**The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra**

Chapter 5: Medicinal Herbs
With Commentary by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

This, the Fifth Chapter of The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, uses the herbs as an analogy. Medicinal Herbs can cure sickness, but they have to be administered properly. If they are administered incorrectly, not only will they fail to cure the sick they will make it worse.

**Sutra:**

**At that time, the World Honored One told Mahakashyapa and all the great disciples, “Good indeed! Good indeed! Kasyapa has well spoken of the Thus Come One’s real and true merit and virtue. It is just as he said.”**Outline:F3. Thus Come One’s narration.
G1. General narration.
H1. Doubly praising Kashyapa “Good indeed! Good indeed!

**Commentary:**

**At that time**, right after Mahakashyapa had praised the Buddhadharma in verse, **the World Honored One**, Shakyamuni Buddha, **told Mahakashyapa and all the great disciples,** assembled there, **“ Good indeed! Good indeed!** You are really good, really good. **Kasyapa has well spoken of the Thus Come One’s real and true merit and virtue. It is just as he said.** You have spoken very correctly.” However…

**Sutra:

Furthermore, the Thus Come One has limitless, boundless asamkheyas of merit and virtue. If you were to speak of it throughout limitless millions of eons, you could not finish.**
Outline:H2. Inability to speak fully of the Buddha’s virtues.

**Commentary:**

**Furthermore, the Thus Come One has limitless,** uncountable, **boundless asamkheyas,** an uncountable number **of merit and virtue.** The merit and virtue he has cultivated and practiced. **If you were to speak of it throughout limitless millions of eons, you could not finish.** If you spoke all day long, day after day, throughout an unreckonable amount of time, you still could not finish.

**Sutra:

Kashyapa, you should know that the Thus Come One is the king of all the dharmas. Nothing that he teaches is false. He extensively proclaims all dharmas by means of wisdom and expedients, and whatever dharmas he speaks all lead to the ground of all wisdom.**Outline:

G2. Expanded narration.
H1. Prose.
I1. Showing the inconceivability of Provisional and Real.
J1. Speaking Dharma.
K1. Showing Provisional and Real Wisdom as inconceivable.

**Commentary:**

**Kashyapa, you should know that the Thus Come One is the king of all the dharmas.** All Dharmas are born from the Buddha. **Nothing that he teaches is false.** Everything he says is true. **He extensively proclaims all dharmas by means of wisdom and expedients.** In his teaching he includes the dharmas of all Three Vehicles. Wisely he employs clever expedients to proclaim all the dharmas. **And whatever dharmas he speaks all lead to the ground of all-wisdom.** The Dharmas the Thus Come One teaches, lead to the other shore of wisdom. All-wisdom is one of the three types of wisdom the Thus Come One possesses: the wisdom of All Modes, the wisdom of the Way, and all-wisdom.

**Sutra:**
 **The Thus Come One contemplates and knows the tendencies of all dharmas. He also knows the depths of the mental processes of all living beings, having penetrated them without obstruction. Furthermore, he has ultimate and clear understanding of all dharmas, and he instructs living beings in all-wisdom.**Outline:K2 . Showing Provisional and Real Wisdom as inconceivable.

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One,** the Buddha, has Three Bodies and Four Wisdom, Five Eyes and Six Spiritual Penetrations.

The Three Bodies are: the Dharma Body, the Reward Body, and the Transformation Body. The Four Wisdom are: the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, the Equality Nature Wisdom, the Wonderful Observing Wisdom, and the Perfecting Wisdom.

The Five Eyes are: the Buddha Eye, the Dharma Eye, the Heavenly Eye, the Wisdom Eye, and the Flesh Eye.

The Six Spiritual Penetrations are: the Penetration of the Heavenly Eye, the Penetration of the Heavenly Ear, the Penetration of Other’s Thoughts, the Penetration of the Knowledge of Past Lives, the Penetration of the Extinction of Outflows, and the Penetration of the Complete Spirit. With such wisdom, he **contemplates and knows** all dharmas. There are 84,000 dharmas. If one were to list them all separately, it would take way too much time, so the text simply says **the tendencies of all dharmas.** And just where do all dharmas tend? All dharmas are not apart from the minds of living beings. All dharmas arise manifested only through the mind. All dharmas manifest through the mind, and they return, they “tend”--towards the mind as well.

**He also knows the depths of the mental processes of all living beings.** Every thought they have, the Buddha knows. That is why The Vajra Sutra says, “The Thus Come One knows the thoughts in the minds of all living beings.” **Having penetrated them without obstruction.** He understands what living beings are thinking, totally. **Furthermore, he has ultimate and clear understanding of all dharmas.** He has fathomed all dharmas completely; he completely understands them, and so **he instructs living beings in all-wisdom.** He leads all living beings to attain all-wisdom.

**Sutra:**
 **Kashyapa, consider the world of the three thousand great thousand worlds and the grasses, trees, forests, as well as the medicinal herbs, in their many varieties, with their different names and colors which the mountains, streams, valleys and flatlands produce.**
Outline:J2. Setting up analogy.
K1. Analogy of just the Real is the Provisional -- not different yet different.

L1. Showing that which can produce and that which is produced, although not different, are different.

**Commentary:**

**Kashyapa,** I shall now speak to you a parable: **consider the world of the three thousand great thousand worlds.** One world consists of:

one sun
one moon
one Mount Sumeru
one set of Four Continents

One thousand of these worlds make up a “small world system”. One thousand small world systems make up a “middle-sized world system”. One thousand middle-sized world systems make up a “great thousand world system”. Because the word “thousand” is used three times, it is called “the world of three thousand great thousand worlds”.

**And the grasses, trees, forests, as well as the medicinal herbs, in their many varieties.** There are many varieties of plants and trees and herbs. **With their different names and colors which the mountains;** the mountains represent the great Bodhisattvas; **streams, valleys and flatlands produce.

Sutra:

A thick cloud spreads out, covering the three thousand great thousand worlds, raining on them equally everywhere at the same time, its moisture reaching every part. The grasses, trees, forests and medicinal herbs - those of small roots, small stalks, small branches and small leaves, those of medium-sized roots, medium-sized stalks, medium-sized branches, medium-sized leaves or those of large roots, large stalks, large branches, and large leaves and also all the trees, whether great or small according to their size, small, medium, or large, all receive a portion of it. From the rain of the one cloud each according to its nature grows, blossoms, and bears fruit.**Outline:

L2. That which is moistened and that which moistens, although not different, are different.

**Commentary:**

**A thick cloud spreads out,** a large, dense cloud spreads out, **covering the three thousand great thousand worlds, raining on them equally everywhere at the same time, its moisture reaching every part.** It does not make discriminations. **The grasses, trees, forests and medicinal herbs - those of small roots, small stalks, small branches and small leaves.** This represents those of the Small Vehicle. **Those of medium-sized roots, medium-sized stalks, medium-sized branches, medium-sized leaves,** those of the Middle Vehicle, **those of large roots, large stalks, large branches, and large leaves,** those of the Great Vehicle.

**And also all the trees, whether great or small according to their size, small, medium, or large, all receive a portion of it. From the rain of the one cloud each according to its nature grows, blossoms, and bears fruit.** The smaller ones receive a smaller amount. The middle-sized ones get a medium amount, and the large ones get a lot of rain.

**Sutra:**
 **Although they grow from the same ground and are moistened by the same rain, still, all the grasses and trees are different.**Outline:
K2 . Analogy of just the Provisional is the Real--different and yet not different.

**Commentary:**

**Although they grow from the same ground and are moistened by the same rain.** The Buddha speaks one Dharma, but according to their dispositions, beings absorb what they can of it. **Still, all the grasses and trees are different.** The One Vehicle is proclaimed with a single sound, and as the teachings of the Five Vehicles, is received according to the good roots of beings.

**Sutra:**
 **Kashyapa, you should know that the Thus Come One is also like this. He manifests in the world like a great cloud rising; with his great sound he covers the world with its gods, humans, and asuras, just like that great cloud covers the three thousand great thousand lands. In the midst of the great assembly he announces, “I am the Thus Come One, one worthy of offerings, one of proper and universal knowledge, one whose understanding and conduct are complete, well gone one who understands the world, an unsurpassed lord, a taming and regulating hero, teacher of gods and humans, the Buddha, the World Honored One. Those who have not yet been crossed over, I cross over. Those who have not yet been liberated, I liberate. Those who have not yet been put at rest, I put at rest. Those who have not yet attained Nirvana, I cause to attain Nirvana. I know things as they really are, both in the present and in the future. I am the all-knowing one, the all-seeing one, the one who knows the Way, the one who opens the Way, the one who proclaims the Way. The entire assembly of gods, humans and asuras, all should come here to listen to the Dharma.”**Outline:

J3. Correlation with Dharma.
K1. Correlation of not different and yet different.
L1. Correlation proper.
M1. First correlating “that which moistens”.

**Commentary:**

**Kashyapa, you should know that the Thus Come One,** the World Honored One, **is also like this. He manifests in the world like a great cloud rising;** for the sake of One Matter he manifests in the world to teach and transform living beings. **With his great sound he covers the world with its gods, humans, and asuras, just like that great cloud covers the three thousand great thousand lands.** “Asura” is a Sanskrit word. It means “no wine”, or “ugly”. That is because asuras have the blessings of the heavens, but not the virtue, and they like to fight. Thieves, for example, are asuras in the three good paths, as well as asuras in the three evil paths, depending on whether they do good or evil. **In the midst of the great assembly he announces, “I am the Thus Come One”.** Someone here is thinking, “Ah hah! The Buddha must have a concept of a ‘self’. He is saying ‘I am the Thus Come One.’” If you really understand, the Thus Come One has no concept of self at all. The Buddha has mounted the Way which is thus and comes to realize right enlightenment.

I will now give you an example. You are all here listening to the Sutra being explained. The more intelligent of you, you remember more. Those of average intelligence, remember less than the smart ones, and the duller ones remember even less. The rain of Dharma of the Thus Come One falls in the same way. Those with greater wisdom get more moisture. Those with average wisdom get average moisture. Those with little wisdom get less moisture. Everyone is listening to the same Sutra, but everyone understands the doctrine on his or her level of understanding. It is different for everyone.

“But you are explaining so many things here--forests and trees and grasses and clouds--I do not understand one bit of this!”

If you know that you do not understand, that means that you must understand some of it! If you really did not understand, you would not even know that you did not understand. If you know that you do not understand, you are on your way to understanding. Why don’t you understand it? Because you have never heard of it before. You have not heard the Dharma before, so it is quite natural that you do not understand it the very first time you hear it. Still, if you know that you do not understand “one bit,” then that is the “one bit” you do understand! Today you understand one tiny bit, tomorrow you will understand two parts, and the next day, three parts and so on. Day by day your understanding will grow. Besides, I have lectured to you for so long, if you do not understand one bit, you are quite extraordinary in your own way! Tomorrow you will only understand half a bit and the day after nothing at all.

**One worthy of offerings, one of proper and universal knowledge.** To understand that the ten thousand dharmas are only the mind is called “proper knowledge.” To understand that mind gives rise to the ten thousand dharmas is called “universal knowledge.” Proper and universal knowledge is just understanding the mind. **One whose understanding and conduct are complete.** Through cultivation he attains the perfect fruition—Buddhahood. **Well gone one who understands the world.** “Well gone” means that he has gone to a good place. **An unsurpassed lord.** There is no one higher than him. **A taming and regulating hero.** He tames, guides, and controls living beings. **Teacher of gods and humans, the Buddha, the World Honored One.** The Buddha dares to say these things of himself. **Those who have not yet been crossed over, I cross over.** That is, those who have not yet understood the Buddhadharma, I lead to an understanding of it. I take them from the place where there is right and wrong to the place beyond right and wrong. I take them from the place where there is good and evil to the place beyond good and evil. I take them from the place where there is birth and death to the place where there is no birth and death. I take them across.

**Those who have not yet been liberated, I liberate.** I set them free. I bring them to understanding. **Those who have not yet been put at rest, I put at rest.** He makes those living beings who have never known happiness, happy. **Those who have not yet attained Nirvana, I cause to attain Nirvana.** Those who have not attained the fruition of Nirvana, with its four virtues: permanence, bliss, true self, and purity; I cause them to attain it, to attain the bliss of still extinction.

**I know things as they really are, both in the present and in the future. I am the all-knowing one.** The Buddha says this, and in his case it is true. He was not like the person who once claimed to know everything. I asked him, “If you know everything, then how many grains of rice did you eat for lunch today?”

“I do not know!” he answered.

If you asked the Buddha, he would know.

**The all-seeing one, the one who knows the Way.** He knows the Way to cultivate. **The one who opens the Way.** A pioneer among cultivators. **The one who proclaims the Way. The entire assembly of gods, humans and asuras, all should come here to listen to the Dharma.** Listen to the lectures on the Dharma! So, as you sit here in the lecture hall, you may not see a lot of people. But there are very many gods, dragons, and others of the eightfold division present. If you opened your Five Eyes and had the Six Spiritual Penetrations you would know: “The Lecture Hall is packed! It is standing room only! I cannot even find a place to stand, for heaven’s sake!” It is probably better you cannot see. If you could, you would not even have room to walk around.

**Sutra:

Then, countless thousands of myriads of millions of kinds of living beings came before the Buddha to hear the Dharma.**Outline:

M2. Correlating that which is produced with that which produces.

**Commentary:**

**Then, countless thousands of myriads of millions of kinds.** There are many different kinds **of living beings.** They all **came before the Buddha,** to the Dharma Flower Assembly **to hear the Dharma,** in order to hear The Dharma Flower Sutra. **Sutra:

Then, the Thus Come One, contemplating the sharpness and dullness of the faculties of these living beings, their vigor or laxness, according to their capacity, spoke the Dharma for their sakes.**Outline:M3. Further correlating that which moistens to that which is moistened.
N1. That which moistens.

**Commentary:**

**Then, the Thus Come One, contemplating** in detail, **the sharpness and dullness of the faculties of these living beings.** “Faculties” also means “roots.” There are many different living beings. Some have sharp faculties, while others have dull faculties. Some are smart, and some are stupid. **Their vigor or laxness.** Vigorous ones go forward and make progress. Lax ones are lazy. **According to their capacity, spoke the Dharma for their sakes** . To the vigorous ones he spoke of vigor. To the lax ones he spoke of laxness to cure them of their laziness and encourage them to work harder. He spoke to each one just that dharma which they would be able to receive according to their individual capacities. If they were not able to accept it, then the Buddha would not speak it. That is why, at first, the Buddha did not teach the Real Dharma. He taught the Provisional Dharma instead.

**Sutra:**

**In limitless varieties, causing them all to rejoice and quickly attain good benefit. After having heard this Dharma, all of these living beings presently are at ease; in the future, they will be born in a good place. By means of the Way, they will enjoy happiness and also be able to hear the Dharma. Having heard the Dharma, they will separate from all coverings and obstructions. Within all the dharmas, according to their powers, they will gradually gain entry to the Way.**Outline:

N2. That which is moistened.

**Commentary:**

**In limitless varieties,** the Buddha speaks all manner of dharmas, **causing them all to rejoice** ---to be happy. The Buddha spoke the Dharma to make living beings happy. He spoke whatever Dharma they would respond to happily. Once they were happy and interested, he gradually sent them down the Path to Buddhahood. **And quickly attain good benefit. After having heard this Dharma, all of these living beings presently are at ease; in the future, they will be born in a good place.** In the present they are tranquil and at ease. In the future they may be born in the heavens or among wealthy humans.

**By means of the Way, they will enjoy happiness.** By cultivating the Way, they will become very happy. **And also be able to hear the Dharma. Having heard the Dharma, they will separate from all coverings and obstructions.** If you wish to separate from obstacles, you must hear the Dharma. If you do not hear the Dharma, you would not be able to understand true principle, and you would not be able to leave your obstructions. **Within all the dharmas, according to their powers, they will gradually gain entry to the Way.** It happens very naturally, according to their abilities. They gradually enter the Path of cultivation, gradually gain enlightenment, gradually become Buddhas, and gradually end birth and death.

**Sutra:

Just as that great cloud rains down on all the grasses, trees, forests, and medicinal herbs and each, according to its nature, fully receives the moisture and grows.**Outline:

L2. Bringing up the analogy again.

**Commentary:**

**Just as that great cloud rains down on all the grasses, trees, forests, and medicinal herbs.** The various types of vegetation represent the various kinds living beings. There are Bodhisattvas, Hearers, Pratyekabuddhas, gods, people, hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals. **And each, according to its nature.** Each living being accepts that dharma which they can accept, and each grows accordingly. **Fully receives the moisture and grows.** The larger ones get more; the smaller ones get less. Those who are wise get more wisdom; those with little wisdom, get less. But, whether they get more or less they all get some and they all grow.

**Sutra:**
 **…so, too, the Thus Come One speaks of a Dharma having one mark and one taste, that is to say: the mark of liberation, the mark of separation, the mark of extinction, culminating in the Wisdom of All Modes.**Outline:

K2 . Correlating the different and yet not different.
L1. Correlating Proper.
M1. Correlating “Grown from same ground and moistened by same rain”.

**Commentary:**

**So, too, the Thus Come One speaks of a Dharma having one mark.** What is the one mark? It is the mark of True Suchness of the essential nature of the minds of living beings. The mark of True Suchness is like a piece of ground, **and one taste.** The one flavor is the Buddhadharma of the One Vehicle and the certification to the principles of the One Vehicle. This single flavor refers to the single word of each ground.

**That is to say: the mark of liberation.** Those living beings who have not planted good roots are led to plant them. Those who have planted them, nurture them so they can grow. Those who have well-grown good roots find them brought to maturity. And those whose good roots have matured are led to liberation.

T**he mark of separation** refers to leaving suffering and distress. **The mark of extinction,** the wiping out of all afflictions; **culminating in the Wisdom of All Modes,** the wisdom of the Buddha. The Buddha speaks Dharma with the hope that all living beings will one day attain the Buddha-Wisdom.

**Sutra:

Those living beings who, hearing the Thus Come One’s Dharma, uphold, read, recite and cultivate it as taught will not themselves be aware of the merit and virtue they obtain.**Outline:

M2. Correlating the different grasses and trees.
N1. Correlating living beings as like grass and trees, therefore, “unaware”.

**Commentary:**

**Those living beings who, hearing the Thus Come One’s Dharma, uphold, read, recite and cultivate it as taught,** cultivating as the Buddha told them to and practicing what they have been told to practice in accord with Dharma. They **will not themselves be aware of the merit and virtue they obtain.** Things are pretty much the same here. You come to listen to the Buddhadharma. You have all changed a great deal for the better, although you yourselves may not be aware of the fact that you have lost your bad habits now, and even if you wanted them back, you would not know where to start looking for them!

**Sutra:

What is the reason? Only the Thus Come One knows the kinds, the marks, the substances, and the natures of these living beings, what they are recollecting, what they are thinking, and what they are cultivating; how they are recollecting, how they are thinking, and how they are cultivating; by means of what dharma they recollect, by means of what dharma they think, and by means of what dharma they cultivate; and by means of what dharma they obtain what dharma. Living beings dwell on a variety of levels. Only the Thus Come One sees them as they really are, clearly and without obstruction.**Outline:

N2. Showing that only the Thus Come One knows the beings. He is, therefore, like the great cloud.

**Commentary:**

**What is the reason? Only the Thus Come One knows the kinds.** There are various kinds of living beings. There are Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Hearers, Conditioned-Enlightened Ones, gods, people, asuras, ghosts, hell-beings, and animals--all those in the ten Dharma Realms. Depending on one’s karma, one becomes one of them. **The marks:** This refers to their external appearance. **The substances,** that is, their basic make-up **and the natures,** their inward disposition **of these living beings.**So, those are the Four Dharmas: kind, mark, substance, and nature. **What they are recollecting, what they are thinking, and what they are cultivating.** There are also Three Dharmas: Hearing, thinking, and cultivating. Hearing refers to hearing the Dharma by listening to lectures on the Sutra. Through our hearing we gain the wisdom of hearing. After you have listened to the Dharma for a while, without realizing it yourself you will grow wiser. For example, some of my disciples can explain the Ten Dwellings and the Ten Grounds. If they had not listened to the Buddhadharma, they would not be able to do this. When you study the Buddhadharma, you gain wisdom. This is called the wisdom of hearing.

Thinking refers to meditation, that is, practicing the Four Dhyanas and stilling one’s thought processes. This is wisdom of thinking. One thinks about the principles one has heard and chooses the right path to follow.

Once you have thought it through carefully, then you start cultivating. You must work hard and never, ever be lazy. You must be courageously and vigorously cultivate in the morning, courageously and vigorously cultivating in the evening, and courageously and vigorously cultivate all day long. Then you will gain the wisdom of cultivation. You much approach your cultivation with wisdom. If you lack wisdom and cultivate blindly, you may get off the track and end up cultivating yourself right into the hells. You would be cultivating blindly. These are three methods to cultivating wisdom. There are two additional dharmas. What are these two dharmas? All of you know, but unless I mention them by name, you do not know what the two dharmas are. Once I tell you, you will blurt out, “Oh, so that is it!” They are cause and effect. You are all very familiar with these, right? The two dharmas are cause and effect. In addition, there is the single dharma. You have also heard this one dharma many times, but no one can seem to make a correct guess right now. This single dharma is the dharma of all grounds, which is the single ground. The one ground is the Real Mark. You all know about the Real Mark? This is the single dharma. Four dharmas, three dharmas, two dharmas, and one dharma; one dharma, two dharmas, three dharmas, and four dharmas. If you understand these, it will be easier to cultivate.

**How they are recollecting, how they are thinking, and how they are cultivating.** They recollect the Buddha, then they think about the Dharma, they cultivate the deeds of the Sangha. They are constantly mindful, forgetting not even for a moment. What should they not forget? They should never forget the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. They constantly in every thought recollect, think about, and cultivate the principle of the Buddhadharma. Clearly, calmly, and without false thinking, they think about the doctrines, and then cultivate them. **By means of what dharma they recollect, by means of what dharma they think, and by means of what dharma they cultivate.** They recollect, think, and cultivate in accord with Proper Dharma. They cultivate according to the laws of cause and effect. They know that whatever cause they plant, it will bear a corresponding fruit.

**And by means of what dharma they obtain what dharma.** You use Buddhadharma, you get Buddhahood. You use demonic dharma, you get demonic dharma. There are also Two Dharmas: Cause and effect. “By means of what dharma” is the cause and “they obtain what dharma” is the effect. According to the causes planted by the Five Vehicles, they obtain corresponding effects.

**Living beings dwell on a variety of levels. Only the Thus Come One sees them as they really are.** Living beings themselves are not aware of their various states. Only the Thus Come One really sees them. **Clearly and without obstruction**. He knows them from beginning to depths. Ordinary people might understand the beginning but not understand the end, or else they would not understand the beginning but will understand the end. They cannot understand both at once. You might know how beings are born and not know about how they die, or vice-versa.

He understands the inside and the outside, clearly without any obstruction. As long as one clearly understands, then there is no obstacle. If one does not clearly understand, then there are obstacles. Therefore, only the Buddha can really understand and be without obstacles.

There is a verse about obstacles, which runs:

I vow to eradicate the three obstructions and all afflictions.
I vow to attain wisdom and true understanding.
I vow that all disasters quickly melt away.
And in every life, I vow to practice the Bodhisattva Path.

There are three obstructions: The obstruction of karma, the obstruction of retribution, and the obstruction of afflictions. One should vow to attain wisdom. With wisdom you can have clear understanding; otherwise, you cannot. One should vow to get rid of all disasters and calamities. All disasters such as tornados and earthquakes disappear.

**Sutra:**
 **Just as those grasses, trees, and forests and all the medicinal herbs do not know themselves whether their natures are superior, middle, or inferior.**Outline:

N3. Living beings unaware of their own natures.

**Commentary:**

The Buddha knows clearly and without obstruction, but the living beings who are moistened by the Dharma are not aware themselves of their own capacities, **Just as those grasses, trees, and forests and all the medicinal herbs do not know themselves whether their natures are superior, middle, or inferior.

Sutra:

The Thus Come One knows the Dharma of one mark, of one flavor, that is to say: the mark of liberation, the mark of separation, the mark of extinction, the mark of ultimate Nirvana which is constantly still and extinct and which in the end returns to emptiness.**Outline:

L2. Conclusion.
M1. Conclusion “different is just not different”.

**Commentary:**

**The Thus Come One knows the Dharma of one mark,** the mark of True Suchness of the mind and nature of living beings. **Of one flavor** refers to the cultivation of the One Vehicle and certification to the wonderful principle. **That is to say: the mark of liberation, the mark of separation, the mark of extinction.** Now, originally there is no mark of liberation, no mark of separation, no mark of extinction. These marks are spoken of to counteract the attachments of living beings. Think it over: If it is really liberation, how could it retain a mark? If it is really separation, how could there still be a mark. If it is really separation, then it should be separate from even the concept of separation. So why do we bring up the “mark of separation”? If we did not, living beings would not have anything to relate to, and it would be difficult for them to believe. The mark of extinction is also without a mark. In general, all dharmas have been swept away, and all marks have been left behind. Not a single dharma is postulated. **The mark of ultimate Nirvana which is constantly still and extinct** The Dharma of one mark and one flavor ultimately returns to Nirvana with its four virtues of permanence, bliss, true self, and purity. The mark of ultimate Nirvana, that is constantly still and extinct is also not a mark. If it had a mark, it would not be still and extinct. **And which in the end returns to emptiness** wherein there is not even the mark of emptiness.

**Sutra:

Already understanding this the Buddha contemplates the desires in the minds of living beings and protects them. For this reason he does not immediately speak of the Wisdom of All Modes.**Outline:

M2. Explaining why he does not immediately speak the Wisdom of All Modes.

**Commentary:**

**Already understanding this the Buddha**, having, while in the midst of marks, transcended marks, then **contemplates the desires in the minds of living beings.** Basically, there is no dharma to be spoken, and there are no marks to be obtained. However, living beings all have their fondness and desires. If you started right out teaching them that there was nothing at all--not a single dharma--and that all dharmas are empty, living beings would not believe it. Not only would they not believe it, they slander it as well. “If dharmas are basically empty, why are you speaking about them, anyway?” they would ask. So the Buddha took a long look at living beings’ minds. He knew that they were not ready to accept the true dharma. Living beings have many faults which they must gradually be encouraged to stop. If you try to do it all at once by telling them it is all empty, they would not be able to do it.

**And protects them.** By refraining from speaking the Real Dharma and speaking the Provisional instead, he protects living beings from slandering the Dharma.

**For this reason he does not immediately speak of the Wisdom of All Modes.** That is the reason why the Buddha does not immediately speak the Dharma of the Real Mark. He waits a bit. The Wisdom of All Modes is the Real Mark Prajna. The Buddha takes a look at the causes, conditions, and dispositions of living beings. Upon seeing that they have not yet ripened, he refrains from speaking to them of the Wisdom of All Modes, the Real Mark Prajna.

**Sutra:

Kashyapa, you are all very rare in your ability to know that the Thus Come One speaks the Dharma as it is appropriate, and in your ability to believe and accept it. Why it this? All the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones speak an appropriate Dharma which is difficult to understand, difficult to know.**Outline:

I2. Concluding praise and narration.

**Commentary:**

**Kashyapa, you are all,** all of you Hearers, **very rare** indeed, **in your ability to know that the Thus Come One speaks the Dharma as it is appropriate,** you are rare because you understand that the Buddha speaks the Dharma in accord with the inclinations of the beings he teaches, in accord with their dispositions, and in accord with their causes and conditions. **And in your ability to believe and accept it. Why it this? All the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones speak an appropriate Dharma which is difficult to understand, difficult to know.** The Dharma spoken by the Buddhas is supreme, profound, and wonderful. So it is not easy to understand.

**Sutra:

At that time the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning spoke verses, saying:**

**“Destroyer of existence, the Dharma KingManifests within the world; According to living beings’ desires,He teaches the Dharma in various ways. The Thus Come One, out of veneration For this wisdom, deep and far-reaching,Has long remained silent on this important matter,Being in no hurry to set it forth. Those with wisdom, if they heard it, Would be able to believe and understand it,But those lacking wisdom would doubt it And thereby lose it for a long time For this reason, Kashyapa, It is spoken in accord with their powers Employing various conditions To lead them to the right view.**

Outline:

H2. Verse.
I1. Verses of Dharma.

**Commentary:**

**At that time the World Honored One,** Shakyamuni Buddha, compassionately wishing to teach living beings, and **wishing to restate this meaning spoke verses, saying:

Destroyer of existence, the Dharma King.** “Existence” refers to the presence of cause and effect. How does the Buddha break through cause and effect? On the part of living beings, the laws of cause and effect always apply. If you plant a good cause, you reap a good fruit; if you plant an evil cause, you reap an evil fruit. But, the Buddha, having reached enlightenment through his cultivation, is no longer bound by cause and effect. He has broken through existence, through the “unstoppable” process of cause and effect. The Dharma King is the Buddha, the King who speaks the Dharma. Those who leave home should learn to speak the Dharma like the Buddha, with his Four Kinds of Unobstructed Eloquence and his Eight Sounds. In speaking the Dharma, we represent the Buddha, the Dharma King.

**Manifests within the world;** the Buddha manifests within the world to smash through all of existence. He cannot do it all at once, however. **According to living beings’ desires, he teaches the Dharma in various ways.** He figures out what living beings like and, going along with them, teaches them bit by bit. He does not speak the Dharma in just one way. There are many ways to speak it. There are the Five Periods and the Eight Teachings. The Five Periods are: the Avatamsaka Period, the Agama Period, the Vaipulya Period, the Prajna Period, and the Dharma Flower-Nirvana Period. The Eight Teachings are: the Sudden Teaching, the Gradual Teaching, the Esoteric Teaching, the Unfixed Teaching, the Teaching of the Tripitaka, the Intermediate Teaching, the Differentiated Teaching, and the Perfect Teaching. He speaks all kinds of dharmas according to the Five Periods of time and the Eight Teachings.

**The Thus Come One, out of veneration for this wisdom, deep and far-reaching.** Because the Real Mark Prajna wisdom is to be revered greatly, being profound and far-reaching. That is why it is said, “When the Bodhisattva who Contemplates at Ease practices the profound prajna…” The prajna is deep rather than shallow. **Has long remained silent on this important matter.** Because it is so deep and so lofty, those of ordinary, shallow understanding cannot penetrate it. Because it is so vast in scope, it is not appropriate for those of the Small Vehicle.

Therefore, the Buddha has sized them up as Small Vehicle types, and he cannot speak the Great Vehicle Dharma to them. He has kept silent on the matter for a long time. “Long” refers to the time from the end of the Avatamsaka Period up to the beginning of the Lotus Flower-Nirvana Period--over thirty years. During those thirty years, he did not set forth the real teaching; he spoke the provisional teaching instead. He did not speak the Real Mark Prajna, that is, the doctrine of the One Buddha Vehicle. It has been a long, long time since he spoke the important matter. He kept it to himself. Why? If he had spoken of the real wisdom, the real teaching, living beings would not only not believe, they would even slander it. **Being in no hurry to set it forth.** The Buddha certainly has a lot patience.

**Those with wisdom, if they heard it, would be able to believe and understand it.** They would believe and accept the doctrine of the Great Vehicle Buddhadharma. **But those lacking wisdom would doubt it and thereby lose it for a long time.** If you spoke to them in terms of the Great Vehicle saying--“originally, there was no bondage, and now there is no need to seek liberation. Originally, there was no uniting with marks, and so now there is no need to separate from marks. Originally there was no mark of production and now there is no need to speak of a mark of extinction”--if you tried to teach them something that truthful and out-in-front, then they would not believe it. They would have many doubts. That is why you have to apply clever expedient devices and use all kinds of analogies to bring them to understanding.

Stupid people would not believe. They would think, “Hmmm...this all sounds too nihilistic to me. What does he mean, ‘There is nothing at all’? If there is nothing all, we are finished! We have had it! If it all reverts to emptiness, what are we doing studying this? There is nothing to study!” Having given rise to doubt, they cut off the seeds of the Great Vehicle, which is equivalent to cutting off the seed of Buddhahood, and cutting off the seeds of being living beings, and they thereby lose it for a long time.

**For this reason, Kashyapa, it is spoken in accord with their powers, employing various conditions,** expedient, clever provisional dharmas and analogies **to lead them to the right view.** To bring them to right knowledge and right views so that deviant knowledge and deviant views vanish.

**Sutra:**

**Kashyapa, you should knowIt is like a great cloud Rising above the world And covering all A wisdom cloud filled with moisture Illuminated with lightening flashes And vibrating with thunderous roars It brings delight to all, Obscuring the light of the sun, Refreshing the earth The cloud lowers and expands As if one could reach out and touch it, It rains equally everywhere Falling alike in the four directions Pouring without measure Saturating all the land.**

Outline:

I2. Verses of setting up parable.
J1. Verses of not different and yet different.
K1. Verses of that which moistens as not different.

**Commentary:**

**Kashyapa, you should know** the Thus Come One speaks the Dharma. **It is like a great cloud rising above the world** and covering the three thousand, great thousand worlds, **and covering all. A wisdom cloud filled with moisture.** The cloud represents the Buddha’s real wisdom, whose rain moistens the hearts of all living beings. **Illuminated with lightening flashes.** The Buddha emits limitless lights, like the flashes of lightening. **And vibrating with thunderous roars.** The thunder represents the sound of the Buddha’s voice speaking the Dharma. **It brings delight to all** causing all living beings to feel happiness in their hearts.

**Obscuring the light of the sun.** The light of the Buddha’s wisdom outshines the light of all outsides ways; it outshines the light of the ninety-five deviant lights. Without the light of the Buddha’s wisdom, non-Buddhists would appear to have principle. But, once their teachings are compared to the Buddhadharma, their deviant wisdom is revealed for what it is and is outshone by the Buddha’s wisdom.

**Refreshing the earth.** This is also an analogy. It represents the Buddha using the clear, pure refreshing wisdom to cool off the earth’s ninety-eight kinds of afflictions. **The cloud lowers and expands.** Dense and profuse clouds colored the sky. Draped across are billows of clouds so thick that you could touch it with the reach of your hand. **As if one could reach out and touch it, it rains equally everywhere.** The wisdom of the Buddha’s words of Dharma universally moistens all living beings. **Falling alike in the four directions.** This represents the Eight Sounds and Four Types of Eloquence of the Buddha. **Pouring without measure, saturating all the lands.** In the Four Books, there is the saying:

Everything under heaven is the land of the king.
Every body of water is a minister to the king.

Everywhere all the land receives moisture, just as all living beings receive the moisture of the Buddhadharma.

In these verses Shakyamuni Buddha praises Mahakashyapa and all the Hearer disciples as being extremely rare, because they like to hear the Dharma the Buddha speaks. Because they like study the Buddhadharma, the Buddha says that there are few such people. In this world, there are many people, but very few of them get to listen to the Dharma; this makes them rare. If you put on a play or show a film, a lot of people will come to watch. If you have a gambling house, a lot of people will come. But here we lecture on the Sutras all the time and still only these few people come to listen. Sometimes they come and sometimes they do not! Such people are rare indeed. So, take a look at yourselves, and you will know that you are rare people. There are few like you. Some of you go to school, and some of you have jobs and go to work--you do various things. Some of you take care of your homes, and some of you work outside, and yet in the evenings you all find time to come and listen to lectures on the Sutras. Very rare!

**Sutra:**

**In the mountains, streams and steep valleys, In deep recesses, there grow Grasses, trees, and herbs, And trees, both great and small, The grains, shoots, and plants, The sugar cane and the grape vine; All are nourished by the rain, And none fail to be enriched. The parched ground is soaked, The herbs and trees together flourish, Issuing from that cloud Water of a single flavor Moistens grasses, trees and forests Each according to its measure All of the trees, Great, medium and small, According to their size Can grow and develop. When reached by that single rain The roots, stalks, branches, and leaves, Flowers and fruits will luster and color, All are fresh and shining.**

Outline:

K2. Verses about receiving different levels of moisture.

**Commentary:**

**In the mountains, streams and steep valleys,** the streams represent the Great Bodhisattvas. The streams represent all the great disciples. **In deep recesses, there grow grasses, trees, and herbs.** The analogy gives the three kinds of grass and two kinds of trees. The three kinds of grass are: the Vehicle of People, the Vehicle of Gods, and the Vehicles of the Hearers and Condition-enlightened Ones. The two kinds of trees are the Bodhisattvas of Intermediate Teachings and Differentiated Teachings. Bodhisattvas of the Differentiated Teachings are great trees while Bodhisattvas of the Intermediate Teachings are small trees. **And trees, both great and small, the grains, shoots, and plants.**

The text says literally, “The hundred grains”. The word “hundred” represents the ten good deeds, each of which is multiplied by ten, making a hundred good deeds. The shoots and plants are all the living beings. **The sugar cane and the grape vine.** Sugar cane grows in stalks which represent both dhyana samadhi and the spiritual powers derived from it. Grapes grow in clusters, representing the use of a single wisdom door of prajna to cut off many, many doubts. **All are nourished by the rain, and none fail to be enriched.** They all grow. They each receive the share of rain that they should receive. **The parched ground is soaked.** “Parched ground” refers to living beings who have not planted good roots, who have not heard the Buddhadharma. These living beings are also nourished by the Dharma-rain and gain advantage.

**The herbs and trees together flourish.** They grow and flourish. **Issuing from that cloud water of a single flavor.** The One Vehicle Buddhadharma **Moistens grasses, trees and forests.** All living beings **each according to its measure.** They receive the benefit they deserve. **All of the trees, great, medium and small, according to their size can grow and develop. When reached by that single rain the roots, stalks, branches, and leaves, flowers and fruits will luster and color, all are fresh and shining.** They are fresh, sparkling, and beautiful.

**Sutra:**

**According to their substance and marks, And natures, either great or small They alike receive moisture And each one flourishes.**

Outline:

J2. Verses of “different and yet not different”.

**Commentary:**
 **According to their substance and marks,** the large ones get much moisture, the middle-sized ones get less, and the smaller ones get even less. Each gets what it deserves. **According to their substance and marks, and natures, either great or small they alike receive moisture and each one flourishes.** For example, we are now giving lectures on the Sutra. The lecturing could be considered one, big rain-cloud. Of those who come to listen, some will understand one thing and some will understand many, many principles. Some will, as the saying goes, hear one thing and understand one thing, while others will hear one thing and understand ten, or even a hundred!

Some people will change some of their small, bad habits and gain small benefit. Some will change their major, bad habits and thereby obtain great benefit. Some will get rid of all their bad habits completely, gaining the greatest benefit. When you have heard and understood the Dharma, it is like having been moistened by the rain. When you get rid of your bad habits, your wisdom-life and Dharma-body flourish and grow, your wisdom develops and sheds its light. Before, when you had all those bad habits, you did not realize that your body gave off no light at all. Now, for every bit of habit energy that you get rid of, you omit that much more light.

**Sutra:**

**The Buddha, in the same way Manifests within the world Just like a great cloud Covering over everything. Having come into the world For the sake of living beings, He discriminates and expounds The reality of all dharmas. The Great Sage, the World Honored One, In the midst of the multitudes Of gods and humans Proclaims these words saying: “I am the Thus Come One The doubly complete honored one. I appear within the world Like a great cloud Moistening all The dried-out living beings, So they all leave suffering And gain peace and bliss Worldly joy And the joy of Nirvana. All gods and humans assembled here Listen singlemindedly and well. You should all come here To behold the Unsurpassed Honored One, I am the World Honored One, The one beyond compare. To bring peace and ease to living beings I manifest within the world And for the sake of the assembly speak The sweet dew of pure Dharma The Dharma of a single flavor, That of liberation and Nirvana. Using a single wondrous sound I proclaim this principle Constantly creating the causes and conditions For the Great Vehicle.**

Outline:

I3. Verses correlating with Dharma.
J1. Verses correlating “not different and yet different.”
K1. Correlation “that which moistens”.

**Commentary:**
 **The Buddha, in the same way manifests within the world just like a great cloud covering over everything.** The Buddha covers all living beings with the rain of Dharma. **Having come into the world for the sake of living beings, he discriminates and expounds the reality of all dharmas.** When he sees people, he speaks human dharma; when he meets gods, he speaks heavenly dharma; when he meets those of the Two Vehicles, he speaks the dharma of the Two Vehicles. When he encounters those of the Great Vehicle, he expounds that teaching. “Discriminates” does not mean that he uses his discriminating mind to speak the Dharma. It means that he speaks Dharma in accord with living beings’ potentials. For the sake of the real, he expounds the provisional. All expedient Dharmas are spoken for the sake of the real teaching.

**The Great Sage, the World Honored One,** the Buddha is the great Sage. **In the midst of the multitudes of gods and humans proclaims these words saying: “I am the Thus Come One the doubly complete honored one.** “Doubly complete” means that he is complete with both blessing and wisdom. In the causal ground, he did many good deeds, so his blessings are complete. It is not enough just to have blessings and not to have wisdom. The Buddha is also complete in wisdom. As the saying goes:

One who cultivates blessings and not wisdom,
Is like an elephant wearing a necklace;
One who cultivates wisdom and no blessings,
is like an Arhat with an empty bowl.

Those who cultivate blessings without cultivating wisdom do not listen to the Sutras; they merely practice good deeds. They may pile up many blessings, but they have no wisdom. This makes them like a big, dumb elephant. Elephants are not really as stupid as they are awkward. They are so big with such big legs! They are too big to fly. In fact, they cannot get off the ground. Now, picture an elephant wearing a necklace. The person who adorns himself with blessing is like that--useless. If you only listen to the Sutras and Dharma and fail to do good deeds to help others, you are like an Arhat with an empty bowl. In the future when you become an Arhat, you will travel all over with an empty bowl; no one will make offerings to you. Why not? Because you never practiced good deeds. What do you think of that? Here you are, a certified Arhat and happy all day long! You go from day to day with an empty stomach. Why? Because you only listened to Dharma and did not do good deeds.

The Buddha is doubly complete in wisdom and blessings. **I appear within the world like a great cloud moistening all the dried-out living beings;** living beings who have not heard the Buddhadharma. Once living beings have heard the Buddhadharma, they are no longer dried-out, they are “moist”. **So they all leave suffering** and attain bliss-- **And gain peace and bliss, worldly joy and the joy of Nirvana;** both transcendental and worldly happiness. **All gods and humans assembled here, listen singlemindedly and well** to the Buddhadharma. **You should all come here to behold the Unsurpassed Honored One,** draw near to and reverently worship the Buddha.

**I am the World Honored One,** honored both in and beyond the world. **The one beyond compare.** No one is as high as the Buddha.

In the heavens and below, there is no one like the Buddha.
In the ten direction worlds, he is beyond compare.
I have seen everything in the world there is to see.
And in it nothing can compare to the Buddha.

**To bring peace and ease to living beings, I manifest within the world and for the sake of the assembly, speak the sweet dew of pure Dharma**--the wonderful Dharma, which is like sweet dew.

**The Dharma of a single flavor, that of liberation and Nirvana. Using a single wondrous sound, I proclaim this principle.** This is the Dharma of the One Buddha Vehicle. The Buddha proclaims it in The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra. **Constantly creating the causes and conditions for the Great Vehicle.** The Buddha employs all manner of causes and conditions to teach the Great Vehicle Dharma.

**Sutra:**

**I contemplate all Everywhere as equal, Without “this” or “that” And without thoughts of love or hate. I have no greed or attachment, And no limitations or obstacles. Constantly for everyone, I speak the Dharma, equally. Speaking for a single person, As I would for the multitudes. I constantly expound and proclaim the Dharma And have no other work. Coming, going, sitting and standing I never grow weary, Filling the entire world, Like the moisture of the universal rain.**

Outline:

K2 . Verses correlating that which produces with that which is produced.

**Commentary:**

**I contemplate all, everywhere as equal.** This line shows us the great compassion of the Buddha. The Buddha never says, “I am the highest. I created all things, and they are all mine”. The Buddha says that he “teaches” the ten thousand things. He instructs them to leave the deviant and return to the proper, to cast aside confusion and return to enlightenment. He does not say, “I alone am enlightened. You are all confused.”

He is not like the Lord who created all things who says, “I created all of you”. If you created all this, why did you make such a mess of it? Why didn’t you do a better job? Why did you create evil? Why did you create evil people who harm the good people? That is being even worse than a common thief!

The Buddha does not claim to have created all things. He rescues all things. Those who do not understand the Buddhadharma, he leads them to understand it. Those who have not yet awakened, he leads them to awakening. He does not say, “I made all of you”. The Buddha saves all living beings, and having done so, there are no living beings whom he has saved. He saves all living beings but does not claim to have done so. That means that he is truly egalitarian.

I contemplate all, everywhere as equal, **without “this” or “that” and without thoughts of love or hate.** Without discriminations between this and that, there is no love or hate. When one discriminates between this and that, then love and hate exist. “I love this person, and I hate that person. I love what pleases me and what does not pleases me, I hate.” If you can not love the things that please you and not hate the things you dislike and not discriminate between this and that, then you are equal in your views without the concepts of this and that. You have knocked down that Mount Sumeru.

The text says, **I have no greed or attachment.** How can the Buddha say this? How can the Buddha be without greed or attachment? It is simply because he has no thought of love or hate. Don’t you agree that if you have love and hate, you will also have greed and attachment? You will be greedy for things you desire and try to avoid things you dislike.

**And no limitations or obstacles.** If you love or hate something, those emotions form your limitations concerning them. That makes for an obstruction.

**Constantly for everyone, I speak the Dharma, equally. Speaking for a single person, as I would for the multitudes.** When you practice lecturing, do not think, “Not as many people come to hear my lectures as they do to hear his! Gees! They do not want to listen to me. This is too humiliating. Really! They just do not want to hear me!!” Here, you give rise to all kinds of love and hate and so on. The Buddha always speaks the Dharma for everyone. One person is many: many people are one person. One is many; many are one. Speaking the Dharma equally means that you do not notice whether there are many or just a few in the audience. Neither many nor few; neither large nor small; nothing far and nothing near. I am speaking the Dharma here right now, and they may even be listening to me in Hong Kong! “Oh! Our teacher is in America lecturing The Dharma Flower Sutra. Let us get some tapes and listen.” So, I lecture for Hong Kong as I would for America, and I lecture for America as I would for Hong Kong. That is called “not discriminating between near and far,” speaking Dharma equally for those both near and far.

What are you laughing at? I am speaking true, real principle. There is nothing in it to laugh at! And there is nothing in it not to laugh at, either.

**I constantly expound and proclaim the Dharma.** Haven’t I told you before that as long as I have breath left, I will speak the Dharma. If I quit speaking the Dharma, my breath will also cease. So none of you can retire or retreat from speaking the Dharma. If you do, it is very inauspicious. **And have no other work.** We who study the Buddhadharma, must speak the Buddhadharma. There are several of you now who are heading to Taiwan to take the precepts, so I am speaking the precept-taking Dharma to you. When you have received the precepts, there may be as many as fifty, or five hundred, or five thousand people in America who will follow you to take precepts as well. People will see that you are not even afraid of starving to death. “They do not ask for offering either. They are really practicing the Buddhadharma.” Those who come after you will want to imitate you in not fearing starving to death. They will want to imitate your temperaments, because you are happy all day long and never get angry. They will want to keep the precepts pure as the two Bhikshunis who do not eat after noon. That is really wonderful!

On the other hand, if you come back from taking precepts and sleep all day, eat fine food and wear fine clothes, no one will believe in you, and the Buddhadharma will become extinct. To say nothing of five, there would not be even one cultivator in America! The responsibility for the flowering of American Buddhism rests with the five of you. I am not trying to frighten you, but, in fact, you are the pioneers of Western Buddhism. There have never been so many people from the West to go to take the precepts of the Great Vehicle. This is a new page in history.

If they ask you who your teacher is, however, just say, “Shakyamuni Buddha”. Do not say it is anyone else. Shakyamuni Buddha is your original teacher. If they ask who you study under, say you study with the Pratimoksha, the moral code. Say that you take the precepts as your teacher. The Buddha, in truth, instructed his disciples after his Nirvana to take precepts as their teacher. I do not want you to mention my name, because I have no cultivation and no Way virtue. I am not fit to be anyone’s teacher. Also, I do not want to be anyone’s teacher. There are a lot of fine gods in the heavens, but I do not want to go there. How much the less do I want to hang out in the human realm!

And have no other work, I just speak the Dharma. **Coming, going, sitting and standing.** This means walking, standing, sitting, reclining. **I never grow weary, filling the entire world, like the moisture of the universal rain.** Standing, walking, sitting, and reclining, I am at all times speaking the Dharma. I am never lazy. I speak the Dharma while I am standing. I speak the Dharma while I am sitting. I even speak the Dharma while I am sleeping! How do I do that? In my dreams I teach and transform all the dreaming living beings.

Why does the Buddha speak the Dharma? Because living beings are too dried out. If they did not receive the moisture of the Buddhadharma, they would wither up and die. Once they are dead, if you speak Dharma to them it would not bring them back to life. So, he gives them the Dharma rain to refresh them and help them grow. The rain moistens all the three grasses and two kinds of trees--all the vegetation.

**Sutra:**

**For the noble, the lowly, the superior and inferior, Those who keep precepts And those who break them, Those with perfect awesome manner And those not perfect, Those with right views and those with deviant views The sharp rooted, the dull rooted I send down equally the Dharma rain And never grow weary.**

Outline:

K3. Verses further correlating that which moistens with that which is moistened.

L1. Correlating that which moistens.

**Commentary:**

**For the noble, the lowly, the superior and inferior.** For those of noble birth, for the lower classes, for the officials, and the common folk, **those who keep precepts and those who break them.** Perhaps there are left-home people who sternly maintain the moral code, or perhaps they break those precepts. **Those with perfect awesome manner and those not perfect.** Keeping precepts is maintaining the Vinaya. Breaking the precepts means violating that code. There are three thousand aspects to the awesome manner, which ought to be:

So awesome it is to be feared;
So proper it is to be emulated.

There is a proper way to walk, to sit, to stand, and to recline. In all four comportments, there is a proper, awesome comportment. Some have not perfected it. They do not stand, sit, walk or recline properly. **Those with right views and those with deviant views.** Right views means that, when improper matters are being discussed, you do not listen.

If it is not proper, do not look at it.
If it is not proper, do not listen to it.
If it is not proper, do not speak about it.
If it is not proper, do not do it.

That is right views. If you look and listen, speak and do things which are not in accord with principle, that means you have deviant views.

**The sharp rooted, the dull rooted.** Sharp means intelligent. They hear the Dharma and gain enlightenment. Dull means stupid. Stupid people may listen to Sutras for a long time and still have no idea what the Buddhadharma is. They would not cultivate giving, morality, patience, vigor, samadhi, or wisdom. Dull-rooted people cannot accept the Buddhadharma.

However, all these different types of living beings are not discriminated by the Buddha, who says, **I send down equally the Dharma rain.** Equally, he rains the Dharma rain on all living beings. The Buddha is like a great rain cloud filled with Dharma rain which all living beings receive. **And never grow weary.** The Buddha is never lazy in speaking the Dharma to living beings. He never gets tired. To propagate the Buddhadharma, he forgets his body, mind, nature, and life. The Buddha never gets tired of teaching the Dharma.

**Sutra:**

**All living beings Who hear my Dharma Receive it according to their power And dwell on various levels. They may dwell among humans or gods, Or Wheel-turning sage kings, Shakra or Brahma Kings. These are the small herbs. Those who know the non outflow Dharma,Those who can attain Nirvana, Giving rise to Six Spiritual Penetrations And attaining the Three Clarities, Dwelling alone in mountain groves Ever practicing Chan samadhi Attaining certification to condition-enlightenment : These are the middle-sized herbs. Those who seek the place of the World Honored One Saying, “We will become Buddhas.” Vigorously practicing concentration, These are the superior herbs. Further, those disciples of the Buddha Who turn their minds to the Buddha WayAlways practising compassion Knowing they will become Buddhas, For sure, without doubt: These are called the small trees. Those who dwell in spiritual penetrations, Turning the irreversible wheel, Saving limitless hundreds of thousands Of millions of living beings- Such Bodhisattvas as these Are called great trees. The Buddha speaks equally, Like the rain of a single flavor. According to living beings’ natures They receives it differently, Just as those herbs and trees Each receives a different measure. The Buddha uses this analogy To instruct expediently. With various phrases, he Expounds and proclaims a single Dharma which In the Buddha’s wisdom is Like a drop within the sea.**

Outline:

L2. Verses correlating that which is moistened.

M1. Verses correlating praise of good benefit and present tranquility with universal saturation.

**Commentary:**
 **All living beings** includes all the flying, swimming, and crawling creatures such as humans and animals, and also the vegetation. It is also includes those born from wombs, those born from eggs, those born from moisture, and those born from transformation. All kinds of living beings **who hear my Dharma r eceive it according to their power and dwell on various levels.** They are each in a different place.

**They may dwell among humans or gods, or Wheel-turning sage kings.** There are four kinds of Wheel-turning sage kings: gold, silver, bronze, and iron. The Gold Wheel-turning sage king oversees the four continents: Uttarakuru in the north, Purvavideha in the east, Jambudvipa in the south, Aparagodaniya in the west. The Gold Wheel-turning sage kings have seven as-you-will treasures which undergo infinite changes. The inhabitants of the countries that they rule all keep the five precepts and practice the ten continents. The Silver Wheel-turning sage kings watch over the three: Purvavideha in the east, Jambudvipa in the south, Aparagodaniya in the west. They do not watch over the northern continent of Uttarakuru. The Bronze Wheel-turning sage kings watch over two continents, Jambudvipa and Purvavideha. The Iron Wheel-turning king watches over only Jambudvipa. We are in Jambudvipa of the south. The leader selected among all the countries of this continent is an Iron Wheel-turning sage king. If the Wheel-turning kings sage cultivate, their next step is Buddhahood. Shakyamuni Buddha, if he had not cultivated, would have been a Gold Wheel-turning king.

**Shakra or Brahma Kings. These are the small herbs.** Such humans, gods, or other kings are called small herbs.

**Those who know the non outflow Dharma, those who can attain Nirvana, giving rise to Six Spiritual Penetrations,** that of the Heavenly Eye, the Heavenly Ear, the Penetration of Other’s Thoughts, the Knowledge of Past Lives, the Penetration of the Complete Spirit, and the Extinction of Outflows, **and attaining the Three Clarities,** -the Clarity of the Heavenly Eye, the Clarity of the Extinction of Outflows, the Clarity of Knowledge of Past Lives. **Dwelling alone in mountain groves** They live alone in the mountains and have practically no communication with people in the world. They always cultivate Chan samadhi. **Ever practicing Chan samadhi** The heavenly beings are always in Chan samadhi. People who always cultivate Chan samadhi are, for all practical purposes, in the heavens, as well.

**Attaining certification to condition-enlightenment: These are the middle-sized herbs.** Those of the Condition-Enlightenment Vehicle, one of the Two Vehicles.

**Those who seek the place of the World Honored One**--seek the Buddhadharma in the presence of the Buddha, **saying, “We will become Buddhas.” Vigorously practicing concentration, these are the superior herbs.**

**Further, those disciples of the Buddha Who turn their minds to the Buddha Way.** They singlemindedly cultivate the path of the Buddha. **Always practising compassion.** They are compassionate to all beings. **Knowing they will become Buddhas, for sure, without doubt:** They know that they will become Buddhas. They have not the slightest doubt about it. **These are called the small trees,** the Bodhisattvas of Intermediate Teachings.

**Those who dwell in spiritual penetrations, turning the irreversible wheel** of Dharma, teaching the Dharma, lecturing on the Sutras, never retiring, never resting, **saving limitless hundreds of thousands of millions of living beings-such Bodhisattvas as these are called great trees.** They always turn the non-retreating Dharma-wheel, thinking to teach and transform living beings. They are not afraid of fatigue or hardship.

**The Buddha speaks equally, like the rain of a single flavor. According to living beings’ natures, they receive it differently.** The Buddha speaks the Dharma equally to all living beings, like that great cloud which rains down a single rain. He teaches living beings by means of the Buddhadharma of the One Vehicle, so that they all realize the Buddha Path. Each living being, according to its own particular nature, receives it differently. The small, middle-sized, and large herbs, and the small and large trees each receives what they should. The giant trees are the great Bodhisattvas of the Differentiated Teaching. **Just as those herbs and trees each receives a different measure.

The Buddha uses this analogy t o instruct expediently. With various phrases, he expounds and proclaims a single Dharma which in the Buddha’s wisdom is like a drop within the sea.** The Buddha uses all kinds of methods to proclaim the wonderful Dharma of One Vehicle. However, when you compare all of these expedient phrases and so forth to the Buddha’s wisdom, they are like a drop in the ocean. The Buddha’s wisdom is limitless and boundless. The Dharma he speaks is like a drop of water in the sea.

**Sutra:**

**I send down the rain of Dharma Filling all the world The Dharma of one taste is Cultivated according to their power Just like those forest groves All the herbs and trees According to their size Grow and flourish well. The Dharma of all the Buddhas Is always of a single taste It causes all the world To attain perfection. Through its gradual cultivation All attain the fruits of the Way. The Hearers, those enlightened to conditions Dwelling in mountain groves Living in their final bodies Hearing the Dharma, gain the fruit; They are called the herbs, And each one does grow. If there are Bodhisattvas, Whose wisdom is firm and solid, Who thoroughly comprehend the triple worldAnd seek the supreme vehicle; They are called small trees, And each one does grow. Further, those who dwell in Chan Attaining spiritual powers, Who hear the dharma of emptiness And rejoice within their minds, Emitting countless lights Crossing over all beings; They are called the large trees, And each one does grow.**

Outline:

M2. Verses correlating future rebirth in good places and gradually entering the Way.

**Commentary:**

**I send down the rain of Dharma.** The Buddha sends down the Dharma rain. **Filling all the world.** It completely fills the world, moistening all living beings. **The Dharma of one taste is c ultivated according to their power.** They cultivate the One Vehicle Dharma according to their strength. **Just like those forest groves, all the herbs and trees according to their size, grow and flourish well.** The big trees get a lot of moisture; the small trees get less.

**The Dharma of all the Buddhas is always of a single taste. It causes all the world to attain perfection.** The wonderful Dharma of a Single Vehicle causes all beings in the world to perfect themselves. **Through its gradual cultivation, a ll attain the fruits of the Way.** In the future all will realize the Way and certify to the fruit.

**The Hearers, those enlightened to conditions, dwelling in mountain groves living in their final bodies hearing the Dharma, gain the fruit; they are called the herbs.** “Final bodies” refers to certification to the Fourth Fruit of Arhatship. At this level, share-section birth and death has ended; they do not need to undergo birth and death another time. They are in their last bodies. When they hear the Buddhadharma, they gain the fruit. **And each one does grow.** They each receive the share of rain they should receive; they each grow accordingly.

**If there are Bodhisattvas, whose wisdom is firm and solid,** who have great wisdom, **who thoroughly comprehend the triple world a nd seek the supreme vehicle.** They understand the entire triple world: The world of desire, the form world, and the formless world. These Bodhisattvas who belong to the category of Intermediate Teachings, **they are called small trees, and each one does grow.

Further, those who dwell in Chan,** in Chan samadhi, **attaining spiritual powers,** the Six Spiritual Powers, **who hear the dharma of emptiness and rejoice within their minds.** They are very happy to hear that all dharmas are but empty appearances. **Emitting countless lights, c rossing over all beings; they are called the large trees, and each one does grow.** They are the Great Vehicle Bodhisattvas.

**Sutra:**

**In this way, Kashyapa, The Dharma spoken by the Buddha Is like that great cloud. With rain of a single flavor, It moistens all the people and flowers, So each one bears fruit. Kashyapa, you should know That by using causes and conditions And various analogies I demonstrate and reveal the Buddha Path.These are my expedients And other Buddhas are also thus. Now, for your sakes, I speak of this true matter; All of you Hearers, None of you have reached extinction. What you now are walking That is the Bodhisattva Path. Gradually, gradually, cultivate and study, And you’ll all accomplish Buddhahood.”**

Outline:

J2. Verse correlating “different and yet not different”.

**Commentary:**

**In this way, Kashyapa,** the things I have just told you about the three grasses and the two trees; **The Dharma spoken by the Buddha is like that great cloud.** The wonderful Dharma of One Vehicle is used to teach and transform living beings **with rain of a single flavor, it moistens all the people and flowers, so each one bears fruit,** and in the future realizes Buddhahood.

**Kashyapa, you should know that by using causes and conditions and various analogies I demonstrate and reveal the Buddha Path.** The Buddha uses all kinds of causes, conditions, and analogies to instruct living beings in the pathway to Buddhahood.

**These are my expedients and other Buddhas are also thus.** They also employ expedients devices to teach and transform living beings. **Now, for your sakes,** for you, Kashyapa, **I speak of this true matter.** A true, real matter, the doctrine of the real teaching, and that is **all of you Hearers,** those of you of the Two Vehicles, that is. I said before that you have attained Nirvana, but you have not really. You have not attained Nirvana Without Residue. You have attained the Nirvana With Residue. **None of you have reached extinction. What you now are walking, that is the Bodhisattva Path.** The road you Hearers are now on is the Bodhisattva Path. **Gradually, gradually, cultivate and study.** Bit by bit, go forward, day by day, go forward and cultivate, and in the future **you’ll all accomplish Buddhahood.**