**The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra**

Chapter 12: Devadatta
With Commentary by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

Devadatta was the Buddha’s cousin, but he opposed everything the Buddha ever did. Some people say that he was the Buddha’s enemy, but this is not the case. Devadatta actually helped the Buddha accomplishes Buddhahood. Not only did he help him in one life, but in life after life. However, he did so in a backhanded way. He “helped” Shakyamuni Buddha by “opposing” him. How does this work? Say for instance someone resolves to cultivate the Way, but another person gives him trouble all day long, by either scolding him, or ridiculing him, or generally giving him a hard time. This opposition serves as a test for the cultivator’s resolve. One of my disciples once asked, “Is it okay to give people tests to help them out?” I said, “No. If you have certified to the fruit and know that your testing them will help them realize the Way, then it is okay. If you have not certified to the fruit, then do not test other people. If you test others, others will test you. If you test people and they fail, then they will fall. If people test you and you fail, then you will fall.”

The situation with Devadatta was different, however. Devadatta’s state was inconceivable. His spiritual powers were as great as those of the Buddha, and it was Devadatta’s opposition that spurred the Buddha on to his attainment of the Way. This chapter tells us that in the past Devadatta lectured The Dharma Flower Sutra to Shakyamuni Buddha, helping him realize Buddhahood.

Devadatta is a Sanskrit name, which means, “fever of the gods (天熱).” From the time of his birth, he specialized in “helping” people by opposing them. This would lead to some heated emotions on the part of the recipients of his generosity. This is an explanation of his name according to the method of “causes and conditions.”

How did Devadatta come to be Shakyamuni Buddha’s aide in realizing the Way? Let us look into the Way it happened. Long ago there was a wealthy elder named Xu Tan whose fortune in the seven gems was impressively abundant. His eldest son was called Xu Mo Ti. When his wife died, Xu Tan though advanced in years, remarried, and had another son, named Xu Pi Ye. The elder passed on when his younger son was only about 18 or 20. The two sons proceeded to divide up their father’s riches but Xu Mo Ti, the elder brother, decided he did not want to give his younger brother half. He took him up to Vulture Peak for a holiday barbecue, and when they got near the top, Xu Mo Ti pushed his brother right off the top! Then he threw rocks on top of him to bury him. He then went home and took possession of all of his father’s wealth.

Xu Mo Ti, surprisingly enough, was Shakyamuni Buddha in a former life. You should not think that Shakyamuni Buddha never did anything wrong. The younger brother was Devadatta in a former life, and the elder was King Ajatashatru, the one who locked his parents up in jail. Life after life, Shakyamuni Buddha was involved with these people in varying combinations of affinities, and so even after he became a Buddha, they still came and gave him trouble. This chapter does not discuss these events, but does tell how Devadatta helped the Buddha accomplish Buddhahood.

You could say this was a case of “the suffering of being joined to what you hate,” one of the eight sufferings. Actually, it would be more correct to call it “the happiness of being joined to what you hate!” How is this? The more Devadatta opposed him, the more the Buddha liked it. If they had truly hated one another, then as lifetimes passed, they would have been drawn farther and farther apart. So it was not really a case of dislike. Because of their affinities, life after life they met one another and helped each other in their cultivation—one way or another.

**Sutra:**

**At that time, the Buddha told the Bodhisattvas, gods, humans, and the four assemblies, “In the past, throughout limitless eons, I sought The Dharma Flower Sutra without laxness or weariness.”**Outline:

D3. Chapter Twelve: Devadatta.
E1. Meeting up with Devadatta in the distant past.
F1. Showing how teacher and disciple held the Sutra in the distant past.
G1. Prose.
H1. The period of time in which the Buddha sought the Dharma.

**Commentary:**

This passage of the text says that Shakyamuni Buddha had given outer wealth and inner wealth throughout his past lives to seek the unsurpassed Bodhi. Everything he gave was for the sake of the Dharma.

**At that time,** having finished speaking the Chapter on the Jeweled Stupa and without being asked, **the Buddha told the Bodhisattvas, gods, humans, and the four assemblies** of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas and Upasikas, **“In the past, throughout limitless eons, I sought** to understand the doctrines of **The Dharma Flower Sutra without laxness or weariness.** I have never grown weary. I never took a break. Whenever The Dharma Flower Sutra was being lectured, I went to listen. I never missed an opportunity.”

**Sutra:**
 **“For many eons, I was a king and vowed to seek supreme Bodhi with a non-retreating mind.”**Outline:

H2. Clarifying his search for Dharma.
I1. His vow.

**Commentary:**

**For many eons** throughout many, many lifetimes **I was a king and vowed to seek supreme Bodhi with a non-retreating mind.** I made the Great Vehicle vow to seek Unsurpassed Enlightenment without ever turning back or getting side-tracked.

**Sutra:**
 **“Wishing to perfect the Six Paramitas, I diligently practiced giving, my mind not begrudging elephants, horses, the seven precious things, countries, cities, wives, children, slaves, servants, even my head, eyes, marrow, brains, body, flesh, hands, and feet—not sparing even life itself.”**Outline:

I2. His cultivation.
J1. Showing how he practiced giving to perfect the Dana Paramita.

**Commentary:**

**Wishing to perfect the Six Paramitas, I diligently practiced giving, my mind not begrudging elephants, horses, and the seven precious things,** gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearls, and carnelian. Sometimes I gave away **countries, cities**—my entire kingdom altogether! But these are just material possessions. I also gave up **wives, children, slaves,** and **servants.** As long as someone wanted them, I would give them away. But this is just the giving of outer wealth. I could give all these things away. I also gave away inner wealth. **Even my head, eyes, marrow, brains, body, flesh, hands and feet—not sparing even life itself.** I had no regard for my body and life. As long as someone needed them, I would give all these things away. Thus, I gave away both inner and outer wealth in my desire to perfect the practice of Dana Paramita, the Perfection of Giving.

We see from the above that Shakyamuni Buddha, wishing to perfect the Six Paramitas, was able to give up both the proper and dependant retribution worlds, that is, give up himself and everything he owned. In giving up both the proper and dependence retribution worlds, he gave himself away entirely.

This is true giving. This is true Dana Paramita, the perfection of giving, and the first of the Six Paramitas.

The second is that of Morality. The Perfection of Morality means guarding against offenses in seven departments. The seven divisions are: three of the body and four of the mouth—killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct with the body and loose speech, lying, harsh speech, and backbiting with the mouth. Not committing these seven offenses is being moral.

The third Paramita is that of Patience. What is patience? Patience means to bear up under insult. It means to take what you cannot take. For example, if someone hits you and you kick him or her right back, you cannot call that patience, but if someone hits you on the face, and you turn the other cheek, that is patience. Besides, if they just slap one cheek and not the other, the other cheek will get jealous! Not striking back is having patience.

Vigor is the fourth Paramita. This means that you finish everything you start. If you start things with great excitement, but then get tired and quit, you do not have vigor. Completing the job indicates vigor.

The fifth Paramita is Dhyana. There are Four Dhyanas and Eight Samadhis. In the first Dhyana, the breath stops, and in the second Dhyana, both the breath and the pulse stop. One could be buried in the ground for two or three days and still not die—like a yogi! Scary, huh? Breath and no pulse. In the third Dhyana, thought stops as well. Then one is really not having false thinking. In the third Dhyana, thought stops, but it is not cut off. In the fourth Dhyana, thought is cut off altogether. The first Dhyana is called “The Joyous Ground of Leaving Production.” In this state one leaves afflictions and gives rise to happiness. But this is not yet samadhi. The second Dhyana is called “The Joyous Ground of Giving Rise to Samadhi.” The third Dhyana is called “The Wonderful Ground of Leaving Joy.” The fourth Dhyana is called “The Pure Ground of Leaving Thought.”

The Eight Samadhis are the Four Dhyanas plus the Samadhi of the Station of Limitless Emptiness, the Samadhi of the Station of Limitless Consciousness, the Samadhi of the Station of Nothing Whatsoever, and the Samadhi of the Station of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception.

The sixth Paramita is Prajna. With this perfection, one no longer contends or fights. People fight because they lack genuine wisdom, genuine prajna. If one has true wisdom, one will not fight or struggle. That is the doctrine of the Three Storehouses Teaching—the Small Vehicle. There are many, many different ways to explain the Six Paramitas. Each paramita has ten advantages, also.

The Six Perfections and the Ten Good Deeds

The first four of the Ten Good Deeds—not killing, not stealing, not committing sexual misconduct, and not lying—correspond to the first perfection, that of Giving.

The fifth of the Ten Good Deeds, not backbiting, corresponds to the Perfection of Morality, the second perfection.

The sixth of Ten Good Deeds, not indulging in abusive speech, corresponds to the third perfection, Patience.

The seventh of the Ten Good Deeds, not indulging in loose speech, corresponds to the fourth perfection, Vigor.

The eighth and ninth of the Ten Good Deeds, not being greedy or hateful, corresponds to the fifth perfection, dhyana samadhi.

The tenth of the Ten Good Deeds, not having deviant views (not being stupid) corresponds to the sixth perfection, Prajna wisdom.

The Six Perfections in Terms of Their Curing Powers

1. Giving cures one of stinginess.
2. Morality cures one of the tendencies to commit offenses.
3. Patience cures one of hatred.
4. Vigor cures one of laziness.
5. Dhyana samadhi cures one of scatteredness.
6. Prajna cures one of stupidity.

The Six Perfections and How They Interact

By giving, say giving up one’s home and family, one is able to maintain morality. Meeting with insult, one is then patient. Having been patient, one can be vigorous. Having been vigorous, one can subdue the five senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body, so they no longer play tricks. That is dhyana samadhi. They follow your instructions instead of the other way around. When the five senses have been tamed, you can know the Dharma Realm. That is Prajna wisdom.

The Six Perfections in Terms of Rewards

1. Giving brings the reward of being wealthy.

2. Morality brings the reward of the perfection and refinement of the six senses. You will not be blind, or deaf or otherwise incomplete.

3. Patience brings physical beauty. Why are people ugly? It is because in past lives they were impatient and could not bear with things.

4. Vigor brings the reward of having great power and authority.

5. Dhyana samadhi brings the reward of a long and healthy life. You can live as long as you like.

6. Prajna brings the reward of unobstructed eloquences.

The Ten Advantages of the Perfection of Giving :

1. One will be able to conquer the afflictions associated with stinginess. Stinginess is a form of affliction, which is hard to overcome. With the practice of giving one can overcome this fault.

2. One will be able to maintain a continuous attitude of generosity. Sometimes people’s first thought is to give, but then in their next thought they retreat and get stingy. The second advantage of practicing true giving is that one is able to sustain an attitude of generosity.

3. One will be able to share one’s wealth with all living beings, without discrimination.

4. One will be born in a wealthy family.

5. In every life one will always be generous and ready to give.

6. The four assemblies will take delight in one’s presence. They will like one because of one’s generosity.

7. One will not be intimidated by others. No matter how much tough opposition one receives from other people—be it good or bad opposition—one will not be afraid.

8. One will enjoy a wide reputation. Everyone will know about one’s practice of giving.

9. One’s hands and feet will be soft and supple. They will not be coarse like sandpaper! The Buddhas’ hands are said to be as soft as cotton and this is because in every life they practiced giving.

10. One will find a genuine Good and Wise Advisor. If one has not practiced giving, one will be unable to find a true spiritual teacher. But if one has, then one will meet a Good and Wise Advisor who will employ “relentless compassion” to help one give up all one’s bad habits and faults.

If one can practice giving one will obtain these ten advantages. Each of the Six Perfections has ten advantages, making sixty in all.

The second is the Perfection Morality. “Morality” is the stopping of evil and the prevention of offenses. It means to do no evil and offer up all good conduct. If you can do no evil and offer up all good conduct, you are truly holding the precepts. But you are deluded if you think, “My little faults are not that important. I just make minor mistakes. They will not hurt my cultivation.” You should know that a hair is very fine and tiny, but if a lot of them are put together, they can make a rope. You should not think it does not matter if you do not correct your small imperfections. The smaller the fault is, the more important it is to change it.

“Does that mean the big ones do not count? I can just change the little ones?”

If you change your small faults, the big ones will naturally disappear. This is because your big fault result from all your small faults put together. A mountain does not just spring into being of itself; it is a collection of millions of tiny dust motes put together. Our faults work the same way.

Does offering up all good conduct mean that you only do good deeds on a large scale and ignore small good deeds? No. The great comes from the small, just like the distant comes from the nearby, and the deep comes from the shallow. If you do small good deeds, your big good deeds will naturally be accomplished. Doing a lot of small good deeds just amounts to doing good on a large scale. So we say,

Do not think a good deed is small and thereby fail to do it.
Do not think an evil deed is small and go ahead and do it.

Those who hold the precepts, who do no evil and offer up all good conduct, gain ten advantages.

The Ten Advantages of the Perfection of Morality:

1. One will perfect All-Wisdom. If one keeps the precepts well, one can gain All-Wisdom.

2. One will study after the manner of the Buddha. The Buddha took the precepts as his teacher. The precepts are called “the Vajra bright jeweled precepts.” They are the original source of all the Buddhas. All the Buddhas arise from morality.

3. Those with wisdom will not find faults with one. Only stupid, senseless people will speak ill of them. If one keeps the precepts, wise people will have no cause to find fault with one. Stupid people might slander one, but that is just because they have right and wrong all mixed up. They take what is black as white. If one keeps the precepts, wise people will not only refuse to speak ill of one, but they will even praise one. However, if you want people to praise you, you must not compete to be the number one. You cannot take that position by force! If you do things so well that you are naturally number one, that is one thing. Whoever does the best, naturally becomes number one. If you are not that good, but you force yourself into the number one position, then you have only gained a false position for yourself. That is useless.

Movie kings and movie queens may occupy that position for a while, but they are not really kings and queens after all, and they cannot fool anybody. How do people turn out to be phony Hollywood kings and queens? In former lives they did not really do any work, they just struggled for false fame and glory. Since they sought to be royalty, they got their wish, but only in the world of celluloid dreams—empty and false.

4. One will not retreat from one’s vows. This is the most important. Say one vows, “I will seek the Buddhadharma no matter how hard it is. I do not care if I starve to death or freeze to death. I am not going to retreat. If no one makes offerings to me, that is the very best thing!” One should not be greedy for offerings. Do not drop hints to people hoping they will buy you things and then think, “I must have Way-virtue and be quite a cultivator. People are making offerings to me!” That is WRONG! One should make a vow, “I will seek the Buddha Way even if it means giving up my head, eyes, brains, marrow, my flesh, my hands and feet—my very life!”

One should make vows never to retreat from the Bodhi mind, never to turn back. One should not be like Shariputra, who tried to practice the Bodhisattva Path, but quit when he realized he gave up the wrong eye! That is just retreating! In the Buddhadharma, the harder things get, the more determined one should be to go forward and not retreat. That is the proper attitude for a true seeker of the Buddha Way, but it is not easy! All of you Good and Wise Advisors! Seeking the Buddhadharma is the hardest thing there is to do. You cannot be enthusiastic for five minutes and lose interest after five minutes.

5. One will dwell securely in proper conduct. One will peacefully practice proper, not deviant, conduct. Proper conduct means benefiting others. It does not mean benefiting yourself. If you are climbing on conditions, you do not have proper conduct. If you do not climb on conditions your conduct is proper.

6. One will cast aside birth and death. One should not hold one to birth and death, thinking, “My life is so valuable. I have to make nice offerings to my body—give it good food, vitamins, minerals, and so forth to make it really strong.” It may get stronger, but the stronger one’s body gets, the weaker ones wisdom becomes. What is the use of having a strong body, but weak wisdom? One must cast aside birth and death altogether. One should not hold on to one’s physical life at the expense of the life of one’s wisdom. Look upon birth and death as unimportant, thinking, “if I live, I live; if I die, I die,” while at the same time cherishing the firm resolve to cultivate. One should not misconstrue the meaning and think, “If birth and death are no problem, then I will just keep getting born and dying.” That is not what I mean. You must see birth and death as unimportant and yet still cultivate to end birth and death.

7. One will long for and delight in Nirvana. One thinks, “What I delight in most is Nirvana, in the Dharma of transcending birth and death.” Through holding the precepts one obtains Nirvana.

8. One will obtain an unfettered mind. One may have a lot of wisdom and have brought forth a formidable resolve for Bodhi. But then one gets tied up by greed, hatred, stupidity, pride, and doubt, to say nothing of the view of a body, one-sided view, views of unprincipled morality, views of grasping at opinions, and deviant views. These are Ten Fetters, which bind up your mind so that wisdom cannot come forth. Obtaining an unfettered mind means gaining liberation.

9. One obtains superior samadhi. It is not the samadhi of ordinary people. This samadhi power is very solid! Nothing can disturb it—nothing! It is an inconceivable kind of superior concentration.

10. One will not lack the wealth of faith. To have faith is to have wealth. People without faith are poor. If you do not believe the Dharma Master when he lectures on the Dharma, then you will not be able to bring forth the Bodhi mind. If you cannot bring forth the Bodhi mind, you are poor. Through the practice of morality, you will gain the riches of faith.

This is a general explanation. If one were to go into detail, a great deal more could be said.

The next Paramita is Patience. It is definitely not easy to be patient. The Chinese word for patience: (忍) has a knife blade on the top (刃), and a heart on the bottom (心). Using patience is like having a knife stuck into your heart. It is hard to bear; it really hurts. If you can bear what is difficult to bear, you can make it through the gate of patience, which means you can achieve Paramita, for Paramita just means “getting through it.” Paramita, a Sanskrit word, literally translates as “gone to the other shore.” You go from the shore of birth and death through the massive flow of afflictions to the other shore, which is Nirvana. I have written a verse about patience, which describes it pretty well. If you can remember it, it will be of great benefit:

Patience is a priceless gem which few know how to mine.
But if you can master it, everything works out fine!

“Priceless” does not mean it is worthless! It means you cannot put a price on it. One, two, three million—it is still not enough. It is invaluable. Most people will claim that they are very patient, but that is when everything is going their way. Once something happens that they do not want to put up with, they usually blow their tops! You may decide to cultivate patience, and strangely enough, someone will show up to test you by slugging you a good one, or trying to knock a few of your teeth out, and then kicking you around for a while. It might feel like that knife is being stuck in your heart, but if you can be patient and act as though nothing was going on, then you can make it through the gate. If you cannot take it, then you have to keep on trying. Patience is not easy, I repeat. Most people do not know how to be patient. If you can, everything will work out fine. It is just because you cannot be patient with things that everything gets messed up.

Maitreya Bodhisattva’s verse is also very good:

The old fool wears tattered clothes, and fills his belly with tasteless food,
Mends his clothes to keep away the cold,
and lets all things take their course.
If someone scolds the old fool, the old fool just says, “Fine.”
If someone hits the old fool, he just lies down to sleep.
Spit in his face, he just lets it dry.
“That way I save my strength and give you no affliction.”
This kind of Paramita is the jewel in the wonderful.
Knowing this news, how can you worry about not attaining the Way?

The old monk wears old, ragged clothes and eats unseasoned food. It does not taste like much, but he is full. When his clothes wear out he just patches them up and lets all things take their course. Nothing presents any problem. This is just “everything’s okay.” Sometimes it is not easy to be like that. Sometimes things just do not seem to work out for us. For Maitreya Bodhisattva, things always work out. If someone scolds him, he just says, “Great, keep on scolding me!” If someone hits him, he just lies down as if he were asleep. If you spit in his face, he does not even bother to wipe it off. This way he saves the energy it would take to wipe it off. People then think, “It is useless to try to fight with someone like this,” and they do not give rise to afflictions. If you can cultivate this Paramita, it is the most wonderful of gems. Knowing this, how can you fail to realize the Way? Do not worry about not becoming a Buddha. You most certainly will. All you have to do is cultivate patience. It will surely take you to the other shore.

Someone is thinking, “That will never work in our society. We have to go out and compete. We fight for everything we get. We combat and kill using a knife, a gun, a canon, an atomic bomb. We won't need this 'patience' you are talking about. The old fool is useless!”

Perhaps you cannot use him, but I will. Or maybe I will not use him, but I will tell my disciples to use him!

Five people have signed up to take refuge, and this makes me very ashamed. I do not know how to teach people who speak English because I am Chinese. However, five people want to take refuge but you should think it over very carefully. Once you take refuge, you have to listen to instructions. Whether or not you understand what I am saying, you still have to obey! If you think that you cannot do it, cross your name off the list. I do not want a lot of disciples. I would rather that they took refuge with the American Bhikshus and Bhikshunis. Then I would not have to worry about whether they obey instructions. Sometimes when I catch you disobeying my instructions and question you about it, you say, “I did not understand what you said!” I never know what to think. Perhaps it is true! So think it over and do not rush into this. From now on all my disciples have to listen to instructions.

The Ten Advantages of the Perfection of Patience :

Patience is not easy to perfect! In this world, the harder something is to do, the more worth is has. If something is not difficult, it is not valuable. Therefore, even though it is hard to cultivate patience, it brings great benefits and its value is extremely great.

If on the cause ground one cultivates patience, in the future the benefits one will obtain can be generally listed as follows:

1. Fire will not burn one. Why? It is because inside one, there is no fire. If there is no fire within then fire from outside has no way to harm one. If one has fire inside, one will get burned. It is also said that if one has problems inside, one will attract sickness from the outside. If one catches cold, it is often because inside one has been doing a lot of false thinking. If one practices patience and has gotten rid of one’s fiery temper, then the outside fires cannot burn one. If one’s nature is like ashes, then outside fires cannot set one aflame.

2. Knives cannot harm one. If one cultivates patience, and within one there are no “knives and guns,” that is, no thoughts of harming others, then the external knives and guns cannot harm one. It is said:

If inside the house there is a superior person,
superior people will come to visit.
If inside the house there are petty people;
petty people will stop by.

This is genuine philosophy!

3. Poison cannot harm one. If one has cultivated patience to perfection, then, as the Great Master Yung Chia said in his “Song of Enlightenment,”

If one meets with knives, it is no problem.
Or is given poison, it is no cause for alarm.

Even if one is poisoned, one will not die. Patriarch Bodhidharma was poisoned six times by jealous rivals, but did not die because for limitless kalpas he had been perfecting patience and had attained that Paramita. The Paramita acted as an antidote to the poison.

4. Water will not drown one. One who cultivates patience to perfection will not drown.

5. Non-humans will protect one. “Non-humans” refers to the gods and dragons and the rest of the eight-fold division of ghosts and spirits. They will all look out for one and watch over one’s Bodhimanda.

6. One’s appearance will be beautiful. If one cultivates patience, one will have a pleasing appearance. One will be liked by all whom see one, and will not make anyone afraid. People will all respect and cherish one. They will always want to be around one and will never desert one. “Beautiful” here refers to the physical manifestation of the purity of one’s thoughts. It is not the kind of beauty associated with glamour and sex appeal. One’s appearance will inspire reverence. It will not cause people to become emotionally infatuated or think impure thoughts.

7. The evil paths will be closed to one. The doors to the hells, the realm of animals, and ghosts will be closed to one. One will not fall into any of the three evil paths.

8. One will gain birth in the Brahma Heaven. If one cultivates patience, in the future one can be born in the pure heavens of Brahma.

9. One will be peaceful by day and night. In the six periods of the day and night, one will be happy and serene. During the day, one will not be worrying about how one is going to finish one’s work, and then in the evening be wondering if one is going to lose one’s job the next day and starve to death. Most people have a lot of worries. If one cultivates patience, one will not have such afflictions. One will always be extremely happy and peaceful, and free from worries.

10. One will always feel happy. One will always be in good spirits, very happy. This kind of happiness is not based on anything external. Rather it comes from within the self-nature and is not forced.

We will now discuss vigor. Vigor is the opposite of laziness. If you are listening to the lecture and falling asleep, you are not being vigorous! If you listen to the lecture, but strike up a lot of false thinking, you are not being vigorous. If you listen and talk to your friends at the same time, you are not being vigorous. What, then, is vigor? Not sleeping, not having false thinking, and not chattering! Sitting quietly, paying full, respectful attention is being vigorous. Vigor is something you cultivate yourself. You do not go around telling other people to do it. Of you feel like you are falling asleep, then standup! If that does not work, kneel. Vigor means fighting with the lazy worms inside you—outsmarting them all. Some people say, "I have received the five precepts. I do not kill. Isn't it a violation of the precepts to kill the lazy bug?" If you kill the lazy bug, you are vigorous. You should be as vigorous as a tiger! See how fast they run?

“I have never seen a tiger,” someone says.

Have you ever seen a cat? It can jump and it can climb trees. It can run faster than mice.

Vigor: you get up at four in the morning and you do not rest until ten at night. That is vigor.

If you take breaks all day long, you are not vigorous. Vigor just means you keep on working.

There is physical vigor and mental vigor. Using physical vigor means practicing the Way in the six periods of the day and night. In the morning you rise and do morning recitation, determined not to be late, not to make other people have to wait for you. If you make people wait for you all the time, instead of merit, you are committing offenses. It is said,

You can change the course of a thousand rivers,
But do not disturb a cultivator’s mind.

If you cause a cultivator to have one false thought, you are in for trouble! If you make everyone wait for you and cause them to be mad at you, you have committed offenses, great offenses!

Using mental vigor means being mindful of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha throughout the six periods of the day and night. You never indulge in false thinking. At all times you are respectful of the Triple Jewel and you think about making offerings to the Triple Jewel.

If you cultivate vigor by striking up your spirits and cultivating the ascetic practices, then you will gain:

The Ten Advantages of the Perfection of Vigor :

1. Others cannot defeat one. If one has the true skill of vigor, one will win all debates. No one will win over one. One will win because of vigor. If two armies are engaged in battle and one is very high spirited while the other is drowsy and lazy, the vigorous ones will certainly conquer the lazy ones.

2. The Buddhas will receive and protect one. This is quite inconceivable! The Buddha will look upon one and think, “This living being is pretty good. He is a straight ahead cultivator, not lazy at all.” The Buddhas will take care of one. Would you not call that an advantage?

3. One will be protected by non-humans. Not only will the Buddhas protect one, but the gods, dragons, the eightfold division, humans, and non-humans will protect one as well.

4. One will not forget the Dharma one hears. One will have a good memory. Once the Dharma passes by one’s ears, it will always remain as a seed of the Way. One will never forget it. Would you not like to receive this benefit? If you are not vigorous, you will not get it. For every increase in your effort, you gain that much benefit.

5. One will hear what one has not heard. One will hear Dharma one has never heard before. What an advantage!

6. One’s eloquence will increase. To start with, one might not have been able to speak the Dharma, but all of a sudden one becomes quite eloquent. This is because one was vigorous, and so one’s eloquence increased, those with eloquence can talk people out of crying into laughing, out of anger into compassion, and out of running away from the suffering of this Summer Session into staying! Eloquent people can even scold others and they will find it very pleasant and not hard at all to hear.

7. One will obtain the essence of Samadhi.

8. One will have little trouble or sickness. One will not be sick or afflicted. Such problems will vanish.

9. One will have good digestion. One will be able to eat all one wants, and in just a few hours one will be hungry again. Why? It is because one is not lazy. One does not sit around thinking, “The Master is not here. I think I will take a snooze.” One will also have a good appetite.

10. One will grow like the Udumbara flower. One will develop and grow, day by day, just like the Udumbara flower.

I just said that you should beat your lazy worms into vigorous tigers, but really, tigers are too fierce. Turn your lazy worms into vigorous dragons. That would be better.

Dhyana, the next Paramita, is a Sanskrit word meaning “the cultivation of thought.” The Zhong Wen transliteration is “Chan.” It is one of the Five major Schools of Buddhism: Chan, Teaching, Vinaya, Secret, and Pure Land. When you cultivate Dhyana, you cultivate a ‘hua tou’, or meditation topic, such as “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” You are then thinking in terms of existence and non-existence, and both the existence and non-existence of existence and non-existence! When you meditate, you “investigate Dhyana.” It is like drilling a hole through something. You just keep drilling and drilling until you get through. In the same way you keep investigating until you “break through.” It is like being in a dark, windowless room and drilling a hole in the wall until the light shines through. As a deluded person lacking understanding, you are in a “dark room.”

Investigating Dhyana is also like a cat stalking a mouse. I talked about the cat yesterday, just getting ready to bring him up again today! Now, if a cat is after a mouse, he will wait and wait by the mouse hole for the mouse to show his little head. As soon as it does—zap!—It is caught. What does the mouse represent? Ignorance. Just as ignorance was likened to a “dark room” in the previous analogy, so too, when you finally “see the light” in meditation, it is like catching the mouse.

Investigating Dhyana is also like a dragon watching over its pearl. Dragons are more attached to their pearls than to their very own lives. So they always take very good care of them. Meditators focus their concentration in the same way on their topic and never let it wander. To be mindful in thought after thought--you are mindful right here, just in this thought. To be mindful in thought after thought is to contemplate with ease. If you can be mindful in thought after thought, then you are able to contemplate at ease. If you cannot be mindful in thought after thought, then you have run away! Run? What does "running away" mean? It means that you strike up false thoughts. How is "contemplating with ease" translated? To not strike up false thoughts is to be at ease. If you have false thinking, you wander away from your topic. So we say,

When your thoughts stir, the myriad affairs arise.
When your thoughts stop, all affairs cease.

As soon as you strike up false thinking, everything starts happening. When your thoughts stop, then nothing is happening! I often tell you:

When the mind stops and thoughts cease, that is true wealth and honor.
When desire and selfishness is ended, that is the true field of blessings.

Why? It is because you are without greed. People who are not greedy are wealthy. Greedy people are poor. If they were not poor, why would they still want “more”? Why would they be greedy? People are greedy because they feel they do not have enough. If they have a million dollars, they want two million. If they have two million, they want two billion, and so on, and they are never satisfied. Why not? It is because they are afraid of being poor. People who cannot be satisfied are always miserable. People who know how to be content are always happy.

When desire and selfishness come to an end, that is the genuine field of blessings. People without blessings are always greedy for something. If you do not have false thinking, if you do not compete, and if you have no desires, then you are blessed.

Investigating Dhyana, then, is like a cat stalking a mouse or a dragon guarding its pearl.

“I do not want to be like a cat or a dragon! Cats kill mice and dragons just run around all the time, from the sky to the ocean.”

Then I will give another analogy. It is like a chicken hatching an egg. The Shurangama Sutra says,

Womb-born beings are born from emotion
Egg-born beings are born from thought

When the hen sits on her eggs she thinks, “My chicks are going to hatch right on time; they are going to be fine little chicks!” Sitting in meditation one thinks, “One of these days for sure I am going to get enlightened. Every day I work on my meditation, I get that much more light. If I work every day I will gain more and more light, and eventually, I will be one with the Buddha.” Thinking like this—like an old hen thinking about her eggs—sooner or later, you will be successful.

The Ten Advantages of the Perfection of Dhyana :

1. One’s schedule will be regulated. One will be organized. One meditates day by day, month by month and year by year, in a very regulated way. In the Chan hall, the meditation periods are regulated. You sit for a while and then you walk and then you run! You run until you sweat. The heavens are cloudy and the earth is dark—that is, you are so absorbed that, above, you do not notice the sky, and below, you do not see the ground. In between, you do not know anyone else is around. Everyone seems to have disappeared. Where did they go? They are gone! But not lost! You have lost track of your “self.” There is no more “me.” There is no self and no others. At that time you can contemplate with ease. Since there is no self, you have no false thinking about self, and since there are no people, you have no false thinking about them. That is just contemplating with ease.

With neither form nor emptiness, you see the Thus Come One. The Buddha dwells neither in existence or emptiness. His Dharma-body is neither existent nor non-existent. You then see the Thus Come One’s Dharma-body.

2. One will practice the attitude of compassion. Being compassionate does not mean being “nice” to people. It means that you accept people and transform them with compassion. But, if you meet stubborn ones, you may use your compassion to scold them a good one and get them to change! People get hit in the Chan hall, but it is not what you usually think of as getting hit. People are hit so that they will quit false thinking and get enlightened. It is not unusual; it is done so that people will be good and follow the rules.

3. One will have no regrets or afflictions.

4. One will guard the six sense organs. If one does not watch over them, they will run off. The eyes will run after form, the ears after sound, and the nose after smells, the tongue after tastes, the body after touch, and the mind after dharmas. Guarding the senses means that from the gates of the organs a light is emitted, and the earth is caused to shake. Emitting light means that, because one is not false thinking, one’s wisdom light comes forth and shines upon the three thousand great thousand worlds.

5. One will obtain the flavor of Dhyana food and be filled with the bliss of Dharma. This means that one can go without food and still be happy! One’s meditation may progress to the point where one does not need to eat and does not feel hungry at all. If you meditate in Dhyana, you can do this.

6. One will leave love and desire. When the mind separates from desire and love, it is pure. Love and desire are defilement. Defilement leads to birth and death. Why do we human beings undergo birth and death? It is just because we do not cut off love and desire. Why do most people keep turning on the six paths of rebirth and fail to end birth and death? Just because they cling to their thoughts of love and desire. It is because they never cut off their love and desire! As long as you cannot cut off love and desire, you will not be able to end birth and death, and will continue to spin around in the six paths of rebirth.

If you have no thoughts of love and desire, you close the gates of the hells; you will not fall into hell.

7. One’s cultivation of Chan will not be in vain. As long as one cultivates it, one will reap the benefits. If one sits in Chan for one hour, one’s wisdom-life will increase one hour’s worth. If one sits for two hours, it increases two hours worth. If one continues to investigate Dhyana over months and years, one will certainly develop great wisdom. All one has to do is cultivate it. It never fails.

8. One will be released from one’s demonic karma. Through Chan meditation one can be liberated from one’s demonic karma. Demons will have no way to obstruct you.

9. One will be secure in the realm of the Buddha.

10. One’s liberation will be effected. This means that one will have no obstructions. Non-obstruction is the pure Dharma-body.

The sixth perfection is Prajna. Prajna is Sanskrit and means, generally, wisdom. Wisdom is a fairly common word. Prajna is an honored term, and so it is not translated. It is a miraculous kind of wisdom. Also, it includes several meanings, and it is not translated. Prajna is of three kinds:

1. Literary Prajna. This refers to the wisdom contained in the Sutras and commentaries spoken by the Buddha. It does not refer to ordinary worldly literature. Literary wisdom gives rise to,

2. Contemplative Prajna. After reading the Sutras, one then contemplates and illuminates their meanings through actual practice. This type of Prajna then leads one to,

3. Real Mark Prajna. Real Mark Prajna is without a mark. But there is nothing not marked by it. It has no mark, and it is also without the mark of having no mark! The Real Mark is neither existent nor non-existent. Literary Prajna is existent. Contemplative Prajna is non-existent. Real Mark is neither existent nor non-existent. From existence one penetrates to non-existence, and from non-existence one arrives at neither existence nor non-existence. If you can comprehend the realm of neither existence nor non-existence, you have attained Real Mark Prajna.

Because Prajna has these three meanings, we do not translate it. If you have wisdom, you will have Prajna. If you have no wisdom, you are stupid. Stupid people lack wisdom. Wise people are devoid of stupidity.

“I am worried,” you say, “because I am really stupid. I do not have and Prajna.”

Do not worry. To know that you are stupid is just the beginning of Prajna! It is just to be feared that you do not know that you are stupid. If you think that you are wise and that you have a lot of Prajna, then you are stupid. Why? It is because you do not understand yourself. If you understand yourself, you have Prajna. If you understand yourself today, then today you have wisdom. If you understand yourself tomorrow, then tomorrow you have wisdom. If you understand yourself every day, then every day you have wisdom. So do not be afraid of not having wisdom. Just be afraid that you will not realize that you do not have wisdom! Where does wisdom come from, anyway? It comes from stupidity. If you were not stupid, you could not become wise. If you know that you are stupid, that means your wisdom is starting to manifest. It is just that wonderful, that ineffably wonderful. Basically, I cannot explain wonderful Dharma to you, but now I see that you have developed to the point that it is okay to tell you. Since we have arrived at the discussion of Prajna, you are no doubt wise enough to hear it!

A few days ago when I talked about patience, a lot of people could not be patient! Instead, they got angry! Before I talked about it, it did not occur to them to get angry and they were getting along alright, taking things in stride. But as soon as I lectured on patience, they got impatient. Before I explained vigor, nobody retreated. Once I lectured on it, people started to retreat! Before I talked about Chan, people were not too scattered. As soon as I discussed it, however, people started getting confused. Before I talked about Prajna, people were not stupid. As soon as I talked about it, their stupidity was revealed! It is actually not that the stupidity was not there, but that you had no mirror to see it in. My explanations are like a mirror and so you say, “Oh, I am so stupid!” Before, you did not know that you were impatient, because you had nothing to compare yourself with. Now, hearing the discussion of patience and looking at yourself in that “mirror” you know that you are not patient. Before you heard about vigor, you could take it easy and not feel too bad about it. Now that you know what vigor is, you realize how lax you have been. So now if you are stupid, in that one clear thought, your wisdom manifests!

The Ten Advantages of the Perfection of Prajna :

Prajna is basically non-attachment. Non-attachment is wisdom. As long as you are attached to things, you have no wisdom. If you are unattached, the light of wisdom is ever present.

1. One will not grasp at the mark of giving. If you grasp at the mark of giving, you are attached. If you do not grasp, then you are not attached. One should give in such a manner that the “three aspects are empty.” By this we mean the giver, the receiver, and the gift. If you are caught up in your ability to give, in the gift, or in the person you are giving to, then you are attached. One should give in such a way that there is no attachment to the mark of the giver, the gift, or the receiver. If you give, thinking, “I gave several million. How much merit do you think I have?” then you are like the Emperor Wu of Liang who asked Patriarch Bodhidharma, “I have built so many temples and bridges, and allowed so many people to leave home. How much merit do I have?”

If Patriarch Bodhidharma had said, “A lot,” he would have just been following worldly thinking. Instead, the Patriarch spoke the genuine Buddhadharma, which does not just go along with worldly sentiments. He said, “No merit!” This is just “not grasping at the mark of giving.” Without the mark of giving, there are no attachments. Without attachments, one’s merit is like empty space. Empty space is entirely filled with merit. But you must not be attached.

2. One will not become dependent upon the precepts. This does not mean that one will not receive and keep the precepts. It means that one will not be attached; one will not grasp at the precepts. One will not think, “I keep precepts and know how to cultivate. I understand the Buddhadharma!” that is just attachment. One should keep the precepts and not hold on to them. Keep them as if not keeping them. One should not think of oneself as a “keeper of the precepts.” Even if one keeps them very well, one should not get arrogant about it and think, “I am a Vinaya Master!” That is just another attachment to the mark of self. The precepts are for the purpose of getting rid of the “self.” One must not get conceited and full of the mark of self, thinking, “I cultivate according to the rules.” If one gets rid of the mark of self, then there is not any “I.” If there is not any self, how can there be a precept holder?

“If there is not any me, then I can go out and kill, steal, and set fires and it will not count, right? That is being pretty unattached, is it not?” someone may wonder.

One form of “non-attachment” reaps offenses, while the other creates merit! There is a difference! Do not misinterpret the Buddhadharma and try to twist it into this and that. You cannot use it as a rationalization for nihilism.

Not being dependent on the precepts means that one keeps them without an attachment to keeping them. One keeps the precepts, but not in an obvious way. That is true holding of the precepts.

3. One will not be caught up in the power of patience. This, too, means being unattached. One is not attached to the idea of being patient. If one is attached to being patient, then one is not truly patient. True patience goes even beyond the concept of being patient.

“Then I do not need to be patient?” one may ask.

If you are not patient, then you are really not patient! You should be patient and yet not patient. You are patient, but you are not caught up in “being a patient person.” If you think, “I cultivate patience,” you are just adding a head on top of a head! Patience is just patience. Why do you have to think in terms of a self—“I” am patient? True cultivators of the Way must understand that all dharmas are but empty appearances. If you cannot understand that concept, then you will not be able to cultivate the Way.

4. One will be vigorous in body and mind. This means that one will not be more vigorous with the body than the mind or vice-versa. One will be vigorous equally with both, but not attached. One should not think, “I really work hard! I am really vigorous!” as long as one cultivates, but holds the idea of vigor, that is not “Prajna” vigor. With Prajna vigor one must be vigorous and yet not vigorous, not vigorous, and yet vigorous. All dharmas must be empty and one must separate from all marks. One still has to cultivate, but one must separate from marks. One must subdue one’s mind and yet separate from the mark of having subdued one’s mind. One must regulate one’s mind until it is tame and does no false thinking.

5. In Chan, one will not dwell anywhere. When one investigates Dhyana, one will arrive at the level of “dwelling nowhere.” This means that one will have broken all attachments. One will have no attachment to self or dharmas; they will both be emptied, gone. Not dwelling anywhere means that one has obtained liberation. As long as one dwells somewhere, one is not free. Not dwelling anywhere is “Prajna” Chan.

6. Demons will be unable to disturb one. This is the “Prajna” Prajna. Demons cannot get one because one has real Prajna wisdom. If one has no Prajna, they will be able to bother one. They will take one by surprise and ambush one so that one does not know what to do. They will catch one off guard and one will be afraid and confused. If one has wisdom, it does not matter what great spiritual powers the demons have, they will not be able to disturb one.

7. Other’s theories will not confuse one. If you do not have genuine wisdom, then if someone says “East,” you will go east. If someone says, “West,” you will go west. Someone might say, “Cultivating the Secret School is the best form of cultivation. Recite the name of Akshobhya Buddha.” You will think, “Is it? Okay, I will do that. I will recite it and subdue the demons!”

Then someone else comes along and says, “The Pure Land School is the best. Reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha is the best form of cultivation in the Dharma Ending Age,” and you will think, “Really? Okay, I will do it.”

Someone else might tell you, “Do not bother learning how to lecture on the Sutras and speak the Dharma. Go off and live in a cave in the mountains. That is real cultivation!” After you have spent two and a half days in the mountains, someone comes by and says, “Hey, the Vinaya School is the best,” and off you go to the Vinaya School. In general you vacillate. You just follow other people’s opinions of what is good. You have no samadhi power and so other people’s ideas turn you around and around.

The Old Man of Mount Wei had real samadhi power. He lived in a broken down hut, which kept out neither the wind nor the rain. Minister Pei went to see him and, being very wealthy, brought forth the Bodhi mind and made an offering of thirty pounds of silver so the Master could build a new “hut.” Thirty pounds in the Tang Dynasty was worth a lot—enough to build a big temple. Minister Pei put the coins in the grass and left. Three years later he came back to see what had been done with his money, but the same old hut was there! Minister Pei got suspicious and asked, “Where is the new hut? I gave you thirty pounds of silver three years ago to build a hut? What happened? Where is the silver?”

The Old Man of Mount Wei said, “Oh? Where did you put it?”

Minister Pei said, “I put it over there in the grass.”

“Well go look in the grass. That is where it still is,” said the Old Man of Mount Wei.

The Minister checked it out and found that the money still lay there untouched. He left all that silver there for three years, and did not touch it. Luckily no one else came by and picked it up. They probably would not have met with any resistance. Minister Pei knew that the Old Man of Mount Wei was a true cultivator, and so he had a temple built for him. It was large enough for several thousand people. This was in Hunan.

Later, the Minister sent his son there to leave home at the temple. His son was an Imperial scholar, sort of like a modern-day Ph.D. When he arrived at the temple, the Old Man of Mount Wei put the scholar to work carrying water. But he had to carry three thousand buckets of water for everyone in the temple!

So, given thirty pounds of silver, the Old Man of Mount Wei did not even look at it. He really had a spirit worthy of our respect. Nowadays, if someone hands us a sack of garbage we go picking through it looking for treasures. Where are you going to find treasure in garbage? Acting like this, how do we compare with our forefathers? When people gave them things, those Elder Virtuous men did not want them. Nowadays if no one gives people anything, they go looking on their own and try to steal things! How can people like that cultivate the Way?

Somebody asked me, "Master, are you unhappy these few days?" I teach them:

Freezing, we do not climb on conditions.
Starving, we do not beg.
Dying of poverty, we do not scheme.

These three principles have been ruined. Since these principles have been ruined, I feel that my coming to this country has been in vain. Since it has been useless, I am unhappy. No one acts like Elder Wei Shan. He did not look at the 300 ounces of silver that others presented to him. He did not even take a peek for three years. Unlike us now, every day we count one dollar, two dollars, three dollars, and four dollars, fearing that they may be lost. He did not look at all! Look at that kind of attitude!" But most people do not follow any of these three principles.

Long ago there were two Dharma brothers who decided to cultivate together. They were very ascetic and only ate one meal a day. One time they went up north. They stayed in an empty, old hut, while it snowed outside. They had no food, no firewood and no water. It snowed for three days, and they did not eat for three days.

After three days, the younger brother had a false thought: “It does not matter if I do not eat for three days, but elder Dharma brother came from a wealthy household. No doubt this is too hard on him. Wouldn’t it be nice if someone gave us an offering? It is so cold outside. Wouldn’t some noodle soup be nice?” As soon as he had this false thought, the local earth spirit picked up the message and thought, “Look at this weather! Those cultivators work so hard and they have not had a bite to eat for three days. If I do not think of a way to protect their Dharma, I will have committed an offense.”

Then the earth spirit went off behind the mountain and appeared in a dream to a couple, saying, “In the hut on the other side of this mountain there are two genuine cultivators. They have not eaten for three days. Hurry and make some noodle soup and take it to them!” The two old folks were in their fifties or sixties and they really believed in spirits. Besides, they both had the same dream several times that night, so they knew it was for real. The next morning they made some noodles and took them right over.

When the younger brother saw the noodles, he laughed. This tipped off the older brother as to what had happened, and he said, “Oh! All you do is false think! You go ahead and eat these noodles you ‘false thought’ here, but I have had it. I am moving out! You are absolutely sickening. You have no scruples at all.” He picked up the mat they shared and ripped it in half saying, “You do your thing and I will do mine! All you do is climb on conditions.” And that was the end of that.

So you see, the virtuous cultivators of the past did not want noodles even when they had not eaten for three days. Nowadays, people think that if they get a response to their false thinking about food, they are really special! False thinking and climbing on conditions might get you some good food, but it will really obstruct your cultivation! If your mouth has good food to eat, your self-nature will not be bright. Why not? It is because you do too much false thinking! You climb on conditions.

If one has samadhi power, nothing will cause one to have false thinking or to climb on conditions. If you want to take a good look at climbing on conditions, look at the pigeons! As soon as you bring out the birdseed they fly all over the place and jump around! They will not leave you alone until you give them some. We cultivators should be careful not to be like the pigeons. They got to be pigeons, you know, because they were greedy and did not have any samadhi power.

8. One will get to the bottom of birth and death. The ocean has a bottom, and every bottle and jar has one. What is the bottom of birth and death? It is Nirvana. To get to the bottom of birth and death is to arrive at Nirvana. If you have wisdom, you can end birth and death and ascend the other shore. “Ascending the other shore” is the same as getting to the bottom of birth and death.

9. One will practice ever-increasing compassion. Previously, we heard about the five thousand who left the Dharma Flower Assembly because of overweening pride. Ever-increasing compassion is the exact opposite of overweening pride. Perhaps you were not very compassionate, but gradually with ever-increasing compassion your compassionate nature develops.

10. One will take no delight in dwelling in the position of the Two Vehicles. One will insist on walking down the Great Vehicle Path. Why is this? It is because one has wisdom. Therefore, one wants to turn away from the small and goes towards the great, put the Small Vehicle aside and pick up the Great Vehicle Dharma.

**Sutra:**
 **“The people of that time had a limitless life span. For the sake of the Dharma, I renounced the royal position, leaving the government to the crown prince. I beat upon the Dharma drum, announcing my search for Dharma in the four directions, saying, ‘whoever can speak the Great Vehicle for me, for him I will act as a servant for the rest of my life!’ ”**Outline:

J2. To perfect Prajna, he diligently seeks the wonderful Dharma.

**Commentary:**

**The people of that time had a limitless life span.** When he was a king, the Buddha could give up his very life to cultivate the Six Perfections and the Myriad Conducts. **For the sake of the Dharma, I renounced the royal position, leaving the government to the crown prince.** I gave away my kingship to my first son. **I beat upon the Dharma drum, announcing my search for Dharma in the four directions, saying, “whoever can speak the Great Vehicle for me,** someone with Way-Virtue, **for him I will act as a servant for the rest of my life!** I will serve and run errands for him, doing whatever he wants me to do.”

**Sutra:**
 **“At that time a seer came forth and spoke to the king saying, ‘I have a Great Vehicle scripture by the name of The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. If you do not disobey me, I will expound it for you.’ ”**Outline:

H3. Finding a Dharma Master.

**Commentary:**

**At that time a seer came forth and spoke to the king saying.** A seer is an immortal, a hermit who can live forever. The seer said **“I have a Great Vehicle scripture by the name of The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. If you do not disobey me, I will expound it for you.”** “Disobey” means not doing what you are told to do, or doing what you are told not to do! You would be disobeying, for example, if you are told to be vigorous and instead you are lazy. Or if you are told to be moral, but you break the precepts. Or told to give, but instead you are stingy. Or told to be patient, but instead you get angry. Or you are told to cultivate dhyana samadhi, but instead you are scattered. Or you are taught to cultivate Prajna, but instead you go on being stupid. Not disobeying means that you do not object to any of the Dharma that I teach you.

**Sutra:**
 **“When I, the king, heard the seer’s words, I jumped for joy. I then followed the seer, supplying all of his needs: picking fruit, drawing water, gathering firewood, and preparing food, even offering my own body as a couch for him, feeling no weariness in body or mind. I served him for a thousand years, for the sake of the Dharma, diligently waiting upon him so he lacked nothing.”**Outline:

H4. Receiving the Dharma and offering up his conduct.

**Commentary:**

**When I, the king, heard the seer’s words, I jumped for joy.** Think about it; he was a king. To seek the Dharma he gave up his royal position and wanted to be a servant. We are not even kings and we do not have such sincere minds. **I then followed the seer, supplying all of his needs: picking fruit.** He would go into the mountains and pick fruit for him. He served him by **drawing water, gathering firewood** in the hills, **and preparing food.** I went so far as to **even offering my own body as a couch for him, feeling no weariness in body or mind. I served him for a thousand years, for the sake of the Dharma, diligently waiting upon him so he lacked nothing.** He was never lazy, and he made sure that the seer had everything he needed.

**Sutra:

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

**“I recall, in kalpas past, when seeking Dharma, Although I was a king at the time, I had no greed to enjoy the five desires. Ringing the bell, I announced in the four directions, ‘If whoever has the great DharmaWill explain it to me, I will be his servant.’ ”**

Outline:

G2. Verses.
H1. Verses about the length of time he spent seeking the Dharma.

**Commentary:**

**At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying: I recall in kalpas past,** limitless eons ago, **when seeking the** Great Vehicle **Dharma. Although I was a king at that time, I had no greed to enjoy the five desires.** The five desires are defined in two ways:

1. Wealth 1. Forms
2. Forms 2. Sounds
3. Fame 3. Smells
4. Food 4. Tastes
5. Sleep 5. Objects

You should recognize them clearly. If the king was not greedy for the five desires, how much the less should we common people be greedy for them. It should not be as hard for us to renounce them. The king had as many opportunities available to him, and still he was not greedy. **Ringing the bell, I announced in the four directions, “If whoever has the great Dharma** and **will explain it to me, I will be his servant.”** Even though I am the king, I will be his slave. Why? It is because I am seeking the Dharma. I will do anything for the Dharma.

**Sutra:**

**Then the seer Asita came and spoke to me, Saying, ‘I have the subtle, wonderful Dharma, Rare in all the world. If you can cultivate it,I will speak it for your sake.’**

Outline:

H2. Verses about finding a Dharma Master.

**Commentary:**

**Then the seer Asita came and spoke to me,** the king, **saying, “I have the subtle, wonderful Dharma.”** “Asita” means incomparable, which describes the length of his life span. His Dharma was also incomparable. No one could speak the Dharma better than he could. The Seer Asita--probably with the penetration of the Heavenly eye, or ear, or other’s thoughts, or past lives or whatever--knew that the King was ready to become a servant in order to hear the Dharma, so he decided to test him out to see if he really meant it.

It is the highest, supreme, subtle and wonderful Dharma. There is no dharma higher or more profound. It is the subtle within the subtle, the wonderful within the wonderful, **rare in all the world. If you can cultivate it, I will speak it for your sake.** If you can cultivate according to it, and not disobey me, I will tell you about it.

**Sutra:**

**Hearing what the seer said, My heart was filled with great joy. I then followed the seer, Supplying him with all his needs, Gathering firewood, fruit and melons, Respectfully presenting them at the proper time.Because I cherished the wonderful Dharma, I was neither lax nor tired in body or mind. I diligently sought the great Dharma For the sake of all living beings.**

Outline:

H3. Verses about receiving the Dharma and reverently practicing it.

**Commentary:**

**Hearing what the seer said, my heart was filled with great joy. I then followed the seer, supplying him with all his needs.** The king would gather all the things the seer needed, **gathering firewood, fruit and melons, respectfully presenting them at the proper time.** After a meal he would offer the seer fruit, very respectfully. **Because I cherished the wonderful Dharma, I was neither lax nor tired in body or mind. I diligently sought the great Dharma for the sake of all living beings.** I sought the supreme Buddha Way and I was never lazy. I did not seek it for my own benefit, but for the sake of all living beings.

**Sutra:**

**And not for my own sake,Or for the pleasures of the five desires. Thus as king of a great realm, I diligently sought to obtain this Dharma, And accordingly achieved Buddhahood, And now I speak it to you.”**

Outline:

H4. Conclusion: certification and exhortation to practice.

**Commentary:**

I sought the Dharma for the sake of all living beings **and not for my own sake.** It was not for myself **or for the pleasures of the five desires,** or out of selfishness or self-benefit. It was not out of greed for wealth, form, fame, food, sleep; or for forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch or dharmas. **Thus as king of a great realm, I diligently sought to obtain this Dharma and accordingly achieved Buddhahood. And now I speak it to you.** If he had said, “I am a king. You should give the Dharma to me,” he would have been successful. Even though he was a king, he was willing to be a servant for the sake of the Dharma. Because he was so sincere, and entirely lacked the mark of a self, he became a Buddha. Now he is telling everyone about his past cultivation and practice of the Bodhisattva Path.

**Sutra:**
 **The Buddha told the Bhikshus, “The king was I, myself, in a former life and the seer was the present Devadatta.”**Outline:

F2. Putting together the past and the present.
G1. The assembly.

**Commentary:**

When he had finished speaking the verse, **the Buddha told the Bhikshus,** including the Bhikshunis, the Upasakas and Upasikas. **The king** who limitless eons ago gave up his kingdom and authority to his son and renounced all his treasures to follow the seer Asita as his servant, **was I, myself in a former life.** He was me, the present Shakyamuni Buddha. **And the seer** Asita **was the present Devadatta,** “fever of the gods.”

In the past Devadatta was Shakyamuni Buddha’s Good and Wise Advisor and his teacher. He taught Shakyamuni Buddha The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. Shakyamuni Buddha was his servant and waited upon him in order to attain the supreme, wonderful Dharma. In the life in which Shakyamuni Buddha became a Buddha, Devadatta was no longer a Good and Wise Advisor. He was an evil advisor! He opposed everything the Buddha did. So you see, in one life, he was a good advisor, and in another an evil advisor. Devadatta stole 500 of Shakyamuni Buddha’s disciples. He came and manifested spiritual powers, which succeeded in confusing them into going off to study under him. Devadatta told them, “Shakyamuni Buddha says he has spiritual powers, but he does not have very big ones, really. His spiritual powers are not even as great as those of my disciples are! Follow me and see!” and he took five hundred Bhikshus off with him. When they arrived at his place he commanded them to all go to sleep for one hundred days. When Shariputra realized that 500 Bhikshus were gone from the assembly, he used his spiritual powers to get them back. At the end of the hundred days, when Devadatta woke up, he saw that the Bhikshus were gone. Using his spiritual powers in turn, he figured out they had been stolen back by Shariputra. That infuriated him and from then on, he exclusively slandered Shakyamuni Buddha and tried to destroy him.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught his disciples to eat vegetarian food and not to eat meat, but Devadatta tried to do him one better by telling his disciples not even to eat salt! Devadatta taught them not to eat, not even immortals. It made the food tasteless, but he felt he was one up on the Buddha that way. Shakyamuni Buddha taught his disciples to eat only one meal in the middle of the day, but Devadatta told his disciples to eat only once every one hundred days. This was supposed to mean he was higher than Shakyamuni Buddha. People that wanted to out do Shakyamuni Buddha studied with Devadatta. Because they were not in accord with the Middle Way, the more they studied, the more they got off the track.

Devadatta also committed the offense of shedding the Buddha’s blood. Once when the Buddha was walking beneath Vulture Peak, Devadatta pushed a huge boulder on top of him, intending to turn him into a pancake. The Dharma Protectors raced to the rescue and rammed the boulder with their vajra pestles to send it off in another direction. They knocked lose a small piece of rock however, which hit the Buddha on his little toe, breaking the skin, and causing it to bleed. Shedding the Buddha’s blood is one of the Five Rebellious Acts—unpardonable offenses.

He also killed an Arhat, another one of the Five Rebellious Acts, when with one fist he beat to death the Bhikshuni Lian Hua She was an Arhat that had certified to the fruit. He also broke up the harmony of the Sangha, and he encouraged King Ajatashatru to kill his father and mother. Thus he committed all five of the Five Rebellious Acts:

1. Patricide,
2. Matricide,
3. Killing an Arhat,
4. Shedding the Buddha’s blood, and
5. Breaking the harmony of the Sangha.

Even though he was an evil advisor, he was really helping Shakyamuni Buddha, in a backhanded way. When Shakyamuni Buddha lectured on The Dharma Flower Sutra, he gave Devadatta a prediction of Buddhahood. In the future Devadatta will become a Buddha. Devadatta was once Shakyamuni Buddha’s teacher, and now Shakyamuni Buddha has become a Buddha but Devadatta has not done so yet. In the Buddhadharma, whoever works hard and is vigorous becomes a Buddha. There is no “rank.”

It will soon be the anniversary of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and we are going to liberate five hundred pigeons. Whoever wants to contribute is welcome to do so. It is up to you. No one can do it for you, however, if you want to contribute and gain merit and virtue, you may.

This year in Taipei, Taiwan at Hu Guo Lin Ji Monastery, the complete precepts will be transmitted. Last year when five Americans took the precepts in Taiwan their sincerity impressed the Taiwanese so much that this year they have changed the precept-taking ceremony from 32 days to 53 days. In China in the past the precept transmissions were always 53 days long. A lot of their procedures still differ considerably from the traditional manner, but at least the number of days is now the same. The disciples of the fourfold assembly! This year is the best opportunity for people who are willing to receive the Bhikshu precepts. It is also the best opportunity for those willing to receive the Bhikshuni precepts. It is also the best opportunity for those willing to take the Upasaka precepts and the Upasika precepts.

In cultivation, the busier you are the better. The busier the schedule is the less false thinking you will have. That is why in the Chan Hall you walk and sit all day without rest. Everyone should be forging a Vajra indestructible body! Do not be afraid of working too hard.

**Sutra:**
 **“It is because of my Good and Wise Advisor, Devadatta, that I have perfected the Six Paramitas of kindness, compassion, joy, and giving, as well as the thirty-two marks and eighty fine characteristics, coloring of burnished purple gold. The Ten Powers, the Four Fearlessnesses, the Four Dharmas of Attraction, the Eighteen Unshared Dharmas, the power of the way of spiritual penetrations, the accomplishment of equal, proper enlightenment, and the vast rescue of living beings, all this came about because of my Good and Wise Advisor, Devadatta.”**Outline:

G2. Reward accruing through teacher/disciple relationship.
H1. The disciple’s accomplishment based on teacher’s help.

**Commentary:**

**It is because of my Good and Wise Advisor, Devadatta,** who taught and transformed me, **that I have perfected the Six Paramitas.** “Paramitas” means perfections. Thus the six are the completion, the perfect realization of giving, morality, patience, vigor, dhyana samadhi, and prajna.

The Four Causal Conditions of Giving

If you cultivate giving,

1. You can break through the causal conditions of stinginess.

2. You can adorn Bodhi. That is, you can enhance the enlightenment of your self-nature.

3. You benefit both yourself and others. You benefit yourself, because after you give, it makes you happy. You help others by relieving them of their hunger and thirst.

4. In the future you will attain a great fruition. If you can give, in future lives, you will be wealthy and honored. The more you give away, the more you get. If you give, in the future you will be wealthy. However, you cannot give with the hopes that you will become wealthy, because that is too petty. You should just give and transfer the merit to Bodhi, seeking the unsurpassed Bodhi. Do not be attached to the mark of giving.

The Four Causal Conditions of Morality

If you cultivate morality,

1. You can cultivate all good dharmas and eradicate evil prohibitions. You cannot cultivate just one form of good. You must do all manners of good deeds. Your good deeds will cancel out the evil dharmas.

2. You will adorn Bodhi and gather in living beings. Since you adorn your self-nature’s Bodhi, you gather in and transform living beings, not rejecting any. You cannot think, “I have no affinities with that being, so I am not going to save it.” Whether or not you have affinities, you have to teach them all.

3. Your body and your surroundings will be peaceful when you are awake and when you are asleep. You are peaceful inside and out. You are peaceful in your self-nature and in your body. You will have no regrets or hatred. You will not want to harm any living creature. Instead, you will protect and support them.

4. In the future, you will receive the happiness of humans and gods, and also the bliss of Nirvana.

These four come about through the practice of morality.

The Four Causal Conditions of Patience

If you cultivate patience,

1. You will be able to take your impatience across.

2. You will adorn Bodhi and receive and transform living beings.

3. You will enable both yourself and others to be free of fear.

4. In the future you will not be hateful.

If you cultivate patience in this life, then your next life you will not have a big temper. Why do you have such a big temper now? It is because you did not cultivate patience in the past. If you cultivate patience, your household will be peaceful and your family members will not become separated from one another. Because of the merit and virtue you have gained through the cultivation of patience, you will not undergo suffering and hardship. In the future too, you will obtain the bliss of Nirvana.

The Four Causal Conditions of Vigor

If you cultivate vigor,

1. You can destroy your laziness and laxness. If you are not vigorous, your laziness will overcome you.

2. You will adorn Bodhi and gather in living beings.

3. You will increase in good dharmas. That is, your self-benefit will grow, and by not bothering other people, you will benefit others as well.

4. With great strength you will obtain the fruit of Bodhi.

The Four Causal Conditions of Dhyana

If you cultivate Dhyana, “thought cultivation” or “stilling thought,”

1. You will destroy your confusion. The skill of dhyana samadhi can subdue your scatteredness.

2. You will adorn Bodhi and gather in living beings.

3. You will be peaceful in body and mind. That is self-benefit, and you will not bother other living beings; that is benefiting others.

4. In your state of purity and tranquility you will gain Nirvana.

The Causal Conditions of Prajna

If you cultivate Prajna,

1. You will destroy your ignorance.

2. You adorn Bodhi and gather in living beings.

3. With wisdom, you will make yourself happy—that is self-benefit. As to benefiting others, if you have wisdom you can teach and transform living beings.

4. If you have Prajna wisdom you can overcome the “obstacle of the known.”

Shakyamuni Buddha relates that he perfected the Six Paramitas, because of his Good and Wise Advisor, Devadatta. He also perfected **kindness, compassion,** sympathetic **joy, and giving.** With “compassion” you relieve them of their suffering. “Sympathetic joy” is what enables you to take delight in causing beings to be happy. “Giving” means renouncing those things other people cannot give away. Kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and giving are the Four Unlimited Minds of the Buddha. They are said to be “unlimited” because there is no end to them. They are like flowing water—endless for the taking and inexhaustible in their function. Through the cultivation of the Four Unlimited Minds, one realizes Buddhahood. When you become a Buddha, your scope is unlimited in these four ways. You can use these to teach and transform living beings. They are limitless in the past, limitless in the present and limitless in the future. They include all three periods of time. They are used to cultivate the Path to Buddhahood, and to teach and transform living beings. Their power is exceedingly great.

To be kind means to be kind to others, and to bestow happiness upon them. It does not mean that others are supposed to make you happy!

To be compassionate means to relieve others of suffering, not to get rid of your own suffering. This is something we should all be clear about. To be joyful means to make others joyful, not yourself. To give means to fulfill others’ wishes and not just your own. Shakyamuni Buddha gave up his life thousands of times—renouncing what others cannot renounce. In teaching and transforming living beings he made them all happy and got rid of their suffering. This is what Shakyamuni Buddha did as his practice for many lives and many eons. I just spoke about the Six Paramitas practiced by the Bodhisattvas. Great Vehicle Bodhisattvas also cultivate Ten Paramitas. They are the above Six Paramitas plus:

The seventh is the Paramita of Expedient Means. This is to turn the affairs of the world into the Buddha’s work, to find ways and means of helping others expediently—to speak the Dharma expediently, that is provisionally. He is skilled in finding temporary dharmas, which happen to suit particular living beings at a given time.

The eighth is the Paramita of Vows. One makes vows to save all living beings.

The ninth is the Paramita of Power. One needs strength to arrive at the other shore—to attain paramita.

The tenth is the Paramita of Wisdom. This refers to provisional wisdom, the expedient wisdom used to teach and transform living beings. Great Vehicle Bodhisattvas cultivate these Ten Paramitas. The Four Unlimited Minds include the Ten Paramitas. Such explanations can go into infinite, endless detail.

The Buddha also perfected **the thirty-two marks** of a great hero. In the Three Storehouses Teaching, one cultivates morality and thereby attains the thirty-two marks. If you cultivate giving, patience, you will attain the thirty-two marks of a great hero. This is the meaning within Pervasive Teaching. The meaning of Separate Teaching is that you cultivate all dharmas and see that they are empty, then you achieve the thirty-two marks. According to the Perfect Teaching, one cultivates the Wisdom of the Way—Dharmas—to attain the thirty-two marks. The Buddha accomplished these thirty-two marks by cultivating blessings and wisdom in the past. If you are interested in studying the thirty-two marks, you can look it up in the Buddhist dictionary.

The Buddha also perfected **eighty fine characteristics.** The thirty-two marks and eighty fine characteristics belong to the Buddha’s perfect, full reward body, which is the **color of burnished purple gold**—gold of the best quality. He is replete with **the Ten Powers and Four Fearlessnesses.** The Buddha speaks the Dharma like a lion roaring, without fear. There are Four Fearlessnesses of the Buddha, and also Four Fearlessnesses of the Bodhisattva. The Buddha’s fearlessnesses have been explained before. The Bodhisattva’s fearlessnesses are:

1. Their memories are unfailing, and so they speak without fear. They know the marks of all Dharmas and never forget them. Because they remember all the doctrines very clearly, they speak the Dharma with eloquence. Using the medicine of Dharma, they speak Dharma without fear.

2. The Dharma is like medicine. They know which Dharma is used to cure which “illness” of living beings. One living being may have a great greedy mind, so they might use a small amount of greed and a great amount of giving to counteract his illness. This might be like giving a child a piece of candy and then saying, “You be a good child. Be filial to your parents.” Or perhaps you give the child a piece of candy and then teach him how to bow to the Buddha. Knowing the child is greedy for candy, you give him some and then cure his “illness” with the Dharma. Knowing the roots, dispositions, and desires of living beings, whether their natures are good or evil, and the quality of their mind grounds, one is able to speak the Dharma for them and decisively save them. It is said,

If you want to lead them to the Buddha’s wisdom,
You must first bait the hook with something they like.

You must give them something sweet first. If they have not studied the Buddhadharma, and right away you give them something bitter, they will run off. Say they do not know anything about Buddhism, but you start scolding them right off saying, “You are terrible!” and so on. If you do that, they will run away. Once they understand the Dharma, then even if you hit them or scold them, they still will not run away. It is all a matter of knowing the dispositions, natures, desires, and thoughts of living beings.

3. When confronted with difficult questions they speak the Dharma without fear. This means they can answer any questions put to them.

4. Endowed with the ability to resolve doubts, they speak the Dharma without fear. If you ask them about something you do not understand they can explain it for you.

The Buddha has perfected **the Four Dharmas of Attraction.** They are,

1. Giving. Living beings are very greedy. If you tell them to give right away, they will not do it. Tell them to give five dollars and you will scare them to death! So first of all you give them something! “But isn’t that rather calculating?” you ask. Perhaps, but it is for the purpose of saving that person. First you give him something and then you find a clever way to cross him over and teach him how to practice giving. Thus, giving is one way to attract living beings to the Buddhadharma.

2. Kind Words. Everyone likes to hear nice things. So you tell someone, “You have a good heart, and you are a good worker too.” You do not just walk up to people and drop a verbal bomb, or hit them over the head with an iron club so they run off in terror. In general, you have to tell them things they like to hear.

3. Beneficial Conduct. This means you benefit others and do things to help them.

4. Cooperation. If you want to teach someone, you might take up the same occupation and work beside him. For instance, he enjoys gambling. Living beings who gamble, care about nothing. Once he starts gambling, he will not listen to any Buddhadharma that you tell him. Instead, you follow him to the casino and stay there. When he is happy, your body turn into a body similar to his. Say you disguise yourself as a student to save a student. When the student sees you are just like him, he will trust you and believe what you say. You want to convert laborers, then you would help him with physical labor. He sees that it is not bad that you came to help him with work, so he will believe in anything you tell him. With these Four Dharmas you attract and convert living beings. Those of you who are working outside should save those with whom you share the same occupation, always using the Four Dharmas of Attraction.

The Buddha has **the Eighteen Unshared Dharmas.** These Eighteen Dharmas belong only to Buddha. They are not shared by the Two Vehicles.

1. Faultless in Body. For limitless eons, Shakymuni Buddha has guarded the wisdom-life of his Dharma-body, without making a mistake. There are three offenses committed by the body: killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. The Buddha has committed no offenses of the body throughout limitless eons.

2. Faultless in Speech. The Buddha speaks the supreme, profound, and subtle Dharma. With his mouth he does not commit the four evils of loose speech, false speech, harsh speech, or backbiting. When Shakyamuni Buddha extended his tongue, it covered his whole face! His tongue extended to his hairline. How did he get such a long tongue? He never lied, that is how. If you want to know who lies and who does not lie, take a look at their tongues! This applies to me, too! But even then, Shakyamuni Buddha’s tongue was not all that long. In The Amitabha Sutra it says that the Buddhas put forth “a vast and long tongue, everywhere covering the three thousand great thousand worlds.” That is long!

3. Faultless in Mindfulness. In his mind, he constantly keeps the thought to disregard his very body for the sake of the Dharma. His mind is not defiled by the three poisons of greed, hatred, and stupidity. Thus, he is faultless in mindfulness.

4. No Discriminations in His Perception. Throughout limitless eons the Buddha only sought the supreme Bodhi Way of enlightenment. He had not other false thinking. Therefore, in the present, he has realized the supreme Bodhi Way.

5. No Lack of Concentration in His Thoughts. Not only does the Buddha not have discriminations in his perceptions, but also in every life, he cultivated dhyana samadhi. Therefore, he attained supreme, wonderful samadhi, and his mind is not scattered.

6. Nothing Not Known and Yet Everything Already Cast Aside. The Buddha completely knows and understands all dharmas. However, he is not attached to any dharmas. Although he knows all dharmas, he has renounced all dharmas. He has put them all down. Because he has cast aside all dharmas, there are no dharmas whatsoever that he has attained.

7. Zeal that Never Decreases. “Zeal” refers to hopes and wishes.

“But shouldn’t one be without hopes and wishes?” you asked.

The Buddha’s zeal is not like ours. His zeal is not directed towards the objects of the five desires: wealth, form, fame, food, and sleep. The Buddha’s zeal is directed towards teaching and transforming living beings in every life. He is zealous in his wish to save living beings, to help them toward the realization of Buddhahood. This is the Buddha’s “hope.”

8. Vigor that Never Decreases. Vigor cannot decrease. Ever since the Buddha began to cultivate the Bodhisattva path, there was only vigor, never retreat. He only moved forward with vigor and never retreated. No matter what it is that you do, you must complete it and do it as well as you possibly can.

9. Mindfulness that Never Decreases. He is always mindful of the Dharma cultivated by all the Buddhas of the three periods of time. His mindfulness of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha is uninterrupted and never decreases. If you merely are mindful and are not vigorous, it is not enough. If you are merely vigorous but are not mindful, that will not work either. You must have both, because they aid each other.

10. Wisdom that Never Decreases. His wisdom grows every day. It does not grow one day and shrink the next!

11. Liberation that Never Decreases. Day by day, he is more liberated. Day by day he gains more freedom and ease.

12. Knowledge and Vision of Liberation that Never Decreases. If one is liberated, but still holds to knowledge and views regarding liberation, that is not true liberation. One must also be liberated from the knowledge and vision regarding liberation.

13. All Body Karma Accords with the Practice of Wisdom. In all his bodily actions he is without stupidity or ignorance. His body karma is pure.

14. All Speech Karma Accords with the Practice of Wisdom.

15. All Mind Karma Accords with the Practice of Wisdom.

16. Wisdom Which Affords Unhindered Knowledge of the Past.

17. Wisdom Which Affords Unhindered Knowledge of the Future.

18. Wisdom Which Affords Unhindered Knowledge of the Present.

Only the Buddha has those Eighteen Dharmas. They are not shared with the Three Vehicles: the Bodhisattvas, Conditioned-enlightened Ones, or the Hearers.

The Buddha has **the power of the way of spiritual penetrations.** With his unlimited spiritual penetrations, the Buddha accomplished the Buddha Way, that is, **the accomplishment of equal, proper enlightenment, and the vast rescue of living beings. All this came about because of my Good and Wise Advisor, Devadatta.** Because of the powerful teaching of my Good Knowing Advisor, I have realized Buddhahood!

**Sutra:**
 **“I announce to the four assemblies that, after limitless eons have passed, Devadatta will become a Buddha by the name of King of Gods Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Right and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Clarity and Conduct are Complete, Well-Gone One Who Understands the World, Supreme Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. His world shall be called Pathway of the Gods.”**Outline:

H2. Showing the Dharma Master’s future realization of the wonderful fruit.
I1. The realization of the wonderful fruit.

**Commentary:**

**I announce to the four assemblies,** the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, **that after limitless eons have passed, Devadatta will become a Buddha by the name of King of Gods Thus Come One.** He will be called “King of Gods,” because when he has cultivated and attained Buddhahood. He will be a god among the gods, a sage among the sages. Since he cultivated to become a Buddha, he is the god among gods, the sage among sages. Therefore, he is the King of Gods Thus Come One.

And also by the title of **One Worthy of offerings:** he is worth the offerings of humans and gods. **One of Right and Universal Knowledge:** not only does he know what is proper, but he also knows what is universal. **One Whose Clarity and Conduct are Complete:** he has cultivated his wisdom to perfection. **Well-Gone One Who Understands the World:** he will become good and go to fine places. He understands the world and is the most intelligent person in the world, possessing a power of understanding. **Supreme Lord:** there is no one nobler than him. He is the most supreme. **Regulating Hero:** he can regulate the three realms, teaching and transforming beings; therefore, he is called the Regulating Hero. **Teacher of Gods and Humans:** he is the teacher and model for the beings in the heavens and humans in the world. And **Buddha, World Honored One.** He will possess the ten titles, which are common to all the Buddhas. Our world is called the “Saha” or “bitter” world. **His world shall be called the Pathway of the Gods.**

**Sutra:**
 **“He shall dwell in the world for twenty middle-sized eons, broadly speaking the wonderful Dharma for living beings. Living beings in number like the Ganges sands shall attain the fruit of Arhatship. Limitless living beings will bring forth the resolve to Enlighten to Conditions. Living beings in number like Ganges sands will bring forth the supreme mind of the Path, attain patience with the non-production of Dharmas, and arrive at irreversibility.”**Outline:

I2. Those whom he will teach and save.

**Commentary:**

**He shall dwell in the world for twenty middle-sized eons.** In our world “one increasing and one decreasing” comprises an eon. What is meant by “one increasing and one decreasing?” Every one hundred years, people’s average life span increases by one year and their average height increases by one inch. When people’s average life span increases to the point of 84,000 years, it starts decreasing, one year at a time, and their height decreases also one inch a year. When people’s average life span is ten years, it starts to increase again at the same rate. One complete cycle of increase and decrease makes up one small eon.

Twenty small eons make up one middle-sized eon. Four middle-sized eons make up a large eon.

The entire world also goes through the process of creation, being, decay, and emptiness. The process of creation lasts for one middle-sized eon, the process of being lasts for one middle-sized eon, the process of decay lasts for one middle-sized eon, and the process of emptiness lasts for one middle-sized eon. Those four eons make up one great eon, or age.

When Devadatta becomes a Buddha, he will dwell in the world for twenty middle-sized eons. That means five great eons. He will be **broadly speaking the wonderful Dharma for living beings** during all that time. He will speak The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra for living beings for the length of twenty middle-sized eons. **Living beings in number like the Ganges sands shall attain the fruit of Arhatship.** What is Arhatship? There are Four Fruits of Arhatship,

1. Arhat of the first fruit, the Shrotaapanna, is called one who has “entered the stream.” He has entered the stream of the Dharma nature of the Sage and he opposes the steam of the six senses of common people. He still has to undergo seven more rebirths among those in the heavens and among people before he comes to the end of the Path.

2. The Arhat of the second fruit, the Sakridagamin, is called a “once-returner.” He has one more birth to undergo in the heavens and one among people.

3. The Arhat of the third fruit, the Anagamin, is called a “never-returner.” He does not have to undergo birth again in the human realm.

4. The Arhat of the fourth fruit is called “unborn.” The fourth stage Arhat has attained Patience with the Non-production of Dharmas. This means that he does not see the slightest dharma produced or the slightest dharma extinguished. Such a vision is not easy to bear, but he has the patience to bear it. Therefore it is called “Unproduced Dharma Patience.”

Arhat is a Sanskrit word with three meanings,

1. “One worthy of offerings.” Arhats are worthy of offerings from humans and gods.

2. “Slayer of thieves.” They have killed the thieves of ignorance and affliction.

3. “Unproduced.” They have attained Patience with the Non-production of Dharmas.

That is what is meant by “the fruit of Arhatship” attained by living beings in number like the Ganges’ sands.

**Limitless living beings will bring forth the resolve to Enlighten to Conditions.** Those Enlightened to Conditions are the Pratyekabuddhas. They cultivate the Twelve Links and awaken to the Path. **Living beings in number like Ganges sands will bring forth the supreme mind of the Path,attain patience with the non-production of Dharmas, and arrive at irreversibility.** “Irreversibility” is of three kinds:

1. Irreversible in Position. The do not retreat to the Two Vehicles.

2. Irreversible in Conduct. In their cultivation, they go forward with vigor.

3. Irreversible in Thought. They never retreat from their resolve for Bodhi or in their Bodhisattva conduct. They make vows in every life to cultivate the Bodhisattva Path, and to bring forth the Bodhi heart.

**Sutra:**
 **“After the parinirvana of the Buddha King of Gods, the proper Dharma will dwell in the world for twenty middle-sized eons. A stupa sixty yojanas high and forty yojanas wide, made of the seven jewels will be built to hold the sharira of his complete body. All the gods and humans shall make offerings to and worship the wonderful stupa of seven jewels, using various flowers, powdered incense, burning incense, paste incense, clothing, beads, banners, jeweled canopies, instrumental and vocal music.”

“Limitless living beings shall attain the fruit of Arhatship. Limitless living beings will awaken to Pratyekabuddhahood. An inconceivable number of living beings will bring forth the resolve for Bodhi and reach irreversibility.”**Outline:

I3. Benefits remaining after that Buddha’s extinction.

**Commentary:**

After the limitless numbers of living beings bring forth the Bodhi mind and arrive at irreversibility, the work of King of Gods Buddha will be finished. He will have taught, transformed and saved those living beings he was supposed to have taught. When his work is done, he will enter Nirvana. Teaching and transforming living beings is the Buddha’s work. When he has taught those he was supposed to teach, he enters Nirvana.

**After the parinirvana of the Buddha King of Gods, the Proper Dharma will dwell in the world for twenty middle-sized eons.** While the Buddha is dwelling in the world, the Proper Dharma Age abides in the world. After the Buddha enters extinction, that is the Dharma Image Age. Then, after a long time we come to the Dharma Ending Age. This Buddha will dwell in the world for twenty middle-sized eons, and so the Proper Dharma will also dwell for twenty middle-sized eons. **A stupa sixty yojanas high,** “sixty yojanas” represent the Six Perfections, **and forty yojanas wide.** “Forty yojanas” represent the Four Applications of Mindfulness. This magnificent stupa**made of the seven jewels will be built to hold the sharira of his complete body.** The Buddha’s relics will be housed there.

**All the gods and humans shall make offerings to and worship the wonderful stupa of seven jewels, using various flowers, powdered incense, burning incense, paste incense, clothing, beads, banners, jeweled canopies, instrumental and vocal music. Limitless living beings shall attain the fruit of Arhatship.** While the Buddha, King of Gods is in the world, limitless living beings will attain the fruits of Arhatship, and after he has entered Nirvana, limitless living beings will also attain the fruit of Arhatship. **Limitless living beings will awaken to** and be certified as having attained **Pratyekabuddhahood. An inconceivable number of living beings will bring forth the resolve for Bodhi and reach irreversibility.**

**Sutra:**
 **The Buddha told the Bhikshus that in the future if a good man or good woman hears the Devadatta chapter of The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra with a pure mind believes and reveres it, having no doubts, he will not fall into the hells, into the realm of hungry ghosts, or into the animal realm. He will be born in the presence of the Buddhas of the ten directions, always hearing this Sutra wherever he may be born. Should he be reborn among humans and gods, he will receive supreme and subtle bliss. If born in the presence of a Buddha, he will be born by transformation from a lotus flower.**Outline:

E2. Exhortation to believe.

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha told the Bhikshus that in the future if a good man or good woman hears the Devadatta chapter of The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra with a pure mind believes and reveres it, having no doubts, he will not fall into the hells.** The “future” here refers to the future from the time of the Buddha, which is just the present for us. “A good man or woman” is one who cultivates the Five Precepts, and cultivates the Ten Good Deeds. A “pure mind” is a mind without defiled dharmas. Being without defiled dharmas means that in the world of good and evil, one does not make discriminations. One does not think in terms of good or evil. One has transcended such dualistic concepts. If you constantly discriminate, thinking, “This is good and that is evil; this is right, that is wrong; this is rotten, that is wholesome; this is black and this is white,” then with so many discriminations going on, you cannot be said to have gained purity of mind. If you can refrain from making discriminations in terms of good, bad, right and wrong, and so on, then you have a pure mind.

“But isn’t that like being dead or something?” you ask.

That is just what it is supposed to be like! If, amidst your daily “life”, you can be as if “dead”, then you will have obtained the subtle point of having pure faith. The sad point is that you cannot do it. Why should you not discriminate between good and evil?

For instance, if you start discriminating, right away you will draw the conclusion that Devadatta was a very rotten person indeed. But, you should surmount such discriminations and understands that Devadatta was really a great Bodhisattva. He just chose to save people in “reverse.” He gave them such a hard time that they cultivated much harder and realized Buddhahood much quicker.

What does it mean to be one who “with a pure mind believes?” It means you must have faith that in every lifetime, those people you meet who oppose you or give you a hard time are all helping you to become a Buddha. You are as if being smelted in a big furnace. You are smelted and refined until you are free of all habits and faults. You become as soft and yielding as cotton. To be like that is to have true, deep faith. You should know that those people who make trouble for you are really helping you in your cultivation. If you did not have any problems, how could you perfect the power of patience?

People who give you trouble help you arrive at the place where your mind no longer moves, you are no longer disturbed at any level. Their efforts simply do not affect you at all. Maitreya Bodhisattva’s verse about patience is so fine! I lectured it the other day. You will note that the word “patience” does not occur in that verse even once. He does not say, “I am perfecting patience.” He has gone beyond the concept of patience altogether, and so he does not even have to bring it up as such. To “believe” in this context means that those who oppose you are helping you to become a Buddha.

Those people you encounter who hate you, trouble you and subject you to great trials, you should think of them, “They are truly my Good Knowing Advisors. They are helping me. If they were not my Good Knowing Advisors, why would they bother to manifest such an entirely evil appearance?” When you meet people who give you a hard time you must think of them as your Good Knowing Advisors. That is to “revere” The Dharma Flower Sutra, and to revere such people as well.

Let us take the example of a bell. Why does a bell ring? It is because someone hits it with a mallet; when the bell is struck, it rings. If it is not struck it will not make a sound. Do you not agree? It is because it rings that people go on hitting it. If it did not ring, no one would hit it.

Pure gold has to be refined in the fire. Only when all the other minerals have been smelted out can you call it “pure” gold. If it does not go through the fire, its quality is not so fine. The process of smelting at high heat purifies it.

The plum that blossoms in the cold of winter is especially fragrant. Its fragrant aroma carries far and wide. Why is it so fragrant? It is because it has endured the cold of winter. We say,

If it had not endured the cold that pierces to the bone,
How could the plum blossom be so fragrant?

Therefore, if you can look upon your “worst enemy” as your Good and Wise Advisor, then you have genuine reverence.

Let us look at another analogy. When a baby is drinking its mother’s milk, it would never think of its mother as having any faults. No matter how terribly ugly the child’s mother might be, the child would never think of her as ugly. The child will not say, “You are so ugly, I am not going to drink any more milk!” It is also like someone who goes to the mountains to pick fruit—oranges, apples, and such. He would never say, “You are such a twisted, ugly fruit tree, I am not going to pick your fruit!” It does not matter how the tree looks, he still picks the fruit. If you can have this kind of attitude, then as the text says, that is “having no doubts.” Even though Devadatta did very evil things, if you do not discriminate it in this way, then you have no doubts about it. Without doubts you are a real cultivator and have the Three types of Wisdom:

1. Wisdom in Listening.
2. Wisdom in Thinking.
3. Wisdom in Cultivation.

He will not fall into the Three Evil Paths—hells, **into the realm of hungry ghosts or into the animal realm.** If you can avoid the Three Evil Paths, then you will be in a position to serve the Buddhas. If you can constantly draw near to the Buddhas, you will quite naturally hear the wonderful Dharma. **He will be born in the presence of the Buddhas of the ten directions, always hearing this Sutra wherever he may be born.** You will get to hear The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. **Should he be reborn among humans and gods, he will receive supreme and subtle bliss. If born in the presence of a Buddha, he will be born by transformation from a lotus flower.** If you get to hear The Dharma Flower Sutra, you can be reborn in a Lotus flower.

The “hells” are places of punishment for evil people. “Hungry ghosts” are always under a lot of pressure. Why? They are always hungry, but they cannot get any food! They may get hold of some food, but it turns into fire in their mouths and never makes it as far as their stomachs. “Animals” are of various kinds—they are extremely stupid. Now, if you can believe the “Devadatta Chapter” without holding any doubts, you can avoid falling into these Three Evil Paths.

It is not easy to hear The Dharma Flower Sutra. Take a look at the people who come here. They want to study, but they often run off. Perhaps they do not have sufficient good roots, or perhaps they have personal problems or have a run-in with someone here, or perhaps it is just too much work; they may think up other various reasons, but in general, it has something to do with their good roots. If one has sufficient good roots, one will never run away from a chance to hear The Dharma Flower Sutra. If born among humans or gods, they will be extremely happy. If they get to be born in the presence of a Buddha, they will be born from Lotus flowers. They will take the nine grades of lotuses as their parents, and they will not be born as a result of lustful contact. Their pure self-natures will appear in Lotus buds. When the Lotus flower opens—there they are, and they become Buddhas. Their Dharma bodies manifest.

Here at the Buddhist Lecture Hall, we are very busy in our study of the Buddhadharma. In the morning we get up early and we do not rest until late at night. As busy as we are, we should do something worthwhile. We should not just act busy all day long, but not actually do anything.

It is my hope that you will work on behalf of Western people, and quickly propagate the Buddhadharma so that it may enter Western society. Then we will not have wasted our efforts in coming here this life. Under the pressures of the current work, do not revert to your previous lifestyle. What did it involve that you should now avoid? Fighting and making trouble! We are now doing the work of Bodhi, the Enlightened Path. Everyone should use wisdom, not afflictions! If you use afflictions, then you would be better off not cultivating. It would be better to retreat to your old ways—your previous way of life. We are now doing the work of Bodhi, so it is essential that we use our wisdom. Using your wisdom just means not having afflictions.

You should not be selfish and think, “What about me? What about me… me… me… me…?” You must take your “self,” and peel it off! Open up your Mind ground, open up your Prajna wisdom, and get on with the work.

The fifth magazine must be finished up and printed. Otherwise those who have subscribed will not get their issue on time, and we will lose face all around. Everyone should look at the big picture. Do not use your small knowledge and tiny views, just thinking about you and not thinking about anyone else! We must do this work perfectly, and it will make up our foundation, our accomplishment.

Now, I do not need anyone to trust in me. It is all right that they do not trust me. Why? Whether people believe in me or not, is no problem. But as for all of you, Western Buddhism is just now beginning. Therefore, you must be trustworthy; do not do things that make people doubt you. This is very important. All of you should take careful note of this.
 **Sutra:**
 **At that time, a Bodhisattva-attendant of Many Jewels, World Honored One, from the lower regions by the name of Wisdom Accumulation, spoke to the Buddha Many Jewels, saying, “Let’s return to our own land.”**Outline:

E3. Wisdom Accumulation asks to go home.

**Commentary:**

**At that time, a Bodhisattva-attendant of Many Jewels, World Honored One, from the lower regions by the name of Wisdom Accumulation spoke.** The Bodhisattva was a servant of Many Jewels Buddha, who had come along with him. The Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulation would often choose to be reborn in Suzhou, China. At Ling Yen Mountain, he would come there to save living beings and make himself manifest so people could see him. When they were building the Monastery at Ling Yen Mt., they dug up a statue of Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva. It was very strange. He spoke **to the Buddha Many Jewels, saying, “Let’s return to our own land.”** He said, “Can I go back now? Can I go home?”

**Sutra:**
 **Shakyamuni Buddha told Wisdom Accumulation, “Good man, wait a moment longer. There is a Bodhisattva named Manjushri. You should meet him and discuss the wonderful Dharma. Then you may return to your country.”**Outline:

F1. The World Honored One detains him.

**Commentary:**

**Shakyamuni Buddha told Wisdom Accumulation, “Good man, wait a moment longer. There is a Bodhisattva** in this Dharma Assembly **named Manjushri,** ‘Wonderfully Lucky’ Bodhisattva. **You should meet him and discuss the wonderful Dharma.** You can be the Bodhisattva’s friend! Manjushri Bodhisattva is very wise. You can discuss the doctrines of The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra with him and **then you may return to your country.** You will not be late, and you will have made a new friend! Won’t that be nice?”

**Sutra:**
 **Then Manjushri, sitting on a thousand-petalled lotus as large as a carriage wheel, along with the Bodhisattvas who accompanied him, also sitting on jeweled lotuses, spontaneously rose up out of the great sea from the Sagara Dragon Palace. They rose high into the air and went to Magic Vulture Mountain. Descending from his lotus, he went before the Buddhas and bowed in worship at the feet of the two World Honored Ones. Having paid his respects, he went up to Wisdom Accumulation and when they had inquired after each other’s welfare, they moved to one side and sat down.**Outline:

G1. Manjushri Bodhisattva arrives.

**Commentary:**

**Then Manjushri, sitting on a thousand-petalled lotus as large as a carriage wheel, along with the Bodhisattvas who accompanied him, also sitting on jeweled lotuses, spontaneously rose up out of the great sea from the Sagara Dragon Palace.** “Sagara,” the name of the Dragon King, is a Sanskrit word, which means “salty sea.” They just rose up out of the sea. **They rose high into the air and went to Magic Vulture Mountain,** to where Shakyamuni Buddha was speaking the Dharma. **Descending from his lotus, he went before the Buddhas and bowed in worship at the feet of the two World Honored Ones.Having paid his respects, he went up to Wisdom Accumulation and when they had inquired after each other’s welfare, they moved to one side and sat down.**Manjushri Bodhisattva said, “How are you?”

“Really good!” said Wisdom Accumulation.

**Sutra:**
 **Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva asked Manjushri, “Humane One, how many living beings have you taught there in the Dragon Palace?”**Outline:

G2. Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva’s question.

**Commentary:**

**Wisdom-Accumulation Bodhisattva asked Manjushri, “Humane One, how many living beings have you taught there in the Dragon Palace?”** “Humane One” is another name for a Bodhisattva. He said, “You have been staying in the Dragon Palace. How many dragons have you saved? How many big ones? How many little ones? Are you enjoying yourself? Is it more meaningful than crossing over pigeons?”

**Sutra:

Manjushri Bodhisattva replied, “An unlimited, unreckonable number, one that cannot be expressed in words or fathomed by the mind. Wait just a moment and you will have proof for yourself.”**Outline:

G3. Manjushri Bodhisattva’s answer.
H1. Answering in terms of the great benefits.

**Commentary:**
 **Manjushri Bodhisattva replied, “An unlimited, unreckonable number,** you could never count how many dragons and other marine-type creatures have been saved. Their number is **one that cannot be expressed in words or fathomed by the mind. Wait just a moment and you will have proof for yourself.”** You will see for yourself! Count for yourself! You will have proof. I will not have to tell you.

Now someone is wondering, “In the beginning of The Lotus Sutra, in the Introduction, Manjushri was present in the Dharma Assembly! When did he leave? How did he get into the ocean? Besides, Shakyamuni Buddha made the seas all disappear. How did he manage to pop out of the ocean?”

You might say this was very intelligent question; you could also say it is a really stupid question. You could say it is an important question, and you could also say that it is not important. In the Buddhadharma, such principles are not rigid.

Earlier in the “Chapter on Vision of the Jeweled Stupa,” Shakyamuni Buddha purified the lands three times. But this was just a transformation. It means that one could not longer “see” the oceans. It did not mean that they were not actually there.

You could also explain it by saying that although Shakyamuni Buddha has moved the great seas to some other world, Manjushri Bodhisattva himself had great spiritual powers, and he might have come from some other world. In the first chapter, Manjushri Bodhisattva was present in the Dharma Assembly. However, Bodhisattvas have limitless, boundless division bodies. At any time they can transform millions of bodies to go off to any world to teach and transform living beings. So the question is both important and unimportant, intelligent and stupid. My responses should have taken care of such questions. If you still cannot figure it out, perhaps you will have a dream that will make it clear for you.

**Sutra:**
 **Before he had finished speaking, countless Bodhisattvas sitting upon jeweled lotuses rose up out of the sea, went to Magic Vulture Mountain and hovered there in space. These Bodhisattvas had been taught and crossed over by Manjushri Bodhisattva. All of them had perfected the Bodhisattva practices and were discussing among themselves the Six Paramitas. Those who had been Hearers were in empty space expounding upon the practices of Hearers. All of them were now cultivating the principle of emptiness of the Great Vehicle.**Outline:

H2. Recipients of the benefit gather together as proof.

**Commentary:**

**Before he had finished speaking, countless Bodhisattvas,** Great Vehicle Bodhisattvas **sitting upon jeweled lotuses rose up out of the sea, went to Magic Vulture Mountain and hovered there in space.** Manjushri had not even finished saying that the number of living beings he had taught in the Dragon Palace were uncountable in number, and totally unfathomable. He was just saying, “Wait and you will see for yourself,” and right while he was saying that, all those countless Bodhisattvas emerged from the sea. They all took off for Magic Vulture Mountain, the Bodhimanda of Shakyamuni Buddha. When they arrived, they used the wondrous function of their spiritual powers and just stayed there in space.

**These Bodhisattvas had** all **been taught and crossed over by Manjushri Bodhisattva** in the ocean. **All of them had perfected the Bodhisattva practices,** the Bodhisattva Path **and were discussing among themselves the Six Paramitas.** They were investigating the Six Perfections. We see that the Bodhisattvas discuss and investigate the Six Perfections, and study them carefully. How much the more so should we common folks work on them! And yet we hear a few lectures and think, “I know all about the Six Perfections!”

That is ridiculous! Understanding of the Six Perfections is not gained from listening to a couple of lectures. It is only gained through the practice of the Bodhisattva conduct. Thus, all the Bodhisattvas were together studying the Dharma of the Six Perfections. **Those who had been Hearers** and who had subsequently brought forth the Great Vehicle Bodhisattva-mind **were in empty space expounding upon the practices of the Hearers.** Some of them had not completely understood the Bodhisattva Path, but still remembered Hearer Dharma-doors like the Four Truths and the Twelve Causes and Conditions, and so they were talking about them. **All of them were now cultivating the principle of emptiness of the Great Vehicle.** Regardless of whether they were Bodhisattvas or Hearers, they were cultivating the principle of emptiness of the Great Vehicle. And what is that principle? It is the Real Mark. They cultivated the Dharma-door of Real Mark.

**Sutra:**
 **Manjushri Bodhisattva said to Wisdom Accumulation, “Such is the work of teaching and transforming that I have done within the sea.”**Outline:

H3. Manjushri Bodhisattva’s conclusion.

**Commentary:**

**Manjushri Bodhisattva said to Wisdom Accumulation, “Such is the work of teaching and transforming that I have done within the sea.”** You asked me how many creatures I had taught and transformed? Well, take a look at the present company. That is about the size of it. What do you think?

**Sutra:**
 **At that time, Wisdom Accumulation spoke these verses of praise:**

**“O greatly wise, virtuous and courageous one, You have taught and saved countless beings. Now this great assembly and I have seen this for ourselves. Proclaiming the Real Mark’s principle,Opening the Dharma of One Vehicle, You are a guide for all living beings Leading them quickly to Bodhi’s realization.”**

Outline:

H4. Wisdom Accumulation’s praises.

**Commentary:**

**At that time** when Wisdom Accumulation saw all the limitless, countless Bodhisattvas that Manjushri had taught—the Bodhisattvas and Hearers discussing the Great Vehicle’s principle of emptiness—**Wisdom Accumulation spoke these verses of praise.** All of you should remember to praise people when you see them. Give them high hats! Ha! Give them several high hats! It does not cost you anything. Wisdom Accumulation praised Manjushri Bodhisattva, saying, **O greatly wise, virtuous and courageous one, you have taught and saved countless beings.** You have great wisdom, great virtuous practice and great courage. And you go forward with vigor. You are really a heroic general! You can practice the Bodhisattva path and save limitless number of beings.

**Now this great assembly and I have seen this for ourselves!** The Dharma Flower Assembly of Shakyamuni Buddha, and I myself, have seen all the many beings you have taught. **Proclaiming the Real Mark’s principle, opening** up and revealing **the Dharma of One Vehicle, you are a guide for all living beings, leading them quickly to Bodhi’s realization.** The One Vehicle, the “wonderful” Dharma! The One Buddha Vehicle! “There are no other vehicles. There is only the One Buddha Vehicle.” (Chapter II; Expedient Devices; Dharma Flower Sutra) On a vast scale, you lead living beings to realize their resolve for Bodhi.

**Sutra:**
 **Manjushri said, “while in the sea, I have proclaimed and taught only The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra!”**Outline:

F2. The nine benefits.
G1. Manjushri’s statement.

**Commentary:**

**Manjushri said, “while in the sea, I have proclaimed and taught only The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra!”** While staying in the salty sea, you know what Dharma I spoke? I will tell you: It was only The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra. I did not lecture on any other Sutras.

**Sutra:**
 **Wisdom Accumulation asked Manjushri, “This Sutra is extremely profound and subtle. Among all the Sutras, it is a jewel rarely found in the world. Is there any living being who can, through diligence and vigor, cultivate this Sutra and quickly gain Buddhahood?”**Outline:

G2. Wisdom Accumulation’s question.

**Commentary:**

When **Wisdom Accumulation** Bodhisattva heard Manjushri Bodhisattva say that he only lectured on The Dharma Flower Sutra, he had some doubts and so he asked Manjushri, “This Sutra is extremely profound. Can the creatures in the sea understand it? **This Sutra is extremely profound and subtle.** It is lofty, profound, and inconceivable. **Among all the Sutras, it is a jewel rarely found in the world.** You seldom meet up with it. **Is there any living being who can, through diligence and vigor, cultivate this Sutra and quickly gain Buddhahood?**”

**Sutra:**
 **Manjushri said, “There is a dragon king’s daughter who is just eight years old. She is wise, with sharp faculties. She well knows the faculties, conducts, and karmas of living beings and has attained Dharani. She is able to receive and uphold the entire storehouse of extremely profound secrets spoken by the Buddha. She has deeply entered dhyana samadhi and thoroughly penetrated all Dharmas. In the space of a kshana she brought forth the Bodhi mind and attained to irreversibility. Her eloquence is unobstructed and she is compassionately mindful of all living beings as if they were her children. Her merit and virtue is complete. The thoughts of her mind and the works from her mouth are subtle, wonderful, and expansive. She is compassionate, humane, and yielding; harmonious and refined in mind and will, and she is able to arrive at Bodhi.”**Outline:

G3. Manjushri’s answer.

**Commentary:**

**Manjushri said, “There is a dragon king’s daughter who is just eight years old.** Even though she is young, her wisdom is great. **She is wise, with sharp faculties.** She is extraordinarily intelligent. At the tender age of eight, **she well knows the faculties, conducts, and karmas of living beings and has attained Dharani.** “Dharani” is a Sanskrit word, and it means “to unite all Dharmas and uphold limitless meanings.” It also means to “maintain purity in body, mouth, and mind.”

**She is able to receive and uphold the entire storehouse of extremely profound secrets spoken by the Buddha.** She understands all the dharanis and secret treasuries of the Buddha. “Secret” means that they are spoken for one person, but another person would not understand them. Perhaps the same words are understood by different people at different levels, some more profound than others are. This eight-year-old girl is able to receive, uphold, read and recite them, and understand them fully.

**She has deeply entered dhyana samadhi and** not only that, she has **thoroughly penetrated all Dharmas,** understands them all. **In the space of a kshana** in less than a split second, **she brought forth the Bodhi mind and attained to irreversibility,** that position. **Her eloquence is unobstructed.** She really knows how to talk! She can talk dead people back to life! That is how wonderful her eloquence is. How can she do this? The dead people get interested in hearing what she has to say, and so they come back to life and listen! Wouldn’t you say that was wonderful?”

**And she is compassionately mindful of all living beings as if they were her children.** She is considerate towards living beings, and is always looking out for them, like a mother watches over her sons and daughters.

We also say that the Buddha is our compassionate father and we are all his children.

**Her merit and virtue is complete. The thoughts of her mind and the words from her mouth are subtle, wonderful, and expansive. She is compassionate, humane, and yielding.** The Dharma she speaks is subtle and vast. The thoughts in her mind are compassionate and gentle. “Compassionate” means that she bestows happiness on living beings, and rids them of their sufferings. “Humane” means that she is protective and kind towards everyone. This kindness is pure. It is not mixed with any defiled dharmas. “Yielding” means that even though she possesses the merit and virtue required to fill a very high position, she defers to others. She is **harmonious and refined in mind and will, and she is able to arrive at Bodhi.** She is able to become a Buddha very quickly.

**Sutra:**
 **Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva said, “I have seen the Thus Come One Shakyamuni practicing difficult ascetic practices throughout limitless eons, accumulating merit and virtue as he sought Bodhi without ever resting. As I observe the three thousand great thousand worlds, there is no place, not even one the size of a mustard seed, where as a Bodhisattva he did not renounce his life for the sake of living beings. Only after that did he attain the Bodhi Way. I do not believe that this girl can accomplish Proper Enlightenment in the space of an instant.”**Outline:

G4. Wisdom Accumulation’s attachments and doubts.

**Commentary:**

**Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva** had a reply to that. When Manjushri Bodhisattva said that the Dragon Girl could realize Buddhahood very quickly, Wisdom Accumulation started having even more doubts. He **said, “I have seen the Thus Come One Shakyamuni practicing difficult ascetic practices throughout limitless eons;** for limitless kalpas. Shakyamuni Buddha practiced those ascetic practices that others could not practice. He was not doing it to show off, either. He did not even think of them as “difficult ascetic practices.” He just did them as if he were not doing them at all.

Most people do some ascetic practice and think, “I eat once a day. I sleep under a tree. I never lie down to sleep. This is truly difficult!” He did not think of his practices as difficult. He looked upon them as being something he was supposed to be doing. He does not give up merit as little as an amount of hair. Not neglecting the smallest good deed, his merit piled up until it was very great. He was **accumulating merit and virtue as he sought Bodhi without ever resting.** Why did he suffer so much hardship? It is because he sought the Way of Enlightenment. He wanted genuine understanding, and so he was never lazy, and he never took breaks. He never thought, “There is no one around; I think I will take a nap. Tomorrow when some people show up I will conduct a rap session.” He never did things like that.

**As I observe the three thousand great thousand worlds, there is no place, not even one the size of a tiny mustard seed,** or a mote of dust **where as a Bodhisattva** (Shakyamuni Buddha) when practicing the Bodhisattva path, **he did not renounce his life for the sake of living beings.** In the entire universe there is not one place where he did not give up his body, mind, and life. **Only after that,** after cultivating these difficult ascetic practices, **did he attain the Bodhi Way.I** most certainly **do not believe that this** little **girl,** the daughter of the dragon king, **can accomplish Proper Enlightenment in the space of an instant.** I do not believe it.

**Sutra:**
 **They had not yet finished their discussion when the dragon king’s daughter suddenly appeared before them, bowed with her head at their feet, and withdrew to one side to speak these verses:**

**“Having deeply understood the marks of offenses and blessings,By shining throughout the ten directions, Now the wondrous, pure Dharma body Is complete with the thirty-two marks And the eighty minor characteristics. The adorned Dharma body is honored And looked up to by gods and humans And revered by all the dragons and spirits. Of all the varieties of beings, None fail to respect and revere it. Hearing about the realization of Bodhi, Which only a Buddha can certify to, I proclaim the Great Vehicle Teaching, Which liberates suffering living beings.”**

Outline:

G5. The Dragon Girl clears up the doubts.

**Commentary:**

Manjushri and Wisdom Accumulation were still talking. **They had not yet finished their discussion when the dragon king’s daughter suddenly appeared before them,** and **bowed with her head at their feet.** She bowed to Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Jewels Buddha, Manjushri Bodhisattva, and Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva, **and withdrew to one side to speak these verses:**

**Having deeply understood the marks of offenses and blessings by shining throughout the ten directions, now the wondrous, pure Dharma body is complete with the thirty-two marks.** Thoroughly understanding the “marks of offenses and blessings,” one does not commit offenses, but cultivates blessings. In this way one obtains the marks of “neither offenses nor blessings,” transcends the mundane, and becomes a Buddha. Buddhas transcend the marks of offenses and blessings. **And the eighty minor characteristics** adorning the Dharma body. Because one has perfected the Six Perfections, one is endowed with the thirty-two hallmarks and the eighty minor characteristics as well as the myriad conducts. **The adorned Dharma body** then **is honored and looked up to by gods and humans, and revered by all the dragons and spirits.**

The Buddha, the Dharma Body of all Buddhas, is honored by the gods. The dragons and spirits also revere the Buddha. **Of all the varieties of beings, none fail to respect and revere it.** All beings worship the Buddha. **Hearing about the realization of Bodhi,** and how living beings who cultivate can attain Buddhahood, **which only a Buddha can certify to,** and also only a Buddha can certify a living being’s attainment of Buddhahood, **I proclaim the Great Vehicle Teaching, which liberates suffering living beings.** It is my wish to rescue living beings from the sea of suffering.

**Sutra**
 **At that time, Shariputra spoke to the Dragon Girl, saying, “You claim quick attainment to the supreme path. This is difficult to believe. Why? The body of a woman is filthy and not a vessel for the Dharma. How can you attain to supreme Bodhi? The Buddha Path is remote and distant. Only after one has passed through limitless eons, diligently bearing suffering and accumulating one’s conduct, perfecting one’s cultivation of all Paramitas, can one then attain realization. What is more, a woman’s body has five obstacles: one, she cannot become a Brahma Heaven King; two, she cannot become Shakra; three, she cannot become a Mara King; four, she cannot become a Wheel-turning sage king; five, she cannot become a Buddha. How can a woman quickly realize Buddhahood?”**Outline:

G6. Shariputra cites the Tripitaka to bring up the difficulties.

**Commentary:**

After the Dragon Girl finished speaking her verses, **at that time,** the Greatly Wise **Shariputra spoke to the Dragon Girl, saying, “You claim quick attainment to the supreme path. This is difficult to believe.** I do not believe it at all. **Why? The body of a woman is filthy and not a vessel for the Dharma.** You are a woman, and women’s bodies are unclean—very dirty. They are not vessels appropriate for realizing Buddhahood. **How can you attain to supreme Bodhi?** You are a woman, so how can you say that you can attain Buddhahood so fast?

**The Buddha Path is remote and distant.** Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated blessings and wisdom for three great asamkhyeya eons, and perfected the fine marks for a hundred kalpas. It took him who knows how long to realize Buddhahood. **Only after one has passed through limitless eons, diligently bearing suffering and accumulating one’s conduct,** piling up merit and virtue, **perfecting one’s cultivation of all Paramitas, can one then attain realization.** Only after such bitter cultivation can one become a Buddha.

**What is more, a woman’s body has five obstacles: one, she cannot become a Brahma Heaven King; two, she cannot become Shakra; three, she cannot become a Mara King; four, she cannot become a Wheel-turning sage king; five, she cannot become a Buddha. How can a woman quickly realize Buddhahood?”**

**Sutra:**
 **Now the Dragon Girl had a precious pearl, its worth equal to the entire system of three thousand great thousand worlds, which she took before the Buddha and presented to him. The Buddha immediately accepted it. The Dragon Girl said to Wisdom Accumulation and the Venerable Shariputra, “I just offered up this precious pearl and the World Honored One accepted it. Was that quick or not?”

“Very quick!” they answered.

The girl said, “With your spiritual powers, watch as I become a Buddha even more quickly than that!” At that moment, the entire assembly saw the Dragon Girl suddenly transform into a man and perfect the Bodhisattva conduct. Instantly she went off to the south, to The World Without Filth, where, seated on a jeweled lotus, she accomplished equal and proper enlightenment and embodied the thirty-two marks and eighty minor characteristics. There, for the sake of all living beings throughout the ten directions, she proceeded to proclaim the wonderful Dharma.**Outline:

G7. The Dragon Girl shows the facts and dispels doubts.

**Commentary:**

It is clear in The Vimalakirti Sutra that the Venerable Shariputra already knew that the mark of male and female was ultimately unobtainable. Why then, in The Dharma Flower Sutra did he have doubts about the Dragon Girl being able to become a Buddha? Actually, the doubts were not Shariputra’s or Wisdom Accumulation’s. Shariputra and Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva were not attached to the mark of male or female. They merely asked these questions on behalf of living beings, fearing that some living beings might have doubts and not believe The Dharma Flower Sutra. That is why they brought up the point that women cannot become Buddhas.

Common people see and think in terms of male and female. Sages who have certified to the fruit have gone beyond concepts of male and female. Just because Shariputra brought up these points to challenge the Dragon Girl, you should not think that Shariputra really did not understand or that he was trying to pick a fight. As far as the obstacles of a woman not being able to become a demon king, as far as I am concerned, that is great. It is not such a bad obstacle, really.

**Now the Dragon Girl had a precious pearl, its worth equal to the entire system of three thousand great thousand worlds, which she took before the Buddha and presented to him.** Every dragon has a pearl, and treasures it above everything else. The Dragon Girl’s pearl was very valuable, but she offered it to the Buddha, and the Buddha took it and put it into his pocket. Well, the Buddha did not have pockets, but you get the general idea. He did not say, “I do not want your ‘crummy’ pearl!” **The Buddha immediately accepted it. The Dragon Girl then said to Wisdom Accumulation and the Venerable Shariputra,** “Intelligent Ones, **I just offered up this precious pearl and the World Honored One accepted it. Was that quick or not?**” What do you think? Was it not quick?

**“Very quick!” they answered.**
**The girl said, “With your spiritual powers,** Wisdom Accumulation and Shariputra, with your inconceivable powers, take a look. **Watch as I become a Buddha even more quickly than that!** I will become a Buddha in less that the time it took to present my pearl to the Buddha.” **At that moment, the entire assembly saw the Dragon Girl suddenly transform into a man.** This all happened faster than her giving the pearl to the Buddha. When she gave the Buddha her pearl she had to polish it up a bit, or maybe dig it out of her purse, bow to the Buddha, put it up to her forehead and probably took from three to five minutes at least. But now, she immediately became a man and just that fast was able to **perfect the Bodhisattva conduct. Instantly she went off to the south, to the world without filth, where, seated on a jeweled lotus, she accomplished equal and proper enlightenment.** She was born by transformation from a Lotus flower.

It is not that easy to be reborn by transformation from a Lotus. You have to cultivate a lot of ascetic practices that others cannot cultivate. There are eight causes and conditions for being born that way:

Eight Causes and Conditions for Being Born in a Lotus

1. One would rather give up one’s life than speak about the faults of others. Let us say you were in a position where you were going to get your head chopped off, and, if you simply said, “It is not my fault! So and so did it, not me. They told me to do it. It was not my idea…” you could escape. You still would not say it. If you would rather lose your life than talk about other’s faults then you have fulfilled the first condition for being born in a Lotus.

Can any of you do this? If you gossip all day long, how can you be born in a Lotus? Ha! I do not care if you gossiped before. That does not count as long as you do not gossip anymore. Now that I have taught you not to, I will certify that your past offenses do not count, as long as you reform in the future. It will hold if you do it again though.

2. One teaches people to take refuge with the Triple Jewel. Not only do you influence people to take refuge and practice the Bodhisattva Path, but even to animals.

3. One brings it all back to the Bodhi heart. All your good deeds should be put in trust to bringing forth the Bodhi heart.

4. One practices undefiled Brahma conduct. Brahma conduct is pure conduct. It means being without greed, hatred, or stupidity. This means you get rid of your greed forever. You cannot think you are doing okay because you are not greedy during lectures, and then get greedy as soon as you leave the lecture hall! Perhaps even while the lecture is in progress you are thinking, “Arrgh! What nonsense! I like being greedy! Why do we have to keep hearing about that!” Then you get angry and then you do not listen anymore. You take a nap instead. See? Pure Brahma conduct means not having even the subtlest forms of greed. If someone leaves a bag of garbage around, you cannot go looking through it for gold pieces! That is worthless!

5. One makes Buddha images and places them on Lotus pedestals.

6. One dispels the troubles of living beings. Living beings are always worrying. “What am I going to do? I cannot solve my problems!” So you think of a solution for them. But you cannot expect a lot of gratitude; you must do it and forget it, that’s all.

7. One is humble towards arrogant people. People who are arrogant are always fighting to be the number one. Toward such people you should be humble and compliant.

8. One does not give trouble to others. You cannot order people around and tell them what to do! Especially Americans! American husbands cannot even tell their wives what to do! It will not work. When I was in Hong Kong and Manchuria, I was much more into the role of being the teacher. If I suspected that something should be done and it was not, I would get very upset. Now I have come to America, and I see that here, fathers do not give orders to their children and teachers do not give orders to their students. I figure that as a teacher of Buddhism, I should be more democratic. Therefore, you students must be even more democratic! We shall practice the genuine Buddhadharma in the context of true democracy, and it will be wonderful!

Soon we are going to have another liberation of life ceremony, but this time we are going to choose the master of ceremonies democratically. There are three candidates and so as to avoid having to make the decision myself and thereby cause two of them to be unhappy, they will draw straws. The long straw wins! That way, no one will have any grievances. Do not worry about it! If you worry, you are just indulging in false thinking. Those of you with false thinking should get rid of it, and those without it should get some! That is where the wonderful is!

She accomplished equal and proper enlightenment. “Proper enlightenment” is the true enlightenment of the Buddha; there is nothing false within it. **And embodied the thirty-two marks and eighty minor characteristics. There, for the sake of all living beings throughout the ten directions, she proceeded to proclaim the wonderful Dharma.** The Dragon Girl was speaking the wonderful Dharma for the living beings in the world to the south called, “Without Filth,” and also for the living beings in all the other nine directions. The “wonderful Dharma” is inconceivable. It is just a matter of not having false thinking. If you do not have false thinking, it is wonderful Dharma. If you do, it is not!

**Sutra:**
 **While the Bodhisattvas, Hearers, gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division, both humans and non-humans in the Saha World all watched from a distance as the Dragon Girl became a Buddha and spoke the Dharma for all the gods and humans. They rejoiced exceedingly and reverently made obeisance from afar. Hearing that Dharma, limitless living beings understood and awoke, attaining to irreversibility. Countless living beings received predictions of the Way. The World Without Filth quaked in six ways, while in the Saha World, three thousand living beings came to dwell on the ground of irreversibility, and three thousand living beings brought forth the Bodhi mind and gained predictions.**Outline:

G8. Benefits gained by the multitudes who saw and heard.

**Commentary:**

**While the Bodhisattvas, Hearers, gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division, both humans and non-humans in the Saha World all watched from a distance as the Dragon Girl became a Buddha and spoke the Dharma for all the gods and humans. They rejoiced exceedingly and reverently made obeisance from afar.** “Saha” is a Sanskrit word, which means “worthy of being endured.” It is the world we live in and it is filled with all kinds of suffering that living beings find hard to endure. When those witnessing the event saw the Dragon Girl become a Buddha they were filled with the bliss of Dharma joy and were happy at heart. **Hearing the Dharma,** which the Dragon Girl spoke as the Buddha she had instantaneously become, **limitless living beings understood and awoke,** they become enlightened, **attaining to irreversibility. Countless living beings received predictions of the Way,** predictions of Buddhahood. **The World Without Filth,** the world where the Dragon Girl was, **quaked in six ways:**

1. Banging,
2. Roaring,
3. Cracking.

These three are descriptive of sound. Then

4. Shaking,
5. Rising,
6. Surging

These three are descriptive of visible appearance.

Banging is the sound of the earth quaking.

Roaring is a louder sustained sound.

Cracking is like the sound of two mountains being smashed against one another or the earth opening up and banging against itself.

Shaking is the moving of the earth. It is not necessarily very violent.

Rising means that the earth erupts into the air. Suddenly a mountain appears on what was a flat plain.

Surging means the entire stretch of the earth soars into the air.

The six types of earthquakes represent the “quaking” of our six sense organs: eyes, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. When you cultivate the Way, sometimes you may feel as if you are trembling, or even roaring, or cracking. Sometimes when you meditate you may suddenly move involuntarily or feel as if you are rising up into empty space, or surging up into the air. Now, in the world called “Without Filth” the six types of earthquakes manifested to represent that the limitless living beings had certified to the fruit.

Each of the six types of earthquakes has three divisions, making eighteen in all, representing the eighteen realms of sense.

There may be said to be Eighteen Types of Earthquakes by virtue of the fact that each of the six has three applications. Three times six, of course, is eighteen, and they represent the eighteen realms of sense. The eighteen realms of sense are composed of the Six Sense Organs, the Six Sense Objects, and the Six Consciousnesses.

How does each of the Six Types of Earthquakes turn into three?

Let us take the fourth, shaking, for example: the first is shaking; the second is universal shaking, and the third is everywhere universal shaking. That is three. Banging works the same way: banging, universal banging, and everywhere universal banging. There is also roaring, universal roaring, and everywhere universal roaring as another three. Crackling, universal crackling, and everywhere universal crackling. Rising, universal rising, and everywhere universal rising are another three. Surging, universal surging and everywhere universal surging are yet another three. That makes eighteen in all.

What is meant by the set of three?

“Shaking” refers to shaking in one particular place. “Universal shaking” is the shaking in one set of the Four Continents: Jambudvipa in the south, Uttarakuru in the north, Aparagondaniya in the west, and the Purvavideha in the east. When the set of four great continents shake, that is termed “universal shaking.”

However “universal shaking” refers only to one of the four continents. “Everywhere universal shaking” refers to shaking throughout the entire three thousand great thousand worlds; they all shake.

The Six Types of Earthquakes—sounds and movement—take place to the end of empty space and the Dharma Realm. The Six Types of Earthquakes also represent the four levels: the Ten Dwellings, the Ten Practices, the Ten Transferences, and the Ten Grounds, with the addition of Equal Enlightenment and Wonderful Enlightenment, a total of six position.

What does the quaking represent?

It represents the breaking up of ignorance, because as you pass through six levels, the six positions, you break through ignorance six times. Each time you break through it, it diminishes. Thus they are called the Six Types of Earthquakes.

**While in the Saha World, three thousand living beings came to dwell on the ground of irreversibility,** attaining to the result. **And three thousand living beings brought forth the** great **Bodhi mind and gained predictions.**

**Sutra:**
 **Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva, Shariputra, and the entire assembly silently believed and accepted.**Outline:

G9. Wisdom Accumulation and Shariputra silently believed and accepted.

**Commentary:**

**Wisdom Accumulation Bodhisattva, Shariputra, and the entire assembly silently believed and accepted.** They had no further doubts. They had nothing to say, because they fully believed and had no question remaining.