**The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra**

**Chapter 10: Masters of the Dharma**
With Commentary by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

There are five types of Dharma Masters. The first is the Dharma Master who receives and holds (the teaching). He receives the Dharma into his mind. To receive means that the mind receives the Dharma. To hold means that the body holds the Dharma. With his mind, he understands the Dharma, and with his body he puts the Dharma into actual practice. The second type of Dharma Master is one who reads the texts. The third type of Dharma Master recites the texts from memory. The fourth type of Dharma Master copies out the Sutras. The fifth type of Dharma Master explains the Sutras to others, lectures on the Sutras and explains their meaning.

The first four types of Dharma Masters practice self-benefit. The fifth type practices benefiting others, they teach and transform other people. When you receive and uphold the Sutras, read, recite and copy them out, you are benefiting yourself. To explain the Sutras to others is to benefit them. A Dharma Master is defined as “one who takes the Dharma as Master.” One takes the Buddhadharma as one’s teacher. A Dharma Master is also defined as “one who bestows the Dharma on others.” In this chapter, Dharma Masters receive predictions from the Buddha and so this is titled MASTERS OF THE DHARMA.

**Sutra:**

**At that time the World Honored One, through Medicine King Bodhisattva, spoke to the eighty thousand great lords saying, “Medicine King, do you see within this great assembly the limitless gods, dragon kings, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, and beings both human and non human, as well as the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, those seeking to be Hearers, those seeking to be Pratyekabuddhas, and those seeking the Buddha Path? Upon such ones as these, all in the presence of the Buddha, who hear but one verse or one sentence of The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, or who have even one thought of rejoicing in it, I bestow predictions of their future attainment of anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”**Outline:

C3. Section of propagation.
D1. Dharma Master Chapter.
E1. Praising those who uphold the Dharma.

F1. Showing the disciples deep merit and the blessings of those who uphold the Dharma.

G1. Disciples during the Buddha’s time.

**Commentary:**

**At that time, the World Honored One,** Shakyamuni Buddha, **through Medicine King Bodhisattva, spoke to the eighty thousand great lords,** Great Bodhisattvas, **saying, “Medicine King** Bodhisattva, **do you see within this great assembly the limitless gods, dragon kings, yakshas,** the speedy ghosts who fly through space, **ghandharvas,** the musical spirits in the court of the Jade Emperor, **asuras, garudas,** the golden winged p’eng birds. **Kinnaras,** another class of musical spirit in the Jade Emperor’s Court. **Mahoragas,** the big snakes, **and beings both human and non human, as well as the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, those seeking to be Hearers, those seeking to be Pratyekabuddhas, and those seeking the Buddha path? Upon such ones as these, all in the presence of the Buddha, who hear but one verse or one sentence of The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, or who have even one thought of rejoicing in it, I bestow predictions of their future attainment of anuttarasamyaksambodhi.** They shall all obtain the unsurpassed enlightenment, the position of Buddhahood.

**Sutra:**
 **The Buddha told the Medicine King: “Furthermore, after the extinction of the Thus Come One, should there be one who hears but a single verse or a single sentence of The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra or who has even one thought of rejoicing in it, I bestow upon him as well a prediction of anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”**Outline:

G2. Disciples after the Buddha’s extinction.

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha told Medicine King: “Furthermore, after the extinction of the Thus Come One,** after the Buddha has entered Nirvana. **Should there be one who hears but a single verse or a single sentence of The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, or who has even one thought of rejoicing in it.** But one thought of rejoicing. “Rejoicing” includes praising the Sutra, receiving and upholding it, reading and reciting it, writing it out as well. **I bestow upon him as well a prediction of anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”**

Sutra:
 **“Further, should there be one who receives and upholds, reads and recites, explains and teaches, or copies out The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, be it even a single verse, looking upon the Sutra text with reverence as he would the Buddha himself, making various kinds of offerings of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, silk canopies, banners, clothing and music, or who even join his palms in reverence, O Medicine King, you should know that such a person has in the past already made offerings to tens of myriads of millions of Buddhas, in the presence of those Buddhas, accomplishing great vows. It is out of pity for living beings that he is born among human beings.”

“O Medicine King, if someone should ask you what type of living beings shall in the future become Buddhas, you should point out to him that these very people in the future certainly shall become Buddhas, Why is this? If a good man or good woman receives and upholds, reads, recites, explains and teaches, or writes out even a single sentence of The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, or makes various offerings to the Sutra text of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, silk canopies, banners, clothing, music, or reverently joined palms, that person should be looked up to in reverence by those in all worlds and should receive offerings befitting the Thus Come One. You should know that this person is a great Bodhisattva, one who has accomplished anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Out of pity for living beings, he has vowed to be born here and to expound upon The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra broadly and in detail.”**Outline:

F2. Showing categories of disciples.
G1. Prose.
H1. Specific explanation.
I1. Present.
J1. Lower classification of masters.

**Commentary:**

**Further, should there be one who receives and upholds, reads and recites, explains and teaches, or copies out The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. Be it even a single verse, looking upon the Sutra text with reverence as he would the Buddha himself. Making various kinds of offerings of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, silk canopies, banners, clothing and music,** singing praises **or who even joins his palms in reverence, O Medicine King, you should know that such a person has in the past already made offerings to tens of myriads of millions of Buddhas, in the presence of those Buddhas, accomplishing great vows. It is out of pity for living beings.** These Bodhisattva Dharma Masters have compassion for living beings. **That he is born among human beings.**

**O Medicine King, if someone should ask you what type of living beings shall in the future become Buddhas, you should point out to him that these very people in the future certainly shall become Buddhas.** Those Dharma Masters who receive and uphold, copy out, read and recite, and explain the Sutra to others, or those who hear but a single sentence or verse of The Lotus Sutra—these people will become Buddhas. **Why is this? If a good man or good woman receives, upholds, reads, recites, explains and teaches or writes out even a single sentence of The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, or makes various offerings to the Sutra text of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, silk canopies, banners, clothing, music or reverently joined palms.**

Why should one make offerings to the Sutras? It is because the Sutras are just the Dharma body of the Buddha. **That person should be looked up to in reverence by those in all worlds and should receive offerings befitting the Thus Come One.** You should make offerings to these Dharma Masters as you would make offerings to the Buddha. **You should know that this person is a great Bodhisattva.** Those who lecture upon The Dharma Flower Sutra after the Buddha’s extinction are great Bodhisattvas. **One who has accomplished anuttarasamyaksambodhi**. Why did he come into this world? **Out of pity for living beings he has vowed to be born here and to expound upon The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra broadly and in detail.**

**Sutra:**
 **“How much the more does this apply to one who can receive and uphold it in its entirety and make various kinds of offerings to it.”

“Medicine King, you should know that this person has renounced his own pure karmic reward and, after my extinction, out of pity for living beings, has been born in the evil world to vastly proclaim this Sutra.”**Outline:

J2. Praising the higher class of masters.

**Commentary:**

**How much the more does this apply to one who can receive and uphold it in its entirety and make various kinds of offerings to it.

Medicine King, you should know that this person has renounced his own pure karmic reward and,** having already attained anuttarasamyaksambodhi, **after my extinction, out of pity for living beings, has been born in the evil world** of the five turbidities **to vastly proclaim this Sutra.** This Dharma Master, after I enter Nirvana, will take pity on living beings and be reborn in the realm of the five turbidities to propagate The Lotus Sutra. So if you study The Dharma Flower Sutra and learn how to explain it to others, you do not have to ask to know that you are a Bodhisattva who has returned to save living beings. If this were not the case you would have no opportunity to meet up with The Dharma Flower Sutra, or, if you did have the chance to meet up with it, you surely would not be able to explain it to other people.

If you lecture The Dharma Flower Sutra, several thousands of years ago Shakyamuni Buddha already gave you a prediction. We who are investigating the Sutras now should each take one of them and investigate it in great detail until you understand it very well. Penetrate its meaning from beginning to end. Then you will be able to explain it, because you will have some foundation in the Buddhadharma. It is not enough just to listen to the Sutras being lectured. You must really understand their meaning well enough to explain them to others. Otherwise you are just wasting your time. Pick a Sutra you like and really get into it so that you understand it completely. Then that counts for something.

**Sutra:**
 **“If this good man or good woman after my extinction can secretly explain even so much as a single sentence of The Dharma Flower Sutra for a single person, you should know that this person is a messenger of the Thus Come One. This person is sent by the Thus Come One to do the Thus Come One’s work.”**Outline:

I2. Future.
J1. Lower class of Masters.

**Commentary:**

**If this good man or good woman,** should it be the case, that **after my extinction can secretly explain even so much as a single sentence of The Dharma Flower Sutra for a single person.** “Secretly” means not openly. Perhaps the person does not dare lecture to groups of people because he is afraid of the awesome virtue of the great assembly. He refused to speak for the great assembly because he is fearful of the awesome virtue of the large assembly. So he secretly explains the Sutra to just one person. Perhaps he is afraid people will ask him questions he cannot answer. Let us say he does not even lecture the whole Sutra, but just a single sentence. Which sentence? It does not matter. Any sentence will do. **You should know that this person is a messenger of the Thus Come One,** the Buddha sent him. **This person is sent by the Thus Come One** to the world to explain The Lotus Sutra, **to do the Thus Come One’s work.** Lecturing on The Dharma Flower Sutra is just doing the Buddha’s work. The Buddha’s work is just The Dharma Flower Sutra.

**Sutra:**
 **“How much the more so is that the case for one who can in the midst of a great assembly extensively explain it to people.”**Outline:

J2. Higher class of Masters.

**Commentary:**

**How much the more so is that the case for one who can, in the midst of a great assembly, extensively explain it to people.** Any of you who can study The Dharma Flower Sutra, understand it and then explain it for a gathering of people, will be praised by the Buddha.

You say, “Well, Dharma Master, you are up there lecturing it for us right now. Is the Thus Come One praising you?”

Not only is he praising me now, he did so in the past and he will do so in the future. That is why I like to lecture it so much! If the Thus Come One did not praise this activity; I would not be undertaking it. I like praise! Ha!

In the past I used to lecture on The Dharma Flower Sutra all the time, I also always used to go to lectures and listen. No matter what was going on, I always liked to go to lectures and listen.

**Sutra:**
 **“O Medicine King, should an evil person with unwholesome mind appear before the Buddha, slandering and scolding him constantly for the length of an eon, his offenses would be relatively light compared to the offenses of a person who speaks even a single evil word reviling any Sanghan or layperson who reads or recites The Dharma Flower Sutra. That person’s offense would be very grave.”

“O Medicine King, you should know that one who reads and recites The Dharma Flower Sutra takes the Buddha’s adornments as his own adornments. He shall carry the Thus Come One on his shoulders. Wherever he goes, he should be welcomed with obeisance. Singlemindedly, and with palms joined, one should pay reverence, make offerings, honor, and praise him. He should receive the finest offerings among people, offerings of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, silk canopies, banners, clothing, fine food, and music. Heavenly jewels should be scattered over him, and clusters of the finest heavenly jewels offered to him.”

“What is the reason? When this person joyfully speaks the Dharma, those who hear it for but an instant shall directly achieve ultimate anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”**Outline:

H2. General explanation.

**Commentary:**

**O Medicine King, should an evil person.** How evil is this person? Not only does he scold his teacher, he even scolds the Buddha! Would you say he was evil or not? **With unwholesome mind,** evil mind, **appear before the Buddha, slandering and scolding him constantly for the length of an eon.** Let us just say it is a small eon, that is 139,600 years. This is like Devadatta who always scolded the Buddha. As a result, he fell, alive into hell. **His offenses would be relatively light.** You should not think this phrase means that scolding the Buddha brings only light offenses. It only means that the offense is lighter than the offense of slandering any Sanghan or layperson who recites The Dharma Flower Sutra. **Compared to the offenses of a person who speaks even a single evil word reviling any Sanghan or layperson who reads or recites The Dharma Flower Sutra.** Be they at-home or left home, **that person’s offense would be very grave.** They say things about the reciter of The Dharma Flower Sutra, things like, “He recites The Dharma Flower Sutra? Are you kidding? He kills, steals, fools around, and drinks and everything!” It does not matter whether the one who recites is a left home person or a lay person.

As to receiving and upholding the Sutra, some do it outwardly and some do it inwardly. “Inwardly” means that it is done in secret. This is like Rahula who was first in secret practices. He recited Sutras and mantras but nobody knew. He did not run up in front of everyone holding a copy of the Sutra and making a display of himself, “See me? I am upholding The Dharma Flower Sutra!” To uphold it inwardly means that, silently, at all times, one is cultivating, and people do not necessarily know.

The same applies to reading and reciting. Rahula recite whether there were people there or not. Some people in Buddhism exclusively cheat people. If they see someone coming, they pick up a Sutra and start reciting like crazy. When the person leaves, they put it down and forget it. They just do it for show. Some people do the same thing with bowing to the Buddha, writing out Sutras, etc. Those who truly write out the Sutras do so whether anyone is there to watch them or not. A Dharma Master in Hong Kong was like this. When he wrote out the Sutra he always sat in full lotus and wrote it out with utmost respect in every word and every brush stroke. He had extremely fine handwriting, too.

The person who slanders one who recites this Sutra has created a heavier offense than one who slanders the Buddha himself. Slandering the Buddha is a tremendously heavy offense, too, but the Buddha is very compassionate. It does not phase him in the least whether you praise him or scold him, and so the offense is less than the offense of slandering the Sutra. Why is slandering the Sutra such a heavy offense? This is because the reciter of the Sutra has not yet certified to the unproduced Dharma patience. If he hears you slander him he is likely to get mad and quit reciting. So see what you have done? Not reciting the Sutra, he will not become a Buddha. Sutras are just the Dharma body of the Buddha, and therefore you must not slander them. The Vajra Sutra says, “Wherever this Sutra is, there is the Buddha and his reverent disciples.” If this applies to The Vajra Sutra, it certainly applies to The Dharma Flower Sutra. The Dharma Flower is the true body of the Buddha. If you want to now see what the Buddha is like, well, then just read The Dharma Flower Sutra.

**O Medicine King, you should know that one who reads and recites The Dharma Flower Sutra takes the Buddha’s adornments as his own adornments.** That means that, in the future, this person will certainly become a Buddha. **He shall carry the Thus Come One on his shoulders.** He is a messenger of the Buddha, teaching living beings, leading them to proper views. He carries on his back, as it were, the Thus Come One’s Dharma. **Wherever he goes, he should be welcomed with obeisance.** People should bow to him.

**Singlemindedly, and with palms joined, one should pay reverence, make offerings, honor, and praise him. He should receive the finest offerings among people, offerings of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, silk canopies, banners, clothing, fine food, and music,** the finest offerings among people. **Heavenly jewels should be scattered over him, and clusters of the finest heavenly jewels offered to him.

What is the reason?** Why does he deserve these offerings? **When this person joyfully speaks the Dharma, those who hear it for but an instant shall directly achieve ultimate anuttarasamyaksambodhi.** Those who hear the Sutra can very quickly attain Buddhahood. It will not take them very long at all.

**Sutra:**
 **At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate these principles, spoke verses, saying:**

**“One wishing to dwell in the Buddha PathAnd to accomplish spontaneous wisdom Should diligently make offerings To those who receive and uphold The Dharma Flower One wishing quickly to gain The Wisdom of All Modes Should receive and uphold this Sutra And make offerings to those who uphold it.**

Outline:

G2. Verse.
H1. Exhortation to self-practice and benefiting others.

**Commentary:**

**At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate these principles, spoke verses saying:** He wanted to make it easier for living beings to understand the principles, so he spoke in verses.

Basically, the time is up for this lecture, but I still have something to say. Someone has some questions about the different kinds of Dharma Masters and about inward and outward cultivation. Some people only work on the superficialities while others cultivate for themselves.

I told you before, when I was in Guan Yin Cave in Hong Kong, my next-door neighbor performed the ceremony of the flaming mouths every day for a thousand days. Everyday about three o’clock he started his ceremony. He would put on his ceremonial robes and then go out on the front porch and look up and down the street to see if any guests were coming. If some guests were coming he would run in and grab the bells and ring them like mad, making an unholy racket. When the people walked by they would see him and think, “This Dharma Master really works hard,” and offer him some money. That is how it went.

Someone is thinking, “Dharma Master, you always wait until we all arrive in the evening before you write out The Shurangama Sutra. Isn’t that ‘outward’ cultivation?” I do not face out or face in.

That is different. I write out the Sutra to teach you Chinese. Basically, I am incredibly lazy. I would not be interested in writing out the Sutra or lecturing, reading, or reciting it. I like it best when there is nothing going on at all.

“But you just said that you liked to lecture on the Sutras!” you say.

That is because the Buddha praises those who lecture on it. So, I end up liking what I do not like to do!

**One wishing to dwell in the Buddha Path.** Should there be someone who wants to become a Buddha. If you want to become a Buddha, you must first dwell in the Buddha Path. If you do not then you have no way to become a Buddha.

What is meant by “dwell in the Buddha Path?” It means that you stand firmly without moving from that position. It means that you would not change your persuasions and turn to an outside Way. Originally one has already taken refuge with the Triple Jewel, and “dwells in the Buddha Path.” But many people stray from the Buddha Path to study other doctrines. They no longer dwell in the Buddha path. Since coming to America, I have seen many such people. There was one disciple who had a lot of faith in his teacher. He said, “No matter what my teacher tells me to do, I will do it.” He heard that once a disciple had knelt for five hours asking forgiveness from me, and he said, “I could do that too. I could kneel for ten hours, and I would not retreat!” I used an expedient to test him out, and needless to say, he flunked. Not only that, he ran off to some other religion. He was not really dwelling in the Buddha Path.

Dwelling in the Buddha Path means that you can bear up under any circumstances. If things are going well, you can take it. If bad things happen, you can take that, too. You are not attached to or turned by favorable situations. Disliking bad situations means that you are not dwelling in the Buddha Path. One who dwells in the Buddha Path cultivates patience. You must be so firm in your resolve that you can bear up under any adverse circumstance. Then you can be said to dwell in the Buddha Path.

**And to accomplish spontaneous wisdom.** In order to dwell in the Buddha Path, you must first have spontaneous wisdom. Spontaneous wisdom is also called “wisdom gained without a teacher.” This does not mean that it is obtained without a teacher, however. It means that after the teacher has crossed you over and led you to understanding, you will then have spontaneous wisdom and do not rely upon a teacher.

For example as they were about to cross the river, the Fifth Patriarch said to the Sixth Patriarch, “It is fitting that I take you across.” The Sixth Patriarch replied, “When one is confused, the teacher takes one across, but when one is enlightened, one takes oneself across.” Before you have crossed the river, you definitely need a boat to cross it, but once you reach the other side, you do not put the boat on your back and carry it around with you everywhere! Your burden would be too heavy; you would get tired quickly! Once across the river, you must put the boat down. Spontaneous wisdom means that you naturally have wisdom. It is said,

If the demon comes, slay the demon.
If the Buddha comes, slay the Buddha.

How does one obtain spontaneous wisdom? How can one come to dwell in the Buddha Path?

**Should diligently make offerings to those who receive and uphold The Dharma Flower.** One should constantly make offerings to…whom? To the Buddha? No. Then who, you? No. Me? No. To those who receive and uphold The Dharma Flower Sutra. You should make offerings to those who can read, recite, receive, uphold, write out, and lecture upon The Dharma Flower Sutra. Those who make offerings to such Dharma Masters will be able to dwell in the Buddha Path and accomplish spontaneous wisdom.

**One wishing quickly to gain the Wisdom of All Modes.** Suppose someone else wants to obtain this wisdom very quickly. The Wisdom of All Modes is not easy to attain. Spontaneous wisdom is not the same as the Wisdom of All Modes. The Wisdom of All Modes includes all of existence in its scope as well as all kinds of wisdom. It is the perfect wisdom. To realize Buddhahood, one must obtain the Wisdom of All Modes. How does one attain it? Do not be nervous. I will teach you the method.

**Should receive and uphold this Sutra.** If you constantly receive and uphold this Sutra, you will attain the Wisdom of All Modes very quickly. Do you see how wonderful this Sutra is? Why is it titled The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra? This is where the Wonderful Dharma is. You need only receive and uphold it to attain that Wonderful Dharma, the Wisdom of All Modes. So you should receive and uphold and also recite it constantly. You recite it with your mouth and ponder it with your mind, thinking upon its wonderful principles. With your body put those principles into action, practicing them in your daily life. This is called receiving, upholding, and actually practicing The Dharma Flower Sutra. In this way you can obtain the Wisdom of All Modes.

**And make offerings to those who uphold it.** It is not enough just to receive and uphold it yourself. You have to make offerings to others who receive and uphold it. If you receive offerings from others for your work with the Sutra, you must pass those offerings on to others that also work with it. If you can do this you will attain the Wisdom of All Modes, and you will not be confused any more. If you obtain spontaneous wisdom, you will not be stupid any more. Why are you unclear about the principles? Why is it you do not know what is going on? It is because you have not attained genuine wisdom. Without spontaneous wisdom or the Wisdom of All Modes, your thoughts will be a mixed bag. One thought will be awakened and the next confused. With one confused thought you have been bumped off the Buddha Path. With one awakened thought, you are back on it again. If every thought is awakened, then in every thought you are on the Buddha Path. If every thought is confused, then in every thought you are a confused living being. There is nothing strange about it. It all depends on whether or not you are confused or awakened.

Who is confused? It is you, yourself. Then who is awake? It is also just you. Since it is you who wake yourself up, you should not rely upon anything external for your awakening.

What is meant by, “relying” on something? It is like the poet Li Tai Bai who relied upon wine. Unless he had had a few drinks, he could not remember anything at all. He could not write poetry or compose essays. But once he had had a few, the muse would visit, and the poems would flow and the essays spill forth. Ha! Words flowed like a bubbling spring. But first, he had to have the wine. It would not work any other way. He had to have that crutch. Without it, he was helpless. That is “relying.”

Some people claim that when they take drugs they can melt into the void. They say drugs give them samadhi. But just take the drugs away and see how far into the void they get. They cannot go anywhere then. They are just confusing themselves. Confusing themselves, they are just living beings. Waking themselves up, they are on the Buddha Path. Confusion and awakening are up to you. Nobody can do it for you.

To say nothing of us common folk, even the Buddha’s cousin Ananda could not rely upon the Buddha for his enlightenment. The Buddha had no way to get enlightenment for him. This makes it obvious that you must apply effort yourself. If you just fritter your time away, day after day, that is really pathetic. We say,

An inch of time is an inch of life.

An inch of time is an inch of your life. You must not waste your life. If you waste all your time, you will accomplish nothing. If you use it up entirely, your life will just go down the drain. Everyone should dwell in the Buddha Path everyday. How? Just do not be confused! If you are confused, you run off the Path.

“But how can I avoid confusion?” you ask.

Do not ask how you can get out of confusion. Ask yourself how you got confused in the first place. If you know how and why it is that you are confused, then you will know how to get “unconfused.”

“I do not know, though,” you say. Since you do not know, I will tell you. If you knew, then I would not tell you. Why? It is because your self-nature would have taken itself across, and you would not need me to wake you up. But since you have not awakened, I will teach you a little something…just a little.

You are confused because of ignorance, because of your not understanding. If you understood, there would be no problems. If you understood, then the heavens would be empty and the earth lay bare, and the entire universe would be yours!

Ignorance is the worst thing going. It is also the best thing going. Why? It is just ignorance that helps you to become a Buddha. Understanding only comes from not understanding. Unless there was something you did not understand, then there would be no way for you eventually to understand it! Without darkness there is no light. You see? If you can understand precisely this point, you can get enlightened. If you do not understand, you will just have to approach it gradually—wait a few more days.

Someone says, “I cannot wait! I want to understand right now!”

Okay, already, then understand! You do not have to wait. The understanding is up to you, not me. If you understand you do not have to wait.

**Sutra:**

**One who can receive and uphold The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra You should know the Buddha sent him, Out of pity for living beings. Those who can receive and holdThe Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra, Have renounced their pure lands, And, pitying beings, have been reborn here. You should know that such people, Are free to be born wherever they wish, And can, in this evil world Vastly teach the supreme Dharma. One should make offerings of heavenly flowers Incense and heavenly jeweled garments, And heaven’s finest, most marvelous gems, To the teachers of this Dharma.**

Outline:

H2. Repetition of specific and general meanings.
I1. Verse of specific explanation.
J1. Present.
 **Commentary:**

So hurry up and learn to lecture The Dharma Flower Sutra! See all the offerings you will get? But I hope you will not learn to lecture it out of greed for offerings, really. You should cultivate and dwell in the Buddha Path.

**One who can receive and uphold The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra, You should know the Buddha sent him.** The Buddha told him to come. If this were not the case, he would not be able to receive and hold The Dharma Flower Sutra. If you can receive and uphold The Dharma Flower Sutra, then the Buddha sent you here. You just do not know, that’s all. It was so long ago, you have forgotten. You have forgotten your duties. If you read and recite and uphold the Sutra, then you are the Buddha’s messenger.

Why did the Buddha send you here into the evil world of the five turbidities? **Out of pity for living beings.** Taking pity on all living beings, the Buddha sent you into this world. And this evil world of the five turbidities is decidedly impure.

**Those who can receive and hold The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra have renounced their pure lands.** They themselves wished to renounce their pure lands of reward and come instead into the evil world of the five turbidities. **And, pitying beings, have been reborn here.** Because they have great compassion for living beings, they have been reborn in this world.

**You should know that such people are free to be born wherever they wish.** They did not come into this world on the wheel of rebirth. They picked this world out of their own choice. They chose to be born here in order to teach and transform living beings. **And can, in this evil world,** in this evil world of the turbid eon, the turbidity of views, the turbidity of affliction, the turbidity of living beings, and the turbidity of the life span—such a dirty world. **Vastly teach the supreme Dharma.** They have great fearlessness. They are not afraid of the five turbidities, and they are not afraid of the Ten Servants. The Ten Servants are the Five Slow Servants and the Five Sharp Servants. Fearless, they expound upon the supreme Dharma.

**One should make offerings of heavenly flowers, incense and heavenly jeweled garments, and heaven’s finest, most marvelous gems.** The gems are marvelous. In heaven they have jewel-cluster trays. The tray is empty, but when you put one thing in it, the whole tray becomes filled with similar things. For example, if you set a small piece of gold on the tray, the tray will be filled with gold. If you set a piece of silver there, there will be a tray full of silver. If you place a piece of gemstone on the tray, there will be a tray filled with gemstones. Such are the wonderful jewels in the heavens.

**To the teachers of this Dharma,** to one who speaks The Dharma Flower Sutra. So I told you to hurry up and learn how to speak the Sutra, but not so that you can get offerings. Offerings should not even enter into the picture. You should learn to speak the Sutra so that you can realize Buddhahood. I do not care if any of you make offerings to me, even though I am speaking the Sutra. If there are no offerings at all, I still keep on lecturing it. I do not do it out of greed for offerings. If I were greedy for fame or offerings, I would be just like Maitreya Bodhisattva! Ah…

Bodhidharma’s disciples, the Bhikshuni Zong Chi could recite The Dharma Flower Sutra from memory. After she died, a blue lotus flower grew from her mouth as a certification of the merit she had gained through her recitation of the Sutra.

You should arrange in your cultivation for special practices that you undertake, over and above the daily-required practices. For example, in addition to morning and evening recitation and translation work and so on, you should concentrate on memorizing or reciting a particular Sutra, The Vajra Sutra, The Dharma Flower Sutra, The Shurangama Sutra, or The Earth Store Sutra. You should investigate it in great detail and “put it in your stomach!”—that is, memorize it.

Do not just waste your time all day.

Regardless of whether you have left home or not, you should gather your thoughts and contemplate emptiness. Discipline yourself so that you reduce your bad habits and faults. Change your habits and toss out your faults. Then you will be able to dwell in the Buddha Path and gain a response from the Buddhadharma.

Those who cultivate the Way should not tell people to make offerings of treasures to them. If you take valuable offerings from people, thieves will be interested in you. I say this because there was once an old Taoist named Lu Dong Bin who had the ability to point his finger at a rock and turn it into gold. He turned a lot of rocks to gold for the poor people, but after five hundred years, the gold would turn back into rock. A thief saw this going on and thought, “What an incredible finger that is! If I had his finger I would never be poor again. I could give up this life of crime.” He resolved to steal poor Lu Dong Bin’s finger. He made elaborate plans to break into his house and cut the man’s finger off. Lu Dong Bin may have been an immortal, but he still felt pain when the thief tried to cut off his finger. “Hey, what are you doing cutting off my finger!” he yelled. The thief tried to run away, but Lu Dong Bin who had many assortment of spiritual powers, used the power of “Pointing Fixation” and the thief froze in his tracks. He pointed at him and said, “You cannot move.” And he could not!

Then he asked him, “Why were you trying to cut off my finger?”

“Your finger is just too neat!”

“Huh?”

“All you have to do is point to something and it turns to gold. I need your finger, I mean! If I get it, I will not have to be poor.” Lu Dong Bin thought, “This finger might turn things to gold, but it is a lot of trouble too. I am not going to give it to you, thief, and I am not going to use it myself anymore, not commercially anyway.” So cultivators should not have a lot of valuable stuff and you can see why!

**Sutra:**

**One who can uphold this Sutra After my extinction, in the evil age, Should be worshipped with palms joined As if making offerings to the World Honored One. Fine food and many sweet delicacies And various kinds of clothing, Should be offered to this disciple of the Buddha, Hoping to hear him speak even for a moment. One who can, in the latter age. Receive and uphold this Sutra, Has been sent by me into the human realm, To carry out the Thus Come One’s work.**

Outline:

2. Future.

**Commentary:**

**One who can uphold this Sutra after my extinction, in the evil age.** “My” refers to Shakyamuni Buddha speaking of himself. The evil age is a time of not only “five” turbidities, but also an uncountable number of turbidities. The evil age is the Dharma-ending age, the age when people are strong in fighting. Everyone wants to put everyone else down, to destroy everyone else. If I am the one, then you cannot be. If you are the one, I cannot be. People cannot exist side by side. This is a most difficult age in which to be born and live. So the Buddha thought of a method. He said, “One who can uphold The Dharma Flower Sutra, **should be worshipped with palms joined.** One who can cultivate according to the doctrines in The Dharma Flower Sutra should be greeted with palms joined, reverently. You should bow to them just **as if making offerings to the World Honored One.**”

The Buddha gave predictions long ago to those who uphold The Dharma Flower Sutra, saying that they represent him in propagating the Dharma. Therefore, The Dharma Flower Sutra is extremely important. Why do we say that The Dharma Flower Sutra is “the Sutra for realizing Buddhahood?” If you can hear The Dharma Flower Sutra you have a chance to become a Buddha.

When I was in Hong Kong one of my old disciples, over 70, always went to my lectures. She could not hear them, however, because she was deaf. Once, when I was lecturing on the Universal Door Chapter of The Dharma Flower Sutra, suddenly she could hear. She was no longer deaf. Is this uncanny or not? Once she got her hearing back, she insisted on attending the lectures even more. She never missed even one lecture. She would come regardless of wind or rain. She told people, “If I miss a lecture, I am upset for about two weeks, and regret it.”

There were also several young students who only went to my lectures. Even if I told them to go to someone else’s lecture, they would not go! I said, “You cannot just listen to my lectures. The other Dharma Masters lecture much better than I do. You should go listen to them.”

“Better or not, I am not going anywhere else,” one of them said. “Why should I go to their lectures? I could lecture better than they do.”

I said, “Do not be so arrogant.”

“But there is just no contest!” he insisted “You cannot compare them.”

Sometimes I would scold my young students roundly, but they did not care. You have not seen me really get angry yet. If you had, you would not dare to try to get away with the stuff you do.

As to Sutra lecturers and listeners, it is also a question of inter-personal affinities. If you have affinities with someone, you can scold them, and it will not matter. If you do not have affinities with someone, no matter how much you try to butter him or her up, they still will not like you. Affinities are very important.

A few days ago I did some nuclear testing. I got angry with my disciples to see if they would run away. I was not probably tough enough because no one ran away.

**Fine food and many sweet delicacies.** Oh boy! Good food. Do you want some? If you do, you cannot have any!

This line refers to a great variety of good things to eat, mouth-watering! Who gets them? The person who receives and upholds The Dharma Flower Sutra gets them. If you want some, you had better get to work on the Sutra. But you better get to work on the Sutra anyway, not just to get some good food. That is too greedy! Receive and uphold the Sutra so that in the future you can become a Buddha.

**And various kinds of clothing should be offered to this disciple of the Buddha, hoping to hear him speak even for a moment. One who can, in the latter age,** in the future, **receive and uphold this Sutra**. One who reads, recites, copies it out, or lectures on it, **has been sent by me into the human realm.** Shakyamuni Buddha sent him here **to carry out the Thus Come One’s work.** The Buddha’s work is not the work of ordinary people. What is the Buddha’s work? Receiving, upholding, reading, reciting, copying out and explaining The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra.

“I am listening to The Dharma Flower Sutra,” you ask. “Did the Buddha send me here?”

Ask yourself! Do not ask me. If you have genuine interest in the Sutra and study its principles, then the Buddha sent you here to protect the Bodhimanda. If on the other hand, you listen, but your mind wanders off to Golden Gate Park, to the beach, or the mountains with its great view, then I believe that you were not sent by the Buddha. It is because you are not really listening to the Sutra, you are false thinking instead. If listening to the lectures makes you very restless, Shakyamuni Buddha probably did not send you.

**Sutra:**

**If for the space of an eon, One were to harbor an unwholesome mind And scowling, scold the Buddha, He would incur measureless offenses. But if one were, but for a moment, to speak ill Of one who reads, recites, or upholds The Dharma Flower Sutra, His offenses would exceed the former’s. If one who seeks the Buddha Path Were for the length of an eon To stand before me with palms joined, Praising me with countless verses, Because of his praise of the Buddha, He would gain limitless merit and virtue. But one who praises the upholder of this SutraWould gain blessings exceeding that. One who, throughout eighty million eons Made offerings to the upholder of this Sutra Of the finest forms, sounds, Fragrances, tastes, and tangible objects, And having made such offerings, Gets to hear it for but an instant, He should be filled with rejoicing Thinking, “I have gained great benefit!”**

Outline:

I2. Verse of general explanation.

**Commentary:**

**If for the space of an eon one were to harbor an unwholesome mind.** An eon is a long time. An unwholesome mind means that: **and scowling, scold the Buddha,** losing one’s temper and blow up at the Buddha. Such a person would have to think that they had more personal power than the Buddha did. Let us say they kept up their tirade for a whole eon. **He would incur measureless offenses, but if one were, but for a moment, to speak ill of one who reads, recites, or upholds The Dharma Flower Sutra, his offenses would exceed the former’s.** If one were to scold one of the five kinds of Dharma Masters for even a second, to say nothing of an entire eon, his offenses would be greater than the person mentioned above would. So do not speak ill of anyone who lectures on this Sutra, regardless of whether or not they lecture well. For example, I am lecturing on the Sutra now so you should not slander me. Although I am compassionate, I would not be able to lighten your offenses, because Shakyamuni Buddha handed this rule down. Nobody can change it.

Notes for the gourmet: If you do not eat good food, you will be less stupid. If you eat a lot of good food, you will be more stupid. You probably do not believe this, but I sure do. If you do not eat a lot of good food, you can give rise to wisdom. That single thought you had, “I would like something good to eat,” is already stupid! To say nothing of how stupid you get after you stuff yourself, you will be stupid before you even eat it because if you were not stupid you would not think, “I want something good to eat.” Good or not good, it is just eating. Why have such false thinking about it? Your false thinking is just stupid. Not having that false thought means you are intelligent. You do not have to look for the answers anywhere else. The whole story is told in a single thought. Understand?

I just told you that I cannot lecture on the Sutras very well and several people have struck up some false thinking: “The Dharma Master is telling a lie. I know he can lecture yet he is saying he cannot.”

You are very intelligent. I tell one little lie, and you pick right up on it. Since I cannot get away with it, I might as well admit that, yes, I do know how to lecture on the Sutras. Part of the reason for this is because I have set aside my greed for food. I am not thinking about cookies or anything like that. And before when I said I could not lecture, I really was not lying. It is really really the case. If you tried to get me to lecture when I was occupied with eating, I would not be able to do it. The only Sutra I could explain at that time would be the “Gourmet Sutra.”

So I said not being preoccupied with good food makes one intelligent and thinking about food all the time makes one stupid. No matter whether the food you eat is good or bad, it all turns into the same thing. If you eat some good food, your excrement will stink even more. You might enjoy eating it, but when it hits the toilet you will think, “Yikes! Whew!” Well, who told you to eat that stuff in the first place and get yourself so smelly? A lot of money will make you all stinky, too. Do not think that eating too much alone makes you stink. Money will do it, too. Sometimes we say that high government officials are “stinky politicians.” Well, if Dharma Masters eat too much good food, they turn into stinky Masters! I do not want to be one, myself, so I do not like to eat good food.

All of you disciples should remember this and refrain from developing into stinky Dharma Master. Okay?

If you are a stinky Dharma Master no one will listen to you when you lecture on the Sutras. If you speak the Dharma no one will believe it. You can knock yourself out trying to tell people how wonderful the Doctrine is, but people will just stick their fingers in their ears and refuse to listen. This is like Gin Gui who absolutely refused to recite the Buddha’s name. No matter how they tried to trick him into it, he would not do it.

So, no one will listen to you. Why? Because you stink from “eating too well.”

**If one who seeks the Buddha Path**--who is it? It is just a person! What are you asking that for! Now, this person might be you or me. If you seek the Buddha Way, it is you. If he seeks it, it is he. If I do, it is I. If you do not seek the Buddha Way, then you are out of the picture. Anyway, suppose this person, **were for the length of an eon.** Not one, two, three years, or a hundred years…but at least 100,000 years. **To stand before me with palm’s joined** very respectfully, **praising me with countless verses, because of his praise of the Buddha.** Although the Buddha does not care if people praise him or not, still you gain more merit by praising the Buddha than by scolding him. If you scolded the Buddha for an eon you would fall into the Avichi Hell. If you praise the Buddha for an eon you can reap the fruit of unsurpassed enlightenment. **He would gain limitless merit and virtue.** Limitless means you could not count it. It would not be as much as the grains of sand in one or two Ganges Rivers, but as much as the grains in limitless Ganges Rivers. Would you say that was a lot or not? I would say it was a lot. You would not dare say it was not a lot. Why? It is because you could not count it either! **But one who praises the upholder of this Sutra.** The Dharma Master who receives, upholds, reads, recites, copies out or explains The Dharma Flower Sutra, **would gain blessings exceeding that.** This person would have more merit than the person who praised the Buddha for such a very long time.

Someone says, “That is just what he or she says.”

Yep, and that is what you just heard. They said it, and you heard it, and that is the way it is!

The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra is just that wonderful. You should not ask why the merit gained by praising the Sutra is greater than the merit gained by praising the Buddha. Whether you praise the Buddha or not, he is unmoved. If you praise those who recite the Sutra, they will be encouraged to be even more vigorous. If you scold them, and they get mad and quit cultivating and quit reciting the Sutra, then you have helped to cut off their Buddha seed. That is a grave offense. I did not want to explain this, but several people were wondering about it, and wishing that I would explain it. So, in answer to the questions in living beings’ minds, I am explaining this mind Dharma.

**One who, throughout eighty million eons made offerings to the upholder of this Sutra of the finest forms, sounds,** the most beautiful things, **fragrances, tastes, and tangible objects**--these are the five desires. Here, they are the best. They are like those in the Real Reward Adornment Land of the Buddha; they are not like those in our world. One time Shakyamuni Buddha was describing the sense objects in the Real Reward Adornment Land. Mahakashyapa, who had been in samadhi like an old cultivator, suddenly jumped up dancing. Such an old established cultivator, and he jumped for joy. It is not surprising that he did, though, considering how fine things are there. If you want to know how fine, ask Mahakashyapa. Go ask him: “What is gotten into you, anyway? Dancing at your age!” Then see what he has to say for himself.

**And having made such offerings gets to hear it for but an instant,** gets to hear The Dharma Flower Sutra for just an instant, **He should be filled with rejoicing, thinking, “I have gained great benefit!”** I have gained a chance for Buddhahood. Wouldn’t you say that was a great benefit? What could be better? If you get to hear The Dharma Flower Sutra, you have a share in becoming a Buddha. So, the Sutra says, “…and say but once, ‘Homage to the Buddha,’ they shall all realize the Buddha Way.’”

**Sutra:**

**Medicine King, I tell you now, Of all the Sutras I have spoken, The Dharma Flower is foremost.”**

Outline:

H3. Conclusion: praising the Sutra as foremost.

**Commentary:**

Why do I say that The Shurangama Sutra is the Sutra for developing wisdom and The Dharma Flower is the Sutra for becoming a Buddha? It is because The Dharma Flower Sutra is the Buddha’s Dharma body. It is the real body of the Buddha. It is the Buddha’s Reward body. The Buddha’s clear, pure Dharma body; Vairochana Buddha is also The Dharma Flower Sutra. The perfect, full Reward body, Nishyanda Buddha is also The Dharma Flower Sutra. The one hundred thousand million transformation bodies are also The Dharma Flower Sutra. Within The Dharma Flower Sutra you will find the Three Bodies of the Buddha, the Four Wisdoms of the Buddha, the Five Eyes and Six Penetrations of the Buddha as well. The Dharma Flower Sutra is the king of Sutras. So now, Shakyamuni Buddha is not afraid of taking the trouble to tell Medicine King Bodhisattva.

**Medicine King, I tell you now: of all the Sutras I have spoken**--from the Avatamsaka, through the Agama, Vaipulya and Prajna periods of my teaching—all the Sutras that I spoke. The final perfect teaching of **The Dharma Flower is foremost.** The Dharma Flower Sutra is number one among the number ones! Now that you are able to listen to it be explained, even so much as a single sentence, means that you are establishing affinities with The Dharma Flower Sutra, whether you believe it or not, or understand it or not. If you come here to listen to the lecture, you are setting up affinities in The Dharma Flower assembly. Hearing the Sutra should make you happier than eating the best of food. If this is the case, then you have affinities with the Sutra. If you believe in The Dharma Flower Sutra and understand this wonderful Dharma, the seed of the wonderful Dharma has been planted in you.

Originally, the wonderful Dharma is something that cannot be understood, but if now you understand it, or even if you do not understand it, the seed has been planted in you. You might want to get rid of it, but you cannot. In the future, when those 2,000 who study become Buddhas, all with the same name, you will be able to attend their Dharma assemblies. If you are vigorous, then sooner than that you will be able to hear The Dharma Flower Sutra and draw near to all the Buddhas. If you are vigorous, you might become Buddhas before Ananda and Rahula do. Why? It is because becoming a Buddha all depends on how vigorous you are. If you are vigorous, you go forward. If not, you fall behind.

Take Maitreya Bodhisattva, for example. He should have become a Buddha long ago. Ananda should have become a Buddha already too, but he concentrated on studying and set himself back behind Shakyamuni Buddha. Maitreya Bodhisattva was seeking fame and so he has not become a Buddha yet. Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated vigorously and became a Buddha, and Maitreya Bodhisattva will become a Buddha next.

His Dharma Assembly will be called Dragon Flower. So we say,

See you again in the Dragon Flower Assembly!

In the future we will all draw near to that fat Bodhisattva, Maitreya. If you want to meet this Bodhisattva, you can not only do so, but you can be him yourself. If your stomach is real big, then you are Maitreya Bodhisattva. If his stomach is real big, then he is Maitreya Bodhisattva. If their stomachs are real big then they are all Maitreya Bodhisattva.

You think, “A big stomach is a lot of trouble. It is real heavy when you try to walk around and when you eat you have to eat so much food.”

I agree. I had a big stomach for a while, and I always felt that my two legs could not quite support my body. Now, I have lost weight, and I do not eat too much. I really hate excess fat!

“Then why does one have to have a big stomach to be Maitreya Bodhisattva?”

Good question! “Big stomach” means that he is able to bear up, to be patient and yielding. He bears what others cannot bear, yields where others cannot yield. He eats what others cannot eat.

This is like when I told my disciple Guo Shun, “You must be able to eat what others cannot eat.” This does not mean that you eat all the good food before other people get a chance to eat any. It means that you eat the things other people do not like to eat.

To do what others cannot do means that you do humble and toilsome work that other people avoid. You do the dirty work, like cleaning the toilet. Even though we have sanitary toilets, they still are not as fragrant as the kitchens, right? I am telling it like it is. I speak Sutras for the common people! If you are a person, you can understand it. If you are an animal, you might have trouble! Ha!

So you bear what others cannot bear. Originally, if someone above you scolds you or hits you, you might be able to stand it. But let us say that someone beneath you scolds you or hits you and you can take it, then that is genuine patience. You cannot say, “I can stand it if my teacher scolds me, but I cannot stand it if my students scold me.” That does not count. If my disciples scold me, I bear it. I just think, “They are just my teacher. There is really no difference.” If you can stand being scolded by your disciples, then you have got some skill. Or suppose, your own son says to you, “You old man! To be old and not die is to be a thief!” Hearing this, you think, “I guess I am a thief. Oh, well, no big deal.” If you can be like that, you have got a stomach pretty much like Maitreya Bodhisattva’s.

To yield where others cannot yield means that you can give up the things others cannot. Say you have five million dollars and you give away five hundred thousand, that does not count. If you have five million dollars and you give away five million dollars, not worrying about whether you will have any for yourself, that is giving what others cannot give.

You think, “But that is really stupid!” It is by being stupid in this way that you can attain great wisdom. If you do not get that stupid, you cannot gain such wisdom.

If you can do these things, it is for sure that you will accomplish your Way karma. I told these things to Guo Shun, and he left home. He was never greedy for anything. In all the years he spent as my disciple, he wore the same set of clothes. He never had a quilted robe or quilted shoes, or anything at all. In Manchuria it is really cold, and he was not afraid of freezing, starving or dying of poverty. He had these “three fearlessnesses.” Later, he immolated himself—he was not afraid of fire, either. His immolation was not a political act of defiance against the government. He did not do it out of anger. He felt that the world was filled with too much pain. He wanted to take the pain of others upon himself and burn himself as an offering to the Buddha. He burned himself in front of the Buddha and dedicated the merit to living beings. So you see that the same act can have a very different motive and meaning, and serve a different purpose.

Someone like Guo Shun did indeed have a “big stomach.” We are not talking about his regular stomach, but about his capacity to be patient. It is said,

With his big stomach, he can bear
All the things in the world that are hard to bear.
He opens his mouth to smile,
Laughing at all the funny people in the world.

He just smiles an inconceivable happy smile, mind you, not a shrill cackle—and laughs at all the people in the world who are stupidly pursuing fame and profit. He should be crying, it is so pitiful, but he smiles instead. They are so upside down he has no way to save them, so he just laughs instead, and thinks of some way to help them. Besides, crying makes you stupid and smiling can give you wisdom.

So do not think Maitreya Bodhisattva got his big stomach by overeating. He manifests that appearance as part of his cultivation to teach and transform living beings.

**Sutra:**
 **At that time, the Buddha further told the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva Medicine King, “Of all the limitless thousands of myriads of millions of Sutras I have spoken, am speaking, or will speak, The Dharma Flower is the hardest to believe and the hardest to understand.”

“Medicine King, this Sutra is the treasury of the Buddhas’ secrets and essentials. It must not be distributed or falsely presented to people. That which the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, have guarded from the distant past until now, has never been explicitly taught. This Sutra incurs much hatred and jealousy even now, when the Thus Come One is present. How much the more so will this be the case after his extinction!”**Outline:

E2. Praising the Dharma maintained and showing method for propagating the Sutra.

F1. Prose.
G1. Praising Sutra-Dharma.
H1. Praising the dharma.

**Commentary:**

**At that time,** having spoken the above verses, Shakyamuni, **the Buddha,** out of great compassion, fearing living beings might not understand the Buddha’s doctrines as set forth in the Sutras, **further told the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva Medicine King, “Of all the limitless thousands of myriads of millions of Sutras I have spoken, am speaking, or will speak, The Dharma Flower is the hardest to believe and the hardest to understand.”** The Dharma Flower Sutra is difficult to believe and understand because it is just too wonderful. The wonderful Dharma is wonderful and “not wonderful” people do not believe in it. This Dharma is wonderful and so “not wonderful” people cannot understand it. It takes wonderful people to believe in and understand the wonderful Dharma.

It is also hard to listen to The Dharma Flower Sutra. All of you here are wonderful people. You sit and do not feel uncomfortable or drowsy, and you do not lose interest. Isn’t this wonderful?

It is not easy to believe the doctrines presented in this Sutra. For example, the above said that if you scolded the Buddha for an eon, your offenses, though great, would not be as great as if you had slandered one who upholds this Sutra for even an instant. This is not easy to believe. But if you are a wonderful person you will believe and understand it. Why can I lecture it to you? It is because I am a wonderful person. Otherwise, how could I explain it to you? This is something you could not disbelieve if you wanted to because it is too wonderful!

**Medicine King, this Sutra is the treasury of the Buddhas’ secrets and essentials.** Those of you who study Chinese, why do you learn it so fast? It is because by listening to the Sutras it is very easy to develop your wisdom. Once your wisdom has been opened up, you learn everything very easily. But do not look upon it as a very simple process. You do not have any idea how many lifetimes you have studied in order to have this accomplishment. This is not a matter of just this one single lifetime, by any means.

That I can lecture on the Sutras is also not a matter of one single lifetime. Who knows how many lifetimes I studied? I remember long ago, I would read The Dharma Flower Sutra until my eyes bled. Why did they bleed? It is because I did not sleep for many days. I just knelt and read the Sutra. The more I read it the more I wanted to read it and recite it. I forgot about eating and sleeping. When my eyes started to bleed, I did not notice, until the blood fell on the text. Then I knew, “Oh, those are not tears, those are blood.” Since my eyes were acting up like that, I had to rest. That is how I read The Dharma Flower Sutra.

You say, “Dharma Master, you are really too stupid.”

Right. If I were as intelligent as you were, my eyes would not have bled.

Perhaps you are laughing to yourself, “That is right. That is the way it is.”

You may be more intelligent than I am, but you are still my disciple. No matter how smart you are, you are still studying with me. I remember in the past, I read a lot of Sutras like that until my eyes bled. But you should not think that I was always a Dharma Master. I have done everything. I was an Emperor, and an official, all kinds of things. I remember it more or less. That is why I am not interested in being an emperor or a politician, or even a Wheel-turning sage king. It is too much trouble. If you can put things down then there is no trouble.

What is meant by “putting it down”? It means “everything is okay. No problem.” You are then a “wonderful person.” The more you listen to the Sutras, the more wonderful you will find them. If you cannot be like that, then you will have problems listening to the Sutras. You will sit there thinking, “This really is not very interesting. It is pretty dry, in fact. It is in Chinese and has to be translated and uses up a lot of my time. Wouldn’t I be better off out playing somewhere?”

“This Sutra” refers to The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. If you are reciting the Vajra Sutra, you cannot say this Sutra is The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. You cannot be like that. When it says “this Sutra” in the Vajra Sutra, that would be referring to the Vajra Sutra and not The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. The Sutra in which the words “this Sutra” appear is just that Sutra. If it is in The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, “this Sutra” refers to The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. If it is in the Varja Sutra, “this Sutra” refers to the Vajra Sutra. If it is in the Amitabha Sutra, “this Sutra” refers to the Amitabha Sutra.

The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra is the storehouse of the secrets and essentials of all the Buddhas. It contains the most secret and essential Dharma of the Buddhas in the ten directions. All the Buddhas think it is the most esoteric of Sutras, and they do not speak it explicitly. **It must not be distributed** casually among people.

“If this is the case,” you wonder, “then why have so many copies of it been made to be given to people for study?”

It could not be distributed in the past, but now it can be. Do not be attached to no distribution and refuse to distribute it. A long time ago, the Buddhas all took this Sutra to be a treasure, and they did not want to pass it out to everyone. It was a Dharma treasure. This is like the Forty-two Hands & Eyes, a Dharma, which I teach only to my disciples. It is my secret and essential treasury. **Or falsely presented to people.** You cannot just explain it for everyone. The Buddhas felt this way about The Dharma Flower Sutra. They did not let everyone see it. They did not transmit it to people. Wouldn’t you say we had a great opportunity now? We get to know all these secrets.

**That which the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, have guarded from the distant past until now, has never been explicitly taught.** Shakyamuni Buddha says, “The Buddhas of the past took The Dharma Flower Sutra as a secret treasury. Now that I have realized Buddhahood, I have never, until this time, spoken The Dharma Flower Sutra. I spoke the Avatamsaka, Agamas, the Vaipulya, and Prajna Teachings.

**This Sutra incurs much hatred and jealousy even now, when the Thus Come One is present. How much the more so will this be the case after his extinction!** Why haven’t I spoken The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra? Do you know? It is because most people would not believe or understand it. It would have been useless to explain it. What is more, in speaking the Sutra, the heavenly demons and those of outside ways would get jealous. If you try to propagate the proper Dharma, the demons get angry, because they do not want people to understand the proper Dharma. If people understand the proper Dharma, then their deviant dharmas became useless. Even Shakyamuni Buddha had to be very careful not to arouse jealousy by speaking the Sutra. Just before he was about to enter Nirvana, he went ahead and spoke it anyway, not worrying about it. “If they get angry or jealous, that is too bad. I am still going to speak it. The time has come and I am going to speak it.”

Just think how jealous people will get after the Buddha’s extinction. We should not be surprised that now, as we lecture it week after week, a lot of people get upset. The demon kings are uncomfortable that we are propagating the proper Dharma. They feel we are taking their clientele away from them. Their improper dharmas are no longer of use so they come here and get angry but it is no use. The deviant cannot overcome the proper, so they run away.

When Shakyamuni Buddha was in the world, a lot of outside Ways were jealous of the Buddhadharma. Now, in the Dharma-Ending Age there are even more outside ways. Some of them claim to have spiritual powers. They say that you can put them in the freezer for a hundred years, and they will come back to life. So what? What use were you during those hundred years? Did you benefit yourself or anyone else? Probably not. And what is more is that you might not be able to wake up after that hundred years.

There is another outside way where they worship fire. They light their wine on fire and then drink it saying they drink “fire wine.” People without much sense see this and think, “I saw it with my own eyes. If they did not have some kind of spiritual powers, they could not do this.” But not only do they not have spiritual powers, they do not even have ghostly powers! Obviously the fire will not burn in their stomachs because there is no oxygen in there.

There is another kind of outside way where they say they can walk on fire and not get burnt. It never occurs to people that they could probably do it too—if they walked fast enough! If you want to test them out, ask them to sit down on the fire! If you pour gasoline all over you and still do not burn, then you have some mastery, although that is not the ultimate either. If they do not burn, then you could say they had some skill. But even this is not anything special. It is just deviant magic. These days there are a lot of outside ways. There are some that claim they can drink fantastic amounts of water, even the whole ocean. What use is that? If they drank up the entire ocean, all the fish would dry up and die! That would be terrible. Murder! So, you need not study these outside ways.

**Sutra:**
 **“Medicine King, you should know that after my extinction, those who can write out, uphold, read, recite, make offerings to and explain it for others, shall be covered with the Thus Come One’s robes and shall also be protected and held in mind by the Buddhas present in other directions. These people have great powers of faith, powers of resolution and vows and the power of good roots. Know that these people shall dwell together with the Thus Come One and shall have their heads rubbed by the hand of the Thus Come One.”**Outline:

H2. Praising the people.

**Commentary:**

**Medicine King, you should know that after my extinction, those who can write out, uphold, read, recite, make offerings to and explain it for others.** Shakyamuni Buddha says that while he is in the world a lot of people will be jealous of The Dharma Flower Sutra. To say nothing of what it will be like after the Buddha enters Nirvana. Although he says this still, “Medicine King, you should know after the Buddha enters Nirvana, those who can write out, uphold, read, recite, make offerings of incense, flowers, food and drink, and explain The Dharma Flower Sutra to other people, setting forth its wonderful doctrines, **shall be covered with the Thus Come One’s robes.**”

These five kinds of Dharma Masters shall be covered with the Thus Come One’s kashaya or sash. This is like when people recite the name of Amitabha Buddha and recite to the point of “reciting and yet not reciting, not reciting and yet reciting.” When they attain this state, they can see Amitabha Buddha come and rub the top of their heads and cover them with his sash. This means that in the future they are certain to be reborn in Amitabha Buddha’s Land of Ultimate Bliss. Now, if one can receive and uphold The Dharma Flower Sutra, the Thus Come One will cover them with his sash, too. What is more, they **shall also be protected and held in mind by the Buddhas present in other directions.** Not only will Shakyamuni Buddha cover you with his sash, but the Buddhas in the ten directions will protect you and keep you in mind at all times, lending you their support and helping you to develop great wisdom.

**These people have great powers of faith.** This “greatness” of the power of faith is not that which is spoken of in relation to “small.” It goes beyond the relative into the realm of the absolute. There is nothing that compares with the greatness of their powers of faith. The Buddhadharma is like the great sea. It can only be entered by means of faith. If you have no faith, you cannot get into the Buddhadharma. Of faith it is said,

Faith is the source of the Way
The mother of merit and virtue.

It nurtures all our good roots. If you have faith, you will have merit and virtue. If you have no faith, you will have no merit or virtue. If you have faith, you will be able to cultivate the Way. If you have no faith, you will be unable to do so. Therefore, faith is the most important factor in cultivation. If you can receive, uphold, read, recite, write out, and explain The Dharma Flower Sutra, that means you have great powers of faith. If you lack great powers of faith, you will not be able to do these things. To the word faith, we add the word “power” and this means that one has no doubts; one has only faith. **Powers of resolution and vows.** Once you have faith, you must set up your resolve and determination. With great determination, you then make “vows.” Those vows should be as solid as stone and as durable as iron. These are the vows you need, vows to receive and practice The Dharma Flower Sutra.

Faith alone is not enough if you do not wish to cultivate. **And the power of good roots.** Why are you able to have faith and determination in your cultivation? It is because of your good roots. The power of good roots refers to the seeds of Bodhi which were planted many lifetimes and many eons ago. Your good roots then grew day by day. If you had no good roots, you could never encounter The Dharma Flower Sutra.

You should **know that these people** who can receive, uphold, read, recite, write out and explain The Dharma Flower Sutra, **shall dwell together with the Thus Come One**—it is just the same as if you were living with the Buddha—**and shall have their heads rubbed by the hand of the Thus Come One.** This is called “getting rubbed on the crown of the head.” It is a gesture of the utmost compassion and fondness. The Buddha often rubs the crowns of living being’s heads. If he has affinities with someone, he will pat them on the head. In this way the Buddha infuses them with his awesome virtue and eradicates their obstacles. This is referring only to being patted on the head. It does not mean that he bestows predictions on them. If he does both, then that living being has a chance to become a Buddha in the future. When you cultivate, sometimes in meditation you might feel that there is something crawling around on top of your head, like maybe a little bug or something. When you have this feeling, what is actually happening is that the Buddhas of the ten directions have come to pat you on the head. You should give rise to even more faith and vows, and truly practice the Buddha Path. Why? It is because the Buddha is being so kind to you and helping you out, and if you do not give rise to great resolve, you will be showing ingratitude towards the Buddha.

**Sutra:**
 **“Medicine King, in any place where this Sutra is spoken, read, recited, written out, or stored, one should build a Stupa of the seven jewels, making it high, broad, and adorned. It is not necessary to place sharira in it. Why is this? Within it already is the complete body of the Thus Come One. To this Stupa one should make offerings of all kinds of flowers, incense, beads, silk canopies, banners, vocal and instrumental music, honoring and praising it. If people should see this Stupa, bow before it, and make offerings to it, you should know that they are close to anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”**Outline:

H3. Praising the place.

**Commentary:**

**Medicine King, in any place,** that is in all places regardless of where they are, **where this Sutra is spoken**, explained, **read, recited, written out or stored,** wherever the Sutra is, **one should build a Stupa of the seven jewels, making it high, broad and adorned.** You should not just make a small Stupa. Before, I told you the story of a dwarf, a man during the time when the Buddha was in the world. The little man is only three feet high but five feet wide. He looked strange, but he had a beautiful voice. Someone asked the Buddha how he could look so strange yet sing so well. The Buddha told him, “In a former life, limitless eons ago, a man was making a jeweled Stupa. This man objected, saying, ‘Why are you making it so high? No one will even be able to see the top, for heaven’s sake! Make it a little broader and a little shorter so everyone can see it and bow to it!’

As a retribution for his discouraging words, life after life he was born as a dwarf. So, if you see short people, you can guess that in a former life, they probably criticized the making of a Stupa. The reason for his bell like voice was because, when the Stupa completed, he hung a bell in the tower.” So after this, if someone is building a temple, you should not object to its size saying, “Why don’t you make a smaller one? There are not that many people in this area anyway.” In general, the higher and bigger temples and Stupas are the better. Stupas are defined as “high, manifest places,” or as “square graves.” Anyway, since he hung the bell in the Stupa, he had a lovely voice. This should illustrate that if we want a beautiful voice we should hang a bell in a jeweled pagoda.

**It is not necessary to place sharira in it.** The jeweled Stupa should be studded with lustrous jewels, which shine both day and night. If you have some sharira, you can put them in of course, but if you do not, you need not go all over looking for some to put in. **Why is this? Within it already is the complete body of the Thus Come One.** If there is a copy of this Sutra in the Stupa, then the true body of the Buddha is there. **To this Stupa one should make offerings of all kinds of flowers, incense, beads, silk canopies, banners, vocal and instrumental music.** To this jeweled Stupa, you should make offerings of flowers, incense, beads, silk canopies, banners, and instrumental and vocal music. We sing songs and chants in praise of the Buddha. We really have no way to express completely our reverence for the Buddha and our sincerity, so we just use songs which everyone likes to hear to express our appreciation of the Buddha’s merit and virtue. The Dharma is not cultivated to accomplishment by means of one method only. There are eighty-four thousand Dharma-doors. One can realize Buddhahood by the use of any one of them.

**Honoring and praising it.If people should see this Stupa, bow before it, and make offerings to it** or even nod their heads even just slightly or raise one hand as a gesture of respect, **you should know that they are close to,** they are not far from **anuttarasamyaksambodhi**, the Buddha fruit. So in the future we should all make a vow, a vow together to make a jeweled Stupa for The Dharma Flower Sutra. We should make it as high as possible—higher than the Empire State Building! It should be the tallest Stupa in the world. If we make a vow, then we can do it. It depends on how determined we are in our vow. Determination means you set your will to accomplish something, and you do not stop until you do. When I left home I made a determined vow. I said, “In the future I am certainly going to spread Buddhism throughout the entire world. I will bring Buddhism to every place where it is absent now. Not only will I spread the Buddhadharma, but I will spread the true, orthodox Buddhadharma.” Now, I have not fulfilled my vows yet. When there is Buddhism in all worlds, not just this one, then my vows will be fulfilled. It is not enough to have Buddhism throughout just this one world. All of you who make vows and are determined in them will certainly succeed.

The eighth day of the fourth month is the Buddha’s birthday (May 10,1969). It is the most important Buddhist holiday, so we are having a celebration and everyone should do word-of-mouth advertising, that is, tell all your relatives and friends. In the afternoon at 2:00 we are going to perform the Liberation of Life Ceremony. Why do we do this? First of all it is illustrative of “non-killing” and the compassion of the Buddha’s teaching. It is said,

If in this life you do not cage birds,
In the future you will not be put in jail.

In the ceremony, we release birds from their cages so they can be free to fly. Doing this insures that in future lives we will not be put in jail. Secondly, if you liberate creatures, others will liberate you. You may think, “I am no bird. I do not need to do this.” Maybe you are not a bird now, but you have forgotten about the times in the distant past when you were a bird. All of us, in former lives, have been everything there is to be. We have all been ants and mosquitoes. On a larger scale, we have been emperors, generals, everything! However, greed, hatred, and stupidity have covered up your self-natures so you cannot remember these things.

There are twenty days left until the Buddha’s birthday and everyone should get busy and advertise. Do not wait for the TV and radio to do all the work. You should all be TVs and radios. Spread the word!

**Sutra:**
 **“Medicine King, many people, both at home and left home, practice the Bodhisattva Path. If they are unable to see, hear, recite, write out, uphold, or make offerings to The Dharma Flower Sutra, know that these people have not yet skillfully practiced the Bodhisattva Path. If they are able to hear this Sutra, then they will be able to skillfully practice the Bodhisattva Path.”**Outline:

H4. Praising the cause.

**Commentary:**

**Medicine King**, Shakyamuni Buddha continues, **many people, both at home,** that is laymen and laywomen, **and left home,** that is Bhikshus and Bhikshunis, **practice the Bodhisattva Path.** Both lay people and left-home people can practice the Bodhisattva Path.

What is the Bodhisattva Path? It means benefiting other people. It means benefiting oneself and benefiting others. It means being able to put yourself aside to help others, giving the advantages to other people and taking the disadvantages upon oneself. The Bodhisattva Path is like water: Water benefits all things but never boasts of its merit. All living creatures, whether they are born from wombs, eggs, moisture, or transformation, depend upon water for the maintenance of their life. Without water, they cannot live. But water itself does not boast of its merit saying, “I have helped you so much. My merit is great indeed.” Those who practice the Bodhisattva Path should be this way. Do not think, “I have helped living beings and so I have merit.” Lao Zi said,

“The highest goodness is like water. Water well benefits all things and yet does not contend. It goes to places people despise and so it is close to the Way…”

Water flows right into lowly places, places where no one would like to live. When you practice the Bodhisattva Path, you must give the merit to others and take the mistakes upon yourself.

“But then I will not have any merit,” you object. The more you give the merit to others, the greater your merit becomes. On the surface, you are giving the merit away, but underneath, in the realms of true principle, it remains yours. People who do not understand how to cultivate are always struggling to grab the spotlight, to be number one, and to make sure everyone knows who they are. People who understand true principle do not seek recognition. It is said,

“Good done for show is not truly good.
Evil done in secret is great evil indeed.”

Bodhisattvas do not want people to know about their good deeds. If they make mistakes, they do not care if people find out.

The Bodhisattva Path means benefiting oneself and benefiting others. It means benefiting others more than yourself, and even benefiting others at your own expense. Bodhisattvas practice the Six Perfections and the Ten Thousand Practices: giving, holding precepts, patience, vigor, dhyana samadhi and wisdom. In giving, you should give to other people. Giving does not mean to tell other people to give things to you! You cannot complain and say, “I am one of the Triple Jewel. How come nobody makes offerings to me?” Holding precepts also means that you hold them yourself. It does not mean that you go around telling other people to hold precepts. Patience means you yourself are patient, not that you tell others to be patient. Vigor also means that you are vigorous, not that you tell others to be vigorous and remain lazy yourself. You cannot think, “I have already become a Bodhisattva and so I do not need to be vigorous. I will just tell the new Bodhisattvas to be vigorous. I am an old Bodhisattva, so I do not have to be vigorous.”

As to dhyana samadhi, you must cultivate it yourself. You cannot pester people and say, “Hey! Why don’t you have any dhyana samadhi?” Finally, you yourself must have Prajna wisdom. You cannot tell others to cultivate it and fail to cultivate it yourself.

The Six Perfections are not to be practiced for one day. You must practice them every single day and never rest for even a second. Practicing the Bodhisattva Path means that you are busy working everyday. Busy doing what? Teaching and transforming living beings. Living beings are drowning in the sea of suffering. Unless you push yourself a little, how are you ever going to be able to save them all? There is no time for naps! There is no time for false thinking! So the text says, “Many people, both at home and left home, practice the Bodhisattva Path.”

**If they are unable to see, hear,** read, **recite, write out, uphold, or make offerings to The Dharma Flower Sutra, know that these people have not yet skillfully practiced the Bodhisattva Path.** They practice the Bodhisattva Path, but their foundation is not solid, and they have not perfected their practice. **If** there are those who practice the Bodhisattva Path and are **able to hear this Sutra, then they will be able to skillfully practice the Bodhisattva Path.** We are now able to hear, see, uphold, read, recite, and write out The Dharma Flower Sutra. The only thing to be feared is that you will not wish to practice the Bodhisattva Path. If you practice it, you will certainly perfect it. Once you have done so, the Buddha Path is then realized as well.

**Sutra:**
 **“If living beings that seek the Buddha Path get to see or hear The Dharma Flower Sutra and, having done so, receive and uphold it with faith and understanding, know that these people have drawn near to anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”**Outline:

H5. Praising the fruition.
I1. The proximate fruit.

**Commentary:**

**If living beings that seek the Buddha Path get to see or hear The Dharma Flower Sutra and, having done so, receive and uphold it with faith and understanding.** Having heard the Sutra, they give rise to wisdom. Since they have wisdom, they then believe in and understand the wonderful doctrines of The Dharma Flower Sutra. Since they deeply believe and understand, they then receive it with their minds and uphold it with their bodies. You should **know that these people,** having come in contact with the Sutra in this way, **have drawn near to anuttarasamyaksambodhi,** they are very close to the Buddha-fruit, the utmost right and prefect enlightenment.

**Sutra:**
 **“Medicine King, it is like a person who is thirsty and in need of water. Although he digs for it on a high plain, all he sees is dry earth, and he knows the water is still far off. He continues efforts without cease and eventually sees moist earth and then mud. He is then certain that water must be close at hand.”**Outline:

I2. Setting up the analogy.

**Commentary:**

The Buddha now gives us an analogy: **Medicine King, it is like a person who is thirsty and in need of water.** He is thirsty. His throat is so dry, it is smoking. To say nothing of tea, he would be satisfied with just a little water! **Although he digs for it on a high plain,** digging a deep hole looking for water, **all he sees is dry earth.** This refers to people whose ignorance, afflictions, view of self, and arrogance are as high as Mount Sumeru, it is very difficult. In the same way, arrogant and self-satisfied people who wish to cultivate, may cultivate and cultivate, but all they will see is “dry earth,”—that is, they will only attain to the stage of “dry wisdom.” “Dry wisdom” means that they have a small measure of wisdom, but it is not great, just small. They have not obtained the water of the Dharma nature; they have not truly opened up their wisdom.

**And he knows the water is far off.** He obtained a small amount of dry wisdom, a state that is somewhat inconceivable. When he sits in meditation, he thinks, “When I meditate I feel my self-nature is emitting light! I feel pure in body and in mind, no others, no self. This is not bad at all!” That is dry wisdom when you think, “It is not bad!” “Not bad” it may be, but one still has not truly opened up one’s wisdom. One has not broken through the black energy barrel—ignorance. One thinks, “Strange, how could I be in such a wonderful state? Surely I am to become a Buddha. It is not all a trick. I have now obtained something I never understood before.” One has seen a bit of “dry earth.”

And he knows that the water is still far off. The true wisdom of the Buddha, the water of the Dharma-nature’s wisdom is still far away. **He continues** his **efforts without cease.** This is the most important phrase! It means he does not stop cultivating. He continues his work mindfully and never thinks, “Today lotus, tomorrow peony.” He changes his mind. As the saying goes:

Sun it for one day.
Freeze it for ten.

It would be better if you just do not set it out to sun! This is like someone who cultivates for one day and then sleeps for ten. He continues his efforts without cease.” He cultivates without ceasing. He is forever vigorous day and night. He is vigorous during the day and vigorous at night. He is always vigorous 24 hours a day. He works hard on his cultivation, investigating Dhyana and meditating non-stop. “He continues his efforts without cease,” means that he is vigorous in the six periods of the day and night. He continues his efforts, day after day, digging and digging **and eventually** he **sees moist earth,** he obtains a bit of the water of the Dharma-nature, **and then mud,** he certifies to the first, second, third, and fourth fruits of Arhatship. **He is then certain.** Having certified to the fruit and attained some of the “flavor,” he is assured **that water must be close at hand.** He knows that he will certainly become a Buddha and gain the water of the Dharma nature.

There is a story about Confucius, the Chinese sage. Even though he was a sage, in his day he had to undergo a lot of hardships. When he was teaching in Xing Tan, present day Shan Dong , he had over 3,000 disciples. Of the three thousand, most of them would come and go their various ways, but 100 of them were his close followers and went with him everywhere. Shakyamuni Buddha had 1,250 close followers; Confucius had about one-tenth that many. At any rate, his followers went with him as he traveled from country to country, and so the hosts would have 125 or so mouths to feed.



At that time, he was lecturing all across the land, teaching his disciples of government and he became an official in the country of Lu. Within three months time he had things so well regulated that it was possible to leave gold laying in the street, and no one would steal it. He taught all the people not to be greedy. Also, at night you did not need to lock your door. America used to be like this too, very well governed. No one cared if they locked their doors or not. Now, that would never do. At the very least you have to have dead bolts on the doors. In any case, within three months, the country of Qi got jealous. “This is terrible. If this goes on, we are finished!” So they thought of a plan and made a gift to the King of Lu of concubines—sort of like present day movie stars. They could sing, dance, and do all kinds of things. The King of Lu spent three days and nights in their company, without showing up at Court for three days. Confucius was so disgusted at the degenerated behavior of the King and he left, taking his disciples with him. He talked to the other nobles, thinking they would employ him, but no one wanted to listen to him.

It is that way today too. If you try to tell people the truth, they do not want to hear it. If you tell them something false, they are delighted. Because Confucius always told the truth, he became very unpopular. They gave him a lot of respect, but they did not employ him. He was too “straight.” He would not let the rulers get away with anything.

He kept on travelling and came to the border of the countries of Chen and of Cai and ran out of offerings. No one gave him anything to eat, and he had no money or food. He was unwelcomed in both countries. After three days of no food, he was sick from hunger and could not even stand up. Confucius said, “What are we going to do now?” One of his disciples suggested, “Fan Dan has food!” Fan Dan was a beggar who stored the rice he had begged in a big barrel, like a grain silo. “Let us go borrow some from him.”

“Who shall we send? All of you are weak from hunger!”

Zi Lu bravely stepped forward. “I will go!” he said, “I am not sick. A little hunger does not bother me.”

“Okay,” said Confucius, “go ahead.” When Zi Lu reached Fan Dan’s place, he said, “Hey, Fan Dan, my brother, I am Zi Lu, a student of Confucius, and I have come to borrow some rice. Our group is stuck at the borders of Chen and Cai with nothing to eat. We know you have rice, and so we would like to borrow some from you.”

Fan Dan said, “All right, but only if you can answer my question.” Then he spoke a verse expecting Zi Lu to finish it for him:

What is more?
What is less?
What is happiness?
What is distress?

Zi Lu thought a moment and then said,

Stars are many.
Moons are few.
Marriage makes you happy.
Death makes you blue.

“No!” Fan Dan said, “That is not the right answer.” Zi Lu thought, “I matched it perfectly. What makes you say it is not right?”

“You do not make sense, you crummy beggar.” But Fan Dan did not shell out the rice and Zi Lu was not about to steal it, so he ran back to Confucius and said, “No luck. Fan Dan—that beggar—is totally unreasonable. He gave me a couplet to match. I gave a good answer, but he rejected it. He just did not want to give us the rice in the first place!”

Confucius said, “What did he say?”

Zi Lu said, “He asked me, in this world,

What is more?
What is less?
What is happiness?
What is distress?”

Confucius said, “Well, how did you answer him?”

I said,

“Stars are many.
Moons are few.
Marriage makes you happy.
Death makes you blue.

What is wrong with that? It is perfectly all right. It is great!”

Confucius said, “No, you are wrong.”

Zi Lu did not dare contradict his teacher. Confucius said, “You go back to Fan Dan and tell him this:

Petty men are many;
Sages are few.
When we get the rice, we are happy;
When we have to return it, we are blue.”

When Zi Lu said this to Fan Dan, Fan Dan nodded his head in approval. “Your teacher is much more advanced than you are. That is fine.” And he gave him the rice. They ate only rice, no vegetables, for several days. Then a tall black general showed up and ran into the garden intending to murder them. Zi Lu had eaten his fill and was feeling even more courageous than usual. He started fighting with him. Although he was strong, he could not outfight the big general. Confucius was standing in the doorway watching all this and he said, “You,” using Zi Lu’s other name, “Go for his throat.” Zi Lu got the hint and slit the man’s throat. As it turned out, it was not a human being, after all, it was a giant fish and it filled up the whole garden. Confucius and his disciples had rice and fish then, and none of them starved to death.

Zi Lu’s strongest point was that he was delighted to hear people criticize him and tell him of his faults.

**Sutra:**
 **“The Bodhisattvas are also like this. Know that those who have not yet heard, not yet understood, or not yet put into practice The Dharma Flower Sutra, are still far from anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Those who have heard and understood, thought upon, and put it into practice certainly should be known as coming near to anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”**Outline:

I3. Correlating the analogy to the Dharma.

**Commentary:**

Bodhisattvas are those who practice the Bodhisattvas’ way. **The Bodhisattvas are also like this.** They are like those mentioned in the previous analogy. **Know**ing **that those who have not yet heard, not yet understood, or not yet put into practice** the inconceivably wonderful Dharma door of **The Dharma Flower Sutra, are still far from anuttarasamyaksambodhi.** Although they may practice the Bodhisattva Path, if they have not heard The Dharma Flower Sutra, understood its doctrines, or cultivated according to them, they are very far away from the Buddha-fruit.

You should know that **those who have heard and understood, thought upon, and put it into practice.** This represents the three types of wisdom: the wisdom of hearing, the wisdom of thought and the wisdom of cultivation. The wisdom of hearing arises when one hears the principles in the Sutras. The wisdom of thinking refers to wisdom arising through contemplating the doctrines and decreasing one’s false thinking. If you had no wisdom, if you were stupid, you would not be able to cultivate according to The Dharma Flower Sutra. Not only would you be unable to cultivate, you would not even be able to think about it, and in fact you would not even have a chance to hear The Dharma Flower Sutra. It is through the three types of wisdom, hearing, thinking and cultivating that one enters Samadhi.

**Certainly should be known as coming near to anuttarasamyaksambodhi.** Because they understand genuine principle, The Dharma Flower Sutra “opens the provisional and reveals the real.” There is nothing false in it. Therefore, those who understand The Dharma Flower Sutra have great good roots and great wisdom. If they did not, they would not have the opportunity to hear it. You should not think that it is easy to come and listen to the lectures on the Sutra. It is extremely difficult. You must make yourself quiet inside and listen to the Sutra—that is an inconceivable state. However, your habits from many lifetimes and many eons are heavy. You may want to listen to the Sutra, but sometimes you have false thinking.

One person told me that they felt as if they were two people. One wanted to listen to the Sutra the other did not! A war was going on between them. Well, the one of you that wants to listen to the Sutra, that is your original nature. The one of you that does not want to hear the Sutra is your old habits that make it impossible for you to subdue your mind. You should examine yourself closely and ask yourself, “Just who is this person who wants to listen to the Sutra, and who is this person who wants to indulge in false thinking?” When you have figured it out, you will not listen to those old habits anymore. You should know that the one who does not want you to listen wants you to fall, to get off the track and fall into the three evil paths. The one that wants to listen wants to keep you on the Path and keep you from the three evil paths. So pay attention! Do not get confused by your habits.

**Sutra:**
 **“What is the reason? The anuttarasamyaksambodhi of all the Bodhisattvas belongs to this Sutra. This Sutra opens the expedient Dharma doors. It demonstrates the true, real mark. The storehouse of the Dharma Flower Sutra is deep, solid, recondite, and far-reaching. No one could reach it except that now, the Buddha, in teaching and transforming the Bodhisattvas and bringing them to accomplishment, demonstrates it for their sakes.”**Outline:

I4. Showing the nearness of Bodhisattvas to it.

**Commentary:**

**What is the reason?** Why is anuttarasamyaksambodhi near to some and far away from others? **The anuttarasamyaksambodhi of all the Bodhisattvas belongs to this Sutra.** It is all included within The Dharma Flower Sutra. All the Bodhisattvas are born from The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. The realization of the supreme Buddha fruit comes from this Sutra as well. The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra is the mother of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions.

**This Sutra opens the expedient Dharma doors.** It opens up all the expedient Dharma doors—they are not used anymore. **It demonstrates the true, real mark.** It points to and instructs us in the wonderful doctrine of the true mark. It points out the principle substance, that which is complete within all of us. The principle of the real mark is not obtained from the outside. Every single person is complete with it.

As to the principle substance of the real mark, on the part of all the Buddhas, it is not “more.” On the part of living beings it is not “less.” It is the same in all of us. Most people, however, turn their backs on enlightenment and unite with the dust. Thus they do not know that they have the real mark. The Buddha shows us how to turn our backs on the dust and unite with enlightenment, in this way realizing the true mark.

**The storehouse of The Dharma Flower Sutra is deep.** It is deep because the Sutra is complete with limitless meanings. It is like the great sea, deep and unfathomable. **Solid** means that there are no heavenly demons or outside ways who could harm the Sutra’s wonderful Dharma. **Recondite** means that the doctrines of The Dharma Flower Sutra are exceedingly abstruse and hard to fathom. They are secret and hard to see. They “hide out,” as it were, like Heng Yin who cultivates on the stairs where no one can see her.

**Far-reaching**, for living beings to reach the Buddha-position, they must pass through nine stages—the nine Dharma realms. They are still a long distance away from the tenth Dharma Realm, the Dharma Realm of Buddhas. Therefore, **no one could reach it** because it is so far away. It is not easy for people to reach the level of The Dharma Flower Sutra. The Dharma Flower Sutra tells us that in the future everyone will realize Buddhahood. This is not easy to believe or understand. **Except that now, the Buddha** opens the provisional and reveals the real. He does away with provisional Dharma and points to the real path.

**In teaching and transforming the Bodhisattvas and bringing them to accomplishment, demonstrates it for their sakes.** He speaks The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. So the Great Master Zhi Zhe read The Dharma Flower Sutra to the part where Medicine King Bodhisattva burned his body as an offering to the Buddhas and the text said, “This is called true vigor. This is a true Dharma offering.” As he read these lines he entered samadhi. In samadhi he saw the assembly at Vulture Peak still in session. It had not dispersed. Shakyamuni Buddha was still lecturing The Dharma Flower Sutra there on Vulture Peak, and he was listening. Not only was Great Master Zhi Zhe in the Dharma Flower Assembly, but perhaps you people were there too! So now, although you are Americans, you have this chance to hear The Lotus Sutra in Chinese! With translation! This is an inconceivable state. When you lecture on The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, you are supposed to talk about wonderful dharmas. Well, my lecturing The Dharma Flower Sutra for you is in itself a wonderful Dharma. Your listening to it is also a wonderful Dharma. If it were not you would have no way to hear it.

**Sutra:**
 **“Medicine King, if a Bodhisattva upon hearing The Dharma Flower Sutra is frightened or afraid, you should know that he is a Bodhisattva of newly resolved mind. If a Hearer, upon hearing this Sutra is frightened or afraid, you should know that he is one of overweening arrogance.”**Outline:

I5. Picking out the bad ones.

**Commentary:**

**Medicine King, if a Bodhisattva upon hearing The Dharma Flower Sutra is frightened or afraid.** He hears lectures on The Dharma Flower Sutra and thinks “Hey, how could this be? It is too wonderful. It is impossible. Is this a demon speaking the Dharma? Is it for real?” and he gets scared out of his wits. **You should know that he is a Bodhisattva of newly resolved mind.** He gets frightened because he is a newly resolved Bodhisattva who has never heard The Dharma Flower Sutra before. These are the eighty thousand Bodhisattvas Medicine King brought along. Bodhisattvas are of the Great Vehicle, but they get scared if they are just beginners.

**If a Hearer,** one of the Two Vehicles, **upon hearing this Sutra is frightened or afraid, you should know that he is one of overweening arrogance.** He thinks, “What is this all about?” Those of overweening arrogance do not believe in anything. They do not believe in their teacher, in the Buddha, the Dharma, or the Sangha. You can lecture and teach with great energy, but they let it all pass in one ear and out the other. Overweening arrogance was the fault of the five thousand people who walked out in the beginning of The Lotus Sutra. The Buddha said, “It is good that those of overweening pride have left. Now, only the best people remain, the most sincere.” The text here refers to these five thousand, and also to those in the future who run off when they hear that the Sutra is going to be lectured. They do not respect their teacher, the Buddha, the Dharma, or the Sangha. All day long, they just do not know what they are doing—they are those of overweening arrogance.

**Sutra:**
 **“Medicine King, if there is a good man or a good woman, after the extinction of the Thus Come One, who wishes to speak The Dharma Flower Sutra for the sake of the four assemblies, how should they speak it? This good man or good woman should enter the Thus Come One’s room, put on the Thus Come One’s robe, sit on the Thus Come One’s throne, and only then expound upon this Sutra for the sake of the four assemblies.”**Outline:

G2. Demonstrating the model.
H1. The model itself.
I1. The statement.

**Commentary:**

**Medicine King, if there is a good man or a good woman**—perhaps they have left home, or perhaps they are at home. **After the extinction of the Thus Come One,** after the Buddha has entered Nirvana, **who wishes to speak The Dharma Flower Sutra for the sake of the four assemblies.** Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, **how should they speak it?** How should they go about lecturing upon it? I will tell you. **This good man or good woman should enter the Thus Come One’s room, put on the Thus Come One’s robe, sit on the Thus Come One’s throne, and only then** when these conditions have been met, can they **expound upon this Sutra for the sake of the four assemblies.**

Tomorrow we will discuss what is meant by entering the Thus Come One’s room, putting on the Thus Come One’s robe, and sitting upon the Thus Come One’s throne.

**Sutra:**
 **“The Thus Come One’s room is the mind of great compassion towards all living beings. The Thus Come One’s robes are the mind of gentleness and patience. The Thus Come One’s throne is the emptiness of all Dharmas.”**Outline:

I2. The explanation.

**Commentary:**

If after the Thus Come One’s extinction, you wish to speak The Dharma Flower Sutra for the sake of the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas and Upasikas, you must enter the Thus Come One’s room, put on the Thus Come One’s robes, and sit on the Thus Come One’s throne. After that, then you can lecture upon The Dharma Flower Sutra.

What is meant by “the Thus Come One’s room?” Does it actually mean the room where he lives? There are a great many people who lecture on the Sutras, but the Thus Come One has only one room. Obviously, they all will not fit. Even though he has spiritual powers with which he can take the limitless into one and expand the one into the limitless, still that is just a temporary arrangement. After a while it is bound to get crowded. Do we move the Thus Come One’s room to the place where you are and give it to you alone to live in? Then where would the Thus Come One move to? Doesn’t he has a lot of rooms? Could he not go somewhere else?”

If he did, then the room he vacates would no longer be “his” room! Besides, all the Dharma Masters are in different countries; they cannot all move to one place to live in the Thus Come One’s room. So ultimately, what do we mean by “the Thus Come One’s room?” All living beings are complete with the “Thus Come One’s room.” They do not all have to move house. Nobody has to relocate at all.

The text says, **the Thus Come One’s room is the mind of great compassion towards all living beings.** If you have a heart of great compassion, just that is the Thus Come One’s room. With a heart of great compassion, you pity all living beings. If living beings slander you, you do not get angry. If they scold you, you get angry even less. You maintain an attitude of loving kindness towards those who have no affinity with you and an attitude of great compassion towards those with whom you feel as one. “Having no affinity” means that a person is not well disposed towards you. The more they dislike you, the kinder you should be to them. Kindness means making people happy. To feel as one with living beings means that when living beings suffer, you look upon it as your own suffering, and find a way to relieve them of their suffering. Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva has great compassion. She sees the sufferings of living beings as her own sufferings and rescues people from suffering. If you can have great kindness towards those with whom you lack affinities and great compassion towards those of one substance, then you have entered the Thus Come One’s room.

**The Thus Come One’s robes are the mind of gentleness and patience.** This means that you have no “fire” at all. Even if one’s disciples bully you, or your children bully you, you do not get angry. One is very compliant and gentle, harmonious and patient. It is not easy to be patient, especially for young people. Patience does not mean that if the police come and beat me up, I bear it. It means, let us say you are the policeman and the criminal beats you, you do not get angry. It means that when those beneath you treat you unkindly, you can be patient. When your superiors appear upset with you and you can bear it, that does not count as true patience. Let us say your teacher gets mad at you and you do not get mad back; that is not counted as patience. Basically, you are expected not to get angry. But when your peers try to boss you around or get mad at you and you are not moved, that counts as patience.

“All right, then,” you think, “I am going to get mad at one of my friends and see if he can be patient. In this way I will be helping him to accomplish his karma of the Way.”

“Great. You help him accomplish his karma of the Way, but who is going to help you do it? When you get tested, will you be patient? If you can be patient yourself, then you can test others, but if you cannot, you have got no business testing other people. You must perfect yourself first. The robes of the Thus Come One, then, represent patience and gentleness, not blazing ignorance.

**The Thus Come One’s throne is the emptiness of all Dharmas.** This throne is not the throne on which the Thus Come One sits upon to lecture the Sutras and speak Dharma. All Dharmas are empty.

“Empty?” you say. “Does that mean I am just supposed to forget everything?”

Emptiness does not mean just getting rid of everything. It means to see the emptiness within existence. When it is time to use them, dharmas are there. Otherwise, they are empty. This is like when you cultivate patience, you do it in situations that require patience. Cultivating patience does not mean that you are obsessed with the concept of patience at all times, reciting “Patience, patience, patience,” all day long, and then when something happens that goes against the grain you still get mad, get upset. Say you cannot stand it when people get angry with you and everyday someone comes up and scolds you. You cannot use your patience Dharma then.

When nothing is happening in that area, you do not need to be preoccupied with patience. You must study all dharmas, but realize their emptiness at the same time. If you do not understand that they are empty, you will form an attachment to dharmas. Those who study the Dharma must see people and dharmas as empty. If people are not seen as empty, you will be attached to people. If dharmas are not seen as empty, you will form an attachment to dharmas. Therefore, you must sit on the Thus Come One’s throne to lecture The Dharma Flower Sutra. This means that dharmas must also be made empty. That is the Thus Come One’s throne.

**Sutra:**
 **“Established securely in these one may then, with an unflagging mind expound upon The Dharma Flower Sutra for the sake of the Bodhisattvas and the four assemblies.”**Outline:

I3. Exhortation to cultivation.

**Commentary:**

**Established securely in these,** in the mind of great compassion, the mind of gentleness and patience, and in the emptiness of all Dharmas, **one may then with an unflagging mind.** I tell you all the time, “Do not be lazy, do not be lazy.” That is just what The Dharma Flower Sutra tells you, too. If you want to lecture on The Dharma Flower Sutra you must not be lazy. A flagging mind is the opposite of a vigorous mind. With a vigorous mind you may then **expound upon The Dharma Flower Sutra for the sake of the Bodhisattvas and the four assemblies.** The Dharma Flower Sutra is a Dharma for teaching Bodhisattvas; it is a Dharma of which the Buddhas are mindful and protective. If you lecture on the Dharma Flower Sutra, all the Bodhisattvas, the Bhikshus, and Bhikshunis come to listen. In listening to the Sutra, you should not think it is such a simple matter. You have to be at the Bodhisattva level before you can hear The Dharma Flower Sutra. You must be at the level of the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas before you can hear the Dharma Flower Sutra.

In speaking the Dharma, why do we say it is the “Wonderful” Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra? When you lecture on the Sutra, all the gods, dragons, and the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits all come to listen. The Dharma rain nourishes all the living beings and so it is said to be “wonderful.”

**Sutra:**
 **“Medicine King, from another country, I will send transformed people to gather an assembly of Dharma listeners. I will also send transformed Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas to listen to the Dharma being spoken. All these transformed people, hearing the Dharma, will believe it and accept it, and comply with it without objection. If one speaks the Dharma in an uninhabited place, I will send gods, ghosts, spirits, gandharvas, asuras, and so forth, to listen to him speak the Dharma. Although I am in another country, I will at all times cause the speaker of Dharma to be able to see me. Should he forget a single punctuation mark of the Sutra, I will remind him of it, causing his knowledge to be perfected.”**Outline:

H2. The five benefits.

**Commentary:**

This section tells of five benefits accruing to the speaker of The Dharma Flower Sutra.

Shakyamuni Buddha calls out, **Medicine King, from another country,** after I have entered Nirvana from this Saha world, I will go to another country to teach and transform living beings. Although I will be in another country, if there are people who enter the Thus Come One’s room, put on the Thus Come One’s robes, and sit on the Thus Come One’s throne, that is, if there is such a Dharma Master who speaks upon The Dharma Flower Sutra, **I will send transformed people to gather an assembly of Dharma listeners.**

This is the first benefit, that of the Buddha’s sending transformation people. “Transformed” means they are created by transformation. There are two ways to explain it. First, perhaps the Buddha will appoint gods to transform themselves into people. Or perhaps right when the lecture is going on, the people will show up in the audience, and nobody knows where they came from or where they went. Nobody recognizes them at all. Perhaps, they are transformed people sent by Shakyamuni Buddha, but no one recognizes them. Or else you could say that the transformed people look like friends of yours. You see them and think, “Oh, my friend has come to the lecture!” Then when the lecture is over you ask your friend, “Say, didn’t I see you at the lecture last week?”

And he says, “No! I did not go.”

“But I saw you there!” That is a transformation person. Some transformed people are born into the world just for the purpose of attending your dharma lectures when the time comes. Others appear on a temporary basis now and then. They do not come from anywhere or go anywhere. Now do you understand? You are all transformed people! That is why you are here listening to the Sutra now.

“I do not believe it,” you say.

You do not believe it now, but when the time comes for you to believe it, you will believe it. You just do not believe it right now. In the future you will. So much for transformed people.

To gather an assembly of Dharma listeners. What will the transformed people do? They will round up people to listen to the lectures. They will tell their friends and relatives to come and listen to the Dharma. This is like Guo You whose father just called. You should tell your father to come to the lecture—because you are a transformed person! That is your job.

You should know that by bringing people to the lectures you create a great deal of merit for yourself. If they come to the lecture and hear a sentence, which causes them to gain enlightenment, then you will have a share in helping them gain enlightenment. By helping others to become Buddhas, you yourself will become a Buddha—it is unavoidable, in fact. So if you have relatives and friends, brothers and sisters, you should encourage them to come to the lectures. It is very important. You cannot just be an independent Arhat. You cannot think, “I am just going to take care of myself. Why should I worry about them?” Since you enjoy listening to the Sutra lectures, you should tell everyone to come and listen to the Sutra lectures!

**I will also send transformed Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas to listen to the Dharma being spoken.** So all of you have been transformed to come here and listen to the Dharma. **All these transformed people, hearing the Dharma, will believe it and accept it, and comply with it without objection.** This is the second benefit that of the Buddha’s sending transformations of the four assemblies. They will not object to the way you lecture on the Sutra. They will not say, “You lectured it wrong! That is not the way to explain it! They will be satisfied with whatever explanation you give.

**If one speaks the Dharma in an uninhabited place** where no one else is, **I will send gods,** dragons, **ghosts, spirits, gandharvas,** musical spirits in the heavens, and **asuras** who like to fight, **and so forth,to listen to him speak the Dharma.** This is the third benefit that of the Buddha’s sending transformations of the eightfold division.

**Although I am in another country, I will at all times cause the speaker of Dharma to be able to see me.** This is the fourth benefit, that of seeing the Buddha. Does this mean the Dharma body, the Reward body, and the Transformation body of the Buddha? Yes. What is the Dharma body? It is The Dharma Flower Sutra. What is the Reward body? It is The Dharma Flower Sutra. What is the Transformation body? It is also The Dharma Flower Sutra. If you get to see The Dharma Flower Sutra, you are seeing the true body of the Thus Come One. In hearing The Dharma Flower Sutra you are hearing the true body of the Buddha. Therefore, you should not look for the Thus Come One outside of The Dharma Flower Sutra. The Dharma Flower Sutra itself is the Thus Come One’s true body.

**Should he forget a single punctuation mark of the Sutra, I will remind him of it, causing his knowledge to be perfected.** This is the fifth benefit that of gaining “Dharani.” If he forgets some part of the Sutra when he is lecturing, I will remind him so that he will remember it all. You should not get attached and think that the Buddha is actually going to whisper it in your ear. The Buddha will help you to remember it for yourself. He will give you some wisdom so that you can remember what you have forgotten.

“I do not quite believe this,” you say. “Before I believed in the Buddha, sometimes in school I would forget things and then suddenly think of them.”

Well, who reminded you of those things? It was also the Buddha because you have the Buddha’s wisdom and virtuous characteristics, and there is a connection between you and the Buddha. Therefore, whether you believe in the Buddha or not, that wisdom is all through the help of the Thus Come One. That way you will not forget your Sutra texts.

As I said, you are all transformed people. If you admit it, you are. If you do not, you are, too. Those who listen to The Dharma Flower Sutra are all transformed people. That is for sure. The Buddha told us this long ago, and we should not deny it. Not only should we be transformed people, we should be transformed Buddhas. On the 10th of May we are going to bathe the transformed Buddha on the Buddha’s birthday. In the past the Buddha’s birthday was held by Pu Chi. He is too old and does not dare this year.

This year there are real Bhikshus, and Bhikshunis, so the Buddhist Lecture Hall will conduct it. I will not be in charge, but my young disciples will be. I told you long ago that I appointed Guo Ning as Chairperson and Guo Qian as the advisor. All of you transformed people will go there to help the Buddha propagate, transform, and participate in the Dharma Assembly. Those of you who can lecture, should give talks. You cannot act like you are dumb. Those who do not lecture should go and support the Bodhimanda. In the future you will lecture. This year we are going to do the Incense Praise and the Eighty-eight Buddha Repentance. This is the first time this has been done in America. Next year we will do it again.

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

**“One who wishes to get rid of laxness, Should listen to this Sutra. This Sutra is hard to hear, And those who believe it and accept it are also rare.**

Outline:

F2. Verse.
G1. General exhortation.

Commentary:

**At that time, the World Honored One**, wanted to make things even clearer, **wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,** these verses arose from his great compassion.

**One who wishes to get rid of laxness,** which means laziness. Why are people lazy? It is because they like to take it easy. They do not like to move their arms and legs! Their hands do not like to work, and their legs do not like to walk. They prefer to sit or lie down and rest. As a rule, people do not like to quit being lazy. The Dharma Flower Sutra here is talking about someone who does want to give up one’s habit of being lazy. To get rid of laziness, you need a method, a plan. **Should listen to this Sutra.** If you want to get rid of it, here is the plan. It is not difficult at all. Just listen to The Dharma Flower Sutra. In this way you can get rid of your laziness. The Dharma Flower Sutra teaches you to be vigorous. When you hear it, you can change. **This Sutra is hard to hear.** Not just everyone gets a chance to hear The Dharma Flower Sutra. It is very, very hard to come by, and very hard to hear. **And those who believe it and accept it are also rare.** Should you get chance to hear it, it is then hard to believe it. If you do not believe it, there is no way you can put it to use and gain its advantages.

**Sutra:**

**It is like a person thirsty and in need of water Who digs for it on a high plain, And sees only dry, parched earth, And knows that water is still far off. Gradually he sees moist earth and then mud, And knows for sure that water is near.**

Outline:

G2. Verses concerning prose text.
H1. Verse about fruition.
I1. Setting up the parable.

**Commentary:**

**It is like a person thirsty and in need of water.** This represents common people who are seeking the “water” of the Buddha fruit. On the ground of the common person it is very dry, and so one wish to drink the Dharma water and realize the Buddha fruit. **Who digs for it on a high plain,** digging a well. This represents cultivating the Way. Your cultivation is like digging a well. **And sees only, dry, parched earth.** This means that because your arrogance and pride are as high as Mount Sumeru, you cultivate coming and going but are always on dry ground. You have not reached moist ground. You are on the ground of dry wisdom. You cultivate, attain a principle, but you are still far from water. **And knows that water is still far off.** You are still far from Buddhahood, yet you know that eventually you will gain it.

**Gradually he sees moist earth and then mud.** After you gain dry wisdom you keep digging and gradually you see “moist earth”, that is, you gain a bit of the flavor and advantage of cultivation. “And mud”, means you attain the first, second, third, or fourth fruits of Arhatship. **And knows for sure that water is near.** You are sure that in the future you will realize Buddhahood. To explain the analogy in terms of the five periods of the Buddha’s teaching, the high plain also represents the Avatamsaka Period. If we want to understand The Avatamsaka Sutra, it is like being on a high plain and digging a well. You dig and dig, but you just cannot understand the Avatamsaka’s principles.

Then, you go to the Agama Period, which is like the dry earth and investigate it. Then you go to the Vaipulya Period. This is like seeing moist earth. The Prajna Period is like seeing mud. The Prajna Teaching is the pivotal point of the teachings where the wealth is passed on from the Vaipulya Period, through the Prajna Period, into the Lotus-Nirvana Assembly. In the Prajna Teaching the Buddha’s “will” is made out. The Lotus-Nirvana Period is the Buddha’s complete body. It is like finding water.

When one begins to cultivate it is very difficult. One feels that one cultivates and cultivates but does not get anything. One learns so much Dharma, and it is still as if there is nothing at all. There is nothing you can grab onto. You cannot see it. You cannot hear it. You cannot even think about it! It is empty any way you think about it. It is very, very difficult. But you still must continue working without cease. You continue working and you still do not get anything! It is like dry, parched earth. Then, after a time, things start to get interesting. One sees moist earth. One goes forward and feels that one has developed some wisdom and obtained the “mud” of Prajna, finally, one certifies to the water of the Dharma Flower, to the doctrines of The Dharma Flower Sutra.

These doctrines are endless. They have no beginning, no end, no inside, no outside. They are not great or small. They are ineffably wonderful, wonderful beyond words. The Dharma Flower is truly wonderful Dharma. Only the word “wonderful” can approximate the doctrines of The Dharma Flower. One who drinks the water of The Dharma Flower will never be a ghost again. What will one become? One will become a Buddha. Why would one become a ghost? It is because one never drank The Dharma Flower water. Why would one become an animal? It is because one never got the mud of Prajna. These birds, you see, never got the mud of Prajna—thus, their bird-existence. You can explain it this way.

There are many ways to explain the doctrines, because they are endless, wonderful Dharmas. We shall now explain the analogy according to the Four Additional Practices: Heat, Summit, Patience, and Highest Mundane Dharmas. Let us say that a person cultivates the Way. He is “searching for water.” He first comes to the position of “heat”. He does not know where it comes from, but it is warm. Eventually, he reaches the position of the “summit,” the highest point. He is “digging on a high plain”. Like a newborn child who does not understand anything, he is at the position of summit and cannot go forward. He just has to sit tight. This is called “patience”. You cannot strike up false thinking and run off, or else you might get caught by demons or ghosts. So you “continue your efforts without interruption.”

At the summit, you have to just stay there and be patient. You can try like Monkey King Sun Wukong and do a somersault across 108,000 miles, but you might not make it back. So even if you want to run, you cannot. You have to remain at the position of patience. Having cultivated at the position of patience, you gain the moist earth and the mud. Then, when you reach the place of water, you are the “foremost in the world.” To be foremost in the world means that you are the most eminent Sanghan in the world. You are an enlightened one as Dharma Master so and so said. This person who has become enlightened is the “foremost in the world.” At the position of “highest of worldly Dharmas,” you get to drink the Dharma Flower water.

You see there are countless ways to explain the Dharma. You could never finish explaining all the doctrines. If you know how to listen to the Sutras, even if I did not explain the principles, you would still understand this principle. For those who do not know how to listen to Sutra lectures, I may talk about this principle and yet they will not understand this principle. “What is he talking about? Water? Mud? Dry earth? Warmth? Summit? Patience? What is “the foremost in world”? What is all this?” you would wonder.

You do not know? Well I do not either!

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

This afternoon we are going to “liberate life.” Americans see this as strange and wonder why it is done. We do it so that living beings can be free, so they do not have to be kept in cages. We also do it to nurture our compassionate hearts by giving creatures their freedom. By not killing we are cultivating compassion. In letting living creatures go we also cultivate compassion. Our compassionate hearts grow larger everyday until they are as large as the heart of the greatly compassionate Bodhisattva Guan Shi Yin. Guan Yin Bodhisattva do not kill living beings. She always liberated beings, and so she has a great compassionate heart.

We should imitate the great kindness and great compassion of Guan Yin Bodhisattva and liberate life. It is all very logical. If you liberate life it increases your compassion. Liberating life is just liberating oneself. Why? It is because you and all living beings are basically one substance. Living beings and oneself are the same. If someone put me in a cage, would I not be uncomfortable? Would I not wish that someone would let me go? If I were put in jail I would not want to live there. Likewise, I do not like to see birds put in cages. This is because living beings and myself are of one substance. Since I feel this, I want to liberate life.

What is more, you do not know which living being was related to you in a former life. One might have been your father, your brother, or your sister. You cannot know for sure. Perhaps they were your children or your friends. Right now you have not gained the Heavenly Eye or the Penetration of Past Lives so you do not know the cause and effect. When you see these creatures, you feel uncomfortable and want to set them free. Setting them free is not stupid by any means, as some people might think. It is a part of cultivation. There is not just one road in cultivation. There are eighty-four thousand Dharma-doors in cultivation, and every single door leads to the realization of supreme enlightenment. Liberating life is one of them.

In America, in the past, very few people understood this. We are leading the way in this regard and instituting the custom so that people can understand this Dharma. Be careful not to call it “stupid.” If you think that way, you will obstruct your own cultivation.

I just said that we would not want to be locked in jail. I will tell you a true dharma. This is not an analogy. Your own body is, in fact, a cage! You are stuck in your own body, and you can never get out of it. I just discussed the four positions—warmth, summits, patience, and highest of worldly dharmas. You have never reached the summit, patience, or the highest of worldly dharmas. When you make it to the highest of worldly dharmas, then you will have escaped from the cage of your body. You will have “liberated” your own “life.” That is the real liberation of life. This is some real principle I am telling you here. If you want to liberate your own life you must first liberate these little creatures’ lives. One kind of liberation helps the other kind of liberation of life. Liberating life is a very important part of Buddhist practice. But if you have not understood it, you might think it very ordinary. If you do not cultivate one kind of liberating life, you cannot obtain the other kind. There are many changes and transformations. Do not look upon it lightly. The liberating of life brings great returns on your efforts. Do not criticize Dharma-doors that you cannot understand. Perhaps now you understand, perhaps you do not.

**Sutra:**

**Medicine King, you should know In this way, those people Who do not hear The Dharma Flower Sutra Are very far from the Buddha’s wisdom. Those who hear this profound Sutra, Will thoroughly understand the Hearer Dharmas. This is the king of Sutras And as to those who hear it and ponder upon it, You should know that such people, Have drawn close to the Buddhas’ wisdom.**

Outline:

I2. Correlating to the Dharma.

**Commentary:**

Shakyamuni Buddha called out again. **Medicine King, you should know, in this way, those people,** the ones I just talked about, **who do not hear The Dharma Flower Sutra, are very far from the Buddha’s wisdom.** You should know that after my extinction, all those people, gods, dragons, or spirits of the eightfold division who do not hear this Sutra will not have an opportunity to become Buddhas. Why not? It is because they do not have the Buddha’s wisdom. It will be a long time before they become Buddhas.

**Those who hear this profound Sutra,** The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, this profound, far reaching, and wonderful Dharma, **will thoroughly understand the Hearer Dharmas.** They will understand that the Hearer Dharmas are not ultimate. They will know that those of the Two Vehicles have not reached the ultimate point, but must still go forward. They must cultivate the Bodhisattva Path, the Six Perfections and the Ten Thousand Conducts, for these are the Dharmas for realizing the Buddha Path.

**This is the king of Sutras. And as to those who hear it and ponder upon it. You should know that such people have drawn close to the Buddha’s wisdom.** Those who hear this Sutra and who then very carefully ponder upon its meaning. This does not mean false thinking. It means thinking it over, meditating on it, like when you think on the topic, “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?” If you meditate on this topic until you understand it, then you will be enlightened. Now, if you think about The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, wondering, “How can it be so wonderful? Why is it called wonderful Dharma? What does this mean?” A person who does this has drawn near to the Buddha’s wisdom. They are close to the Buddha’s wisdom, but they have not arrived at it yet. When you arrive at it, then you truly

Deeply enter the Sutra treasury
And gain wisdom like the sea.

How does one go about “deeply entering the Sutra treasury?” From the first words of The Dharma Flower Sutra, “This I have heard…” you illumine the real mark of all dharmas with your wisdom, which penetrates it from beginning to end. This does not mean that you merely read it by rote. It means that you understand it and penetrate it completely. You obtain the Dharma Flower Samadhi, like the Tien Tai Master Zhi Zhe who entered the Dharma Flower Samadhi as he read the lines, “This is called true vigor. This is called true Dharma offering.” In this flash of illumination, he understood the entire Sutra.

True recitation of Sutras does not involve the mouth, and a true offering of incense does not involve the hands. One of my disciples said he could not recite the Shurangama Mantra, and now he can recite it line for line. Who is reciting it? Sutras have wonderful Dharma just like this. For a long time he could not recite it, and then one day he thought, “I should be able to do this,” and he did without a single mistake! Reciting the Sutras is also this way. The true way to recite Sutras is not with your mouth. The true way to offer incense is not with your hands. These are just outward ceremonies. If you obtain the “incense offering samadhi” you can offer incense without using your hands.

You say, “What is this Dharma Master trying to say?”

I do not know either! Do not ask me. Not only you are in the dark, so am I. But it does not seem to me that I have said anything at all. Probably none of you believe this.

We say that in true recitation one does not use the mouth. However true recitation is not apart from the mouth either. Real offering of incense does not involve the hands, but it is not apart from the hands either. One does not use them, and one does not 'not' use them. What is this? True recitation of Sutras is the recitation of the wordless Sutra. The Sutra which does not a have single word, is not apart from words, and it is not apart from “non-words.” True offering of incense does not involve the hands, nor is it apart from the hands. This is because you use the heart to offer incense. In this way you are offering incense all the time, in the six periods of the day and night, however, the offering of incense does not depend on the hand, and it is not apart from the hand.

Today, one of my confused disciples asked his confused teacher about a confusing situation. The confused disciple did not understand himself. He said, “Sometimes when I talk, it is me. Other times when I talk it is not I. One person has turned into two people.”

Would you call that confused? The confused teacher did not understand what was going on either. The confused teacher did not want to be stumped by his confused disciple, however, so he thought of a confused solution to the problem. He said, “Do not have yourself talk and do not have the other person talk. Have the ‘truth’ do the talking. Whatever part is true, let that part do the talking. You do not use whichever one is false.”

The confused disciple heard this and his confused question answered. His confused teacher clarified his question. Who would have guessed that a confused teacher would instruct a disciple into non-confusion?

**Sutra:**

**One who speaks this Sutra Should enter the Thus Come One’s room Put on the Thus Come One’s robes, And sit on the Thus Come One’s throne, And fearlessly, in the assembly, Expound it to them in detail. Great compassion is the Thus Come One’s room, Gentleness and patience are the Thus Come One’s robes, The emptiness of all Dharmas is the Thus Come One’s throne. Dwelling in this, one should speak the Dharma. If, when one speaks this Sutra Someone would slander him with evil mouth,Or hit him with knives, sticks, tiles or stones Recollecting the Buddha, he should endure this.**

Outline:

H2. Verse about method.
I1. Statement of method.

**Commentary:**

**One who speaks this Sutra.** ‘To explain The Dharma Flower Sutra after my extinction,’ Shakyamuni Buddha told Medicine King Bodhisattva, ‘one **should enter the Thus Come One’s room.**’ First of all they must enter the Buddha’s room, **put on the Thus Come One’s robes and sit on the Thus Come One’s throne. And fearlessly, in the assembly,** one is not intimidated by the size of the audience**. Expound it to them in detail,** expound upon it broadly and in detail.

What is the Thus Come One’s room? It is certainly not the room he lives in. **Great compassion is the Thus Come One’s room.** You must have a greatly compassionate heart and vow to save all living beings, helping them to leave suffering, attain bliss, end birth and cast off death, and quickly realize the Buddha Path. Compassion means that one would not deliberately harm even a blade of grass or a tiny bug, an ant, or a mosquito.

The purpose of Liberating Life in Buddhism is for the nurturing of compassion. If you have true compassion you will realize that all living beings are of one substance. Since we are all of the same substance, it is up to us to help creatures gaining their freedom. Yesterday, we liberated some pigeons. Perhaps they were your relatives, father, mother, brothers or sisters, from former lives—it does not matter—they are living beings, and they are suffering so we should help them to gain freedom. That is compassion. Compassion does not mean being compassionate in one situation and not in another. Compassion means a universal concern for the welfare of all creatures. It is not partial to human beings, or animals, or any particular form of life. Compassion should extend to all of existence, to the entire Dharma Realm. This is the Thus Come One’s room—great compassion.

**Gentleness and patience are the Thus Come One’s robes.** Gentleness means that one is not tough and stubborn. The Earth Store Bodhisattva Sutra says, “Stubborn living beings are hard to subdue.” Gentleness is the opposite of toughness.

Patience is the most wonderful of Dharmas. It is the third of the Six Perfections. Patience is of three types: produced patience, dharma patience, and unproduced dharma patience. Produced patience refers to the ability to endure both good and evil treatment by other living beings and to bear what others cannot bear. You must yield when others cannot yield. You can endure hunger, thirst, fatigue, wind, rain, heat, and cold. Cultivating patience and gentleness are like the Thus Come One’s clothing.

Dharma patience means that in your investigation of the Buddhadharma you endure long periods of study. If you have no patience, your mind may become uneasy and impatient. You might think, “I have studied so much Buddhadharma and read so many Sutras and learned so many mantras, but so much remains. I will never get to the end of it.” And you think about quitting.

Or perhaps you have just begun to study and you get anxious thinking, “I will never catch up with the others,” and you cannot be patient. In studying the Buddhadharma you have to be patient. You cannot get nervous or anxious because that is just false thinking. If you have too much false thinking, you will forget everything you know.

There is also the unproduced Dharma patience. What is “not produced”? Ignorance is not produced. This refers to the state in which you view that within the entire three thousand great thousand worlds not a single dharma is produced or destroyed. This kind of vision is extremely hard to endure, but you can bear it. Or say your Five Eyes are about to open, and you have to be patient with a lot of uncomfortable states. You may get headaches or feel that you cannot see anything. You must be patient, pay no attention to the discomfort. Basically, it may be impossible to bear, but you must bear it. If you cannot bear it, you cannot get enlightened. You must not lose patience and get nervous or upset.

**The emptiness of all Dharmas is the Thus Come One’s throne.** Some people might get an understanding of all the Dharmas and then become self-satisfied. Take care not to do this. Do not think, “I know all about the Dharma. I can lecture The Shurangama Sutra and The Lotus Sutra and The Vajra Sutra. I am a lot more advanced than everyone else.” If you think like this, you have not seen the emptiness of all dharmas. On the contrary, you have become obstructed by the dharmas. Not only have you failed to gain any true understanding of dharmas, you have formed an attachment to them. With such an attachment, you cannot gain the throne of the Thus Come One, that is, the emptiness of all dharmas. If one has an attachment to Dharmas, one cannot obtain the emptiness of all dharmas and “sit on the throne of the Thus Come One.”

Those of you who had never seen liberating life would have first impressions about it. Yesterday we liberated life, and afterwards I asked you each how you felt about it. Once it is done it is done, but still your impressions remain.

**Dwelling in this, one should speak the Dharma.** One should not have an attachment to self and others. One should not have the mark of self, living beings, others, or a life.

**If, when one speaks this Sutra, someone would slander him with an evil mouth.** Let us say, while you are lecturing someone comes along and starts yelling at you. Basically, you are doing something meritorious, but this person reviles you for it. **Or hit him with knives, sticks, tiles or stones. Recollecting the Buddha, he should endure this.** Think of the Buddha’s great compassion, and remain gentle and patient. Remember the emptiness of all dharmas. Since all dharmas are empty, the one hitting you is empty, and you are empty, and so what is there to make you angry? Recollect the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Recollect the Buddha and cultivate compassion. Recollect the Dharma and cultivate patience. Recollect the Sangha and cultivate gentleness.

**Sutra:**

**In a thousand myriads of millions of lands I manifest a pure, solid body, Throughout limitless millions of eons, Speaking Dharma for the sake of living beings. If after my extinction, There is one who can speak this Sutra, I will send by transformation the four assemblies, Bhikshus and Bhikshunis, As well as men and women of purity, To make offerings to that Dharma Master. I will gather living beings there To listen to the Dharma. Should someone wish to harm him, With knives, sticks, tiles, or stones, I will send transformed people, To surround and protect him. Should the speaker of Dharma Be alone in an uninhabited place Where it is lonely without a human sound, And there be reading and reciting this Sutra, I will then manifest A pure and radiant body. Should he forget a single passage or sentence, I will remind him so he recites it smoothly. Should persons of such virtue Preach for the four assemblies, Or recite the Sutra in a deserted place, They shall all see me. Should one be dwelling in an empty place I will send gods and dragon kings, Yakshas, ghosts, spirits and so forth To be listeners in the Dharma assembly. This person will delight in speaking the Dharma, And explain it in detail without obstruction. Because the Buddhas are protective and mindful of him, He can cause the assembly to rejoice greatly.**

Outline:

I2. The five kinds of benefit.

**Commentary:**

**In a thousand myriads of millions of lands, I manifest a pure, solid body.** Shakyamuni Buddha says, “After I enter into Nirvana I will manifest bodies. **Throughout limitless millions of eons, speaking Dharma for the sake of living beings. If after my extinction, there is one who can speak this Sutra,** The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. **I will send by transformation the four assemblies: Bhikshus and Bhikshunis, as well as men and women of purity**--Upasakas and Upasikas. **To make offerings to that Dharma Master;** to the one speaking the Dharma. **I will gather living beings there to listen to the Dharma.** I will gather them together to listen to the Dharma.

**Should someone wish to harm him;** to hurt the Dharma Master **with knives, sticks, tiles, or stones, I will send transformed people to surround and protect him,** to protect the person from harm.

Although Shakyamuni Buddha has entered into Nirvana, now in other worlds and other lands, he has become a Buddha in order to teach and transform living beings. Now, here in this Saha world when someone speaks The Dharma Flower Sutra, then Shakyamuni Buddha, from other lands, is protective and mindful of that Dharma Master. Not only does Shakyamuni mindfully protect those who lecture on the Sutra, but he also protects those who receive and uphold this Sutra, those who read, recite, and write it out. This is the Dharma Master Chapter, which discusses the five types of Dharma Masters of whom the Buddha is protective and mindful. Since Shakyamuni Buddha cannot come in person, he sends transformed people and the gods and dragons of the eightfold division. There are five types of Dharma Masters protected mindfully by the Buddha. Ultimately what is a “Dharma Master?”

Dharma is the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha. Master means first of all that they take the Dharma as their Master. It also means that they bestow the Dharma upon others. This passage is the final section on verses in the Masters of Dharma Chapter, the tenth chapter of The Dharma Flower Sutra. These verses praise the merit and virtue of Dharma Masters who explain The Dharma Flower Sutra.

**Should the speaker of Dharma,** “If after my extinction,” continues the Buddha, “there is someone who wishes to speak The Dharma Flower Sutra himself.” Perhaps he decides to do it on his own or perhaps others request him to do it. At any rate if he should **be alone in an uninhabited place.** This is a Dharma Master who decided himself to live deep in the mountains, perhaps in a cave, in a solitary place, alone **where it is lonely without a human sound,** an extremely pure place. All day long you never hear a human voice, for a whole month or even an entire year, ten years, a hundred years, you do not hear a human sound.

**And there be reading and reciting this Sutra.** In such a place it is easy to enter samadhi, to gain dhyana samadhi. Perhaps he reads it, or perhaps he recites it from memory, **I will then manifest,** right then in this solitary place, I will appear to this cultivator in a pure and radiant body. **This pure and radiant body** is also just pure wisdom. Pure wisdom means no jealousy or obstruction. It is pure and light. Shakyamuni Buddha will manifest this body. What is the pure and radiant body? It is just The Dharma Flower Sutra. The Dharma Flower Sutra will cause you to give rise to pure wisdom. When you have pure wisdom, then you obtain pure light. With pure light you manifest the pure Dharma body.

**Should he forget a single passage or sentence, I will remind him so he recites it smoothly.** Perhaps in a dream I will come and tell him, “You forget a word there. Remember to put it in.” Or perhaps the Buddha will remind you when you are sitting in dhyana samadhi and your memory lapses. “How do those verses in the Masters of the Dharma chapter go? Let us see, ‘Should the speaker of Dharma be alone in an uninhabited place, where it is isolated without a human sound…then what? Oh! I remember: And there would be reading and reciting this Sutra.’” You will suddenly remember it. Actually it is not you remembering it. It is Shakyamuni Buddha in the Land of Eternal Quiescent Light, shining his wisdom light upon you so that you can remember it. Would you not say that was wonderful? It is even more wonderful than buying your own computer! It is faster than a computer, and you do not have to program it or get a print out or anything. The Buddha’s computer is more efficient than ours!

**Should persons of such virtue,** that is people with pure cultivation and virtuous practice, people without lust, greed, hate and stupidity, people who have morality, samadhi, and wisdom. **Preach for the four assemblies**, speak The Dharma Flower Sutra**or recite the Sutra in a deserted place. They shall all see me.** “Me” here, just means The Dharma Flower Sutra. If you recite The Dharma Flower Sutra and obtain the wisdom of The Dharma Flower Sutra, then you have opened the wisdom of the Buddha and attained a vision of the Buddha himself.

**Should one be dwelling in an empty place, I will send gods and dragon kings, Yakshas, ghosts, spirits, and so forth to be listeners in the Dharma assembly.** Because there are no human beings there, the Buddha will send all the gods and dragons, Dharma protectors and so forth to be the audience. **This person will delight in speaking the Dharma and explain it in detail without obstruction.** One principle will expand into limitless meanings, and the limitless meanings will return to the one principle. He will be unobstructed—light upon light interpenetrating, like Indra’s net.

**Because the Buddhas are protective and mindful of him,** of the one speaking The Dharma Flower Sutra, **he can cause the assembly to rejoice greatly.** Because the Buddha is helping this person speak the Dharma; there is not a single person who is unhappy. They are all happy and delighted. Even if this Dharma Master scolds people, they like to listen to it. Why? It is because he has virtue.

**Sutra:**

**One who draws near this Dharma Master Will quickly gain the Bodhisattva Path. One who follows this master in study Will see Buddhas as countless as the Ganges’ sands.**

Outline:

G3. Concluding exhortation.

Commentary:

**One who draws near this Dharma Master** who expounds upon The Dharma Flower Sutra**will quickly gain the Bodhisattva Path**, the way cultivated by the Bodhisattvas. **One who follows this master in study will see Buddhas as countless as the Ganges’ sands.** If you study the Buddhadharma with this teacher, you see countless Buddhas. The Buddhas will rub you on the crown and give you a prediction saying, “Good man, in the future you shall become a Buddha,” and so on.

Do you see how inconceivable The Dharma Flower Sutra is? Today we have finished The Dharma Master Chapter.

On the first day of the Summer Session we will start Chapter Eleven: Seeing the Jeweled Stupa. Whoever wants to see a jeweled Stupa should not miss it.

“What is the use of seeing a jeweled Stupa?” you ask.

If you see one then you can live in one, and you will not have to worry about having no place to live!

Originally the Buddha’s birthday is Tuesday, but since everyone works during the week, we are having it on Sunday. If you bathe the Buddha, in the future people will come and bathe you. If you do not, when you become a Buddha no one will remember your birthday! Everything is a matter of cause and effect. Why do so many people remember Shakyamuni Buddha’s birthday? It is because in limitless eons in the past, he bathed other Buddhas. Bathing the Buddha now is for the future when you become a Buddha. If you do not want to become a Buddha, you can forget about bathing the Buddha. If you do not care about the result, you do not need to plant the cause. However, if you think, “The Buddha is not bad. He is greatly enlightened and really understands everything. I would like to be like that,” then you should join in and bathe the Buddha.

Basically, the Buddha’s body is perfectly clean and he does not need a bath. The ceremony is a manifestation of our filial thoughts towards the Buddha. “Our teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha’s birthday has come around. When he was born nine dragons came to bathe him and so we follow their example and bathe the Buddha. We are Buddhist disciples and so we should be filial to our teacher.” One need not give a lot of money in exchange for bathing the Buddha. Since, unlike some places, we do not charge money for bathing the Buddha, our ceremony is really clean. I hope this is clear now. We are not in it for the money.

The Dharma which is transmitted here is the “everything okay” Dharma.