the Dharma Realm**
**And beholds countless Buddhas in the ten directions.**

**Commentary:**

This verse describes the state of the First Ground Bodhisattva. The First Ground is the Ground of Happiness. Why is the Bodhisattva happy? It’s because the Dharma has benefited and nourished him.

**Through countless eons of pure and diligent practice**. To be pure is to be free from defiled dharmas. Defiled dharmas may or may not be visible. Visible defiled dharmas are external situations. Invisible defiled dharmas are internal mental states. At the level of what is visible, you engage in impure conduct and create an infinite amount of karma that is impure. At the invisible level, you entertain impure thoughts inside.

When the Buddha was cultivating at the level of planting causes, he always observed the precepts and thus maintained constant purity. Being pure, one must also diligently practice and not be lax or lazy. Laxness entails breaking the rules, and laziness is the opposite of vigor. A diligent cultivator is vigorous not merely for one or two days, one or two months, one or two years, or one or two lives. He or she practices diligently for infinitely many great eons.

Since the Buddha was pure and vigorous for limitless eons, **he enters the First Ground of utmost happiness.** The first of the Bodhisattva Grounds is the Ground of Happiness. On this ground, one is filled with the joy of Dharma. **He brings forth wisdom vast as the Dharma Realm**. The First Ground Bodhisattva has tremendous wisdom—wisdom commensurate with the Dharma Realm. **And** with such wisdom, he **beholds countless Buddhas in the ten directions** and pays respects, makes offerings, and draws near to them.

**Sutra:**

**On the Ground of Freedom from Defilement, amidst all dharmas,**
**He upholds pure precepts as numerous as sentient beings.**
**Having practiced extensively for many eons,**
**He makes offerings to a boundless sea of Buddhas.**

**Commentary:**

**On the** Second **Ground of Freedom from Defilement, amidst all dharmas**. Those on the First Ground do not know the state of those on the Second Ground. Those on the Tenth Ground do not understand those of Equal Enlightenment. In the Buddhadharma, if one is off by a hairsbreadth in the beginning, one will miss the mark by a thousand miles in the end. Only through diligent cultivation can you obtain a response and become free from defilement.  To be free from defilement means to attain purity. Defiled dharmas are everywhere to be found.

All of you who come every day to listen to the sutra and investigate the Buddhadharma do not realize the misery of those who cannot come. In the past, I encountered situations where either the husband forbade the wife from listening to the sutra lecture, or the wife forbade the husband from doing so. It was quite rare for both of them to come to the lecture together.

One husband told his wife, “You are not allowed to go to the Buddhist temple. If you go, I will divorce you.” In spite of this threat, the wife still went. The husband couldn’t do anything, either. They were already in their sixties; how could they get divorced? The husband took their wedding photo and cut it in half, symbolizing a divorce. The wife nearly died of rage, and the husband didn’t exactly want to live, either. Since they disagreed about listening to the sutras, such demonic obstacles arose. Theirs was a case of not being free from defilement. There are great number of such people in the world. Bad exists within the good, and some good can also be found within the bad. True liberation and freedom are not easy to achieve. The Ground of Freedom from Defilement involves cultivating every practice that removes one from defiled dharmas. When you let go of defiled dharmas, you achieve pure dharmas.

**He upholds pure precepts as numerous as sentient beings.** On the Second Ground of Freedom from Defilement, one cultivates the pure dharma of precepts for as many eons as there are sentient beings. One does not transgress the precepts one has received. One is able to recognize one’s wrongs and reform. There is no greater good than being able to correct one’s faults.

**Having practiced extensively for many** great **eons** before reaching the Second Ground, being only vigorous and never lax, **he makes offerings to a boundless sea of Buddhas.** He makes offerings on a vast, universal scale to all Buddhas.

As to offerings, making offerings to a hundred evil people is not as good as making offerings to a single good person. Making offerings to a thousand good people is not as good as making offerings to a single *upasaka* or *upasika* who has received the five precepts. Making offerings to ten thousand *upasakas* and *upasikas* who have received the five precepts is not as good as making offerings to one Bhikshu. Making offerings to a hundred thousand Bhikshus is not as good as making offerings to a First Stage Arhat (S*rotaapanna*). Making offerings to a million First Stage Arhats is not as good as making offerings to a Second Stage Arhat (*Sakridagamin*). Making offerings to ten million Second Stage Arhats is not as good as making offerings to a Third Stage Arhat (*Anagamin*). Making offerings to a hundred million Third Stage Arhats is not as good as making offerings to a Fourth Stage Arhat. Making offerings to infinitely many Fourth Stage Arhats is not as good as making offerings to one who is beyond cultivation and realization, that is, to a Buddha.

Therefore the Bodhisattva, in cultivating all dharmas, extensively cultivates making offerings to the boundless sea of Buddhas.

**Sutra:**

**Amassing blessings and virtue, he reaches the Ground of Radiance.**
**Resolute patience achieves the *Shamatha* treasury.**
**All hear the vast cloud of Dharma.**
**Thus it is proclaimed within the fruits of *mani*.**

**Commentary:**

**Amassing blessings and virtue, he reaches the Ground of Radiance.** In cultivation, one must collect blessings and virtue little by little, so that one eventually accumulates a great amount. Don’t decide to skip doing a meritorious deed because it seems too small. When you have done many small meritorious deeds, your merit will be great.

The ancients were frugal with food and clothing, and used the money and resources they saved to do good and create merit. A good deed may be small, but you still have to do it to earn merit. If you neglect to do small good deeds, you’ll have no merit.

Why do we live in such difficult circumstances now? It’s because we did not create merit in the past. The reason we suffer hardship at every turn is that we did not know how to accumulate blessings and virtue in the past.

The Third Ground of Radiance can only be reached through the accumulation of abundant blessings and virtue. When your blessings and virtue are abundant, you have a glow about you. That radiant aura comes from your blessings.

**Resolute patience achieves the *Shamatha* treasury.** The term “***Shamatha***” was explained in the *Surangama Sutra*. “Resolute patience” has the meanings of “stopping,” “level and equal,” and “still.” To be still, one must have resolute patience and have fewer discursive thoughts. One must endure criticism and not be impatient with everything. One must have resolute patience in cultivating *samadhi*, the dharma of stilling thoughts. Stopping refers to ending discursive thoughts and resting in the highest good.

**All** sentient beings **hear the vast cloud of Dharma. / Thus it is proclaimed within the fruits of *mani*.** The fruits of *mani* are wondrous, jeweled fruits. This also refers to the fruit of still tranquility, within which the principles just mentioned are expounded.

**Sutra:**

**On the peerless ground of a blazing sea of bright wisdom,**
**He understands all situations and responds with compassion.**
**He manifests bodies equally in all countries,**
**Fully disclosing the Buddha’s cultivation.**

**Commentary:**

This is the Ground of Blazing Wisdom. **On the peerless ground of a blazing sea of bright wisdom**. The wisdom on this Ground is very high. **He understands all situations and responds with compassion.** He skillfully understands all circumstances, whether they involve true or false phenomena. He comprehends pure dharmas and recognizes defiled dharmas. Seeing sentient beings lost in the darkness of delusion, he compassionately vows to save them. Encountering sentient beings with good roots, he helps them to increase their good roots. He responds to every situation with great kindness and compassion. With kindness, one can make others happy. With compassion, one can alleviate sentient beings’ suffering.

**He manifests bodies equally in all countries** throughout the ten directions to teach and transform sentient beings, **fully disclosing the Buddha’s cultivation.** He proclaims the dharma doors cultivated by the Buddha freely and without reservation. He speaks the Dharma appropriate for each situation, bestowing the teachings according to sentient beings’ potentials. He tailors the Dharma to fit each individual’s needs, the way physicians prescribe medicines according to the patient’s condition. And when he speaks Dharma, he shares it all; he doesn’t hold anything back.

**Sutra:**

**Impartial, universal treasury—Ground of Invincibility—**
**Movement and stillness harmonize, free from conflict.**
**The states of the Buddhadharma are equal.**
**He explains the practices of the Buddhas.**

**Commentary:**

**Impartial, universal treasury** of the Dharma Realm**—Ground of Invincibility**. One takes the Dharma Realm as one’s scope. This Fifth Ground is said to be invincible because none of the previous grounds surpass it.

**Movement and stillness harmonize, free from conflict.** Why is this ground invincible? Movement and stillness follow each other. Movement does not hinder stillness; stillness does not hinder movement. Movement is essentially stillness, and stillness is essentially movement. Movement and stillness are not mutually conflicting. Ordinary people see movement as movement and stillness as stillness. To them, these two are opposites. On the Ground of Invincibility, however, these two qualities become essentially the same. They are nondual. Moving is the same as being still.

**The states of the Buddhadharma are equal.** All Buddhadharmas and all states of being are equal. **He explains the practices of the Buddhas.** The Bodhisattva can explain the dharma doors cultivated by the Buddhas. He can represent the Buddha in speaking the Dharma and teaching sentient beings.

**Sutra:**

**With extensive practice, he attains the ground of oceanic wisdom.**
**He pervasively understands all dharma methods.**
**Like the void, he manifests everywhere in all lands**
**And proclaims this Dharma beneath the tree.**

**Commentary:**

**With extensive practice** in all aspects of cultivation, from the greatest to the minutest, **he attains the ground of oceanic wisdom.** His wisdom is as great as the ocean. Due to his extensive cultivation, **he pervasively understands all** the 84,000 **dharma methods.** He is One of Proper and Pervasive Knowledge. Having successfully cultivated all dharma doors, **like the void, he manifests everywhere in all** Buddhas’ **lands** throughout the ten directions**. And** in each land, he **proclaims this Dharma beneath the** *bodhi* **tree.** He expounds upon the Dharma that he himself cultivated, using it to teach and transform all sentient beings so that they attain this Dharma as well.

**Sutra:**

**His body pervades the Dharma Realm and space.**
**His wisdom lamp illuminates all sentient beings.**
**His every expedient device conduces to purity.**
**His far-reaching practices are now told for all.**

**Commentary:**

On the Ground of Traveling Afar, **his** Dharma **body pervades the Dharma Realm and** equals **space. / His wisdom lamp illuminates** the Dharma Realm and **all** its **sentient beings.** Since the Bodhisattva on the Ground of Traveling Afar has a Dharma body pervading space, the light of his wisdom shines upon sentient beings everywhere. **His every expedient device conduces to purity.** Every expedient dharma door helps sentient beings turn away from defilement towards purity, to attain a pure Dharma body. **His far-reaching practices are now told for all.** The Bodhisattva now proclaims for all sentient beings his past cultivation on the Ground of Traveling Afar.

**Sutra:**

**Adorned by all his vows and practices,**
**He purifies measureless seas of lands,**
**No discursive thought can sway him.**
**This peerless ground is proclaimed in full.**

**Commentary:**

**He is adorned by all vows and practices**. Cultivators of the Bodhisattva Way cannot fail to make vows. Having made vows, they must not retreat from them; they may only advance. If you retreat from your vows, your spiritual skill will not come to realization. Originally, you would have realized Buddhahood very quickly, but once you retreat, it will take a long time. To retreat from vows is to be lazy. All past Buddhas and Bodhisattvas came to realization by means of vows. Thus, the Bodhisattva is adorned by all vows and practices. The Unmoving Ground is reached through vows. In cultivating, we must make resolute, far-reaching vows, not short-term ones. Then we must cultivate in life after life according to those vows.

**He** **purifies measureless seas of lands.** With blessings and merit adorned by vows and practices, he causes measureless seas of lands to be pure. **No discursive thought can sway him.** Discriminations cannot sway him. He is thus and unmoving, with clear and constant understanding. **This peerless ground is proclaimed in full.** Nothing is more wonderful than the Unmoving Ground. Therefore, it is now being discussed in its entirety.

**Sutra:**

**Measureless states arise from spiritual powers.**
**Skillful entry into Dharma teachings brings power of light.**
**This is the pure Ground of Wholesome Wisdom.**
**Practices through seas of eons are completely revealed.**

**Commentary:**

**Measureless states arise from spiritual powers.** There are too many states to count. These spiritual penetrations facilitate **skillful entry into Dharma teachings**, which **brings power of light.** All the Dharma and teachings are skillfully expounded, so that sentient beings understand them and attain the power of wisdom light. **This is the pure Ground of Wholesome Wisdom**, the Ninth Ground, at which one attains the pure original substance. **Practices through seas of eons are completely revealed.** To attain the state of the Ninth Ground, one must cultivate for an infinite, ocean-like quantity of time. Now, all these practices that the Buddha cultivated in the past are completely explained for sentient beings.

**Sutra:**

**The vast Dharma Cloud of the Tenth Ground**
**Encompasses everything in space.**
**The states of all Buddhas are expressed in sound.**
**Such sound comes from the Buddhas’ awesome spiritual power.**

**Commentary:**

**The vast Dharma Cloud of the Tenth Ground**. This is the tenth and last ground, the Ground of the Dharma Cloud. The Dharma Cloud symbolizes the vastness of the Dharma. It pervades and **encompasses everything in space.** The Dharma Cloud pervades all of space, and space contains everything that there is. **The** inconceivable **states of all Buddhas** in the ten directions and the three periods of time **are expressed in** the inconceivable Dharma **sound** of the Ground of the Dharma Cloud. **Such** Dharma **sound comes from the** ten-directions’ **Buddhas’ awesome spiritual power.**

VIII. Multitudes issue forth from the lion throne
J. They speak verses in praise
10. Wholesome Courage Bodhisattva praises how the Buddha’s body freely responds to potentials

**Sutra:**

**At that time, Bodhisattva Mahasattva Bright Banner of Wholesome Courage received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses.**

**Countless sentient beings in the assembly,**
**With pure faith and understanding, various in kind,**
**Enlighten to the wisdom of the Tathagata**
**And fathom all states of adornment.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time,** the great **Bodhisattva Mahasattva** named **Bright Banner of Wholesome Courage received the Buddha’s awesome spiritual power, universally contemplated the oceanic multitudes in the *bodhimanda*, and spoke the following verses.**

**Countless sentient beings** are **in the** Dharma **assembly** where the Buddha speaks the Dharma. **With pure faith and understanding, various in kind**…The benefits that various kinds of sentient beings receive are different, but they all attain pure faith and understanding. They all **enlighten to the wisdom of the Tathagata**. They all understand the Buddha’s wisdom **and fathom all states of adornment** of the Buddha.

**Sutra:**

**Each made pure vows and cultivated all practices.**
**All made offerings to countless Buddhas.**
**They now perceive the Tathagata’s true body**
**And all his spiritual transformations as well.**

**Commentary:**

**Each** Buddha, while cultivating at the level of planting causes, **made pure vows and cultivated all practices.** All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas became what they are through the power of their vows. Without vows, they could not have become Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Vows are an essential requirement of cultivation.

**All** Buddhas and Bodhisattvas had **made offerings to countless Buddhas.** As a result, they were able to become Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and then to receive offerings from all sentient beings. **They can perceive the Tathagata’s true body**—his Dharma body—**and** the inexhaustible and wonderful functioning of **all his spiritual** powers and **transformations as well.**

**Sutra:**

**Some can perceive the Buddha’s Dharma body:**
**Peerless, unimpeded, and all-pervasive.**
**The boundless natures of all dharmas**
**Are completely contained within his body.**

**Commentary:**

**Some can perceive the Buddha’s Dharma body**. All sentient beings exist within the Buddha’s Dharma body, yet most cannot see the Dharma body. There may be some sentient beings with extremely good roots who can see the Buddha’s Dharma body: **peerless, unimpeded, and all-pervasive.** The Buddha’s Dharma body is nowhere and yet everywhere. It pervades empty space and the Dharma Realm. It is exceptionally sublime, and nothing can compare with it. Moreover, it is especially pure and free from hindrances. Since it is sublime, pure, and unimpeded, it is universally pervasive. It encompasses everything.

**The boundless natures of all dharmas**—all Buddhadharmas, dharmas of sentient beings, and mind dharmas—are contained within the Buddha’s Dharma body. That is why they **are** said to be **completely contained within his body.** However, sentient beings who are severely obstructed by ignorance do not perceive the Buddha’s Dharma body, although they are right within it. They are comparable to ants crawling on a big ship without knowing what a ship is and where its limits are. The Buddha’s Dharma body is like a big ship, and we sentient beings are like ants. Although we are inside the Buddha’s Dharma body, we don’t know what that is, because we can’t see it. Certain sentient beings, though, are able to see it.

**Sutra:**

**Some can see the Buddha’s wondrous physical body,**
**With its boundless hallmarks and dazzling light.**
**According to sentient beings’ different understandings,**
**Its various manifestations appear in the ten directions.**

**Commentary:**

The previous stanza concerned the Buddha’s Dharma body. Most sentient beings cannot see the Buddha’s physical body either. **Some**, however, **can see the Buddha’s wondrous physical body / With its boundless hallmarks and dazzling light.** The Buddha has the Thirty-two Hallmarks and Eighty Subsidiary Characteristics, which glow with infinite resplendence.

**According to sentient beings’ different understandings / Its various manifestations appear in the ten directions.** Each sentient being has a different understanding based on his or her own disposition. Despite these differences, the Buddha applies various expedients and creates transformations using his spiritual powers to teach and transform sentient beings.

**Sutra:**

**Some see the unobstructed wisdom body,**
**Equal in the three times, like the void.**
**Turning the wheel to teach and delight beings,**
**This body can be seen in various ways.**

**Commentary:**

**Some** sentient beings **see the** Buddha’s **unobstructed wisdom body, / Equal in the three times, like the void.** Buddhas of the past, present, and future all have the wisdom body; thus, it is equal in the three periods of time. But, what is this wisdom body like? It is like space. If you know what space is like, you will know what the Buddha’s wisdom body is like. **Turning the wheel to teach and delight beings**. The wisdom body turns the Dharma wheel to teach and transform sentient beings according to their preferences and inclinations, causing everyone to understand the Buddhadharma. **This body can be seen in various ways.** With various expedient methods, sentient beings are led to awaken and perceive the Buddha’s wisdom body.

**Sutra:**

**Some beings perceive the Buddha’s sound**
**As it pervades all regions in the ten directions.**
**Based upon sentient beings’ capacities to understand,**
**He utters words and sounds without any hindrance.**

**Commentary:**

**Some beings perceive the Buddha’s sound** when he speaks the Dharma.

With a single sound he speaks the Dharma.
Sentient beings understand it according to their kind.

We people hear the Buddha speaking human speech. Each kind of animal hears the Buddha speaking its own language. There’s no need for translators. It’s not like when people of one country cannot understand the language of another. People of all countries can directly understand what the Buddha says, without need for a translator.

Nevertheless, there are those who still don’t understand. Why would some people be able to understand? It’s because they have deep affinities with the Buddha. Those whose affinities are shallower cannot understand what the Buddha is saying.

**It pervades all regions in the ten directions.** The sound of the Buddha’s voice travels to every land throughout the ten directions. **Based upon sentient beings’ capacities to understand, / He utters words and sounds without any hindrance.** Sentient beings will absorb only as much as they can understand. This can be compared to the greater and lesser amounts of water absorbed by large and small trees, respectively, when it rains. Grasses absorb the least amount of water. In the same way, each sentient being benefits from the Dharma according to his own capacity. The Buddha speaks Dharma for each one without impediment.

Sutra:

**Some see the myriad lights of the Thus Come One.**
**His various illuminations pervade all worlds.**
**There are some who, within the Buddha’s radiance,**
**Further see all Buddhas displaying spiritual powers.**

**Commentary:**

**Some** sentient beings **see the myriad lights of the Thus Come One.**  They see all the various kinds of light that the Buddha has, not just one kind. **His various illuminations pervade all worlds.** The Buddha shines various types of light upon various sentient beings, inspiring them to seek *bodhi*, cultivate the Bodhisattva practice, and become Buddhas. Since his light shines upon all sentient beings, it is said to pervade all worlds.

**There are some** sentient beings **who, within the Buddha’s radiance,** see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas emitting more light and speaking the Dharma. These sentient beings may **further see all Buddhas displaying** inconceivable states of wonderful functionings of **spiritual powers.** These sights inspire happiness and faith in all sentient beings.

**Sutra:**

**Some see the Buddha’s light—like an ocean or a cloud**
**Streaming from his pores in dazzling colors.**
**It reveals his past cultivation of the Path,**
**Leading beings to enter the Buddha’s wisdom with deep faith.**

**Commentary:**

**Some** sentient beings may **see the Buddha’s light**, which is so profuse that it is **like an ocean or a cloud— /** **Streaming from his pores in dazzling colors**. Infinitely many pores emit immeasurable amounts of oceanic, cloud-like light in a myriad dazzling hues. **It reveals his past cultivation of the Path**, displaying the dharma doors and paths that the Buddha cultivated at the level of planting causes. Why are these things displayed? It is for **leading beings to enter the Buddha’s wisdom with deep faith.** The Buddha wishes to cause all sentient beings in his Dharma assembly to believe and attain the Buddha’s wisdom. The only way to attain the Buddha’s great wisdom is to have deep faith. Without faith, it is impossible to discover our inherent wisdom.

**Sutra:**

***S*ome see the Buddha adorned with the blessed hallmarks.**
**Discerning, too, how the blessings came about.**
**His past cultivation of an ocean of *paramitas***
**Is clearly visible in the Buddha’s appearance.**

**Commentary:**

**Some see the Buddha’s form adorned with the blessed hallmarks.** When the Buddha was cultivating, he cultivated blessings and wisdom. Consequently, he is doubly adorned with blessings and wisdom. Ordinary people lack blessings and wisdom, so we are not adorned. The Buddha, on the other hand, is adorned with both blessings and wisdom; thus he is called the Doubly Perfect Honored One. Although *zu* “perfect” also means “foot,” the title *liang zu zun* does not mean Two-footed Honored One!

Some sentient beings see the Buddha’s magnificent physical body adorned with the Thirty-two Hallmarks and Eighty Subsidiary Characteristics, **discerning, too, how the blessings came about.** These blessings came from the cultivation of blessings and wisdom. How does one cultivate blessings? By benefiting sentient beings. How does one cultivate wisdom? By diligently reciting the sutras. Through the recitation of sutras, your wisdom unfolds. By helping sentient beings, you increase your blessings.

Where did the Buddha’s blessings come from? From **his past cultivation of an ocean of *paramita*s**—the Ten Paramitas, which, to review, are:  giving, morality (holding precepts), patience, vigor, *dhyana* concentration, *prajña*, expedients, vows, power, and knowledge.

The Buddha’s cultivation of an “ocean of *paramitas*” refers to the Ten Paramitas and the myriad practices. These are the source of the Buddha’s blessings, and this **is clearly visible in the Buddha’s appearance.** From looking at the Buddha, one can tell where his blessings came from.

**Sutra:**

**Immeasurable, the Thus Come One’s merit**
**Fills the Dharma Realm and has no boundaries.**
**All the states of spiritual penetrations**
**By the Buddha’s power are proclaimed.**

**Commentary:**

**Immeasurable** is **the Thus Come One’s merit.** This line praises the boundless immensity of the Buddha’s merit and virtue. Being both deep and wide, it **fills the Dharma Realm and has no boundaries. / All the** pervasive **states of spiritual penetrations** and wonderful functionings **by the Buddha’s power are proclaimed.** The preceding verses praising the Buddha’s Dharma body were spoken through the power of Sãkyamuni Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions. The aid of those Buddhas made possible the expression of such wonderful functionings and states.

**IX. Heaven and earth display auspicious portents
The quaking of the earth**

**Sutra:**

**At that time, by the Buddha’s spiritual power, the ground in the Flower Treasury Adorned Sea of Worlds underwent all the six kinds of quaking in their eighteen forms.**

**Commentary:**

**At that time,** after the previous verses were spoken, **by the Buddha’s spiritual power, the ground in the Flower Treasury Adorned Sea of Worlds underwent all the six kinds of quaking in their eighteen forms**. The Lotus Flower Treasury World-System contains various world seeds. Our world is located in the thirteenth tier of the Lotus Flower Treasury World-System. There are infinitely many worlds, not just our world.

The earth quakes by virtue of the Buddha’s spiritual power. There are six kinds of earthquakes: banging, roaring, crackling, shaking, rising, and surging. Banging, roaring and crackling pertain to sound, and shaking, rising, and surging pertain to movement.

**There are many reasons why the earth might quake. Earthquakes may cause great disasters, whereas tremors may not cause any harm.**

1.   When there are great floods, earthquakes may also occur.
2.   When spirits want to test out their own powers, they cause the earth to quake.
3.   When the Buddha-to-be enters the womb (in the life he is to become a Buddha), the earth will quake.
4.   When the Buddha leaves the womb, the earth will quake as well.
5.   When the Buddha cultivates and attains the Way, the earth will also quake.
6.   When the Buddha turns the Dharma wheel, the earth will quake as well.
7.   When the Buddha ceases to expound the Dharma and teach and transform sentient beings, the earth also quakes.
8.   When the Buddha enters nirvana, the earth quakes as well.
9.   When a great Bhikshu with the power of spiritual fulfillment attains sovereignty of mind and contemplates the earth disappearing, he can cause the earth to quake with his spiritual powers.
10.  When a Buddha bestows a prediction upon a Bodhisattva, saying, “You will become a Buddha in this world,” the earth spirit, in delight, causes the earth to quake.

**These are ten circumstances in which the earth may quake. There are other reasons, such as:**

1.   The earth may quake in order to frighten all the demon kings.
2.   The earth may quake in order make everyone concentrate when the Dharma is spoken.
3.   The earth may quake to cause lazy beings to grow more alert and aware. “Ah, I shouldn’t be so lax. Heaven and earth are impermanent. The earth is quaking now!”
4.   The earth may quake to cause sentient beings to understand the characteristics of the Dharma and the importance of the Dharma.
5.   The earth may quake so as to cause sentient beings to see the place where the Dharma is spoken.
6.   The earth may quake so as to cause mature sentient beings to attain liberation.
7.   The earth may quake so as to cause sentient beings to follow the Proper Dharma and inquire about the proper meaning.

**There are four more reasons that earthquakes occur. These are not related to the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, but it wouldn’t hurt for everyone to know them.**

1.   To cause unkind sentient beings to change their evil ways and become good.
2.   To cause sentient beings who believe in heavenly deities to realize that the heavens are not an ultimate end.
3.   To cause egotistical sentient beings to feel shame and remorse.
4.   To cause people who recite spells to harm others to become compassionate.

There are six basic types of earthquakes, and these six occur in three classes, making eighteen forms of quaking in all.

**Sutra:**

**[Those quakings were] namely, moving, pervasive moving, universally pervasive moving, rising, pervasive rising, universally pervasive rising, surging, pervasive surging, universally pervasive surging, shaking, pervasive shaking, universally pervasive shaking, roaring, pervasive roaring, universally pervasive roaring, banging, pervasive banging, universally pervasive banging.**

**Commentary:**

**[Those quakings were] namely, moving, pervasive moving, universally pervasive moving**. Moving is a visible form of quaking. Movement in one location is merely “moving.” Movement in the four directions—east, west, north, and south—is called “pervasive moving.” Such movement occurs successively in the different directions, not simultaneously. Movement in eight directions, whether simultaneously or successively, is called “universally pervasive moving.”

**Rising** refers to the earth being raised upwards in one place. Rising in four directions is called **pervasive rising**, and in eight directions, **universally pervasive rising**. **Surging** is the same kind of movement as rising, except that it takes place at a faster speed. Surging refers to the earth moving upwards quickly in one place. Surging in four directions is called **pervasive surging,** and in eight directions, **universally pervasive surging**.

**Shaking** describes the sound of parts of the earth shaking against each other. There is banging in one direction, **pervasive shaking** in four directions, and **universally pervasive shaking** in eight directions—the four cardinal and four intermediate directions. **Roaring**, which is also a sound, takes place in one location. **Pervasive roaring** refers to roaring in the four directions, and **universally pervasive roaring** occurs in eight directions. **Banging** refers to parts of the earth knocking against each other in one place. Banging in the four directions is called **pervasive banging,** and in the eight directions, **universally pervasive banging.**

A different interpretation defines “shaking” in as shaking in four directions, “pervasive shaking” as shaking in eight directions, and “universally pervasive shaking” as shaking in ten directions. However, I do not think this interpretation is apt, because we would not be aware of shaking in the upper direction. Therefore, only nine directions should be mentioned.

I find that defining “shaking” as shaking in one place, “pervasive shaking” as shaking in four directions, and “universally pervasive shaking” as shaking in eight directions more reasonable.

There is also the distinction between successive and simultaneous shaking in the various directions. Simultaneous shaking means shaking occurs at the same time in one, four, or eight directions. Successive shaking means shaking occurs first in one direction, then another, then another, and so forth.

These eighteen forms of quaking represent the eighteen realms—the six faculties, the six sense objects, and the six consciousnesses—which can also be said to undergo quaking.

IX. Heaven and earth display auspicious portents
The making of offerings

**Sutra:**

**Each and every one of the world leaders manifested inconceivable clouds of offerings and rained them upon the oceanic multitudes in the Thus Come One’s *bodhimanda*.**

**There were clouds of all kinds of adorning fragrance and flowers, clouds of all wonderful ornaments of *mani*, clouds of exquisite nets of dazzling light from jewels, clouds of perfect radiance from a boundless array of *mani* jewels, clouds of jewels of a myriad colors and a treasury of pearls, clouds of assorted precious *candana* incenses, clouds of canopies made of various jewels, clouds of magnificent *mani* gems resonating with pure and wondrous sound, clouds of wheel-like necklaces of sunlight *mani* beads, clouds of resplendent radiance from assorted jewels, and clouds of myriad ornaments, each distinct. There were measureless, inconceivable numbers of clouds of offerings such as these. Each and every one of the world leaders manifested such clouds of offerings and rained them upon the oceanic multitudes in the Thus Come One’s *bodhimanda*, covering them all.**

**Commentary:**

**Each and every one of the world leaders**—the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas in the Way-place where the Dharma assembly was going on, as well as gold, silver, bronze, and iron wheel-turning sage kings—**manifested inconceivable clouds of offerings and rained them upon the oceanic multitudes in the Thus Come One’s *bodhimanda*.** There is no way to imagine these clouds of offerings to the Buddha. These clouds fell like rain upon the site where the Buddha attained the Way, where the ocean-like assembly of sages were gathered. What kinds of clouds were there?

**There were clouds of all kinds of adorning fragrance and flowers, clouds of all wonderful ornaments of *mani*, clouds of exquisite nets of dazzling light from jewels**. The flame-like radiance of jewels formed beautiful, flower-like nets. There were also **clouds of perfect radiance from a boundless array of *mani* jewels, clouds of jewels of a myriad colors and a treasury of pearls, clouds of assorted precious *candana* incenses, clouds of canopies made of various jewels, clouds of magnificent *mani* gems resonating with pure and wondrous sound, clouds of wheel-like necklaces of sunlight *mani* beads**. The glow of these clouds resembled sunlight. There were also **clouds of resplendent radiance from assorted jewels, and clouds of myriad ornaments, each distinct.**

**There were measureless, inconceivable numbers of clouds of offerings such as these.** The number of these clouds could not be conceived or expressed in words. **Each and every one of the world leaders manifested such clouds of offerings** as mentioned earlier **and rained them upon the oceanic multitudes in the Thus Come One’s *bodhimanda*, covering them all.** No one was left out.

X. Conclusion that the situation is universal and infinite

**Sutra:**
**Just as each and every world leader in this world was delighted and made offerings in this way, so too, in all worlds in the Flower Treasury Adorned Sea of Worlds, all the world leaders made offerings in the same way.**

**Commentary:**

**Just as each and every world leader in this world was** immensely **delighted and made offerings** to the Buddhas **in this way, so too, in all** the infinite **worlds in the Flower Treasury Adorned Sea of Worlds, all the world leaders made offerings in the same way.** In other words, in every world the king of every country saw a Buddha realizing Buddhahood in his country, and created these clouds of offerings.

**Sutra:**

**In each of those worlds, a Thus Come One was seated in a *bodhimanda*. Each and every world leader had his individual faith and understanding.**

**Commentary:**

In the Flower Treasury Sea of Worlds, all the world leaders resolved to present to the Buddha the vast clouds of offerings mentioned previously. **In each of those** infinite **worlds, a Thus Come One was seated in a *bodhimanda*** beneath the *bodhi* tree, where he realized Proper Enlightenment.

**Each and every world leader had his individual faith and understanding…**Each king and leader gave rise to deep faith and understanding of the Buddhadharma, thus gaining three benefits:

1.   The benefit of hearing. Upon hearing the Buddha’s words, they understood the principles behind them and grew in faith and understanding.
2.   The benefit of reflection. Upon hearing the Buddha’s words, they pondered the principles conveyed through language.
3.   The benefit of cultivation.
a.   Cultivation of practices. By cultivating various practices of *samadhi*, we can realize sagehood.
b.   Cultivation of Dharma. By cultivating in accord with the Dharma, we become filled with Dharma joy. The Dharma involves faith, vows, and practice.
c.   Cultivation of the fruition. Through cultivation, we can understand the principles and realize the fruition of sagehood.
d.   Cultivation of benefits. Through cultivating, we attain various benefits.
e.   Cultivation of conversion. We can change from being ordinary people and become sages.
f.    Cultivation of sameness. The dharma doors that we understand and awaken to are the very same ones that past Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Arhats realized.
g.   Cultivation of the ultimate. We must cultivate to the utmost point.

1) Cultivation of ultimate great compassion. Through cultivating great compassion to the utmost point, we can enter the Buddha’s state and can benefit all sentient beings, thereby achieving the virtue of kindness.

2) Cultivation of ultimate great wisdom. We can enter the Buddha’s power of wisdom, at which point we will gain incomparable compassion and wisdom, thereby realizing the Buddha’s virtue of wisdom.

3) Cultivation of ultimate freedom and ease. We can eliminate all obstacles, and our mind and environment will be characterized by freedom and ease. In fact, the mind and environment  are nondual. We will achieve the Buddha’s virtue of severance; in other words, we will realize all the Buddha’s passages into liberation.

In each world, every leader obtained the benefits of hearing, reflection, and cultivation.

**Sutra:**

**[Each world leader had] individual conditions, individual expedient passages into *samadhi*, individual practices of dharmas that aid the Way, individual accomplishments, individual happiness, individual inclinations, individual enlightenment and understanding of dharma doors, individual entry into the states of the Thus Come One’s spiritual penetrations, individual entry into the states of the Thus Come One’s powers, and individual entry into the Thus Come One’s passages into liberations.**

**Just as it was in this Flower Treasury Adorned Sea of Worlds, so it was in all seas of worlds in the ten directions to the ends of the Dharma Realm and space.**

**Commentary:**

The preceding passage stated that each world leader had his own faith and understanding. Having developed faith and understanding, each was guided by his own **individual conditions** in cultivation. Moreover, every world leader cultivated his own **individual expedient passages into *samadhi***. Every king and leader undertook **individual practices of dharmas that aid the Way**. They did all sorts of good deeds that generated merit to aid their cultivation. Since they cultivated their own dharma doors, they also had **individual accomplishments**. Each leader’s accomplishments caused him to experience **individual happiness**. Every leader followed his **individual inclinations** to delve more deeply into his dharma door. Having entered deeply, they experienced **individual enlightenment and understanding of** their own **dharma doors**. The wonderful functioning of spiritual powers they attained from cultivation made possible their **individual entry into the states of the Thus Come One’s spiritual penetrations,** their **individual entry into the states of the Thus Come One’s powers** of wisdom**, and** their **individual entry into the Thus Come One’s passage into liberations.** These passages into liberation signify the Buddha’s virtue of severance. Having severed all afflictions, he attained liberation.

**Just as it was in this Flower Treasury Adorned Sea of Worlds, it was the same in all seas of worlds in the ten directions to the ends of the Dharma Realm and space.** It was the same in all those worlds. All the world leaders formed clouds of offerings and finally entered the Thus Come One’s passages into liberation.

**Praise**:

**In the Flower Adornment Oceanic Assembly,**
**Its jeweled treasury of spiritual literature**
**Has sutra-rolls the size of a great trichiliocosm** **in a single atomic particle,**
**Which is broken open by this very person.**
**Then flowers rain down in profusion,**
**And the Dharma Realm is everywhere permeated with fragrance.**

**Commentary:**

**In the Flower Adornment Oceanic Assembly,** which is endless and inexhaustible, **Its jeweled treasury of spiritual literature**—This sutra is a jeweled treasury of spiritual literature. Anyone who recites this sutra will derive merit and benefit. The effort will not be in vain. One will certainly gain advantages.

This sutra **has sutra-rolls the size of a great trichiliocosm**, which can fit **in a single atomic particle, which is broken open by this very person.** One can take a knife and cut open this particle, then take out the sutra. Who can do this. You can, if you know how. Then you will understand the principles in the *Flower Adornment Sutra*.

**Then** celestial *mandarava* **flowers rain down in profusion**, as in the line from the Great Compassion Repentance, “Jeweled flowers rain down in profusion from the heavens.”

**And the Dharma Realm is everywhere permeated with fragrance.** Sentient beings throughout the Dharma Realm are permeated with and can smell the Dharma-fragrance and merit of the *Flower Adornment Sutra*. It is not the Dharma Realm that smells the fragrance, but the sentient beings within the Dharma Realm. The Dharma Realm is a location, with no nature of its own. This concludes the explanation of Chapter One of the *Flower Adornment Sutra*.