**The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra**

**Chapter 14: Happily Dwelling Conduct**
With Commentary by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

This chapter is called “Happily-Dwelling Conduct.” [The Sanskrit title of the chapter is Sukha-Vihara. Sukha means "happy," and Vihara means "dwelling." The Chinese translation is “an le heng”, literally “dwelling-happy-conduct.”] Happily-dwelling conduct is the Bodhisattva Conduct, and the Bodhisattva Conduct is itself the happily-dwelling conduct. One happily dwells in the doors of practice cultivated by Bodhisattvas. Both one's body and one's mind reside in the states of cultivation of the Bodhisattva Way, and do so happily, since that is what one likes to do.

The Masters of the Dharma Chapter, the Devadatta Chapter, and the Exhortation to Maintain Chapter, which came previously, were very important sections of the Dharma Flower Sutra. This chapter is even more important. The reason one happily dwells is that one sits on the Thus Come One's throne, puts on the Thus Come One's robe, and enters the Thus Come One's room. One cultivates that kind of happily dwelling conduct.

Happily-dwelling conduct is the road on which one must travel in cultivating the Bodhisattva Way, hence the name of this chapter, Happily Dwelling Conduct, chapter fourteen.  **Sutra:**

**At that time, Dharma Prince Manjushri Bodhisattva Mahasattva said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, all these Bodhisattvas are extremely rare. Reverently complying with the Buddha, they have made great vows to protect, maintain, read, and speak this Dharma Flower Sutra in the future evil age.”**Outline:

D5. This is the fifth chapter in the “door of the traces” and circulation of the Sutra section.

E1. The question

F1. Praising the Bodhisattvas of profound practice, discussed in the previous chapter, who are able to propagate the Sutra in accord with the Dharma.

**Commentary:**

**At that time** is when the Buddha had finished speaking the “Exhortation to Maintain Chapter” and was ready to speak the “Happily Dwelling Conduct Chapter”. **Manjushri** Bodhisattva's name is a Sanskrit word. Some translate it as “Wonderful Virtue,” and some as “Wonderfully Auspicious.” But Wonderful Virtue is Wonderfully Auspicious, and the meaning is the same. In general, this Bodhisattva's state is inconceivable. As explained in the commentary to the Earth Store Sutra, ten auspicious signs occurred when Manjushri Bodhisattva was born, setting him apart from other Bodhisattvas.

While Manjushri Bodhisattva was cultivating the Bodhisattva Conduct, he never lied, killed, or stole. He kept the precepts very carefully. There is proof that he never stole. One time he said to the other Bodhisattvas, “From the time I first brought forth my resolve to cultivate, I have always maintained the precept against stealing. That is why no one ever steals from me. Why, I could set my most valuable possession down on the ground, and no one would steal it.”

Some of the Bodhisattvas did not believe him, and said, “We should test this out. Bring your most valuable possession, and we will put it in front of the city gate.” They chose that spot because it was where the most people came and went. “We will leave it there for three days, and if no one has taken it by the end of that time, that will prove what you say is true.”

Manjushri Bodhisattva said, “Fine, let's try it out.” He took his most valuable gem—Bodhisattvas have many treasures—and put it in front of the city gate. People came in and out of the city through the gate for three days, but no one took the jewel. The Bodhisattvas then knew that Manjushri Bodhisattva had truly maintained the precept against stealing.

This Bodhisattva has the greatest wisdom. Why? Because he cultivated Prajna practices. From the time he began to cultivate the Bodhisattva Way, he cultivated Prajna. He cultivated Literary Prajna, Contemplative Prajna, and Real Mark Prajna—the three kinds of Prajna. As a result, his wisdom is the greatest.

Before Shakyamuni Buddha realized Buddhahood, he studied the Buddhadharma under this Bodhisattva, who appeared earlier in the Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra as the Bodhisattva Wondrous Light. Manjushri Bodhisattva is also the Dharma Master Wondrous Light.

So, you who are cultivating the Way and have taken precepts must truly keep the precepts. If we do not truly keep the precepts now, later when it is time for us to realize the Way, our realization would not be true either. For that reason, we should learn to be like Manjushri Bodhisattva: We should not kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie or take intoxicants.

“**Dharma Prince**” is Manjushri Bodhisattva's title. The Buddha is the Dharma King. He is the King within the Dharma, the God among Gods, and the Sage among Sages. Bodhisattvas are Dharma Princes. They are the sons of the Dharma King. Hence, Manjushri Bodhisattva is called the Prince of Dharma.

“**Bodhisattva**” is a Sanskrit word. “Bodhi” means “enlightenment,” and “sattva” means “being(s)”, so the whole word means “one who enlightens beings.” A Bodhisattva can help other living beings to become enlightened. A Bodhisattva is also a living being who is enlightened. He is a living being just as we are but he is enlightened living being among sentient beings. That is the meaning of Bodhisattva.

“Mahasattva” is also a Sanskrit word. “Maha” means “great,” and “sattva” is the Bodhisattva. Mahasattvas are the great Bodhisattvas among Bodhisattvas, which means they are senior, not junior Bodhisattvas. Junior Bodhisattvas are those who have just brought forth the resolve for Bodhi, who have just decided they want to be Bodhisattvas. It is not certain that Bodhisattvas who are newly resolved will necessarily become Bodhisattvas. Why not? Because some make the resolve for one, two, or three days and then run away. For example, Shariputra wanted to practice the Bodhisattva Way, but then retreated. The ancients had a verse which describes this very well:

Fish eggs, amalakas,
And newly resolved Bodhisattvas:
All three are many on the causal ground,
But few at the level of fruition.

Fish lay many eggs, but a large number of them never hatch into fish. The amalaka is a fruit found almost exclusively in India. The tree blossoms profusely, without necessarily bearing even one fruit. Also, many people bring forth the beginning resolve to cultivate the Bodhisattva Way; they hear how good it is to practice the Bodhisattva Way, so they bring forth the Bodhi mind. But after a while they realize it is not at all easy, and they prefer not to practice it. Thus, there are many newly-resolved Bodhisattvas, but few actually become senior Bodhisattvas. And so there are many of these three—fish eggs, amalaka blossoms, and newly-resolved Bodhisattvas—at the level of planting causes; but few of them actually come to fruition.

Senior Bodhisattvas have been thoroughly smelted; they have passed through the fire. That is not to say that Bodhisattvas are actually burned. It means that they have been through experiences as painful as being burned by fire and as difficult to endure as being drowned by water. By passing through so many demonic tests, the Bodhisattvas have been successfully smelted and forged. That is how they become senior Bodhisattvas. Manjushri Bodhisattva is not only a senior Bodhisattva, he is a great and inconceivable Bodhisattva, which is why he is called a Mahasattva.

And so this Mahasattva **said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, all these Bodhisattvas are extremely rare.”** He said, “All these many Bodhisattvas who are now before the Buddha making great vows are very unusual and rare. **Reverently complying with the Buddha, they have made great vows.** They are extremely respectful of the Buddha, and so they have accorded with the Buddha's intent and brought forth mighty resolutions. In the evil world of the five turbidities, they want to practice the ascetic practices of bearing what others cannot bear and doing what others cannot do. Their great vows are **to protect, maintain, read, and speak this Dharma Flower Sutra in the future evil age.** In the future, when it is the Dharma Ending Age, they will guard those who receive and maintain this Sutra, those who read and recite it, and those who explain The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra.

Therefore, now as we explain the Dharma Flower Sutra, there are who-knows-how-many myriads of Bodhisattvas, Hearers, and Those Enlightened by Conditions here protecting and supporting this Bodhimanda. Why? All these Bodhisattvas made the vow that wherever there is a Dharma Flower Assembly, they definitely will protect it. It is similar to Many Jewels Tathagata’s vow that wherever there is a Buddha speaking the Dharma Flower Sutra, he will appear before that Buddha to give certification.

**Sutra:**
 **“World Honored One, how should Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas speak this Sutra in the future evil age?”

The Buddha told Manjushri, “If a Bodhisattva Mahasattva wishes to speak this Sutra in the future evil age, he should dwell securely in four Dharmas. First, by dwelling in a Bodhisattva's range of practice and a Bodhisattva's range of association, he will be able to expound this Sutra for living beings.”**
Outline:

F2. Asking how Bodhisattvas who are starting to practice can propagate the Sutra in the evil age.

E2. Answer
F1. General reply
F2. Explanation of methods of cultivation
G1. Happily-dwelling conduct of the body
H1. Prose
I1. Statement

**Commentary:**

Manjushri Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha, saying, **“World Honored One, how should Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas speak this Sutra in the future evil age?** How can all those great Bodhisattvas propagate The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra in the future Dharma Ending Age, when offenses and evils fill the world?” In our present world, everyone likes to fight and wage war. People fight with people, families fight with families, countries fight with countries, and worlds fight with worlds. This world wants to conquer that world, and that world wishes to vanquish this one. As a result, human beings want to migrate to the moon, and moon-beings wish to invade our Saha World. That is what is meant by the future evil age. “During the Dharma Ending Age, which is so full of evil, how can Bodhisattvas explain The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra?” Manjushri Bodhisattva asks the Buddha.

**The Buddha** Shakyamuni **told Manjushri** Bodhisattva, “**If** there is **a Bodhisattva Mahasattva,** a great Bodhisattva who has brought forth the resolve and **wishes to speak this,**The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower **Sutra, in the future evil age,** in the future world of corruption, **he should dwell securely in four** kinds of **Dharmas.** The **first** of the four Dharmas is that, **by dwelling in the Bodhisattva's range of practice and the Bodhisattva's range of association, he will be able to expound this Sutra for living beings.** He should reside where Bodhisattvas cultivate, that is, in the Six Paramitas or the Ten Paramitas. They cultivate the Ten Paramitas of giving, holding precepts, patience, vigor, dhyana-samadhi, wisdom, expedients, vows, powers and knowledge. They should reside in these Ten Paramitas, which are the Bodhisattvas’ range of practice.

The Bodhisattvas' range of association means the places Bodhisattvas draw near to. If one dwells in the state of the practice of Bodhisattvas and draws near to the state that Bodhisattvas should draw near to, then one will be able to lecture on The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra for living beings.

**Sutra:**
 **“Manjushri, what is meant by the Bodhisattva Mahasattva's range of practice? If a Bodhisattva Mahasattva dwells on the ground of patience, is gentle and compliant, not impetuous or volatile; if his mind is not frightened; if, moreover, he does not practice in regard to any dharma, but contemplates the marks of all dharmas as they really are—not, however, practicing non-discrimination—that is called a Bodhisattva Mahasattva's range of practice.”**
Outline:

I2. Explanation
J1. Explanation of the range of practice

**Commentary:**

This section of text discusses a Bodhisattva's range of practice, which is why Shakyamuni Buddha says, “**Manjushri**, do you know **what is meant by the Bodhisattva Mahasattva's range of practice?** Do you know what constitutes the scope of cultivation of a great Bodhisattva? **If a Bodhisattva Mahasattva dwells on the ground of patience**—when a Bodhisattva cultivates the practice of being patient, and resides at the level of patience—what is he like? It must be that he **is gentle and compliant, not impetuous or volatile.”**

Being patient is not at all easy. In the past, when Shakyamuni Buddha was a Patient Immortal, King Kali dismembered his body, yet as a Patient Immortal, he did not feel any hatred or anger. That qualifies as dwelling on the ground of patience. Those who have heard the Vajra Sutra know that story, but those who have not will not know it.

Limitless kalpas ago, Shakyamuni Buddha was in the mountains cultivating the practice of patience. You may wonder, “Since there aren't any people in the mountains, with whom was he being patient? No one came into conflict with him or had any dealings with him, and so how did he cultivate patience?” His cultivation of patience did not necessarily involve being insulted. He simply endured things people cannot bear. For instance, in the mountains there are many mosquitoes, and they bite people all the time. When the mosquitoes came to bite him, the Buddha, as a Patient Immortal, was patient and did not drive them away. First of all, he wanted to practice patience, and secondly, he was afraid that if he drove them away, he would terrify them. That is an example of how he was patient with small creatures. As to larger creatures, if snakes came to bite him, he would bear it. If wolves, bears, tigers, and leopards came wanting to tear into him, he endured it. He practiced patience toward all the animals, since there were no people there.

One time, King Kali came to the mountain to hunt. He brought a large group of people with him. There were ministers, generals, and quite a few women, including the queen and the ladies-in-waiting from the palace. During the sport, each of the men went off in pursuit of whatever kind of animal he spotted. The women did not hunt, so they wandered around amusing themselves on the mountain. In the course of their explorations, they saw a very strange creature. The hair on his head was matted together like a rug, and his beard was very long. His fingernails were several inches long and had curled several loops at the ends of his fingers. The women stared and exclaimed, “What kind of monster is that?” Many of them were frightened and wanted to run away.

But then the “monster” (they could not tell if it was an animal or a human being) spoke to them. He said, “Do not be afraid of me. I won't eat you.”

The women said, “Oh, it is not a monster. He can talk like a human being.” Then the ones who had started to run away came back, for people tend to be curious. They said, “Let's go see how he can talk.”

They asked him, “What are you doing here?”

He answered, “I am cultivating.”

“What does ‘cultivating’ mean?” they asked.

He replied, “No matter what kind of trouble people give me, I endure it. I am cultivating the practice of patience.”

Once he had said a few sentences, the women were no longer afraid, and they thought, “He talks; he is a person like us.” They drew closer and closer until they had surrounded the Patient Immortal.

Meanwhile, King Kali had finished hunting and came back to look for his women. He was a long way off, but because there weren't any other sounds on the mountain, he could hear them chattering with someone. As the King approached, he saw the person had long hair and a long beard. However, he was not a hippie. You should not be misled to think hippies are like the Patient Immortal. The Patient Immortal specialized in being patient, whereas hippies specialize in being impatient, in breaking the rules and doing every kind of disreputable thing there is to do.

As soon as the King saw that strange man talking with his women, he became jealous and thought, “You freak, you must have some special skill to be able to confuse my women like that. In the royal palace they are well behaved, but now they have fallen in love with you!” Feeling incredibly jealous, he exploded, “Hey, you freak! What are you doing here?”

The Patient Immortal replied, “I am cultivating patience.”

“What do you mean ‘patience’?” the King bellowed.

“Patience means that if people scold me, I bear it. If people beat me, I bear it. No matter how badly people treat me, I still bear it.”

King Kali said, “I don't believe a word you say. You are simply tricking people. How can anyone in the world stand it if people scold or beat him?”

The Patient Immortal said, “Not only can I stand people scolding or beating me, even if someone were to kill me, I could bear it.”

King Kali fumed, “Did you hear that? He is lying right to my face. He says he would stay patient even if someone killed him. Okay, I am not going to kill you now, but do you really think you can stay patient?”

“You can give it a try,” the Patient Immortal said.

King Kali replied, “Oh, so I can try you out, can I?” Even if I didn't have your permission, I would still try you out. Do you think I don't dare? Hah! You say you could bear even someone trying to kill you. Well, I am not going to kill you now.”

Then what did he do? He took out his sword, sliced off one of the cultivator's ears and asked him, “Does that hurt or not?”

The Patient Immortal said, “It does not matter.”

King Kali raged, “You are a liar! I don't believe that when I cut off your ear, you didn't get angry. It had to hurt terribly, and yet you still say, ‘It does not matter’. Okay, I will cut your other ear off.” And he did. “How about now? Does it still not matter to you?”

The Patient Immortal replied, “Of course it does not matter.”

That made the King even angrier. “You lie right to my face and say it does not matter that I have cut off your ears. All right, I will cut off your nose.” Then he cut off the Patient Immortal's nose and asked, “What about now? You'd better hurry up and tell the truth. Don't keep lying. What I can't stand most is that you are obviously full of anger but you say you are not. That is a lie.”

The Patient Immortal said, “It still does not matter. It is not important that I do not have a nose.”

The King said, “Fine, you don't mind not having a nose, I will chop off one of your hands. There. Are you angry now?”

The Patient Immortal said, “I am not angry.”

“Wonderful,” said the King, “you are not angry, so now I will chop off your other hand and see how you take it. I want to help you accomplish your work in the Way. You cultivate patience, and no one else would dare challenge you like this. I'm an Emperor, and even if I killed you, I wouldn't commit any crime.” Then he hacked off the other hand. “How about now? You must be very happy? Both your hands are gone, and you definitely are not angry, right?”

The Patient Immortal said, “Of course not. You really do understand me. I do not have any anger.”

That enraged the King Kali even more. “There isn't anyone in the world who would not get angry if both his hands were cut off. Well, then, I will chop off one of your feet.” He did so, and asked, “Now aren't you sorry? You have cultivated patience to the point that now you don't have any hands, and you are missing a foot. You have only got one foot left. Right now if you tell me the truth, I can still let you off easy. Really, are you angry or not?”

The Patient Immortal said, “I am not angry. If my feet are gone, they're gone. Do whatever you like.”

King Kali said, “He is lying through his teeth,” and he cut off the other foot. “How about now?” he asked. “You are missing both ears, your nose, both hands and both feet. Are you angry?”

The Patient Immortal said, “I am not angry.”

The King was beginning to feel that something strange was happening. He said to himself, “This person must have some kind of trick. I have cut off so much of his flesh, but it does not hurt him, and he still says he is being patient.” He started to wonder. “Is he really being patient, or is he faking it?” He turned to the cultivator and asked, “You say you are being patient, but ultimately what proof is there that you are really patient? You have got to have some proof. Maybe I should take out your heart and see if there's any anger in it or not.” He had already chopped off the Patient Immortal's hands and feet, and now he wanted to take out his heart and look at it!

The Patient Immortal, who was Shakyamuni Buddha cultivating patience, said, “If you want to look at my heart, go right ahead. But now I will give you some proof. You have cut off my four limbs. If I have any anger, then in the future I will not become a Buddha. Instead, I will fall into the hells, become a hungry ghost, or become an animal. If I do not have any anger, then the ears you cut off will grow back, and the nose you cut off will become the way it was before you cut it off. Not only that, my four limbs will return to being just as they originally were. That is if I do not have any anger. If I was angry, then I would not be able to return to the way I was.” After he said that, in fact his ears did grow back, and so did his nose, his hands, and his feet.

When King Kali saw that, he shouted, “It is a monster! It is a monster! Quick, cut him down with your swords! I would not be able to handle him myself.” He commanded his generals to chop the Patient Immortal to bits. Right at that moment, what do you think happened? Wei Tou Bodhisattva and the Dharma-protecting spirits were outraged, and said, “You are really going too far!” Then the heavens thundered and pelted down hail on King Kali's head. The King said, “This monster is using spiritual penetrations! His powers are so great, what can I do?”

The Patient Immortal said, “It is not that I am using spiritual penetrations; the good Dharma-protecting spirits are punishing you.”

The King said, “What should I do?”

The Patient Immortal said, “Quickly repent. If you don't repent, you are in for trouble.”

King Kali said, “Please help me repent. I am afraid it won't work if I do it myself.”

And so the Patient Immortal asked the good Dharma-protecting spirits not to punish King Kali. He said, “Dharma-protectors, good spirits, do not blame him. He is just a stupid, foolish person. Not only am I not angry with him, but what is more, after I become a Buddha, I will first save this person who cut off my four limbs. I am going to save him first.”

After the Patient Immortal made that vow, King Kali was very moved. He said, “This cultivator is truly great. I treated him so badly, but he is still going to save me first!” Then the king began to cry bitterly, and he said, “After you become a Buddha, I definitely want to be your first, senior disciple. I want to be first.” Consequently, when Shakyamuni Buddha realized the Way, he first took across Ajnatakaundinya, whose name means “understanding the basic limit.” This disciple had previously committed such heavy offenses against his teacher, and yet his teacher still treated him so well and wanted to save him first. Therefore, in Buddhism, enmity and kindness don't present any problems that cannot be resolved.

After hearing this account, we should think it over. Are we able to be like Shakyamuni Buddha was when he cultivated patience? If someone cut off your hands, feet, ears, and nose, could you remainy patient? I hope you could not. Why is that? It is because if you could be patient, then someone would have to cut you up like that. If no one cut you up and you said you could be patient, would it be true or false? There is no way to tell! That is one problem. I also hope you could be patient. If you could be patient, that would indicate you were just like Shakyamuni Buddha when he was practicing as the Patient Immortal. That is why I have those hopes for you.

You may say, “But I do not want to be a Patient Immortal like Shakyamuni Buddha was then. I'd like to be a King Kali. If there were someone practicing patience, I would cut off his hands and feet, slice off his ears, and sever his nose. After that, I hope he would vow to save me first after he became a Buddha. That way I would save a lot of effort cultivating the Way, and I could certify to the fruition sooner.”

That kind of thinking is not reliable, and it is not even logical. Why is that? If you really met someone like Shakyamuni Buddha, it might work. But ordinary people cannot be compared to the Sages. If you were to cut off the hands, ears, or nose of an ordinary person who had not certified to the fruition, he would feel pain. As soon as he felt the pain, he would get angry. Once he became angry, when he died, it is to be feared he would become an asura. As an asura, he would want to kill you, and then the resentment between the two of you would increase day by day. For that reason do not imitate King Kali.

It is a good thing the king encountered Shakyamuni Buddha, who made the vow to save him first. Otherwise, what he did to the Patient Immortal would have been very dangerous. What if Shakyamuni Buddha had not made that vow? How could the king have been sure that Shakyamuni Buddha would make the vow to save him first? He would not have any control over it. He would not be able to count on it. And so, instead of acting like King Kali, you had better think of another method.

“How should I be?” you may ask. You should be without patience.

“If I should be without patience, then why are you telling people to be patient?” you may wonder. “If I should not have any patience, then why are you even bringing the subject up? If there is not supposed to be any patience, then why did the Buddha talk about the Paramita of Patience?”

Being without patience is true patience. Not having any patience is real patience. No patience is genuine patience.

You may ask, “How do you explain that? When the Dharma Master speaks the Dharma, it is not reasonable. He says whatever he wants.”

What is meant by ‘being without patience’? It means you are patient, but you do not feel like you are being patient. You do not think, “Oh, I am being patient. I was patient that time.” That is an attachment. You should be patient as if you were not being patient. Having patience should be ‘as if not having any’:

Having as if not having;
Being real as if being unreal.

For instance, suppose someone scolds you, and you think, “I'll be patient with his scolding.” In your mind there is still a “scolding.” If you are ‘as if without patience’, then you basically don't even know that you are being scolded; it is as if it were not even happening. Then there is basically no patience involved. That is what is meant by no patience. If you have the concept of “patience,” then you have an attachment.

“I do not believe it,” you say.

Well, if you do not believe it, then believe what you want.

“It is not that I do not believe it, but Shakyamuni Buddha still remembered that when he was practicing as a Patient Immortal, King Kali cut off his limbs. He had not put it down. He was still attached. If he was not attached, then why did he remember it?”

His remembering was not remembering, and your understanding is not understanding. That is the general meaning of patience. Sometimes it is easy to be patient once, or even twice, but by the third time, one loses patience. As soon as one loses patience, one loses all the merit and virtue acquired from being patient before. That is why it is said:

One spark of fire
Burns up a forest of merit and virtue.

Furthermore, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva “is gentle and compliant”. Gentle means yielding and not contending. Compliant means good-tempered and agreeable. The Great Bodhisattva who practices patience and cultivates the Bodhisattva Way must be gentle and compliant, and “not impetuous or volatile”. Being impetuous means being over-hasty and doing things all in a rush, very abruptly. Things done that way end up being not at all in accord with principle. Being volatile means having an explosive temper. A Bodhisattva who cultivates the Bodhisattva Way should not have a volatile temper. **His mind is not frightened**. His mind does not become alarmed or terrified concerning anything. Why not? Because he has the power of samadhi.

**If, moreover, he does not practice in regard to any dharma.** A Bodhisattva Mahasattva is without any “doing” in regard to all dharmas, but that does not mean he does not act. Rather, he has no thoughts of attachment to cultivation. He does not have that kind of attached thinking. He does practice, but it is as if no such thing were going on. Why is that? It is because he can really put everything down. **But contemplates the marks of all dharmas as they really are.** A Bodhisattva contemplates all dharmas as empty. If you were to tell most people that all dharmas are empty, they would not cultivate. They would think, “All dharmas are empty, and so what is there to cultivate? Cultivation is empty, too. If I do not cultivate, that is also empty, and so why do I have to cultivate?” That is the outlook and understanding of those externalist ways, and the sort of thing they say. A Bodhisattva, however, contemplates all dharmas as empty. He knows that they are empty, and enters the reality of all dharmas, being in accord with the wonderful principle of reality.

**Not, however, practicing non-discrimination**—he also does not form views of non-discrimination. Externalists say that all dharmas are empty, and so they do not discriminate and do not cultivate. That is the externalists' view of non-discrimination. “Everything is empty,” they say, “and so why are you discriminating?” They cultivate this kind of deviant view of non-discrimination, but a Bodhisattva does not cultivate this kind of deviant view.

**That is called a Bodhisattva Mahasattva's range of practice.** What was just described is the Bodhisattva Mahasattva's happily dwelling conduct of the body, the range of practice of the body.

**Sutra:**
 **“What is meant by the Bodhisattva Mahasattva's range of association? Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas do not draw near to kings, princes, great ministers, or officials.”**
Outline:

J2. Explanation of the range of association
K1. Defining “drawing near” in terms of staying away from
L1. Staying away from those who have power and influence

**Commentary:**

How are the places that a Great Bodhisattva should draw near to defined? **What is meant by the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas' range of association? Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas do not draw near to kings.** They do not take advantage of situations in order to be able to draw near to kings; they do not try to set up lines of communication so that they can become friends with kings. That is called “seeking to be in favor with those in high positions.” This also applies to **princes, great ministers, or officials.** Bodhisattvas do not seek to get involved with those kinds of people. They do not interact with officials.

On the other hand, there are certain ways in which they may be involved that are appropriate. If such people, of their own accord, draw near to the Bodhisattva, without the Bodhisattva having sought out such people first, then it is permissible. For instance, if the Bodhisattva is in a monastery and does not have any intention of ingratiating himself with a king, and yet the king comes to the monastery to draw near to and bow to the Bodhisattva, then there is no problem. The Bodhisattva can speak appropriate Dharma for the king. That is what is meant by there being no fixed dharmas.

You should not be rigidly attached to this passage, saying, “Oh, the Dharma Flower Sutra, says that Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas who are cultivating should not associate with kings, princes, great ministers, and officials,” so that if a king did come to pay his respects, you would not even see him. That would also be incorrect. It is all right for such people to draw near to you. As long as you are not the one actively seeking to associate with them, it is okay. It is not all right for you to go to the king's quarters and say things like, “Ah! Today is your birthday; I have come to commemorate it. I will recite the Limitless Life Sutra to guarantee that you will live long and never age.” That is just being obsequious, and is incorrect behavior.

If you are residing in an aranya, a peaceful place for cultivation, and the king wants to approach you, then that is okay. However, you do not need to search for a method to induce the king to come. If you induce him to come by using some plan, then you are the one who is drawing near to him. You are thinking, “If the king were to come and bow to me, how great my fame would become! Or if the president came, ah!” It is not correct for you to scheme like this day and night.

Rather, you should seek a response. Seeking a response means asking Wei Tou Bodhisattva to go and tell the king to come. If you have cultivation, Wei Tou Bodhisattva sees you and thinks, “This Bodhisattva has nobody to protect him. I will find a great Dharma protector to protect him.” Then he finds a wealthy person to help you. This is acceptable. So, you should be clear about this principle.

**Sutra:**
 **“They do not draw near to externalists—brahmacharins, nirgranthas, and the like—or to writers of worldly literature, to those who sing praises of externalist writings, to lokayatas, or to the opponents of lokayatas.”**
Outline:

L2. Staying away from deviant people and deviant dharmas.

**Commentary:**

**They do not draw near to externalists.** Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas only study the Buddhadharma. They absolutely do not draw near to those of externalist ways, such as **brahmacharins**, who are ordained in an externalist sect. **Nirgranthas** is another externalist way. At the time of the Buddha, there were six major teachers of externalist ways in India, and as their teachings were developed further by their disciples, there came to be ninety-six sects. **And the like** refers to those other sects. “Nirgrantha” translates as “apart from bonds.” They were trying to attain liberation, but they had not yet attained it. They were seeking to free themselves from bonds but had not yet succeeded. They were one of the externalist sects. **Or to writers of worldly literature.** This includes writers of worldly-novels, plays, and movie scripts. It refers to those who write novels that incite people’s desire. All of these are considered worldly literature.

They do not draw near **to those who sing praises of externalist writings,** delineating the ways in which they think the externalist sects are good, or **to lokayatas.** “Lokayata” is a Sanskrit word and is translated as “evil discourses.” Such discourses are not wholesome; they go on and on, but contain no true principle. They teach people to create evil karma. For example they say, “Taking more drugs will make your enlightenment greater. By the same token, taking less drugs will give you less enlightenment. Therefore, take more drugs.” Not only do such people encourage others to take drugs, they use those drugs themselves. Such evil discourses enable the teacher to defeat his disciples, because in them the teacher always appears to have the loftier wisdom and in every way be better than his disciples. Whatever the disciples say is wrong; even if they are right, they are “wrong”. Those who give such evil, unprincipled discourses are called lokayatas.

**The opponents of lokayatas** are those with “discourses that incite rebellion.” For example, they say, “If you were to murder your father or give your teacher a beating, you would be a great hero!” Such discourses incite people to rebel. “Wreck the Buddha image, and I will bow to you.” This kind of discourse encourages people to be destructive. In this case, the disciples specialize in destroying the teacher. Nothing the teacher says is right. “We disciples are much better and much more intelligent than you.” In the lokayata sect, the teacher concentrates on ruining the disciples. In the opponents' sect, the disciples concentrate on ruining the teacher. In both cases, slander is involved. The teacher slanders the disciples, and the disciples think, “If we do not return the favor, then we are not acting properly.” So they come up with their rebellious discourses to slander their teacher. “Do not listen to him, he does not have any education. Listen to me.” That is the opponents of lokayatas.

**Sutra:**
 **“They also do not draw near to violent amusements such as boxing and wrestling, to displays of martial arts that involve mutual attack, to natas, or to any entertainment that uses magic.”**
Outline:

L2. Staying away from wicked and dangerous amusements

**Commentary:**

**They also do not draw near to violent amusements** where mutual killing is involved, **such as boxing and wrestling**, where people fight and beat each other up in public competitions or in movies and plays. One should not go to see such things or listen to them. This includes going **to displays of martial arts that involve mutual attack.**

No wonder someone has brought up a criticism, saying that we should not watch the kung fu performance. This is very reasonable since TheDharma Flower Sutra prohibits it. However, we are not Bodhisattvas. This prohibition is only for Bodhisattvas. You should understand this point. Right now we are still ordinary people. Ordinary people do a lot of wrong things, and it is okay.

But we've got to change, and then it is actually okay. If we do not change, then it is not okay. Nobody should say, “The Dharma Master says it is okay, so let's go commit some more offenses.” That would not do.

Or **to natas**. “Nata” is also a Sanskrit word, it means “man of great strength.” “You can lift five hundred pounds? Well, I can lift six hundred.” They are very boastful. Natas also like to show themselves off as great heroes whose strength is unsurpassed. Bodhisattvas do not draw near to such people. **Or any entertainment that uses magic.** Magicians can manifest things out of nowhere, or make things disappear. They have many sleight-of-hand tricks. They try to get you to believe that what you see is real. Children believe it is real, but adults know it is an illusion—a magic trick. Bodhisattvas do not watch that kind of show.

**Sutra:**
 **“They do not draw near to chandalas, to those who raise pigs, sheep, chickens, or dogs, or to those who hunt, fish, trap, or engage in any other evil activities. If such people should on occasion come to them, they speak the Dharma for them, but have no expectations.”**
Outline:

L4. Staying away from chandalas

**Commentary:**

**They do not draw near to chandalas.** “Chandalas” are the lowest caste in the Indian caste system. There were four main classes: kshatriyas, brahmans, vaishyas, and chandalas, which are outcasts, such as butchers. They were restricted to their own paths and were not allowed to walk on the roads that other people use. They even had to wear signs on their heads identifying them as chandalas. The Indian caste system is extremely rigid. Bodhisattvas do not draw near to chandalas; **to those who raise pigs, sheep, chickens, or dogs; or to those who hunt.** Bodhisattvas do not raise chickens, dogs, pigs, or sheep, and they must not hunt.

You say, “But the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch, lived with hunters and hunted for sixteen years.”

The Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch, did live with hunters, but he himself did not hunt.

A previous passage said that Bodhisattvas do not draw near to kings, princes, great ministers, and officials. The Sixth Patriarch of China was invited several times to the palace by Empress Wu Zetian, and he never went. The Fourth Patriarch was also invited to the palace four or five times by the Emperor Tai Zong of the Tang dynasty, and he never went. They were following the rule set forth here in the Dharma Flower Sutra that Bodhisattvas should not draw near to kings, princes, great ministers, and officials.

Bodhisattvas do not draw near to those who catch **fish or trap** birds, **or engage in any other evil activities.** A contemporary example of “other evil activities” is those who call themselves monks, dress up in outlandish costumes, act very strangely, play instruments, and beg for money.

**If such people should on occasion come to them,** the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, **they speak Dharma for them, but have no expectations.** One may speak the Buddhadharma for them, but one should not seek anything at all from them.

**Sutra:**
 **“They also do not draw near to those who seek to be Hearers, whether Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, or Upasikas, and they do not make a half bow to them. They do not remain in a room, a promenade, or a lecture hall with them. Should such people sometimes come to them, they speak Dharma as is appropriate, but seek nothing in return.”**
Outline:

L5. Staying away from followers of the Two Vehicles

**Commentary:**

**They also do not draw near to those who seek to be Hearers,** that is, those of the Small Vehicle, **whether Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, or Upasikas, and they do not make a half bow to them.** You may have seen some Japanese monks greeting everyone they see by joining their palms and bowing from the waist. That shows they are not familiar with this passage of the Dharma Flower Sutra. If they were, they would not act so indiscriminately. **They do not remain in a room,** say perhaps their own dwelling place, **a promenade** where they may be strolling, **or a lecture hall,** such as our Buddhist lecture hall, **with them.** They do not live with evil people, unless they are people who were once evil but who have reformed. If such people come, for example to our summer session here, and sincerely want to seek the Dharma, then you can associate with them.

**Should such people sometimes come to them, they speak Dharma as is appropriate, but seek nothing in return.** In accord with their potentials, one may speak Dharma for them, but one should not have any ulterior motives. One should not have even the slightest opportunistic thought.

**Sutra:**
 **“Manjushri, moreover Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas must not regard women's bodies as objects of desire, and speak Dharma for them. They do not take delight in looking at women. If they enter the homes of others, they do not speak with young girls, maidens, widows, and so forth.”**
Outline:

L6. Staying away from thoughts of desire

**Commentary:**

Shakyamuni Buddha called out again to **Manjushri** Bodhisattva, “**Moreover,** I will tell you more about the things that Bodhisattvas should not do. **Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas must not regard women's bodies as objects of desire.** When a Bodhisattva sees a woman, he should not make discriminations about the fineness or the beauty of her appearance and give rise to lust. Bodhisattvas should not be this way.

**And speak Dharma for them.** Moreover, a Bodhisattva should not feel happiness in encountering women or take delight in speaking Dharma for them while ignoring men who come to request the Dharma from him. When women request the Dharma, he should not be extremely happy and talk on and on, not finishing for days, because of his desire for women.

**They do not take delight in looking at women.** Not only would they not have thoughts of lust towards women, they would not even be willing to look at them, because the female body is unclean. Cultivators of the Way should avoid indulging in looking at members of the opposite sex. For those who have true samadhi power,

The eyes see forms, but there is nothing inside.
The ears hear defiling sounds, but the mind does not know.

Theirs is an altogether different state of being. But if you do not have samadhi power and are turned by states, you should not look at members of the opposite sex so much.

**If they enter the homes of others, they do not speak with young girls.** If for some special reason, a person who is practicing the Bodhisattva Way has to enter a lay person's home, he should not chat with young girls, or with **maidens,** or **widows, and so forth.** People who practice the Bodhisattva Way cannot go to someone's house and get involved in bantering with little girls. Nor should they have conversations with young maidens, especially when the two of them are alone.

“Maidens” refers to young women who have never married and who are still virgins. One must also not have private conversations with widows. “And so forth” refers to any other such women. To “speak with” means to have a conversation that no one else hears. Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas who practice the Bodhisattva Way should not hold private conversations with such women.

**Sutra:**
 **“Further, they do not draw near to the five kinds of unmanly men or become friends with them.”**
Outline:

L2. Staying away from unmanly men

**Commentary:**

**Further, they do not draw near to the five kinds of unmanly men.**

...“Further, they do not draw near to the five kinds of unmanly men.” There are five kinds of unmanly men. If they are unmanly, does that mean they are women? No, they are not women. There are five kinds of people who are neither male nor female. You cannot call them men, because they cannot conduct themselves as men do. And you cannot call them women, because they cannot do the things that women do. These are the five kinds of unmanly men. They have never been called “unwomanly women” before, but now I am giving them the name “five kinds of unwomanly women.”...

**The Five Kinds of Unmanly Men**

1. Unmanly from birth. While still in the womb, such people did not develop as either male or female; and when they were born, they did not have male organs or female organs. They can neither fulfill the man’s role of fathering children, nor can they fulfill the woman’s role of bearing children. Such people are born into the world unable to fulfill their proper functions...

2. Unmanly through dysfunction. In some cases, such people had male organs but were castrated. Some developed diseases that destroyed their male organs. The same thing may happen in the case of female organs.

3. Unmanly through jealousy. When they see a man, they become jealous, and “turn into” a man. The change takes place in their minds only, however, and they cannot conduct themselves as a man would. Sometimes when they see a woman, they become jealous of the woman and “turn into” a woman. But they are incapable of functioning as a woman would. They assume their sexual identity mentally as a result of the emotion of jealousy.

4. Unmanly through physical transformation. Such people do not transform into a man only when they see a man, or transform into a woman only when they see a woman. They can make the change by themselves. For instance at noon, the person is a man, but at one o'clock he changes into a woman. He does not need to see other men and women to bring about this change. Then at two o'clock or three o’clock, or five o'clock, he turns back into a man. This is called being a man, but not a man; being a woman, but not a woman...

You have to study the Buddhadharma to understand this principle. Those who do not investigate the Buddhadharma do not ever learn about the five kinds of unmanly men or five kinds of unwomanly women.

5. Unmanly Through Switching Back and Forth. These are hermaphrodites—half and half. For half a month they are men and then for the other half month, they are women. The previous kind of transformation does not last such a long time. In the previous case, the person is male for one or two days and then becomes female for one or two days. It does not take half a month before the change occurs. But in this case, this person has male organs for half a month and then changes into having female organs for half a month. This is the retribution of being neither male nor female. You should think it over...

You might say, “That is being without any mark of male or female,” but that is an undesirable characteristic. This is a case of deficient faculties. They lack proper male or female organs. To be like that is the worst possible way for a person to be. People should behave themselves and follow the rules. Those who do not will undergo the future retribution of being perverted. When people have their six sense organs incomplete, it is their retribution for having committed too many offenses.

Bodhisattvas do not **become friends with them.** Bodhisattvas practicing the Bodhisattva Way do not befriend people who are among the five kinds of unmanly men or unwomanly women. They do not become good friends with them.

**Sutra:**
 **“They do not enter others' houses alone. If for some reason they must enter alone, they single-mindedly recollect the Buddha.”**
Outline:

L8. Staying away from danger and harm

**Commentary:**

**They do not enter others' houses alone.** They cannot go alone to a layperson's home. In that way, they avoid danger and do not cause others to doubt them. **If for some reason they must enter alone, they singlemindedly recollect the Buddha.** If there is some special reason why they must enter someone's house alone, they singlemindedly recite “Namo Amitabha Buddha,” or “Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha.”

**Sutra:**
 **“If they speak the Dharma for women, they do not smile or laugh and let their teeth show, nor do they expose their chests. Even for the sake of the Dharma, they do not become familiar with them, much less for the sake of other matters!”**
Outline:

L9. Staying above suspicion

**Commentary:**

**If they speak the Dharma for women, they do not smile or laugh and let their teeth show.** You should not laugh out loud or smile and giggle when speaking the Buddhadharma. You see, it is not the case that laughter is necessarily good. You should not laugh and show your teeth when lecturing the Dharma to those of opposite sex, for if you do, you might cause them to have thoughts of desire, or harbor defiled thoughts in your own mind. **Nor do they expose their chests.** They do not let their chest or stomach show. **Even for the sake of the Dharma they do not become familiar with them.** When speaking the Dharma, one cannot become too close to people—so well acquainted that two become as if one. **Much less for the sake of other matters!** Those who cultivate the Bodhisattva Way should at all times watch over themselves and be very careful.

When lecturing on the Dharma, you must cultivate samadhi power. If you have samadhi power, then you can enter the water and not be drowned and enter the fire and not be burned. You can be like pure gold. The best gold has been smelted by fire many times, and no matter how much it is smelted, it does not weigh any less. Let's say there were ten ounces of pure gold. After being smelted, it would still weigh ten ounces. If the gold were not pure, then it would weigh less.

Cultivation works the same way. If you truly cultivate until you have skill, then you would not melt in the fire or be drowned in the water. You will be able to “accord with conditions but not change; not change, yet accord with conditions.” If you can do that, you have achieved the most inconceivable of states. If you have not reached that state, then you definitely have to be very careful at all time not give rise to any false thinking.

“Is it a kind of false thinking when you are able to accord with conditions but not change, not change, yet accord with conditions? Isn’t according with conditions a kind of false thinking?” you may ask. No, not when you do not change. Only if you do not change can you accord with conditions. To be able to always accord with conditions, and yet not change; to never change and yet accord with conditions is an inconceivable state—something special that comes through cultivation. It is not something that most people can manage to do. Until you reach the state where fire won't burn you and water won't drown you, you must be careful in your cultivation.

**Sutra:**
 **“They take no delight in raising young disciples, Shramaneras, or children, and they do not take pleasure in sharing the same Master with them.”**
Outline:

L10. Staying away from raising children

**Commentary:**

**They take no delight in raising young disciples.** “Take no delight” means that they do not want to raise them; it does not necessarily mean that they do not raise them. If there are unusual circumstances, it is permissible to do so, but not to take delight in doing so. If they were to delight in it, then they'd be making a mistake. It would mean they were fond of children, of young disciples, thinking, “I am getting old, and I do not have a son or daughter at home to take care of me. I can leave the home-life and accept a young disciple who can serve me. That would not be a bad idea.” But that kind of thinking is incorrect.

Left-home people who cultivate the Bodhisattva Way are not supposed to enjoy themselves and have people cater to their every need or work on their behalf. Practicing the Bodhisattva Way is very inconvenient—there are many things one is not supposed to do. One who practices the Bodhisattva Way cannot get away with being sloppy or casual. One cannot even take delight in having small disciples. Under special circumstances, it might be all right.

Why is one not supposed to accept young disciples? It is because young disciples are sometimes disobedient and very often naughty. Haven't you noticed how enraged parents get with children who will not listen to instructions? Even though the parents get upset, still they have no way to control the children. Now suppose you were to accept such a child as your disciple. From morning to night you'd have trouble. Therefore, we are advised not to take delight in raising young disciples.

If the child is obedient and good, then it is be permissible. If when told to cultivate, the child cultivates and when told not to get into mischief he does not play around, then the child can be accepted as a disciple. We must apply the teachings in the Sutra to our lives in a dynamic way and not assume the texts are completely inflexible. The point here is that one should not take delight in raising young disciples, and not that one definitely cannot accept any.

How can you know if a child is good or not?” you ask.

If you do not know, then do not flirt with danger. Do not accept the child. Wait until you are sure before you accept him as your disciple. If you are certain that a child is good-natured and has some foundation in cultivation to stand on, then you may accept him.

In Manchuria, I had several young disciples who were only twelve or thirteen years old. However, they were exceptionally obedient. I heard about a child named Zheng De. He was a very unusual child. From the time he was five years old, he bowed to his parents every day. When I heard about that child, I was ashamed, because I didn't know enough to bow to my parents until I was twelve. I certainly wanted to meet that child who knew to practice the filial way from the time he was five. He was such a filial child and took such good care of his parents that they never had a care or a worry.

One day, when conditions were ripe, I went to his house in Wuchang County, about thirty miles from my home. He was twelve years old at the time. Before I visited him, many externalist teachers had been intent on converting him to their various religions, because the child was already famous as a “filial son.” All the externalist teachers wanted him for their disciple, but when they went to convert him, they could not outtalk him.

The child would ask them, “What do you cultivate?” They would answer that they cultivated the spirit in order to become immortal.

The child would ask, “How do you cultivate to become immortal?” They would answer that one needs to meditate and that one should be filial to one's parents.

Then the child would ask, “Were you filial to your parents before?” When asked that, the externalists had nothing to say, and the child would dismiss them saying, “Right now I am busy practicing filial piety. After I have finished my filial duties, I will cultivate the Way. My father and mother are living Buddhas right here in my home. I will not renounce what is near to seek what is far.” None of the externalist teachers had been able to convince him to embrace their beliefs. Many had tried, but they all ended up leaving without accomplishing their aim.

On the day I went to his house, he was inside, and when he looked out the window and saw me coming, he said to his mother, “Mama, my teacher is coming!”

“Since when do you have a teacher?” his mother asked.

“Now! Now I have a teacher!”

His mother thought he was acting very strangely. He came to the door to greet me, and the minute I entered the door, he insisted on taking my bag from me. Wherever I traveled in Manchuria, I carried my “bag of myriad treasures,” which held Sutras and all sorts of things I used. But as soon as the child saw me, he insisted on taking my bag and carrying it on his back. I went in with him, sat down, and spoke with him a little. I asked him, “Who told you to bow to your parents? Did your parents tell you to do that?”

“No,” he said.

“Then why are you bowing every day?” I asked.

“I feel that there is no way I can repay my parents' kindness. They are elderly now, and I bow to them to make them content and not upset with me. I feel it is something a child should do,” he replied.”

“But you started doing it when you were five years old,” I said. “A five-year-old child does not understand such things.”

“Well, when I was five, I did it because bowing to my parents made me happier than anything else.”

“Very good,” I replied. “You are a better child than I was. I did not start bowing to my parents until I was twelve. Nobody told me to do it, either. But you started when you were only five. You are a very good child.”

That made him happy. Then I asked his parents, “He bows to you, but doesn't he sometimes do things that make you angry?”

His father said, “We have no virtue in the Way. No doubt my father had virtue, and so he is blessed with such a grandson.” The child's father was not conceited in the least. He did not say, “I am pretty special. See what a fine, filial child I have?” The child's father understood principle. He gave the credit of having a good son to his father's virtue, and did not claim to have done good deeds himself that merited such a reward.

About an hour passed, and I put my legs down over the edge of the seat [kang, a brick bed used in northern China], preparing to leave. What do you suppose the child, whose name was Zhen De, did? He immediately got down and snatched my shoes. I thought he was going to help me put them on so that I could leave, but instead he took the shoes and ran off with them. He put the shoes in another room and came back, saying, “Teacher, today is the first time I have met you. You must stay at our home and have a simple meal with us, even though we do not have any especially good food here.”

I was pleased with the child: The first time his teacher came, he asked his teacher to stay for a meal, which was also being filial to his teacher. I assented in silence by nodding my head. I did not answer him verbally. Zheng De prepared and served the meal, and we all ate together.

After we finished, I asked the child, “Zheng De, you have bowed to me as your teacher. Is it the case that the teacher should obey the disciple, or that the disciple should obey the teacher?”

“The disciple should obey the teacher, of course,” he replied. “How could it be that the teacher should obey the disciple?”

“If that is what you think is right, then why, without asking my permission, did you take my shoes away from me and put them away before asking me to stay for lunch? If you were obedient to your teacher, you should not have hidden my shoes and then asked me to stay. You could have simply invited me without using some way to coerce me into it. Now wasn't that a case of the teacher having to obey the disciple?”

The child immediately knelt before me and said, “Teacher, I will never do it again. I thought if I did it that way, my teacher would certainly not leave.”

“If you knew that by doing that, your teacher could not leave, then weren't you using force to make him stay?”

“I understand now,” he said, “I will not ever do that again. Please, Teacher, forgive me!”

The reason I did not answer him verbally when he invited me to stay, but only nodded my head in assent, was that he was forcing me into it. What else could I have done? He took my shoes, and without shoes I could not walk on the roads, because in Manchuria there's a lot of snow. Actually, I was able to walk barefoot in the snow, but it was difficult to endure. In Manchuria, the snow stays about three feet deep in the winter, and I would walk around in Arhat sandals and no socks. Since I was able to do that, most people said I had virtue. Actually, it was not a matter of virtue, it was a matter of being able to bear it. I could be patient and not fear the cold and not fear hunger. I would say to myself:

Freezing to death, I face the wind!
Starving to death, I stick out my stomach!

When I was first practicing wearing only cotton clothing and no padded clothes, I was always freezing. But after you get used to the freezing cold, you are no longer afraid of it. The weather that I am talking about it not like anything experienced here in America. That kind of freezing weather does not occur in America. In Manchuria, people's ears get frozen stiff. It is very painful, and if you flick their ears, they fall right off! That is really true! Even so, I never wore a hat; but I never lost my ears, either. At first, that kind of cold hurts worse than needles, but I would grit my teeth and say, “Go ahead and hurt! Fall off, ears, I don't care!” I endured it and eventually got used to it so that it wasn't so bad.

As to that filial child, Zheng De, I knew when I first saw him that he was to be a left-home person. He was very chubby and had great big ears. His countenance showed that he had tremendous blessings. He was also quite intelligent. Children like that are perfectly all right to accept as disciples—the more the better! They are so good and know how to follow the rules; they can cultivate the Way and they are obedient.

**Shramaneras** refers here not to the elder Shramaneras or young Shramaneras, but to “scarecrow Shramaneras.” In the monasteries in China, the monks planted the fields and when the crows came to try to eat the vegetables, the monks sent the very young Shramaneras out to scare the birds away. That is how they got the name. Scarecrow Shramaneras are between the ages of eight and twelve.

Shramanera is a Sanskrit word. It is the title given to novice monks. It is derived from the word Shramana, the title given to fully ordained Bhikshus. Shramana means “diligent and resting,” because a Shramana diligently cultivates precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, and puts to rest greed, hatred, and stupidity. “Diligent” means not being lazy; “resting” means not getting angry. If you diligently cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, then greed, hatred, and stupidity will be put to rest. Unless greed, hatred, and stupidity are put to rest, you will be unable to diligently cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. People who are greedy are fond of leisure and do not like to work. In cultivation, you should not be lax. You must be vigorous, and only when you achieve the fruition can you rest at ease. People who are hateful get angry all the time. People who are stupid are always having false thoughts. If one thing does not work out, they want to try another, and when that does not work out, they think of another. There is a saying that describes this:

At night you travel a thousand roads;
But in the morning you still get up and sell bean curd.

As you lie on you bed, there are a thousand possibilities for you to consider. But in the morning, you go back to selling bean curd. That is the false thinking of the stupid mind. If you do not put to rest greed, hatred, and stupidity, then precepts, samadhi, and wisdom cannot appear. Precepts guard against greed. Most importantly, they help us restrain our greed so that we do not always want more of everything; and so that we are not fond of leisure and unwilling to work. If you have Samadhi, there is a saying that describes it:

You have a thousand wonderful ideas;
I have a definite principle.

No matter what methods or ideas you have, I have samadhi. No matter what ways you might think of to try to move me, I will not be moved. Regardless of how you might try to trouble me, you cannot do so, because I have samadhi power. Samadhi guards us against hatred. No matter how angry you get, I do not pay attention. Wisdom counteracts stupidity. If you have wisdom, you can turn stupidity into wisdom. If you are stupid, your wisdom turns into stupidity. Actually, the two are one—two sides of the same thing. Turning to one side is being wise; turning to the other is being stupid. One side is yin; the other side is yang. If you try to take advantage of situations, you are being stupid. If you do not, you are being wise. If you were born as if drunk and will die as if in a dream, and if you go about doing upside-down things all the time, you are being stupid. If you are absolutely pure and clean without any greed or defilement, then you are wise.

If you are pure for one moment,
then in that moment you are on Magic Mountain;
If you are pure in every moment,
then in every moment you are on Magic Mountain.

Magic Mountain is the Bodhimanda where Shakyamuni Buddha speaks the Dharma. But actually this just refers to purity of mind. That is why it is said, “If you are pure for one moment, then in that moment you are on Magic Mountain. If you are pure in every moment, then in every moment you are on Magic Mountain.” You are always in the Dharma Assembly on Magic Mountain. Do not seek outside; it is right there with you. All you have to do is understand that and know how to use it, and you are that way. If you cannot use it, you cannot be that way. That is what cultivation is all about: diligently cultivating precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, and putting to rest greed, hatred, and stupidity.

Bodhisattvas do not take pleasure in raising **children, and they do not take pleasure in sharing the same Master with them.** Not only do they not take children for their own disciples, they do not say to them, “You should take refuge with my teacher. My teacher’s status is more long-standing than mine, probably he can teach children. He is no doubt more talented at it.” That is also not permissible. You should not work it so that you share the same teacher, for if you do, the child will always be calling you, “Elder brother!” and you will have to take care of him. If you do not, it will be as if you are not fulfilling your responsibilities as a Dharma brother. All day long he will call to you, “Elder brother, I want some candy!” and you will have to buy him some candy. “Elder brother, I want some cookies to eat!” and you will have to find some cookies for him to eat. Wouldn't you say that was a lot of trouble? That is why you should not try to arrange it so that you both have the same teacher. The meaning of the text is that you should not take delight in sharing the same teacher with children. The meaning is not that you might not have the same teacher as children do. If your teacher likes children, you cannot object!

When I first began to lecture on the Sutras here in the West, people came to listen, but how do you suppose they listened? They sprawled out on the ground to listen to the Sutra. Or they lay down with their feet propped up on a chair and their heads under a chair. They resembled snakes coiling around the chairs. Why did they get in those positions? They thought that was a way of practicing yoga. I never said anything to them about it, because at that time people here did not know anything at all about the rules pertaining to Dharma Assemblies. That is why no one followed the rules.

Later, when the first group of college students came to listen to the Sutras, things became a little better. They had some understanding regarding the rules followed in Dharma Assemblies. Gradually the rules have been established here, and people follow them.

During the first summer session I was quite strict. I did not allow people to miss even a minute of class or even take a five minutes break. There were people at that session who wanted to make trouble, but because I was so strict, they did not manage to do it. That was the first time. The second time, things were a little better. In the beginning, no one knew that it was appropriate to bow to left-home people. Then there was one student who began to bow to me every day. He had heard that someone had kneeled before me for four hours, and he said that he could do that, too. I said, “Fine,” and later he started bowing to me every day. Actually, I do not like people to bow to me, but since I have come here, I have learned that Americans do not like to bow to anyone. And so even though I do not like people to bow to me, now I like to have you bow. It is a case of learning to like what you basically do not like. I do not like to receive bows, but I must learn to allow you to bow. You do not like to bow, but you must learn to like it.

So, another disciple took the lead and started bowing to me every day. Seeing this, someone said that I had told everyone to bow to me. But I never said that, because I know I have no virtue. That is why I do not like people to bow to me. That person also started bowing to me, in a flippant way. He did not do it seriously, because he felt he was an old-timer, and that it would have been beneath him to bow to me seriously. So he bowed as a joke, but later he felt he no longer had any face to come here. The Buddhist Lecture Hall has established some rules now, and you Americans have set up the rule that people should not talk. I agree completely with that rule, I do not like to talk either. If we talk less to each other, we will create less trouble. You are doing pretty well now, and the rules are much better kept than in the beginning. I believe that day by day it will get even better. In America [in Chinese, literally “the beautiful country”] everything is beautiful and so I am sure that the rules established here will not be ugly either.

**Sutra:**
 **“They always delight in sitting in dhyana and, in a quiet place cultivating collecting their thoughts. Manjushri, this is called the first range of association.”**
Outline:

K2. Defining “drawing near” in terms of the places to draw near to

Commentary:

You must delight in sitting in dhyana, and then you will be able to do so. If you do not delight in doing so, then even though you may sit in dhyana, it would not be of any use. **They always delight in sitting in dhyana.** This is the most important requisite for cultivating the Bodhisattva Way. If you do not delight in sitting in dhyana, I believe you will be quite scattered. If you sit in dhyana, you can obtain samadhi power.

“Do you have to ‘sit’ in dhyana?” Yes and no. We can define “not sitting” as being before you have ever sat in meditation. However, after you have done the sitting, can also be defined as “not sitting.” The actual period when you are sitting in meditation can be defined as “sitting”. And so I say it is also not sitting, because once you have achieved dhyana, then when you sit you are in dhyana, when you walk you are in dhyana, when you are asleep you are in dhyana: when moving, when still, when awake and when asleep, it is all dhyana. But before you have understood dhyana, you must first sit in dhyana. Once you have attained dhyana, you never leave it. In movement and stillness, in waking and sleeping, dhyana is you and you are dhyana. Dhyana follows you and you follow dhyana. Just as a shadow follows a form. You could not leave it even if you wanted to. That is samadhi power.

“You've been talking and talking about it, but exactly what is dhyana?”

It is not anything at all! If you think it is something, you have an attachment. It is not anything at all, so there is no attachment to anything.

You say, “What you are saying is too indefinite.” Of course! If it were definite, it would not be dhyana. Dhyana is not definite. It is emptiness. Out of emptiness your samadhi power arises.

“Chan” is the abbreviated Chinese transliteration for the Sanskrit word dhyana. The entire transliteration is “chan no.” Translated, dhyana means “cultivating one's thoughts,” and “quieting reflection.” You sit there and cultivate your thoughts, you sit there and quiet your reflections. If you do not know how to apply effort, then you will sit there and strike up false thoughts. You should chase those false thoughts away. Once you chase away the false thoughts, you would not have any. You should not think that “striking up false thoughts” is necessarily a bad expression. Change it to “chasing away false thoughts” and it is not bad. Do battle with your false thoughts. When a false thought first arises, use the demon-quelling pestle to beat it to death. When the next one comes up, use the demon-quelling pestle to beat that one to death too. Sometimes after you have beaten one to death with the demon-quelling pestle, the same one comes back to life again. In that case you should use the demon-slicing sword. With it, you can slice right through a false thought the moment you see it arise. Once it is sliced in two, it would not come back to life again. That is how powerful the demon-slicing sword is. Once you slice through your false thoughts until they die, then your wisdom can arise. Wisdom, in fact, is the demon-slicing sword. If you have wisdom, you have a demon-slicing sword, if you do not have wisdom, you would not have a demon-slicing sword either.

You say, “I have been listening to Sutra lectures for a long time, but I have never heard an explanation like this.” Why does it have to be explained in a way you have already heard? Sutras can be explained any way one likes as long as one accords with principle. They can fly up to the heavens and hide in the earth, just like dragons. What is the demon-quelling pestle? It is your samadhi power. If you have samadhi power, you have a demon-quelling pestle; if you do not have samadhi power, you do not have a demon-quelling pestle. Now do you understand? Dhyana can give rise to samadhi power. Giving rise to samadhi power, you can beat your false thoughts to death. If you continue sitting in dhyana, you will give rise to wisdom power. The power of wisdom can also kill false thoughts. For that reason, Bodhisattvas always delight in sitting dhyana. They like to cultivate samadhi power.

“Where should one sit in dhyana? Can it be done at a playhouse while watching a play? Can it be done at the movie theater while watching a movie?” you ask. If you are able to sit in dhyana, then you can do it anywhere at all. If you are not able to sit in dhyana yet, then you certainly could not do it in those places. If you are able to sit in dhyana, then

When moving, it is dhyana; when quiet, it is dhyana.
Speaking, silent, moving, or still,
The substance is at peace.
In the dream, the six paths are clearly seen;
But once awake, all is empty, and even the universe does not exist!

If you awaken, then even the three-thousand-great-thousand world system does not exist, how much the less anything else. While you are still in the dream, the six paths of rebirth exist. You get born again and again, and die again and again. You cannot put this down and you cannot give up that. That is your husband. That is your wife. That is your father and that is your mother, and there are many more—a whole bunch of entanglements! It is really meaningless.

“What should we do, then?” If you have not yet attained samadhi power, then when sitting in dhyana, you should sit **in a quiet place.** The character for “quiet” also means “idle,” and so you say, “I understand. I should not do any work, right? I should be idle all day long. To put it another way, I can be lazy. Well, that is just my style. I do not like to work, so I will sit in dhyana!” Here, the word does not mean “idle,” it means a place that is not busy and noisy. It means an aranya, a tranquil and pure place. You do not want to mistake the meaning of the word here and think it means you can be idle. Do not be like a certain disciple who mistakenly thought that men wai han, which means amateur, was the same as luo han, which means Arhat. How funny! This is one of the wonderful things that happen when Americans are learning Chinese. He thought “an amateur” was “an Arhat”. Well, maybe in the future he will become one, but he is not one now.

In a quiet place, Bodhisattvas enjoy **cultivating collecting their thoughts.** They cultivate collecting their thoughts, just as a magnet collects iron filings. They do not let their minds run away.

“Oh? My mind can run away?” you ask.

Oh? Did you think it could not? Not only does your mind run away, it runs for 108,000 miles! You do not even know where it has run off to. In the first thought, it runs to Europe. In the second thought, you have gone to Australia. In the next thought, it is in Asia. It is in Vietnam at the front line fighting with the guns going off “bang, bang, bang!” and many people being killed. You do not have to use any money or buy any tickets and you can traverse the five continents. You think you are getting a bargain, but in fact you are using a tremendous amount of your “gasoline”—the gasoline (energy) of your own nature. You just do not realize it. What is that gasoline good for? It can enable you to emit light. If you use it up, you do not have any light. Without light you will be dark. What I am saying right now definitely contains genuine principle. If you understand, then it will be very helpful to you. Do not use so much gasoline! If you do not understand, then after you have used up your gasoline you will become dark and run off to the path of hungry ghosts. Mencius said:

When people lose their chickens and dogs,
they know to go looking for them.
But when their minds run away,
they do not even know to search for them.
What a sad state of affairs!

When chickens or dogs run away, their owners know to look for them. “Oh, no,” they cry, “My pet is gone!” They immediately put an advertisement in the newspaper saying, “If you see my lost dog, please call 397-3675.” But when their minds fly off in all directions, they do nothing about it. They do not need to buy a ticket, but they can still travel the world, fly up to the heavens, or enter deep into the earth. They may think it is a good deal, but really it uses up a lot of the gasoline of their own nature, until the tank is empty of Prajna’s light. From this discussion you should realize the seriousness of having false thinking. You should not casually have false thoughts, such as “I wonder how my child is doing,” and “What about my sisters, how are they? And my brothers, father, and mother...?” Thinking about such things is not useful at all. It is a case of not being able to gather in your mind. If you are able to cultivate and collect your thoughts, then you will not be lax in your thinking—you would not let your mind loose. If your mind is let loose, then you are not cultivating and gathering it in. Now I believe you understand.

There is much that can be said about cultivating and collecting one's thoughts—so much that it could never be explained entirely. We can only discuss a little. In cultivating and collecting your thoughts you should do three things:

Reproach the five desires!
Chase out the five coverings!
Regulate carefully the five matters!

Everyone knows the five desires, although you may not recognize them by that name. The five desires are forms, sounds, odors, flavors, and objects of touch. They are also listed as wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep. With the desire for forms, one chases after forms. With the desire for sounds, one pursues sounds. With the desire for fragrances, your mind gets caught up in pursuit of fragrances. WIth the desire for flavors, you pursue flavors. With desire for touch, you chase after objects of touch. In general, people are confused by these false things—so confused that their own natures will not emit light. All five desires are false; you should scold and berate them, “Hey! Do not run after those defiling forms!” When you scold them like that, then your mind will take heed and know it should not chase after forms. This same principle applies in cases when disciples are not obedient and do not listen to the Sutra lectures. “Do not fall asleep!” Do not be lazy!” Then the disciples take heed and think, “Oh, I should not be lazy. I guess I had better be a little more diligent.” Scolding away the five desires works in the same way. When your mind wants to pursue defiling forms, you should scold it: “Come back here!” It will come back. Suppose it decides to listen to a piano, or to the sound of an airplane passing overhead. “Hey! Do not listen to that sound! That sound is of no help in cultivation!” Your mind will take heed. If your mind wants to pursue flavors, tell it, “People who cultivate the Way should not become attached to flavors!” Do not think that although it is not all right to become attached to flavors, it probably does not matter if one becomes attached to touch. That is also not permissible. In this way you should reproach the five desires, until your mind becomes very well-behaved.

Does anyone know what the five coverings are? If you know, you can tell me; I also want to study them. No one knows? It is very simple. When I tell you, you will say, “Oh, it is those!” and you will understand. Before the term is explained, you wonder what the five are and what they are covering. They are covering your samadhi and your wisdom. Because they are covering them, your samadhi does not come forth and your wisdom does not come forth. They are obstructed by the coverings. If you do not want to be obstructed by these five coverings, you must chase them out. Get rid of them.

The Five Coverings

1. *The covering of greedy desire.* This refers not merely to greed, but to greedy desire. Desire is the worst thing there is. We can also say it is the best thing there is. Everything has two sides, you do not want to just look at one side. When is desire the worst thing? When you are greedy for wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep; and greedy for forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch. When is desire the best thing? When you are greedy for precepts, greedy for samadhi, and greedy for wisdom. To “always delight in sitting in *dhyana*” is a kind of greed, after all. It does not hurt to have this kind of greed. If you are greedy to become a Buddha, or a Bodhisattva, or a good person, or a filial disciple, then that kind of greed in not bad. What makes me happiest is to have filial disciples. That is my greed. Your greed as disciples is to have the very best teacher, so you can study the Buddhadharma. Those kinds of greed are permissible. In lecturing the Buddhadharma one must explain it as perfectly fused and unobstructed. If someone says something is bad, I will show how it can also be good. If someone says something is good, I will show how it can also be bad. The first covering of greedy desire covers your samadhi and wisdom.

2. *The covering of hatred.* This refers to one's temper. Of temper it is said:

Firewood gathered in a thousand days,
Can be completely burned up by a single match.

The “single match” points to our tempers. You may accumulate a thousand days’ worth of merit and virtue, but if you lose your temper once, you burn up all that merit and virtue.

A spark from the fire of our nature
Burns up a forest of merit and virtue.

That is why hatred is so bad. But even though hatred is so terrible, I can tell you that it still has its good points. If you can hate things this way: “Why don't I cultivate?” “Why can't I control my temper?” “Why can’t I kill the poisonous dragon within me?” Could you say hating that way is not good? That kind of hatred is not bad! That is part of the skill of subduing yourself and returning to propriety. That is called the skill of practicing self-control. If you can make hatred work that way, it is not bad.

3. *The covering of sleep.* Sleep can also be very bad or very good. If you sleep too much, it is very bad. It causes you to become like a pig. You lose your intelligence. Too much sleep will make you stupid. So you wonder, “Is it all right not to sleep, then?” No, it is not all right not to sleep. When you sleep, your fatigue goes away. You feel rested, and so in that way sleep is not bad. You cannot sleep too much. If you are greedy for too much, then anything becomes bad. If you use just the right amount, then anything can be good.

For instance, if a person does not eat, then his stomach will have a battle with him. It will growl and ask, “Why haven't you fed me?” It will roar like thunder. If you do not eat enough you will have a thunder storm in your stomach from hunger. If you eat too much, you will get a tornado in your stomach, and you will have to go to the bathroom one-knows-not-how-many dozens of times. It will be like mountains crashing together, the earth ripping open and the waters of the sea flowing forth non-stop. Basically eating is a good thing, but if you eat too much it becomes a bad thing. If you do not eat at all, then that would not work either. That is how it is with sleeping, too. You should sleep, but not too much. If you do not sleep properly, it becomes a covering. If you sleep correctly, the covering will be removed. You will chase out the covering so that it is entirely gone.

4. *The covering of restlessness.* A person who is restless cannot sit still and cannot stand still and does not know what to do with himself.

5. *The covering of doubt and delusions.* “Delusions” refers to coarse delusions, subtle delusions, delusions as fine as dust and sand, and delusion of ignorance. If you give rise to doubt and delusions when cultivating the Way, it becomes a kind of covering. For instance, regarding the Dharma that the Dharma Master speaks, you think, “Everything the Dharma Master explains is expedient Dharma. It is unverifiable. Speaking the Dharma is like that—it would not stand the test.” That is a kind of doubt. “He tells us to reproach the five desires, but I see that he has not reproached them. He tells us to chase out the five coverings, but the Dharma Master himself is so greedy. He has not chased his own out, and yet he is telling me to chase mine out. Well, I won't do it.” Those are doubts.

Reproach the five desires! Chase out the five coverings! Regulate carefully the five matters! The five matters are things you have to do every day.

The Five Matters

1. *Regulating one's intake of food.* Have you ever gone without eating for a day? You say, “I have gone without food for several days.” That was when you were a starving refugee in Hong Kong, fleeing from the Japanese. At that time in Hong Kong, everyone was trying to escape the Japanese air raid and so many people were without food for several days. Some people even starved to death. Regulating your intake of food means not eating too much, and not eating too little. It does not mean that you decide to stop eating altogether and fast for a week, but then on the sixth day you find that you cannot take it any more, and so you eat—a lot. You eat so much that your stomach cannot contain it, and the food has to move out. The “Relocation Bureau” is incredibly busy, day and night. That is from not knowing how to regulate your intake of food. It is not necessary to fast, but you also do not want to be unrestrained and eat too much.

2. *Regulating one's sleep.* People's daily lives consist of such matters as eating and sleeping. But you have to know how to do them; otherwise there will be problems. Thus, with food and drink, you should neither go too hungry, nor stuff yourself. If you go to either extreme, you cannot cultivate patience. Your stomach would not be able to stand it. Sleep enough, but not too much. If you do not get enough sleep, you would not be rested. If you sleep too much, you will be too rested. Underdoing is just as bad as overdoing.

3. *Regulating one's body.* Do not let your body do no work, but do not make your body do too much work. Do as much work as you have the energy to do. That is because your body should do some things for the sake of others in the world; it should make its contribution.

4. *Regulating one's breath.* We should not breathe too slowly, nor should we breathe too fast, for breathing too slowly or too fast is not good for one’s health.

5. *Regulating one's mind.* The regulation of our intake of food, our sleep, our bodies, and our breath is done by our minds. How should one's minds be regulated? It should not be sunk into a torpor, nor should it be too high-strung and excited. You should keep it calm and quiet.

These three—reproaching the five desires, chasing out the five coverings, and regulating the five matters—are methods for cultivating and collecting the mind.

Therefore, Shakyamuni Buddha further says to **Manjushri** Bodhisattva, “**This is called the** very **first range of association** for Bodhisattvas.”

**Sutra:**
 **“Further, Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas contemplate all Dharmas as empty…”**Outline:

K3. Defining “drawing near” in terms of what is neither stayed away from nor drawn near to

L1. A general statement about states of being and wisdom

**Commentary:**

**Further** indicates that the meaning being discussed above is discussed again. He says that great **Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas** who cultivate the Bodhisattva Way, **contemplate all Dharmas as empty.** “Contemplate” refers to the wisdom which contemplates, and the “emptiness” of all dharmas is the state that is contemplated. This refers to how the Great Bodhisattvas contemplate all states within the Ten Dharma Realms. The Ten Dharma Realms do not go beyond one single thought present in the mind. That single thought in the mind creates the Ten Dharma Realms. The Ten Dharma Realms include Four Sagely Realms and Six Common Realms.

The Four Sagely Realms

1. *The Dharma Realm of the Buddhas.* This is the highest realm. How does one become a Buddha? One must enlighten oneself, enlighten others, and perfect enlightenment and practice, and then one will become a Buddha. Enlightening oneself means that one gains enlightened understanding if all dharmas. When one understands all dharmas oneself, one finds them extremely wonderful and inconceivable, and so one wants to teach others to understand that subtle, inconceivable principle. That is what is meant by wanting to enlighten others. When both self-enlightenment and the enlightenment of others are perfected, one has thereby perfected both enlightenment and practice. When both enlightenment and practice are perfected, one is a Buddha. Buddhas are greatly enlightened ones. There is nothing they do not understand. They understand things that ordinary people do not understand; they have become enlightened in a way that ordinary people have not. That is why they are called the Greatly Enlightened World Honored Ones. All those in the world, and beyond the world, pay homage to the Buddhas. Yet the Dharma Realm of Buddhas does not go beyond one single thought that you and I are presently having.

2. *The Dharma Realm of Bodhisattvas.* It is really not easy to be a Bodhisattva. Bodhisattvas do things to benefit themselves and benefit others, and to enlighten themselves and enlighten others. But their enlightenment is not yet complete. Only Buddhas are completely enlightened. Bodhisattvas practice the Six Perfections and the Myriad practices. They practice giving, renouncing their heads, eyes, brains, and marrow; their countries, cities, wives, and children—both internal wealth and external wealth. “External wealth” includes all valuable material things that are external to our bodies. “Internal wealth” refers to parts of our physical bodies, such as our heads, eyes, brains and marrow. They all have to be renounced and given away.

There are three kinds of giving: the giving of wealth, the giving of Dharma, and the giving of fearlessness. Internal and external wealth can be given. Dharma can also be given. Having studied and understood the Buddhadharma, when you meet people, you can speak the Dharma for them. The giving of wealth can save people's lives. The giving of Dharma can save people's wisdom-lives. The giving of fearlessness is practiced when people are experiencing difficulty and fear. If you can comfort them and dispel their fears, then you are practicing the giving of fearlessness.

Bodhisattvas cultivate strictly upholding the precepts. They do no evil but rather offer up all good conduct. They practice patience and they cultivate vigor. Throughout the day and night, they are always vigorous. They also practice *dhyana* samadhi and wisdom. Thus they cultivate the Six Perfections and the Myriad Practices; they benefit themselves and benefit others. That is the Dharma Realm of Bodhisattvas, and yet the Dharma Realm of Bodhisattvas also does not go beyond a single thought in the mind. If in your mind you want to practice the Bodhisattva Way, and with your body you actually put the Bodhisattva Way into practice, then in the future, you will be a Bodhisattva.

3. *The Dharma Realm of Those Enlightened by Conditions.* Those Enlightened by Conditions cultivate the Twelve Causes and Conditions and awaken to the Way.

The Arising of the Twelve Causes and Conditions

1. Ignorance is the condition that brings about activity;

2. activity is the condition that brings about consciousness;

3. consciousness is the condition that brings about name and form;

4. name and form is the condition that brings about the six sense organs;

5. the six sense organs are the condition that brings about contact;

6. contact is the condition that brings about feeling;

7. feeling is the condition that brings about love;

8. love is the condition that brings about grasping;

9. grasping is the condition that brings about becoming;

10. becoming is the condition that brings about birth;

11. birth is the condition that brings about old age and death.

Those Enlightened by Conditions can be divided into two kinds: Those who cultivate the Twelve Causes and Conditions and awaken to the Way when a Buddha is in the world are known as Those Enlightened by Conditions. Those who cultivate the Twelve Causes and Conditions and awaken to the Way when there is no Buddha in the world are called Solitarily Enlightened Ones.

Solitarily Enlightened Ones work only at doing well by themselves; they do not want to benefit the world. Why do they want to “do well by themselves”? It is because they consider the whole world to be going bad, as well as all the people in it. They themselves do not want to be bad; they want to cultivate. Since they want to cultivate, they get far away from the defiled world. They separate themselves from all those other people. They go deep into the mountains into isolated valleys and over the months and years they never see a single person. They cultivate there in an *arany*a, a “pure and quiet place.”

As they cultivate, in the spring they see the myriad flowers blossom and consider it ineffably wonderful. In the autumn they watch the yellow leaves fall. They contemplate the trees: in the spring the leaves bud and grow, the flowers blossom, and then the fruit comes forth. In the autumn, the leaves fall from the trees. These cultivators find this entire process to be quite wonderful: the state of impermanence whereby things naturally come into being and cease to be. Because the myriad things are all impermanent, those cultivators search for what is permanent. Thus, they analyze the Twelve Causes and Conditions.

First, they investigate ignorance. Ignorance is another name for afflictions. If you do not understand something, you become afflicted. Once you get afflicted, you will want to do something. Once you do something and there is activity, then a consciousness comes into being. That is, when you behave in a certain way, there will be a shadow created. That shadow is consciousness. It can also be called a seed or an impression.

Ignorance refers to the mutual “unknown” that arises between men and women—that kind of emotion. Once that emotion based on enticement toward the “unknown” arises, activity will occur. Sexual intercourse will result. Once there is activity, a consciousness comes into being; a seed is fertilized. Once the fertilized seed exists, name and form come into being—it is called a fetus. Once there is name and form, the six entrances also come into being: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. With the forming of the six entrances, contact occurs; there is an awareness of contact. With contact, feeling is experienced. Once there is feeling, love arises. With thoughts of love, one wants to grasp what one loves and have it become one's own. With that becoming, there will be birth into another life, followed by death. Those are the Twelve Causes and Conditions.

Those Enlightened by Conditions investigate this problem. They come to realize that when ignorance ceases, activity will cease. When activity ceases, consciousness will also disappear. Without consciousness, there will be no name and form. Without name and form, the six entrances will naturally not exist. Without the six entrances, no contact will be experienced, because there would not even be a physical body to know the contact. Without contact there will be no feeling. Without feeling, there will be no love. If love does not arise, then there will be no compulsion to grasp. Without grasping there will be no becoming, and without becoming there will be no birth. Without birth there will be no old age and death. They investigate these Twelve Causes and Conditions backwards and forwards, until they become enlightened. Thus, they are called Those Enlightened by Conditions. They can also become Bodhisattvas of initial resolve.

4. *The Dharma Realm of Hearers.* Hearers investigate the Four Truths and awaken to the Way. The Four Truths are suffering, accumulation, cessation, and the Way.

The Four Truths

**a.** *The truth of suffering.* There are three kinds of suffering, eight kinds of suffering, and limitless kinds of suffering. The three sufferings are

1. suffering within suffering;

2. the suffering of decay, and

3. the suffering of process.

1. Suffering within suffering occurs when one is poverty-stricken and experiences additional difficulties. One may be so poor that one has no food to eat and no clothes to wear. One has a small house to live in, but then the house burns down. One builds another house, and that one is washed away in a flood. That is suffering within suffering.

2. The suffering of decay occurs when what was good goes bad. When one is wealthy and honored, one does not have the problem of being poor; but wealth and honor do not last forever. One's wealth may be lost in a fire or stolen by thieves. That is the suffering of decay.

3. The suffering of process occurs as we go from being small to being adults, to being old, and finally dying. That process flows on unceasingly with every passing thought. A child grows into an adult; the adult becomes an old person; the old person finally dies. That kind of change is a form of suffering.

There are also eight sufferings, the first four of which are:

1. the suffering of birth;

2. the suffering of old age;

3. the suffering of sickness;

4. the suffering of death.

It is very painful to be born. It is also painful to be old. Sickness brings even more suffering, and death more suffering still.

Long ago there were three old men who gathered together to drink wine. One was sixty, one was seventy, and one was eighty. During their party, the youngest one thought, “These two friends of mine are really old and will die before long.” Then he said, “This year we gather for a banquet, but who knows who will not be here next year!” He was wondering who would be dead before the next year.

The seventy-year-old said, “You are giving us a lot of time. Tonight when I take off my shoes and socks, I do not know if I will be around to put them on in the morning!”

The eighty-year-old said, “You two have lots of time! When I breathe out this breath, I do not know if I will be around to breathe in the next one!”

Birth and death are impartial events. There is no politeness involved. It is just as the old-timer said, “When I breathe out this breath, I do not know if I will be around to breathe in the next one.” That is the suffering of death. The last of four of the eight sufferings are:

5. the suffering of being apart from those you love;

6. the suffering of being together with those you hate;

7. the suffering of not getting what you want;

8. the suffering of the raging blaze of the five skandhas.

That is the eight sufferings. There is a saying;

The old monk has a way to pacify his mind.
When the eight sufferings strike, he does not feel obstructed

If he gets caught up in the eight sufferings, he is not afraid; it does not bother him. Therefore, if you have samadhi power, suffering turns into bliss. If you do not have any samadhi, bliss can turn into suffering.

**b.** *The truth of accumulation.* Accumulation refers to afflictions. There are many kinds of afflictions: great afflictions, intermediate afflictions, and small afflictions.

**c.** *The truth of cessation.* This refers to Nirvana—the passage into stillness.

**d.** *The truth of the Way.* This refers to cultivating the Way.

Hearers regard the Four Truths in order to know suffering, to cut off accumulation, to aspire toward cessation, and to cultivate the Way. Right after Shakyamuni Buddha realized the Way, he spoke the Dharma of the Four Truths, turning the Dharma Wheel of the Four Truths three times to take across the five Bhikshus. When the five Bhikshus heard the Dharma of the Four Truths, they awakened to the Way.

The Hearers and Those Enlightened by Conditions are the Two Vehicles. Together with the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they comprise the Four Sagely Dharma Realms.

The Six Common Dharma Realms

1. The Dharma Realm of Gods. This is the highest of the six common realms. People who do not understand the Buddhadharma believe that getting born into the Garden of Paradise in Heaven is the most supreme bliss. In fact, that is still within the six common Dharma Realms, and one who is born there has not transcended the cycle of rebirth.

The longest life span of the gods is eighty-thousand great kalpas. That occurs in the heaven of Neither Thought Nor Non‑Thought. But once the gods' life spans end, they are destined to fall. If their good karma has matured, they will be born in the three wholesome paths of rebirth. If their evil karma has come to fruition, they will be reborn in the evil paths. Besides that heaven, there are many, many others.

2. The Dharma Realm of *Asuras*. *Asura* is a Sanskrit word, which is translated as “ugly.” It also means “no wine.” But although the male *asuras* are extremely ugly, the *asura* women are exceptionally beautiful. *Asuras* like to fight. They are strong in fighting and like to make war. There are *asuras* in the realm of the gods, in the human realm, in the animal realm, and in the realm of ghosts. *Asuras* go everywhere, and so sometimes they are counted among the three wholesome paths and sometimes among the four evil destinies. The four evil destinies are the *asuras,* animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings.

3. The Dharma Realm of People. Let us look into how many kinds of people there are. At the highest level, there are the Presidents, Secretaries of State, Secretaries of Foreign Affairs and various other people in official position. There are wealthy people who are world magnates—from the most wealthy, to the second most wealthy, to the third most wealthy, and on down. There are also people in the world with absolutely no money who live in utter poverty, on down to the very poorest person in the world, someone who does not even own a place large enough to put the point of an awl. There are extremely ugly people, whom no one would even want to look at, and also exceptionally beautiful people whom everyone enjoys seeing. There are also very strange freaks. There are terribly fat people—some even weigh a couple thousand pounds! They cannot even get through the doors that ordinary people use, or fit through the doors of the city buses! If they want to go on a vacation, they have to rent their own special bus and have a special airplane made just for them. There are also people so thin they look like match-sticks.

How do all these different kinds of people—wealthy and honored, poor and lowly, fat, thin, tall, short, ugly, handsome—come about? In general, if you plant the causes for being wealthy, you will receive the reward of being wealthy. If you plant the causes for being honored, you will receive the reward of being honored. If you plant the causes for being poor, you will receive the retribution of being poor. If you plant the causes for having blessings, then you will receive the reward of having blessings. You plant a cause and you receive a retribution. Fat people no doubt thought that they would like to be fat, and so now they receive the retribution of being fatter than pigs. In the human realm there are all different kinds of people.

4. The Dharma Realm of Animals.

5. The Dharma Realm of Hungry Ghosts

6. The Dharma Realm of Hell Beings.

These are the three evil paths. There are so many species and classes of animals, for example, that you could never finish counting them all. It is the same with hungry ghosts. There are many, many different kinds of ghosts, not just one or two. The hells also have many categories of beings.

The Six Common Realms and the Four Sagely Realms make up the Ten Dharma Realms. These Ten Dharma Realms come from the single thought present in our minds right now. If you lose your temper every day, then “the fire of ignorance and tiger-like spirit are rooted in offenses created in previous lives.” When you lose your temper, you really are just as fierce as a tiger. if you keep on losing your temper and having so much fire, you will walk right into the path of *asuras*. If you are greedy, hateful, and stupid, you will fall into the three evil paths of the hells, the hungry ghosts, and the animals. If you want to cultivate the Four Truths of suffering, accumulation, cessation, and the Way, then you will go into the path of those of the Two Vehicles. If you want to cultivate to be a Bodhisattva and to become a Buddha, then you must bring forth the resolve for Bodhi and cultivate the Six Perfections and the Myriad Practices and eventually become a Buddha. That is why it is said that everything is made from the mind alone.

If people would like to know
All Buddhas of the three periods of time,
They should contemplate the nature of the Dharma Realm:
Everything is made from the mind alone.

If you want to know about the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, you should look into the causes and conditions of the Ten Dharma Realms: Everything is made from the mind alone. It all comes from your own mind. That is why I like to explain the Chinese character for the word “mind”:

The three dots are like a cluster of stars.
The hook is like a crescent moon.
Furred creatures come from this.
Buddhas come from this, too.

It is because of the mind that we end up in the animal realm; but if you decide to cultivate and become a Buddha, it is also because of this mind. Therefore, the Ten Dharma Realms are not apart from the single thought now a present in your mind and mine. If your mind ponders the Buddhalands, in the future you will go to the Buddhalands. If your mind is fixed on the hells, in the future you will end up in the hells. Everything is made from the mind alone. There is not the least bit of room for mistake.

**Sutra:**
 **“…as characterized by actuality, as not upside down, as not moving, as not retreating, as not turning, as being like empty space, as without a nature, as having the path of language cut off, as not coming into being, as not coming forth, as not arising, as without a name, as without an appearance, as in reality non-existent, as measureless, as boundless, as unimpeded, and as unobstructed.”**
Outline:

L2. Specific explanation

Commentary:

Bodhisattvas contemplate all dharmas **as** being **characterized by actuality.** Being characterized by actuality is the basis of all characteristics. The basis of all characteristics is no characteristics. If you try to find the basis of all characteristics within characteristics, you would not be able to find it. You must search for that basis of characteristics within what has no characteristics. Bodhisattvas contemplate all dharmas as being empty. They contemplate how all dharmas of the Ten Dharma Realms are empty—how those states are empty, and how they are characterized by actuality. Even though they are empty, within that emptiness there is existence. Within true emptiness, wonderful existence comes forth.

True emptiness is not empty, because it can bring forth wonderful existence. Wonderful existence is non-existent, because it itself is true emptiness, which is another name for being characterized by actuality. When you are characterized by actuality, then outwardly you will not be greedy, and inwardly you will not seek. You will do no seeking either inside or outside. Inside and outside will be empty. Inwardly you empty the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and outwardly you empty sights, sounds, scents, flavors, objects of touch, and dharmas that are objects of the mind. In between, you empty the eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and mind consciousness. You empty the six sense organs, the six sense objects, and the six consciousnesses, so that the six consciousnesses, the twelve locations and the eighteen realms will be empty.

Bodhisattvas contemplate all dharmas as characterized by emptiness. They are all empty, but does that mean they do not exist? No. They are characterized by actuality. They are like actuality, and what is subtle, wonderful, and inconceivable is right here. What is sitting in meditation every day? It is being characterized by actuality. When one practices sitting in *dhyana* meditation every day, what is one doing? One is being characterized by actuality and according with reality. Since you find it hard to understand what being characterized by actuality means, I am telling you that it means sitting in meditation every day. As soon as you investigate *dhyana*, inwardly the six sense organs become empty, outwardly the six sense objects become empty, and in between the six sense consciousnesses become empty. When the eighteen realms become empty, you reach the Station of Nothing Whatsoever, and the Heaven of the Station of Neither Thought Nor Non-Thought. That is not to say one's soul goes out and ascends to that heaven. If right here, there is nothing whatsoever, that is the Heaven of Neither Thought Nor Non-Thought. You do not have to go up somewhere to that Heaven. It is right here. If you can be characterized by actuality, your state is that of the Heaven of Neither Thought Nor Non-Thought.

When you cultivate the Way, you must have a persevering mind, a sincere mind, and a firm mind. A firm mind is one as strong as vajra, or a diamond, which cannot be broken, but which can cut through all things. Your resolve should be as solid as vajra. You should think, “I am going to study the Buddhadharma, no matter what kind of state comes along. I am not going to change my mind. I am absolutely going to be firm and have solid determination. Whatever the circumstances and whatever the demonic obstacles, I am determined to have that kind of solid resolve, and study the Buddhadharma with a true mind.” That is because for life after life, if we have not been horses, we have been cows; if we have not been pigs, we have been dogs. We have even been mice, and even filthier, dung beetles in latrines.

You do not have to talk about bugs in toilets. Take a look inside yourself at how, within your belly, along with the excrement, there are one-does-not-know-how-many bugs. Pigeons, for example, look like pigeons, but there are numerous bugs on their bodies biting them. Sometimes the pigeons are aware of them, and sometimes they are not. We people are the same. In our bodies we have one-does-not-know-how many bacteria—bugs, which is just to say one-does-not-know-how-many living beings. We say, “Living beings are boundless, I vow to save them all.” Not to speak of there being boundlessly many living beings outside, right within our own bodies, how many living beings would you say there are? Can you count them? If you do not save those living beings, they will convert you. How will they do that? You will go along with them and, from being a big bug, you will become a small bug. The efficacious nature of tiny bugs is tiny, and so they are very stupid. They only know how to be parasites. They only know how to beg, and do not know how to give. You will be like them: eating people's flesh and drinking their blood—living in people's stomachs and stealing the food that people ingest. Such bugs feel they are getting a bargain, but actually it is brought about by their own stinginess. If you want to save them, you should increase the *yang* light of your own nature day by day until *yang* energy prevails. *Yang* light can be compared to sunlight, which can kill germs. Doctors now use ultraviolet rays to kill germs, and if you can use the *yang* light of your own nature, you can kill the germs on your own body.

“But isn't that breaking the precepts?” you may ask.

Such a question is just letting your intelligence run away with you. It is like one of my disciples who was planning to take the Bodhisattva precepts, but then asked me, “If I take the Bodhisattva precepts, won't I be breaking them when I drive my car and I squash lots of bugs.?”

He didnot think of how his losing his temper is a lot more violent than killing those living creatures. He forgot all about that and thought about the other instead. I said to him, “That is an inadvertent error on your part. You have not set out to kill them. Their death is due to the environment and the circumstances, and you have not intended to kill them. You can recite the Buddha's name as you drive your car and transfer merit to the beings you kill. That is because you do not want to kill them. If you clearly knew it was wrong and yet deliberately did it anyway, and you took delight in killing them, then that would be an offense.”

It is like the case of someone I once knew who had been a military man but who later studied Buddhism, took refuge with the Triple Jewel, and then left the home life. He saw others leaving home and doing well, and so he left home, too. Before and after leaving the home life, he recited the Buddha's name. Also, he had been a vegetarian while he was still a lay person. He did not take the life of living creatures. After he left home, he was a grand-disciple of Venerable Master Hsu Yun, and his name was Hung Hui. He took the precepts at Nan Hua Monastery. He could speak very well. Later, when the Communists took over, he could no longer stay in Jiangxi Province, and so he went to Hong Kong.

At that time, the situation in Hong Kong was very complicated. There was no place for Buddhist monks to stay. It was not like right now when every monk has his own high-rise. Not to speak of a high-rise, they did not even have small huts to live in. Hung Hui lived in a one-story wooden shack on East Putou, and he had no money. Probably he had used a lot of money for a long time, and so he felt it was very difficult to be without it. In Hong Kong there was a place called Daofeng Mountain. It specialized in helping Buddhist monks and nuns return to lay-life. If they did not want to remain in Buddhism, they could go there, and would be given a monthly allowance of perhaps thirty, fifty, or two hundred dollars. You could stay there and be a monk if you wanted, or not be a monk if that was what you preferred. You could be a vegetarian if you wanted to, but if you did not want to be one, they provided you with meat to eat. It was fine to remain a monk, but if you wanted to go back to lay-life, they would find you a wife. It was the same for Bhikshunis. If you wanted to remain a nun, you could. If you wanted to be a lay person, you could. If you wanted to get married, they would find you a husband—perhaps one of the monks.

Things were extremely expedient there. They claimed that what they were doing was suited to the times. They taught people to believe in Lord God and not to believe in monks or the Buddha. Yet they advertised themselves as a place that recited Buddhist Sutras and did morning and evening recitation. Actually, it was a case of “hanging out a sheep's head but selling dog meat.” They were trying to destroy Buddhism.

Hung Hui had no money, and so he went to work as a cook at Daofeng Mountain, and earned three hundred dollars a month. But the food was not vegetarian, and every day he had to kill chickens, ducks, and fish. “It does not matter,” he would rationalize. As he wielded his knife and cut off the chicken's head, he recited, “Namo Amitabha Buddha. Be born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Namo Amitabha Buddha. Be born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.” He killed many chickens in that way every day. He just closed his eyes and said that by reciting the Buddha’s name for the chickens, he could help them to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss He would recite the Buddha’s name once and then kill a chicken. This continued until he had killed about three hundred and sixty chickens. Then what do you suppose happened? His retribution came. He went insane and could not stay at Daofeng Mountain anymore. He went back to where he had lived without money on East Putou, and carried on crazily all day long. “Have you seen those chickens I killed? Did they reach the Land of Ultimate Bliss?” he would ask people. “Are those ducks in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, or are they ducks again? Are they going to come and kill me?” He talked crazy talk like that from morning to night.

He wanted to see me, because he knew that if he could see me, his sickness would be cured. But he never could get to see me, no matter how he tried. He thought that it would help to see me because he had seen many other people who had sicknesses similar to his get well after they saw me. He had brought many such people to see me, and they had all recovered. Now it was his turn. In his more lucid moments he wouldsay, “I want to go visit Dharma Master An Tse. Who will help me?” But just as soon as he was ready to start out to see me, he would go insane again and scream, “No! You cannot do that! If you go to see him, what are we going to do? You have taken so many lives and, even though you knew better, you deliberately created those offenses. You are a monk, and yet you have killed so many ducks and chickens! How can you face him?” After about six months, he stabbed himself to death. And he was a monk. You see, cultivation is not easy.

Why did he receive such a severe retribution? First of all, I will tell you, he was a great Bodhisattva who appeared here to show living beings what can happen. “See? If you have left the home-life, you cannot kill or you will undergo this kind of retribution.” He was not afraid of looking bad, or embarrassed to appear in such a way. He was like Devadatta. He let all the other monks know that left-home people cannot take life. That is the first interpretation—a positive one. The second interpretation is that he did not have a firm mind. After he left the home-life, he changed and did not cultivate. First of all you must have a firm mind.

Second of all you must have a persevering mind. You cannot approach the study of the Buddhadharma as if you were addicted to opium, so that if you do not have some of it you go into withdrawal, but if you do get some of it you become invigorated. The study of the Buddhadharma should not be up and down like that. You must steadily persevere. Study the Buddhadharma today, study tomorrow, study the next day, study day after day. Study the Buddhadharma this month, study next month, study month after month. Study the Buddhadharma this year, study next year, study year after year.

“Shouldn't I ever do anything else?” you ask. When it comes time to die, are you going to be able to do something else? Are you aware of the fact that in the future you will definitely die? If you do not study the Buddhadharma, you will have absolutely no control when you die. If you study the Buddhadharma at ordinary times, then when you die, you will have no calamities, no sickness, and no pain.

Take for instance a certain person who took refuge with me. Why did he take refuge? He thought that after he did, he could get rich. After he became a disciple, he vowed that he would get rich and once he was rich that he would build a Buddhist hospital. He also asked me to interpret his physiognomy and read his fortune. I answered him like this: “If your physiognomy indicates that you should be wealthy, but your mind is not good, then you still will not get rich. If your physiognomy indicates that you will not be a wealthy man, but your mind is good, then you still can get rich. Therefore, physiognomy is false; do not believe in it.”

He still wanted me to tell his fortune. He had read in my biography that I understood all the different methods of telling people's fortunes and so he asked me over and over. “Teacher, did you read my fortune yet?”

I replied, “Oh, I lost that piece of paper you gave me.”

“It does not matter,” he said, “I will write it for you again.”

He rewrote it and I said, “I do not have time right now. I am too busy.”

“Never mind,” he said, “Wait until later.” Another month passed, and he asked, “Teacher, did you read my fortune yet?”

I replied, “What? Read what?”

“You know,” he said, “that information I gave you to read my fortune with.”

“Oh, that,” I said, “they must have burned that paper when they cleaned my room.” He still did not get the point and rewrote the information for me. He must have rewritten that information five or six times. I never read his fortune for him, because people who have left the home-life cannot do that kind of thing. They cannot read people's physiognomy, they cannot tell people's fortunes. To do such things is to “advertise your medicines” like snake-oil salesmen. People who genuinely cultivate the Way do not get involved in that kind of thing.

Eventually that disciple said he was going to New York. He probably was about to ask me to read his fortune again, but that time I was no longer polite. I said, “You have taken refuge with me, and now I am going to instruct you. When you get to New York, there will be many left-home people there. No matter what left-home people you meet, I forbid you to ask them to read your physiognomy or tell your fortune. If you have the physiognomy of a dog, then no matter what you do you would not be able to change it into the physiognomy of a tiger. If you have the physiognomy of a tiger, you would not be able to change it into the physiognomy of a dog. What do you keep thinking about that for? Why do you want your fortune read? If you are to be poor and I tell you your fortune is that you can get rich, you still would not get rich. If you are supposed to get rich, then even if I do not tell your fortune, you will still get rich. If you treat left-home people like that, asking them to read your fortune, it is just the same as insulting them. It is not polite to ask a left-home person such a thing. You really do not have any manners.”

He protested, “But there are left-home people who read other people's fortunes and tell their physiognomy.”

I said, “They are just snake-oil salesmen. Anyone who is a genuine cultivator does not do such things.”

After that, he did not dare ask me to tell his fortune again. He said, “I made a vow to build a Buddhist hospital. It has been several years now and I still have not made much money. I will never fulfill my vow at this rate.”

I said, “If your vow could be fulfilled just by making it, then anyone's vow could be fulfilled just because he made it, and the Buddhas would be incredibly busy. They do not have time to get involved in so many matters that do not concern them. Just take going to school as an example. From elementary school you go on to high school, and then to college before you can obtain a Ph.D. How many years does it take? You want to get rich and figure that you can make a vow and in two and a half days it will be fulfilled. If things could happen as easily as that in this world, then everyone would have made such vows long ago, and your turn would never come.”

He stammered, “Oh! Oh! Today I truly understand a little! Vows must be long-term and must be maintained for a long time. You cannot just make a vow today and fulfill it tomorrow.”

I said, “You should make your vow like this: ‘I want to build a Buddhist hospital this life, but I do not have the money to do it, so I will do it next life. If next life I do not have the money to do it, then I will wait for the life after that. No matter what, I shall cultivate blessings and cultivate wisdom and when I have enough money, I will build a Buddhist hospital. I will make this vow life after life.’ That is how to do it.”

He said, “All right, I will do it like that.” He really did come to understand a little. You must have perseverance. You cannot study the Buddhadharma for a little while and then stop studying it and go back to doing whatever you please. You must be persevere.

Third, you must have a sincere mind. No matter what kind of difficulty you meet with, you must remain sincere. For example, a friend may try to destroy your faith by saying, “What are you doing studying the Buddhadharma? Those people who study Buddhism are really dumb. They are way behind the times and superstitious as well. You are an intelligent person; you should not be studying that!” He uses all kinds of methods to undermine you, but you are not moved by him.

He said, “That Dharma Master with whom you are studying Buddhism with does not really understand Buddhism. Do not study with him!” He may employ various methods to try to turn you against what you are doing and discourage you. If you remained unmoved by him, then you have a sincere mind.

You think, “I have my own eyes and I recognize the Buddhadharma. I am seeking the genuine Dharma. I will not be discouraged by others.” You must have utmost sincerity. “Even if people wanted to kill me for it, I still would study the Buddhadharma.” Even if you have to lose your life in the process, you are still going to study the Buddhadharma. That is true sincerity.

Shakyamuni Buddha in the past lives offered his body and life a thousand times. When he gave up his body and life those times, it is not for sure he wanted to. Because of the circumstances, he was unable to do otherwise. Perhaps it was because he felt pity for living beings and thought, “Ah, that living being does not have anything to eat. I will give him my body to eat so that he can sustain his life.” That was the reason he gave up his life to feed a tiger and cut off his flesh to feed an eagle. The eagle was so hungry it could not even fly. It wanted to eat a pigeon, but the pigeon flew to the Buddha for protection. The eagle said, “Sure, you can save the pigeon, but he lives and I die. What about that?”

On the cause-ground, Shakyamuni Buddha thought, “That is right. If I save the pigeon, the eagle will starve to death” and so he said to the eagle, “You wanted to the pigeon? Well, I will give you a piece of my flesh to eat instead.” He cut off a piece, but the eagle said he still was not full. The Buddha cut off another piece of flesh, but the eagle still was not full. Eventually he cut all the flesh off his body, but the eagle still was not full. So the Buddha said, “Fine, you take a look and wherever you see any flesh left on my body, you can pick it off and eat it.”

Then the eagle flew up into the air and so did the pigeon. They were gods who had come to test him. They were not really a pigeon and an eagle. At that point, the flesh he had cut off returned to his body. You say, “According to scientific investigation, that is an impossibility.”

I also say it is an impossibility, and I do not know for why it was possible. If you have sincerity, you will have a response. Those responses came as a result of the Buddha's sincerity in giving up his life to feed the tiger and cutting off his flesh to feed the eagle. We, too, should practice giving of that sort. It should not be that if you give away two-and-a-half cents it pains your heart! That is really not having any backbone at all. What kind of Buddhadharma are you studying, anyway? Those who study the Buddhadharma are willing to give up their lives—heads, eyes, brains, and marrow. Then it is real!

You say, “I am starting to regret that I decided to follow this Dharma Master to study the Buddhadharma.”

It is too late for regrets! Now that you have met this Dharma Master, you have no way to run away from him. Doesn’t that worry you?”

“As characterized by actuality” (*ru shi xiang*) refers to the state of the Contemplation of the Ten Dharma Realms. What follows, “as not upside down,” refers to the Wisdom of the Contemplation of the Middle Way.

“Actuality” means not falling into emptiness and not falling into existence. The Three Truths of Emptiness, Falseness, and the Middle are not different from each other—they are the same.

Emptiness is falseness; falseness is the Middle. When one is empty, all are empty. When one is false, all are false. When one is the Middle, all are the Middle. The Three Truths are not differentiated, and that non-differentiation is “actuality.”

“Actuality” also means not being the same as the Seven Expedients.

The Seven Expedients

1. The Five Stoppings of the Mind;
2. dwelling in particular characteristics;
3. dwelling in general characteristics;
4. heat;
5. summit;
6. patience;
7. foremost in the World.

This transcends the Seven Expedients, and so is called “actuality.” They are characterized by actuality—they have actuality as their basic substance.

**As not upside down.** What is being upside down, and what is not being upside down? If you do not want to be upside down, you first must know what is being upside down. Ordinary people are upside down in these ways:

1. They consider what is not permanent to be permanent;
2. They consider what is not bliss to be bliss;
3. They consider what is not self to be self;
4. They consider what is not pure to be pure.

Those are the four ways in which ordinary people are upside-down.

Those of the Two Vehicles have their own four ways of being upside down.

1. They consider what is permanent to be impermanent.
2. They consider what is bliss to be suffering.
3. They consider what is self not to be self.
4. They consider what is pure not to be pure.

Even Bodhisattvas have the upside-downness of getting out of the false. Those are all ways of being upside-down. Only Buddhas are not upside down. Thus living beings in the Nine Dharma Realms reside in upside-down environments, and are upside-down. Being upside-down, sometimes they feel good, and sometimes they feel bad. If you understand, then there is nothing that is good or bad in itself. Concepts of good and bad are based on the false speculations that living beings make in their upside-down state. If you can be not upside-down, then you are in accord with the Middle Way.

To be more specific, if you want to study the Buddhadharma, then you are not upside-down. If you do not want to study the Buddhadharma, you are going down the road of being upside-down. If you follow the rules, you are not upside-down. If you do not follow the rules, you are upside-down. If you are deviant, you are upside-down. If you are proper, you are not upside-down.

Now that we are discussing not being upside-down, you should each take a look at yourself to see if you are upside-down. If you are, you should quickly learn how to be not upside-down. If you are not upside-down, you should try to be even less upside-down.

**As not moving** refers to samadhi. To have samadhi is to not be afraid of anything. You may be sitting in mediation within samadhi and when a tiger approaches you with its mouth wide open ready to swallow you in a single gulp. If you become afraid, you have moved! If you are not afraid, you are unmoved. In addition to not fearing tigers, you must not even fear death. Look upon life and death as the same.

Someone may say, “It is just because I am not afraid of death that I do not need to study the Buddhadharma. People study the Buddhadharma in order to end birth and death, but since I am not afraid of birth and death, I do not need to study the Buddhadharma.”

If you do not study the Buddhadharma because you do not fear birth and death, birth and death will never end. The kind of freedom from fear of birth and death we are talking about is having samadhi, but your type of not fearing birth and death is using your temper and your ignorance. Your attitude is, “What is the problem? If I fall into the hells, I fall into the hells. If I have to undergo suffering, I will undergo suffering. I am not afraid.” You cannot stop birth and death that way. On the other hand, if you do not fear birth and death and are unmoved by birth and death, you have samadhi power. That is entirely different.

There are two kinds of birth and death, known as the “two deaths.” Some people may wonder, “Does that mean dying once, coming back to life, and then dying again?” No, the two kinds are:

1. the birth and death of share and section;
2. the birth and death of change.

The birth and death of share and section means that I have my own share and section, and you have your share and section. “Share” refers to each individual's physical body. You have your body, which is your share; I have my body, which is my share. “Section” can refer to each individual's specific dimensions. You are five foot eight, I am five foot nine, and he is six feet tall. Another meaning of “section” is each individual's lifespan. You live to be eighty, which is your section. I live to be ninety, and that is my section. He lives to be a hundred, and that is his section. Ordinary people all undergo birth and death of share and section.

Those of the Two Vehicles undergo birth and death of change. “Change” refers to the continual change and flow of our thoughts in an unending process. Each changing thought is a birth and death. These births and deaths are the ceaseless flow of false thoughts which have not come to a stop, for one has not attained samadhi. “Not moving” means one has attained samadhi and so one is not moved by the two kinds of deaths.

**As not retreating.** This means that from having wisdom, one does not retreat into stupidity. When at every moment your mind is still and quiescent—when you have no false thinking—then you have great wisdom and knowledge. That is what is meant by not retreating. It means not retreating into stupidity. Once you have gained prajna wisdom, you never again do stupid things.

**As not turning.** This means not having to turn on the wheel of rebirth. It means not being like ordinary people who revolve in the paths of birth and death. It also means not being like those of the Two Vehicles who turn from being ordinary people into sages. One does not turn in either of those ways.

**As being like empty space.**The Flower Adornment Sutra says, “If one wishes to understand the Buddhas' state, one must purify one's mind so it is like empty space.” What we call empty space is not anything at all. Although it is not anything at all, nonetheless, everything is contained within empty space. “Empty space” is only a name. Although it has a name, it does not have a nature of its own. The Wisdom of Contemplation of the Middle Way is also just a name. When you cultivate the wisdom of the Middle Way, that is only a name. If you look for something real, there is nothing at all. Thus, It is like empty space. You should not “add a head on top of your head” and ask, “What is empty space?” and go around looking for empty space. Empty space is not anything at all, so what are you looking for? Do not put another head on top of the one you have got. By asking, “What is my head?” you are adding another head. Do not be like that. Nor should you ask, “Why don't I have a head?” as Yajnadatta did. He looked in the mirror and saw a person with a head, and wondered, “Why don't I have a head?” Then he ran out in the street asking everyone he met, “Look at me—do I have a head or not?” and searching all over for his head. Do not be like him.

**As without a nature** means as not having nature of their own, not having something else's nature, and not having a shared nature, a nature held in common. It also means not having a causal nature or a resulting nature. They are, therefore, without a nature. Everything is empty, and so this, too, is talking about emptiness.

**As having the path of language cut off.** They cannot be articulated, or even conceptualized. The path of language is cut off, so there is no way to speak about them.

The mouth wants to speak, but the words are lost;
The mind wants to think, but reflections have perished.

The mouth would like to talk but there is nothing that can be expressed in words. The mind would like to involve itself with conditions, but all thinking is gone.

The path of language is cut off;
The place of the mind's activity is extinguished.

What kind of state would you say that is? It is:

Leaving the four predications far behind;
And cutting off the hundred fallacies.

The “four predications” could also refer to stanzas of four lines, such as:

All conditioned dharmas,
Are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows;
Like dew and like a lightning flash:
Contemplate them thus.

This four-line verse is left behind, and the hundred fallacies—ways of being wrong—are all gone. This is an inconceivable state, and so one cannot imagine it. There is no way to express it in words or even to think about it. The inconceivable is the wonderful. If you can understand the wonderful, then you can be said to know a little bit of the flavor of the Dharma Flower Sutra. But if you do not know the meaning of the wonderful, you have no way to listen to the Dharma Flower Sutra. What the Dharma Flower Sutra talks about is the wonderful. In all it says, it is speaking of the wonderful.

Most of you have been applying effort very well, but some of you are still having “false thinking as usual.” I hope that those of you who are having false thinking will have a little less, and that those of you who are applying effort well will do even better and make progress every day. To make daily progress, you must watch over yourself more strictly every day and gather in your body and mind. To gather in your body and mind means not to have false thinking.

When this Summer Session is over, the Winter Chan Meditation Session will begin. This Chan Session will last for a hundred days. Each day there will be twenty-one hours of walking and sitting without a break. Those of you who are not afraid of difficulty can sign up early for the Chan Session. Sitting in Chan is learning about the state that is inconceivable. There is no way you can think about it because its wonderful points are inconceivable!

**As not coming into being.** What does not come into being? Ignorance does not come into being. Wisdom does not come into being. There is no wisdom and no ignorance. What would you say that is? It is a principle. Because you have no ignorance, you also have no wisdom. Because you have no wisdom, you also have no ignorance. Wisdom and ignorance are opposites. When you produce neither ignorance nor wisdom, you are in the state described as “not thinking of good and not thinking of evil.” If you have a “good,” then you have something that is brought into being. If you have an “evil,” you also have something that is brought into being. Now, if you have ignorance, then you have something that is brought into being. If you have wisdom, you also have something that is brought into being. What kind of state is it when neither wisdom nor ignorance come into being? That state is a wonderful one. That is because there being no ignorance and no wisdom is a principle, the fundamental substance of principle—the Great Treasure of Light of one's inherent nature. Thus, there is nothing that is destroyed and nothing that destroys. There is no way to destroy it, because it is merely a principle—the principle of not coming into being. In this state, neither practice, nor position, nor cause, nor effect come into being.

**As not coming forth** means not coming out and not going in— neither exiting or entering. That is the original substance of the Tathagata, the original substance cultivated by the Tathagata until the ultimate point is reached, so that there is no coming forth or entering. This also means there is no ignorance and no wisdom which can be spoken of.

**As not arising.** When one has certified to the principle of the Tathagatas, the expedient teachings—the provisional dharmas—all become still and quiescent. They do not arise.

**As without a name.** Isn't there a name for them? There is no name. There is only the principle. By this we mean that there is no name or term that can represent the principle. From “As not upside-down” in the text above through “As not arising,” there is no name that can be their name.

**As without an appearance.** There is also no appearance that can be said to characterize them. In the same way, from “As not upside-down” through “As not arising,” there is no mark or appearance whatsoever that can describe them. They have no mark. “As without a name” refers to the emptiness of a nature. “As without an appearance” refers to the emptiness of marks.

**As in reality non-existent.** This if further praise of the contemplation of the Middle Way, which does not fall into the two extremes of emptiness or existence. For that reason, it says “As in reality non-existent.” There is nothing at all.

**As measureless.** The dharmas are innumerable, and cannot be counted. An example of numbered dharmas is the five skandhas—form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness. They have a set number: there are five kinds. The six sense organs are of six kinds, and there are six of the sense objects. Together they are the twelve entrances, which have twelve terms in all. Between the six sense organs and the six sense objects, add the six consciousnesses, and that makes the eighteen realms. The five skandhas, the six sense organs, the twelve entrances (also known as the twelve locations, and the eighteen realms are all numbered. Now in the contemplation of the Middle Way, there are no numbers. Thus there are no measures. Measurelessness is the entire measure—a measure is where there is nothing in excess and nothing lacking, and so they are said to be measureless.

**As boundless.** Being boundless means there are no boundaries or borders. In the Small Vehicle there are confines and boundaries. All their dharmas are fixed and bounded. What is not fixed does not have bounds. Here, therefore, being “boundless” means there are no fixed dharmas.

**As unimpeded.** Being unimpeded means universally entering into all dharmas without impediment by means of the wisdom of Contemplation of the Middle Way.

**And as unobstructed.** There is not a single dharma which can obstruct and cover the Wisdom of Contemplation of the Middle Way.

From the phrase “contemplate all dharmas as empty” to the phrase “as unobstructed,” there are nineteen phrases in all. The phrase “contemplate all dharmas as empty,” which refers to the wisdom that contemplates, together with the remainder of the passage—“…as characterized by actuality, as not upside-down, as not moving, as not retreating, as not turning,… and as unobstructed”—comprise a total of nineteen phrases. The phrase “contemplates all dharmas as empty” is a general heading. The following eighteen phrases are explained separately; they are specific explanations.

A full discussion of the principles involved here would be boundless and without end. Now I am just speaking in general. Excluding the phrase “contemplate all dharmas as empty,” there are eighteen phrases left. These eighteen phrases can be explained as applying to all dharmas, that is to say, “all dharmas are characterized by actuality, all dharmas are not upside-down, all dharmas are unmoving, all dharmas are non-retreating, all dharma are non-turning, all dharmas are like empty space, all dharmas are without a nature, all dharmas have the path of language cut off, all dharmas do not come into being, all dharmas do not come forth, all dharmas do not arise, all dharmas are without a name, all dharmas are without an appearance, all dharmas are in reality non-existent, all dharmas are measureless, all dharmas are boundless, all dharmas are unimpeded, and all dharmas are unobstructed.” That is to explain these eighteen phrases as applying to all dharmas.

These eighteen phrases can also be explained in terms of the Eighteen Kinds of emptiness referred to in the Great Prajna Sutra.

1. “Characterized by actuality” corresponds to emptiness in the Primary Sense.

2. “Not upside-down” refers to the Internal Emptiness of the six sense organs. If inwardly, one is emptied of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, there will no longer be a self or attachments to self. If inwardly one is not upside-down, one will not be turned by the six sense organs.

3. “Not moving” refers to the External Emptiness of the six sense objects. With outward emptiness, one is not swayed by the six sense objects, but remains unmoving.

4. “Not retreating” refers to Neither Internal nor External Emptiness, which is actually Both Internal and External Emptiness. One does not retreat to the position of ordinary people, nor to the position of the Two Vehicles. The inner and outer are both empty, so one does not retreat.

5. “Not turning” refers to the Emptiness of the Empty. In this emptiness, all dharmas are broken through, destroyed, and emptied. If all is emptied, how can there be any dharma? If all is emptied, and yet a dharma of emptiness remains, then you have not broken through yet. You are attached to emptiness. When emptiness itself is empty, then all dharmas have been destroyed. What is broken through are the dharmas, and what breaks through them is emptiness. When all dharmas have been destroyed, then there is no attachment to self or to dharmas. Only when there is no attachment to dharmas can there be the emptiness of the empty. When all dharmas are gone, that is the Emptiness of the Empty. But if emptiness itself is not emptied, a flaw remains. When emptiness is empty, there are no flaws, and all dharmas are destroyed. One:

Sweeps away all dharmas,
And leaves all appearances behind.

When all dharmas are empty, how much the less are there any appearances. This is called “not turning” and corresponds to the Emptiness of the Empty.

6. “Being like empty space.” The Prajna Sutra discusses wisdom—prajna, and the principle of emptiness. The Buddha’s disciple Subhuti was good at discussing prajna and was the best disciple at explaining emptiness. Since he exclusively investigated emptiness, his name means “born of emptiness.” However, he was not really born of emptiness, because there was actually a Subhuti. I think many people may not understand why he was called “born of emptiness,” so now I will explain briefly. Subhuti is a Sanskrit word that means “born of emptiness.” This was because at his birth all the treasuries of wealth and jewelry in his household became empty. Seeing this, his father named him “Born of Emptiness.” Did the empty treasuries mean they were going to be poor? His father consulted a fortune teller who told him not to worry, that such an event was extremely auspicious, and that this was one extremely lucky child. Then the father also named him “Good Fortune.” Seven days later, the wealth and gems reappeared in the treasuries, so his father gave him yet another name, “Good Manifestation.” Thus “Subhuti” has three meanings. Why did all the treasuries become empty at his birth? That was because in many previous lives Subhuti had studied emptiness, and so prajna emptiness manifested at his birth, and all the wealth and valuables disappeared. So he was called “born of emptiness.” “Being like empty space” corresponds to Great Emptiness. There is nothing greater than it. How great is it? No one knows, because it is too great. If someone knew it would not be great.

7. What kind of emptiness does “without a nature” correspond do? Take another guess. Let us see how your wisdom is—let us see if you have truly understood emptiness. I have not said that if you guess correctly, I will transmit the Wonderful Dharma of the Tathagata’s Mind-Seal to you and make you the next Patriarch. Therefore you should not be that anxious. At most, you will have a hard time falling asleep tonight. But tomorrow, whether you know the answer or not, I will explain it for you. If you do not know what kind of emptiness “without a nature” corresponds to, you can look it up in the Great Prajna Sutra.“Without a nature” corresponds to Ultimate Emptiness. It is ultimately empty, that is, fundamentally empty. It is said,

The Tathagata is like the clear, cool moon,
Ever travelling through ultimate space.
When the waters of the minds of living beings are pure,
Bodhi is reflected in them.

At night, it is very refreshing to look at the clear, cool moon in the sky. The Tathagata is compared to the moon, always roaming through space. When the waters of wisdom are brought forth in living beings and their minds are pure, the reflection of Bodhi appears. Why does “without a nature” correspond to Ultimate Emptiness? Without a nature, there is nothing at all, so how can that be anything but the Ultimate Emptiness? In all dharmas, there is nothing lacking and nothing in excess in their fundamental substance, so they are ultimately empty, and thus without a nature. Having no nature is the ultimate emptiness.

8. “Having the path of language cut off.” What kind of emptiness is this? It is very easy to deduce from the text itself. In fact, the corresponding emptiness can be inferred from each of the phrases of the Sutra text. This phrase means “Emptiness of Everything.” All the paths of language are severed, and so everything is empty. Since everything is empty, nothing remains to be said. The path of language is destroyed.

9. What emptiness does “not coming into being” refer to? Some of you have read the Eighteen Kinds of Emptiness, and you may or may not know their correspondence to these eighteen phrases. If you knew, you would not have said that “without a nature” is the Emptiness in the Primary Sense or the Emptiness of the Nature, because “without a name” corresponds to the Emptiness of the Nature; “without an appearance” corresponds to the Emptiness of Appearances; and “characterized by actuality” corresponds to the Emptiness in the Primary Sense. Now, “not coming into being” is the Emptiness of the Conditioned. Conditioned dharmas come into being through the combination of causes and conditions. Now causes and conditions do not combine, and so conditioned dharmas do not come into being. Since there is no coming into being, there is no combining.

10. “Not coming forth” refers to the Emptiness of the Unconditioned.

Unconditioned, without arising or perishing.
Unreal, like flowers in empty space.

The “unconditioned” means there is a departure from all dharmas into emptiness wherein no dharmas come forth.

11. “Not arising” refers to “Beginningless Emptiness.” There is no beginning because there is no arising. Any beginning would imply an arising, so this is called Beginningless Emptiness in the Great Prajna Sutra. You may search for a beginning, but it does not exist. This emptiness has no beginning.

12. “Without a name” refers to the Emptiness of the Nature.

13. “Without an appearance” refers to Emptiness of Appearances.

14. “In reality non-existent.” Does this also correspond to Ultimate Emptiness or Beginningless Emptiness? No, it refers to Unobtainable Emptiness, one of the Eighteen Kinds of Emptiness.

15. “Measureless” refers to the Emptiness of Existing Dharmas. When they can be measured, they exist. When their measures are emptied, they are called “measureless,” and that is the Emptiness of Existing Dharmas.

16. “Boundless” refers to the Emptiness of No Dharmas. There was the Emptiness of Existing Dharmas, and now the Emptiness of No Dharmas. When there are no dharmas, there are no boundaries.

17. “Unimpeded” refers to the Emptiness of Both Dharmas and No Dharmas. Both are empty and unattainable. Since there is no impediment, dharmas are empty and so are no dharmas.

18. “Unobstructed” corresponds to the last of the Eighteen Kinds of Emptiness, the Emptiness of Scattering. All hindrances and obstructions are gone, so it is “unobstructed.”

The Eighteen Kinds of Emptiness have been used to explain the general meaning of these eighteen phrases. Since the Buddha always cultivated the Eighteen Kinds of Emptiness, I have interpreted these eighteen phrases of the Dharma Flower Sutra based on them.

**Sutra:**

**“They exist only because of causes and conditions and are produced from inversion. Therefore, it is said that constantly delighting in contemplating such characteristics of Dharmas is called the second range of association of a Bodhisattva.”**
Outline:

L3. Conclusion

**Commentary:**

The phrase in the previous text which read “(They...) contemplates all dharmas as empty...,” is the general characteristic. The eighteen phrases following that, which begin “as characterized by actuality,” are the specific characteristics. **They,** all those various characteristics, **exist only because of** various kinds of **causes and conditions and are produced from inversion. Therefore, it is said that constantly delighting in contemplating the characteristics of Dharmas** in this way **is called the second range of association of a Bodhisattva** Mahasattva. He should always enjoy contemplating all the different characteristics of dharmas mentioned above, and see everything as empty. This is the second place to which Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas should draw near.

**Sutra:**
 **“At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke the following verses:**

***“If there is a Bodhisattva,
In the future evil age,
Who, with a fearless mind,
Wishes to speak this Sutra,
He should enter the range of practice,
And the range of association.”***

Outline:

H2. Verses
I1. Statement in verse

**Commentary:**

**At that time,** Shakyamuni Buddha, **the World Honored One, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke the following verses.** He wanted to explain the meaning in more detail, and so he spoke again, this time using verses.

He said: **If there is a Bodhisattva in the future evil age,** a Mahasattva who practices the Bodhisattva Path and has brought forth the great Bodhisattva resolve, **who, with a fearless mind, wishes to speak this***Dharma Flower* ***Sutra,* he should enter the range of practice and the range of association.** He should enter the range of happily-dwelling conduct practiced by the body, and appropriate places of association.

**Sutra:**

***He should always stay away
From kings, as well as princes,
Great ministers, and officials,
Brutal and dangerous performers;
From chandalas, along with
Externalists and Brahmacharins.***

***He should not draw near to
Those of overweening pride,
Who are attached to the Small Vehicle,
And study the Three Stores.***

***Nor should he draw near to
Bhikshus who are breakers of the precepts,
Arhats in name only,
Or to Bhikshunis
Who like to play and laugh,
Those deeply attached to the five desires,
Or seeking quiescence in the present.
Nor should he draw near Upasikas.***

***Should such people come
With good hearts
To the Bodhisattva
To hear of the Buddha Way,
The Bodhisattva, then, may
Without apprehension
And without expectations
Speak the Dharma for them.***

***He should not draw near
Widows, maidens
Or unmanly men,
Nor should he be familiar with
Or close to them.***

***He should also not draw near
Butchers, meat-cutters,
Hunters, or fishermen,
Or any who kill for profit
Or sell meat as their livelihood,
Or those who traffic in female flesh:
Such people as these
He should not draw near.***

***He should take care never
To draw near to those
Engaged in dangerous, violent sports,
Nor to actors and performers
Or prostitutes and the like.***

***He should not, while in a secluded place,
Speak the Dharma for women.
While speaking the Dharma,
He should not joke or laugh.***

***When he enters the city to seek alms,
He should go with another Bhikshu,
Or, if there is no other Bhikshu,
He should single-mindedly recollect the Buddha.***

***Those are what is called
The ranges of practice and association;
By resort to these two ranges
He can preach in peace and comfort.***

Outline:

I2. The explanation in verse
J1. Verses defining drawing near to in terms of staying away from

**Commentary:**
**He,** the Bodhisattva who cultivates the Bodhisattva Path, **should always stay away from kings, as well as princes.** He should remain distant from kings and their crown prince sons. He also should not draw near **great ministers and officials** in government, or **brutal and dangerous performers.** This includes those who practice martial arts or who perform in spectacles where martial arts are used. He should stay away **from *chandalas***—butchers who slaughter pigs, cattle, sheep, and so forth—**along with externalists and *Brahmacharins*.** He should not associate with people who cultivate externalist dharmas, including Brahmans who are *Brahmacharins*.

**He should not draw near to those of overweening pride, who are attached to the Small Vehicle, and study the Three Stores.** He should not get involved with people who cultivate dharmas of Hearers and Those Enlightened by Conditions. They are those who do not bring forth the resolve for the Great Vehicle. The Teaching of the “Three Stores” is the Teaching of the Small Vehicle. The people being talked about exclusively cultivate the principles of the Three Stores Teaching.

**Nor should he draw near to Bhikshus who are breakers of the precepts, Arhats in name only.** He should stay far away from monks who violate the precepts, and from those who pretend to be Arhats but who are Arhats in name without the Way-virtue of Arhats. He should not draw near to them, **or to Bhikshunis who like to play and laugh.** He should shun Bhikshunis who break the precepts and who like to play and tell jokes. He should avoid **those deeply attached to the five desires** of forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and objects of touch, and to wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep, **or seeking quiescence in the present.** This refers to people who are only interested in attaining passage into quiescence in this life. **Nor should he draw near Upasikas.** He should not draw near such people. **Should such people come,** meaning people as just mentioned, those of overweening pride, those Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas or Upasikas who break the precepts, *chandalas,* the butchers, **with good hearts,** that is, if they come seeking the Way, seeking to draw near the Triple Jewel, **to the Bodhisattva, to hear of the Buddha Way, the Bodhisattva, then, may without apprehension and without expectations speak the Dharma for them.** They should not try to exploit the situation. They should have no greed and no hopes for offerings as they speak Dharma for them.

**He should not draw near widows,** who have lost their husbands, unmarried **maidens** who have not become intimate with men. **Or** the five kinds of **unmanly men** listed in the text: those who are unmanly from birth, unmanly through dysfunction, unmanly through jealousy, unmanly through physical transformation, or unmanly through switching back and forth. **Nor should he be familiar with** them **or close to them.** He should not be friends with them. **He should also not draw near butchers, meat-cutters, hunters, or fishermen, or any who kill** creatures **for profit or sell meat as their livelihood, or those who traffic in female flesh**—women who dress themselves up to engage in improper activities. **Such people as these he should not draw near.** He should not associate with these kinds of people.

**He should take care never to draw near to those engaged in dangerous, violent sports, nor to actors and performers or prostitutes and the like.** He should avoid those who study martial arts and use their skills to spar with one another, performers, and improper women.

**He should not, while in a secluded place, speak the Dharma for women.** He should not be alone with a woman, whether in a secluded spot or behind a screen where others cannot see him. **While speaking the Dharma, he should not joke or laugh.** He should not explain the Dharma on the one hand and joke around on the other. **When he enters the city to seek alms, he should go with another Bhikshu,** He should not go alone. **Or, if there is no other Bhikshu, he should single-mindedly recollect the Buddha.** When he goes out on his begging rounds, a cultivator of the Bodhisattva Way should not go unaccompanied. He should take another Bhikshu with him. If he must go by himself, he should act properly and respectfully recite “Namo Amitabha Buddha” or Namo Shakyamuni Buddha.”
 **Those are what is called the ranges of practice and association; by resort to these two ranges, he can preach in peace and comfort.** These are (1) the range of practice or cultivation and (2) the range of association. By means of these two, he can comfortably and fearlessly speak the Dharma for the multitudes.

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

When you recite the Great Compassion Mantra, you should be sincere. Then our Way-place will be successful. If you are not sincere, it would not be successful. When it comes to Way-places, the bigger the better; they should be able to hold several hundred thousand people, like a great military camp. A military camp can house several hundred thousand people, and our great Way-place will also be able to hold several hundred thousand, several million, and even several tens of millions of people. You should all make vows to establish Way-places. Do not be afraid of too many Way-places. The more Way-places there are the better. If every home became a Way-place, that would be even better. If every single person became a Way-place unto himself, that would be the best. If every country became a Way-place, that would be very good, until the entire world itself was a gigantic Way-place and no one killed, stole, committed sexual misconduct, lied, or took intoxicants. Sellers of alcoholic beverages would starve!

**Sutra:**

***Further, he does not practice
Higher, middle, or lower Dharmas;
Nor conditioned or unconditioned Dharmas,
Real or unreal Dharmas.***

***He does not distinguish
Between men and women;
He does not obtain any Dharma
Nor does he know or perceive any.***

***This is what is known as
The Bodhisattva’s range of practice.***

***All the Dharmas whatsoever
Are empty, non-existent,
Without permanence,
Neither arising nor extinguished;
This is known as the Wise One’s range of association.***

***It is through inverted discrimination
That Dharmas exist or not exist,
Seem real or unreal,
Created or uncreated.***

***If, in a quiet place,
He cultivates and collects his thoughts
Peacefully dwelling, unmoved
Like Mount Sumeru,
Contemplating all Dharmas
As having no existence,
Like empty space,
With nothing firm or solid,
Uncreated, not coming forth,
Unmoving, not retreating,
Dwelling always in one mark,
This is called the range of association.***

Outline:

J2. Verses about neither drawing near to nor staying away from

**Commentary:**

**Further, he does not practice higher, middle, or lower Dharmas.** The Bodhisattva who cultivates the Bodhisattva Way must not practice the higher Dharma, the Bodhisattva Vehicle, nor the Middle dharma, the Vehicle of those enlightened by conditions, nor the lesser Dharma of the Hearers. **Nor conditioned or unconditioned Dharmas, real or unreal Dharmas.** He cultivates none of these. **He does not distinguish between men and women.** “Men” may be said to refer to wisdom and “women” to Samadhi. Wisdom and Samadhi are basically the same thing, one cannot make artificial distinctions between them. **He does not obtain any Dharma.** As the *Heart Sutra* says, “There is no wisdom and no attainment.” **Nor does he know or perceive any.** In his mind there is no knowledge of all dharmas; his eyes perceive no dharmas. His mind is reined in to a single place and **this is what is known as the Bodhisattva’s range of practice.**
 **All the Dharmas whatsoever are empty, non-existent.** Originally there is nothing at all. **Without permanence.** He contemplates the marks of all dharmas as devoid of permanence. Seen as impermanent, there is no attachment. Without attachment, one obtains liberation. **Neither arising nor extinguished; this is known as the Wise One’s range of association.** This is the place to which a wise Bodhisattva should draw near.

**It is through inverted discrimination that Dharmas exist or not exist, seem real or unreal.** One discriminates this dharma as real, that dharma as unreal.
 **Created or uncreated.** One discriminates the marks of dharmas in this way.
 **If, in a quiet place, he cultivates and collects his thoughts, peacefully dwelling, unmoved like Mount Sumeru.** He dwells in a still, quiet place, cultivating his body and mind, dwelling in the real mark of all dharmas as not arising and not moving, like Sumeru, the King of Mountains, unshakable and immovable. **Contemplating all Dharmas as having no existence.** Originally there is no dharma which can be obtained. **Like empty space, with nothing firm or solid.** Empty space has no substance in itself and so is not “solid”. **Uncreated, not coming forth, unmoving, not retreating, dwelling always in one mark.** The prose section above says “having no existence,” so how can one dwell in the “one mark”? Because there is neither a mark nor a non-mark—and just that is permanently dwelling in one mark. One always dwells in the mark of neither existence nor non-existence. **This is called the range of association.** This is the range of what the Bodhisattva draws close to in cultivation.

**Sutra:**

***If a Bhikshu,
After my Nirvana,
Enters into this range of practice
And range of association,
When he speaks this Sutra,
He will have no fear.***

Outline:

I3. Clarifying how the conduct is accomplished
J1. Statement of how the conduct is accomplished

**Commentary:**

**If a Bhikshu, after my Nirvana, enters into this range of practice and range of association, when he speaks this Sutra, he will have no fear.** Shakyamuni Buddha says, “After I enter Nirvana, if a Bhikshu enters into this kind of Bodhisattva cultivation and range of association to speak the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*, he will have no fear or expectations. Why would he not be afraid? Because he has no expectations. If one has expectations, one will be afraid. It is said, “when you arrive at the place where you seek nothing, you will have no worries.”

**Sutra:**

***When a Bodhisattva
Enters a quiet room
And with upright mindfulness
Contemplates Dharmas in accord with principle,
Arising from Dhyana concentration
He may for the sake of kings,
Princes, ministers,
Brahmans and such
Teach, transform, and expound,
Speaking this Sutra
With a tranquil mind
And without fear.***

Outline:

J2. Statement of how the conduct is accomplished to attain peace and happiness.

**Commentary:**

**When a Bodhisattva enters a quiet room and with upright mindfulness contemplates Dharmas in accord with principle, arising from Dhyana concentration, he may for the sake of kings, princes, ministers, brahmans and such teach, transform, and expound, speaking this Sutra with a tranquil mind and without fear.** If a Bodhisattva enters into a quiet room and with proper mind contemplates the doctrine of the Buddhadharma. So it would be a good idea if, before you lecture on the Sutras, each of you could sit quietly for an hour or half an hour to quiet your false, random thoughts and to cultivate your concentration. Then from your quiet concentration, you will gain insight into certain principles that will help you to explain the Sutra. This is the best method for lecturing on the Sutras. Therefore, with proper thoughts, you can recollect the principles in the Buddha’s Sutras and, in accord with the text, you can contemplate and explain the principles in the Sutras. Coming out of Samadhi, you can speak the Dharma for kings, princes, ministers, and common people, teaching them the unsurpassed, wonderful principles of the *Dharma Flower Sutra.* Your mind will be very peaceful and happy and you will have no fear.

**Sutra:**

***Manjushri,
This is called the Bodhisattva’s
Peaceful dwelling in the first Dharma,
And he may, in the future age,
Speak the Dharma Flower Sutra.***

Outline:

J3. Conclusion in verse

Commentary:

**Manjushri, this is called the Bodhisattva’s peaceful dwelling in the first Dharma, and he may, in the future age, speak the *Dharma Flower Sutra.*** You should know that this is the first step in the Bodhisattva’s development in cultivating the Bodhisattva Way. The Bodhisattva who can cultivate in this way in the future age, the Dharma-ending Age, can speak the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*.

End of Happily-Dwelling Conduct of the Body.

**Sutra:**
 **“Manjushri, after the Tathagata’s Nirvana, in the Dharma-ending Age, if one wishes to speak this Sutra, one should dwell in this happily-dwelling conduct.”**
Outline:

G2. Happily-dwelling conduct of the mouth
H1. Prose
I1. The statement

**Commentary:**

Shakyamuni Buddha says, “**Manjushri** Bodhisattva, previously we were talking about the peaceful, happy conduct of the body. Now we are talking about the kind of verbal conduct the Bodhisattva should cultivate. **After the Tathagata’s Nirvana,** after I, Shakyamuni Buddha, go into Nirvana, **in the Dharma-ending Age,** in the future, **if one wishes to speak this Sutra,** the *Dharma Flower Sutra,* **one should dwell in this happily-dwelling conduct.** He should secure himself in the teachings of this chapter on Happy-Dwelling Conduct.

**Sutra:**
 **“Whether one is expounding upon the Sutra orally or reading the Sutra itself, one should take no delight in speaking of the faults of people or of the Sutra, nor should one hold other Dharma Masters in contempt, nor speak of the good or bad qualities, the strengths or weaknesses of others. With regard to Hearers, one should not mention them by name in order to speak of their faults, nor should one speak of them by name to praise their excellence. One should not harbor resentment or jealousy.”**
Outline:

I2. The explanation
J1. The conduct of “stopping”
K1. Not speaking of faults
K2. Not slighting others
K3. Not praising and not disparaging
K4. Not harboring resentment

**Commentary:**

**Whether one is expounding upon the Sutra orally or reading the Sutra itself,** explaining it or reading or reciting it, **one should take no delight in speaking of the faults of people or of the Sutra.** Do not speak of the deficiencies either of other people or of the Sutra text. In speaking the Dharma, the Buddha takes his audience into account and dispenses the Dharma in accord with the potential of the listeners. He prescribes the medicine of dharma in accord with the “illnesses” of living beings. There is nothing fixed as “wrong” or “incorrect.” **Nor should one hold other Dharma Masters in contempt, nor speak of the good or bad qualities, the strengths or weaknesses of others.** He should not belittle others, the Sutras or other Dharma Masters, saying either they speak well or poorly. One should not talk about the good or bad points of others.

**With regard to Hearers, one should not mention them by name in order to speak of their faults.** You should not single out Hearers by name for purposes of criticism, as in America where children call their parents by their first names. That is very disrespectful. Those who have left home and those at home cannot call each other by their first names. You can use their formal names and the title Dharma Master, but you cannot use their familiar names. For instance, you may say Dharma Master Heng Chyan or simply Dharma Master Chyan and Dharma Master Ning. You should not call your Dharma-brothers by their familiar names, and you certainly must not address your teacher by his name. Those of you who do not understand the Buddhadharma say, “This is Dharma Master To Lun,” or “This is Dharma Master Hsuan Hua.” That is really disrespectful. It would be even more disrespectful if you just address me as “To Lun”; that is simply to “cheat the teachers and destroy the patriarchs”; It is totally irreverent and unfilial.

Therefore, in the future you must remember not to call your Dharma-brothers by their familiar names, like this: Guo Ning Shi, Guo Chyan Shi, Guo Syan Shi, or Guo Syou Shi. You should address them as Dharma Masters and use the last word of their formal names, for example: Dharma Master Chyan, Dharma Master Ning.

Initially, when I told the laypeople to address left-home people as Dharma Masters, one of you opposed and said to the little Shramanera, “Do I have to call you Venerable?” As a layperson, he felt that it was demeaning to himself to address the left-home people as Dharma Masters. That is a big mistake. Therefore, even when left-home people are addressing one another, they should not use the familiar name, such as “Guo Yi” or “Guo Syou” because only one’s teacher is supposed to use that name. If you call others by their familiar names, you are being disrespectful to them, and they will in turn be disrespectful to you. If you call her Guo Syou Shi, she will return the favor by calling you Guo Chyan Shi. Westerners have not studied this and are not knowledgeable on this point. I am telling you now and you should understand this and not call your Dharma-brothers by their familiar names. You should not call the Dharma Masters of the Small Vehicle by their names, nor should you praise them or speak about their good and bad points. You must not bring up their names and criticize them saying, “I saw him break a precept! I saw him eat meat and drink wine; then I asked him why he did it, and he denied it. He is not a cultivator! He lied!” You should not gossip about people in this way.

**Nor should one speak of them by name to praise their excellence.** Legitimate praise is okay, such as when I praise a certain Dharma Master. Even though I do not have a particularly close relationship with him, I praise him because he is truly a Bodhisattva. If someone is truly good, you can praise them. But you should not use their name. Just speak in general terms, praising their cultivation. If you praise them by name, if they truly are good, everyone knows it and does not need to hear you say it; if they are not good, then people will accuse you of lying.

**One should not harbor resentment or jealousy.** One should not gossip about other people’s faults and evils, praise others, or hold grudges against others, disliking them no matter what they do. If you harbor resentment against someone, you will be biased against him and treat him badly, always having a bad impression of him.

**Sutra:**

**“Because one skillfully cultivates such peaceful and happy thoughts, he will not oppose his listeners’ intentions. If asked difficult questions, he does not answer by resorting to the Small Vehicle Dharma, but uses only the Great Vehicle for his explanation, which causes his listeners to obtain the Wisdom of All Modes.”**
Outline:

J2. The conduct of “contemplating”

**Commentary:**

**Because one skillfully cultivates such peaceful and happy thoughts,** because one does not have these faults—one does not gossip about people’s good and bad points and one does not resent people—his mind is peaceful and happy and without thoughts of greed, hatred or stupidity, **he will not oppose his listeners’ intentions.** He should not go against the wishes of his listeners. If he pays no attention to his listeners whether they ask about the advantages or the disadvantages of something, he is opposing their intentions. **If asked difficult questions, he does not answer by resorting to the Small Vehicle Dharma, but uses only the Great Vehicle for his explanation.** If people ask him about the principles, he should not answer them in terms of the Small Vehicle Dharma. He should use only the wonderful Dharma of the Great Vehicle to answer them, **which causes his listeners to obtain the Wisdom of All Modes.** His listeners will then obtain the wisdom of All Modes.

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

***“The Bodhisattva ever delights
In tranquilly speaking the Dharma;
On pure ground
He arranges his seat,
Smears his body with oil,
And washes away dust and filth.
Wearing fresh, clean clothing,
Completely pure, within and without,
Seated securely on the Dharma seat,
He responds to questions.”***

Outline:

H2. Verses
I1. The statement in verse
I2. The explanation in verse
J1. Verses about the conduct of “stopping”
K1. Verses about not slighting others

**Commentary:**

**At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke these verses, saying.** Shakyamuni Buddha wanted to explain the meaning yet another time in a bit more detail, so he used verses to say:

**The Bodhisattva ever delights in tranquilly speaking the Dharma.** He speaks the Dharma in order to bring peace and calm to living beings. **On pure ground, he arranges his seat.** This refers to “entering the Tathagata’s room.” He **smears his body with oil, and washes away dust and filth. Wearing fresh, clean clothing.** This refers to “donning the Tathagata’s robe.” **Completely pure, within and without.** Inwardly, he has no false thinking; outwardly there is no dirt or filth. **Seated securely on the Dharma seat.** This refers to “sitting in the Tathagata’s seat.” **He responds to questions** from living beings, speaking the Dharma for their sake.

**Sutra:**

***If there are Bhikshus
Or Bhikshunis,
Upasakas
Or Upasikas,
Kings, princes,
Ministers, scholars, or commoners,
By resorting to the subtle, wonderful principle,
With harmonious mien he speaks for them.
If there are difficult questions,
He answers in accord with principle.***

Outline:

K2. Verses about not praising and not disparaging

**Commentary:**

**If there are Bhikshus or Bhikshunis, Upasakas or Upasikas**—left-home men, women, at-home men or women, **kings, princes, ministers, scholars, or commoners,** ordinary folks, **by resorting to the subtle, wonderful principle, with harmonious mien;** that is being neither jocular nor overly serious or stern looking, having a peaceful countenance that shows not the least bit of temper, very harmoniously **he speaks for them.

If there are difficult questions, he answers in accord with principle,** as the question requires.

**Sutra:**

***Using causes and conditions and parables,
He explains and makes distinctions,
Through his use of such expedients,
All are moved to bring forth the resolve,
Which gradually increases
As they enter into the Buddha Way.***

Outline:

K3. Verses about not speaking of faults

**Commentary:**

**Using causes and conditions and parables, he explains and makes distinctions,** but he does so using the Great Vehicle Dharma, not the Small Vehicle Dharma. **Through his use of such expedients, all are moved to bring forth the resolve, which gradually increases as they enter into the Buddha Way.** All bring forth the Bodhi heart which increases day by day so that they eventually accomplish the Buddha Path.

**Sutra:**

***Casting out thoughts of laziness
And slothful thinking,
Freeing himself from all worry,
He speaks Dharma with a compassionate mind.***

Outline:

K4. Verses about not harboring resentment

**Commentary:**

**Casting out thoughts of laziness and slothful thinking,** attitudes of laxness and sloppiness, **freeing himself from all worry** and afflictions, **he speaks Dharma with a compassionate mind** for the benefit of living beings.

**Sutra:**

***By day and night he ever speaks
The supreme teaching of the Way.
By means of causes and conditions
And limitless analogies
He instructs living beings,
Leading them to be joyful.***

***Clothing, bedding,
Food, drink, and medicine--
With respect to these
He harbors no expectations.***

***His single focus is to speak the Dharma
According to causal conditions;
His wish is to realize the Buddha Way
And lead living beings to do the same.
This, then, is the greatest benefit:
The offering of peace and comfort.***

Outline:

J2. Verses about the conduct of “contemplating”

**Commentary:**

**By day and night he ever speaks the supreme teaching of the Way.** The cultivating Bodhisattva teaches with compassion, not just once, but day and night, always, he compassionately teaches living beings the Dharma to transform them, expounding the unsurpassed principles of cultivation and of Buddhism. **By means of causes and conditions and limitless analogies, he instructs living beings, leading them to be joyful.** His only fear is that living beings may not understand and so he uses limitless causes and conditions and limitless analogies to teach them and to cause them to gain great happiness, peace and long life.

**Clothing, bedding, food, drink, and medicine--with respect to these, he harbors no expectations.** He is not speaking the Dharma while trying to get the best clothing, bedding, food, drink, or the most nourishing medicine. **His single focus is to speak the Dharma according to causal conditions;** expediently for the benefit, to lead them to become enlightened. **His wish is to realize the Buddha Way and lead living beings to do the same.** He wants to become a Buddha dna to lead all living beings to become Buddhas. He certainly does not want living beings to be as greedy and hot-tempered as he is! **This, then, is the greatest benefit** to living beings, **the offering of peace and comfort.**

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

There is some good news that I would like to share with everyone. Next Sunday, a week from today, we will be buying a big Way-place which can seat four hundred people. If you have faith, then send your contribution; if you do not have faith, then even if you send your contribution I do not want it. I want to make this clear: if you do not believe, then do not send your money. I am a monk who does not eat food given out of pity. If you try to give food to a beggar without any courtesy, saying, “Here, take this and eat it!” and the beggar has any self-respect, he will leave without eating your food. That is called “not eating food given out of pity.” I am a monk who does not accept offerings made out of pity. If someone offers me money only because he wants to look good himself, I would not take his money. Whether he offers the money or not, it is all the same to me. “Then I would not give any money,” someone says. If you do not offer money, that is even better. Do not force yourself. If you made an offering reluctantly, I would not take it either. When I was in Hong Kong, for example, Mr. Zhang Yujie sent a worker to give me two hundred dollars. I took the money and threw it out the door; I did not want it. Then the worker picked it up and left. That is the kind of disposition I have, so I want you all to understand me. If you cannot bear to give the money and you still give it, that is considered a bit offering. If you have one dollar that you cannot bear to give and now you give it up, that is called a big offering. Do you all understand?

**Sutra:**

***After my Nirvana,
If there is a Bhikshu
Who is able to expound
Upon The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra
With no thought of envy or anger,
With no affliction or obstruction,
He will have no worries
And no detractors.
He also will not fear
Knives or staves,
Nor will he be exiled,
Because he is secure in his patience.***

Outline:

I3. Clarifying how the conduct is accomplished
J1. Statement about how the conduct is accomplished

J2. Clarifying how, when inwardly there is no offense, outer difficulties do not arise.

**Commentary:**

**After my Nirvana.** When the Buddha is dwelling in the world, that is called the Proper Dharma Age; after the Buddha’s extinction, that is called the Dharma Image Age, and then the Dharma-ending Age.

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

Today, when the layman from Hong Kong said the worlds, “After the Buddha entered Nirvana,” his Cantonese dialect threw you off. Although this phrase sounds similar in Cantonese and Mandarin, you all could not figure out what he was saying. Then the layman began to think that you did not know anything about the Buddhadharma, that you did not understand what the “real truth,” the “worldly truth,” and the “middle truth” were. He became disdainful thinking that you had left the home-life and been studying for so long, but did not even understand such simple terms.

I came to your defense. I said, “It is not that they do not understand; they actually have a very deep understanding of these principles. They thoroughly understand the principles of the *Shurangama Sutra,* how much the more would they understand the Shastra you are explaining. A Shastra is very easy to understand; it is a discourse, and even those who had never studied Buddhism would understand.

First of all, they were being polite on your behalf. If they had said they understood, you would have had no reason to explain it to them. Secondly, they do not know Cantonese. Thirdly, even if they understood, they would have said they did not because otherwise you might not have gone on to explain it to them.” Once I said that he sat up and took notice. I said, “Do not look down on them. They are all extremely smart, a hundred times smarter than I am. Why are they so sincere in their studies? Because their teacher is so stupid, and they figure they can learn some stupidity from him.” When he heard that, he was not feeling so superior anymore. So after this, do not be polite. If someone makes a mistake, jump right in and challenge the person; trot out your own, unique interpretations and argue it out—test his wisdom.

I know this layperson has no Samadhi power; he is a straw in the wind. He talks a good game, but has no real cultivation. If you scold him, he cries because he has no Samadhi power. If you have Samadhi power, you do not cry when someone says a harsh word to you; and the more you get scolded, the less it matters. Those who understand the Buddhadharma do not laugh or cry. They do not giggle when they hear the Dharma. If you giggle, the speaker may think you do not know anything about the Buddhadharma, or he may worry that you are laughing at him because he made a mistake—and he will quit talking. No matter who is speaking the Dharma for you, if you have Samadhi you would not laugh when it is funny or cry when it is sad; crying and laughing are both wrong. So be careful. Do not think laughing is so great; you can laugh up a lot of trouble for yourself if you are not careful.

**If there is a Bhikshu,** if there is a left-home person who cultivates the Bodhisattva Path, **who is able to expound.** “Able” means “doing it”. Just do it. If you can translate but you do not—then you could say you cannot! If you cannot translate, but you do—then you could say you can. Take my three disciples here, for example, if I had just waited and not told you to translate, then you probably still would not know how to translate even now. You need to do it to learn how to do it. Then you will succeed. Ultimately, there is no big difference between being “able” and “unable”, it depends on whether you do it.

I basically cannot speak the Dharma, but I go ahead and do it because on one else is. I try it out and I learn how and all of you Americans come to listen. I get louder every day as more of you come to listen. I am not afraid of large audiences, and I am no longer intimidated into speaking softly. I speak in a big voice, unafraid someone will challenge me or debate with me. Having done it for a while, I am no longer afraid. So you could say that even though I cannot—I can! You should not think I can lecture on the Sutras. I do not even know how to listen to them! I have no ears or eyes, and I have even lost my nose. “You do not have any ears, eyes, or nose? Does that mean you do not have a mouth either?” someone asks. I have not lost my mouth, for if I had I would not be able to eat. But since I can still eat, I know that I still have my mouth. Therefore, I can still lecture on the Sutra. Is this wonderful or not? I have lost my ears, eyes, and nose, but not my mouth. Have you ever seen such a person? No? Well, that is how I am right now.

It is said,

They had eyes but could not see Nishyanda Buddha,
They had ears, but could not hear the perfect, sudden teaching.

They must have lost their eyes and ears, right? Otherwise, how could they have eyes and yet not see Nishyanda Buddha? How could they have ears and yet now hear the perfect, sudden teaching? All Buddhas are adorned with fragrant light, and no matter how far away one is, one should be able to smell it. After such long time of smelling, they still did not smell it. If they had not lost their nose, then what was the matter with them? I am not joking. I am being serious. To be able to listen to the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*, or to be able to expound **upon *The Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra,*** this is inconceivably wonderful and miraculous Dharma!

He will speak the *Dharma Flower Sutra,***with no thought of envy or anger, with no affliction or obstruction.** One should lose such thoughts, but this is not easy. Why not? Because as soon as you lose them, you want to look for them. People who study Buddhism are trying to find the mind, while those who do not study Buddhism casually let their minds wander off. When their minds are lost, they do not look for them. Students of the Buddhadharma are looking for the mind.

When your mind is free of jealousy, it will be free of anger. Envy is anger. If you are jealous, you will have afflictions; if you are angry, you will have even greater afflictions. Without jealousy or anger, there is no affliction or obstruction. **He will have no worries,** no afflictions, no obstacles towards oneself or others; even when others try to put obstacles in your way, if you have no obstacles inside, then those obstacles cannot touch you. This is the same principle as flies being attracted to filth. If you have filth inside, afflictions and obstructions will be thrown your way, like flies gathering around the garbage. If inwardly you have no obstructions, outside events will not obstruct you and you will have no worries **and no detractors.** Why does no one scold you? Because you do not scold them. People will scold you if you scold them; it is that simple. If you do not want people to scold you, do not scold them. It is a very obvious principle. If you do not understand this principle, you will just seek outside and ask, “Why do they scold me?” Well, why shouldn’t they?
 **He also will not fear knives or staves, nor will he be exiled.** He will fear nothing.

Even in the face of poison, I am always calm;
When confronted by the point of a sword, I am still at ease.

His attitude is, “If someone wants to chop my head off with a sword, go right ahead, no problem!” For example, the Second Patriarch, Master Shen Guang, called out, “Chop if off! Chop if off!” Then the executioner beheaded him with a single stroke of the sword. The Patriarch neither cried nor laughed, and a white liquid flowed from his neck.

Do not fall asleep! How can you sleep when I am speaking in such a loud voice? What is to be done about this?

Even in the face of poison, I am always calm;
When confronted by the point of a sword, I am still at ease.

Now, if I were to give you some of that poison, you would not dare fall asleep, because you would be at death’s door! How could you have time to sleep? However, since you are not in such a critical situation right now, you figure it is all right if you doze off for a while.

When the Second Patriarch was beheaded, a white liquid flowed from the wound. The Emperor then knew he had executed the wrong man. He built him a temple and *stupa*, but it was a little too late. The Emperor did not know until after the fact. He was not like the Zhu Geliang [the brilliant military strategist from the Three Kingdoms Period in China], who knew things ahead of time. One time, as Zhu Geliang was getting ready to ride off on his horse, the scouts came and told him, “General, the troops of Wei are coming to attack us now!” Zhu Geliang said, “Do not worry; their army will retreat before long.” Later the scouts went out again and found that Cao Cao’s army had indeed retreated. If Zhu Geliang had instead said, “Please wait; let me check it out,” and then only after the scouts reported the situation a few days later did he say, “Oh, I knew all along that they would retreat,” that would not have counted; that would mean that he did not know until after the fact. It only counts if you know ahead of time. If you wait until people tell you, and then you say, “Oh! I knew about that a long time ago,” you are someone who knows after the fact. It is like me, I know just about everything, but I know it too late! I do not know things in advance. However, knowing things after the fact is also very wonderful!

“Nor will he be exiled.” No one will cast him out, throw him out, exile him. If you give the people you live with a lot of troubles, they will throw you out. For example, suppose two people who live together dislike each other deep down in their hearts. When one person sees the other, his face turns black; and when the second person sees the first one, his face turns bright red. Since they harbor grudges against each other in their minds, only angry words come out of their mouths. In such circumstances, they are bound to split up. One of them will say, “You have such a bad temper, I cannot live with you. You had better get out of here quickly!” So he throws the other person out of the house.

Now, why is that he will not be exiled? It is because he is patient. When we are patient, we will not obstruct others, and we will be oblivious to obstructions that others give us. For example, if someone scolds me, I will think, “Who is he scolding? It is not me, is it?” If he mentions my name and says that I am very bad, I will not mind it and nothing will happen. If you can be patient, then you will forget about your name and ego. Without any ego, who is getting angry? The Bodhisattva will not be exiled because he is extremely easy-going and does not respond to others’ tempers and **because he is secure in his patience.**

**Sutra:**

***The wise one is thus:
Cultivating well his mind,
He is secure in peace and comfort.
As I have explained above,
This person’s merit and virtue
Cannot be exhaustively described
By means of number or parable
Throughout ten of millions of eons.***

Outline:

J3. Clarifying how, when inwardly there are good dharmas, conduct is accomplished

J4. Reckoning the amount of merit and virtue

**Commentary:**

**The wise one is thus:** he does not blow up in anger over every small annoyance because he has great wisdom. He may pretend to get angry, but he does not really get angry. You should recognize this clearly. **Cultivating well his mind, he is secure in peace and comfort.** He is secure in this kind of happily-dwelling conduct.

**As I have explained above, this person’s merit and virtue cannot be exhaustively described by means of number or parable throughout ten of millions of eons.** One could never count or measure, nor describe by means of analogies or parables, the merit and virtue of this cultivator of the Bodhisattva Path. No way. This merit and virtue is limitless, boundless, unfathomable and even the Buddha using numerous analogies cannot describe it to its limits.

A case of foreknowledge can also turn into belated discovery, and knowledge after the fact can also become foreknowledge. In the past, I talked about Yuan Tiangang and Li Chunfeng, who were experts at predicting the future and knew about everything before it happened. Once a person holding a bird in his hand approached them and said, “Can you tell me whether this bird is alive or dead?” If they had answered that the bird was alive, that person could have tightened his grip and it would have been a dead bird. On the other hand, if they had answered that the bird was dead, the person could have opened his hand and let the bird fly away. How could they predict what would happen? Was their ability to know the future useful at this point, or did they have to wait until after the fact to know what would happen? In this case, neither foreknowledge nor knowledge after the fact could help them, so it was better not to make any prediction. After all this discussion, the conclusion is that we should depend neither on foreknowledge nor on knowledge after the fact.

End of Happily-Dwelling Conduct of the Mouth

**Sutra:**

**“Further, Manjushri, in the future ending age, when the Dharma is about to become extinct, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva who receives, upholds, reads, or recites this Sutra should harbor no thoughts of envy, flattery, or deceit. He should also not ridicule or malign those who study the Buddha Way, nor should he seek their strengths or weaknesses. If there are Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, those who seek to be Hearers, Pratyekabuddhas, or those who seek the Bodhisattva Way, he should not torment them or cause them to have doubts by saying to them, “You are all very far from the Path, and you will never obtain the wisdom of all modes. Why not? Because you are careless and lax in the Way.” Further, he should not frivolously discuss the Dharma for the sake of argument.”**
Outline:

G3. Happily-dwelling conduct of the mind
H1. Prose
I1. The statement
I2. The explanation
J1. The conduct of “stopping”
K1. Not being jealous and not flattering
K2. Not being scornful and not scolding
K3. Not making trouble
K4. Not contending or arguing

**Commentary:**

**Further, Manjushri, in the future ending age, when the Dharma is about to become extinct, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva who receives, upholds, reads, or recites this Sutra,** the great Bodhisattva who, long after I have entered Nirvana, cultivates the Bodhisattva Way in the Dharma-ending Age, when the Dharma is about to perish, when people’s life spans are only twenty years, or fifteen years, or even as short as ten years, **should harbor no thoughts of envy, flattery, or deceit.** The person who is able to receive, uphold, read, and recite the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra should not have thoughts of envy or flattery. He should not ingratiate himself with rich people or be displeased when he sees the poor. Deceit refers to telling lies. To say nothing of acting out of jealousy, flattery or deceit, he should not even have such thoughts. He should not harbor thoughts of flattering rich people or scorning the poor.

**He should also not ridicule or malign those who study the Buddha Way,** speaking ill of them, praising some and denigrating others, **nor should he seek their strengths or weaknesses.** He should not accuse them of bowing to the Buddha and then beating their parents. He should not pick them apart or gossip about them.

**If there are Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, those who seek to be Hearers,** who cultivate the four truths, **Pratyekabuddhas,** who cultivate the twelve causes and conditions, **or those who seek the Bodhisattva Way,** those who cultivate the Six Perfections and myriad practices, **he should not torment them.** You must not trouble them or offend them **or cause them to have doubts.** If you cause them to become afflicted, they will give rise to doubts and will not be able to vigorously cultivate. How do you cause them to have doubts? **By saying to them, “You are all very far from the Path.** What cultivation do you have? You are way, way off. You will never succeed, **and** if you continue in this way, **you will never obtain the wisdom of all modes.”** “All wisdom” refers to the common truth. The “wisdom of modes” refers to the real truth. The “truth of the middle (Way)” is the truth of neither the common nor the real, and it is the wisdom of the Buddha. **“Why not? Because you are careless** and indolent. You do not want to work. You just want to take it easy and not follow the rules, **and** you are **lax in the Way,** sloppy in your cultivation. So you would not become a Buddha; you would not obtain the wisdom of all modes.”

**Further, he should not frivolously discuss the Dharma,** as if it were all a play or a joke, casually reciting his lines like a comic, using the Dharma as a joke or as topic for idle conversation. To “frivolously discuss” means to say things that are not based upon the truth. He should not do that **for the sake of argument,** deliberately misrepresenting the Dharma just to stir up an argument. When something is clearly in accord with the Buddhadharma, he argues that it is not. When a statement is obviously correct, he says that it is incorrect. He deliberately stirs up an argument and debates in a very unreasonable fashion. How should one act instead? One should avoid making people afflicted by saying things like, “You are so lazy, you will never become a Buddha.”

**Sutra:**
 **“He should give rise to thoughts of great compassion towards all living beings and think of all the Tathagatas as compassionate fathers, all Bodhisattvas as great Masters. Always he should deeply revere and pay respect to all the great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. He should speak Dharma in equal measure for all living beings. In accord with Dharma, he should speak neither too much nor too little; even to those who deeply love the Dharma, he should not speak too much.”**
Outline:

J2. The conduct of “contemplating”
K1. Thoughts of great compassion to counteract jealousy and deceit
K2. Thoughts of a kind father to counteract being scornful and scolding
K3. Thoughts of great masters to counteract trouble-making
K4. Speaking Dharma equally to counteract contention and arguing

**Commentary:**

**He should give rise to thoughts of great compassion towards all living beings.** He should always consider their great suffering and try to alleviate it, **and think of all the Tathagatas as compassionate fathers, all Bodhisattvas as great Masters.** We should think of all the Bodhisattvas as teachers in our cultivation, as kind teachers and skillful guides who can lead us on the path of cultivation. **Always he should deeply revere and pay respect to all the great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions.** He must be extremely sincere in making obeisance to all the Bodhisattvas.

**He should speak Dharma in equal measure for all living beings.** His teaching should be even-handed and he should not be partial, both in his compassion and in his teaching of the Dharma. **In accord with Dharma, he should speak neither too much nor too little.** He should not favor one with more Dharma and another with less. He should not pick and choose, speaking more Dharma to those who treat him with more respect and less to others. He should speak Dharma evenly to living beings regardless of how much respect they show him and how much faith they have. **Even to those who deeply love the Dharma, he should not speak too much**.
 **Sutra:**
 **“Manjushri, in the future age, when the Dharma is about to become extinct, it will be impossible to trouble or confuse a Bodhisattva Mahasattva who has accomplished this third happily-dwelling conduct when he is speaking the Dharma. He shall gain good fellow students with whom he may read and recite this Sutra. Large assemblies will gather to listen to and accept it. Having heard it, they will uphold it; having upheld it, they will recite it; having recited it, they will be able to speak it; having spoken it, they will be able to write it out; to cause others to write it out; to make offerings to it; to revere, honor, and praise it.”**
Outline:

J3. Conclusion regarding how to accomplish this conduct

**Commentary:**

**Manjushri, in the future age, when the Dharma is about to become extinct, it will be impossible to trouble or confuse a Bodhisattva Mahasattva who has accomplished this third happily-dwelling conduct** of the mind **when he is speaking the Dharma,** the Dharma Flower Sutra. While he is speaking, no one will be able to bother him or set him off course. That is because when he speaks the Dharma, all the Dharma-protecting gods, dragons and others of the eightfold division will come to protect him. Moreover, if in the past you did not bother others, now they will not come to bother you. **He shall gain good fellow students,** peers in cultivation, **with whom he may read and recite this Sutra.** You could say that all of us now studying the Dharma Flower Sutra have gained such good study companions. So we should not get angry at one another. We should respect one another. **Large assemblies will gather to listen to and accept it.** All of us have gathered here to read and recite the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. Not only are all of us investigating this Sutra together, a great assembly has also come to hear the Sutra being lectured. Many people have come to listen.

**Having heard it, they will uphold it.** They will not just listen to the Dharma Flower Sutra and then forget it. They will reread and recite it, accept and uphold it. They will constantly uphold this Sutra and always study it. If one does not study it, then one cannot be considered to be constantly upholding it. **Having upheld it** for a long time, **they will recite it** from memory, without having to look at the Book. “Upholding” the Sutra means reading it from the book. “Reciting” it means reciting it from memory. **Having recited it, they will be able to speak it; having spoken it, they will be able to write it out.** It is not enough to just be able to lecture on the Sutra. One must also be able to write it out. This refers to the Five Kinds of Dharma Masters: those who (1) read, (2) recite, (3) receive and uphold, (4) write out, and (5) explain the Sutras. I once knew a Dharma Master named Ru Lian whose calligraphy was excellent. Everyday he sat in his room in full lotus and wrote out the Dharma Flower Sutra. It was later published. Previously he had been an official but later he left home and exclusively wrote out the Dharma Flower Sutra.

They will also be able **to cause others to write it out; to make offerings to it; to revere, honor, and praise it.** If one cannot write it out, one can ask others to write it out. After the Sutra is completely written out, one can bow to and revere it, praise it, make offerings to it, honor it, and recite it.

All the Buddhas, including Buddha Many Jewels, certify that the Dharma Flower Sutra is the most wonderful and inconceivable of dharmas. For every part of sincerity you bring, you will receive that much of a response. If you have ten parts sincerity, you will receive ten parts of benefit in response. You should not take it for granted and waste your time. It is inconceivable to be able to hear the Dharma Flower Sutra. Your parents, grandparents, and great grandparents never heard it, but you get to hear it. You have outdone your ancestors in this regard in terms of merit and virtue. This is an inconceivable state; do not think it is ordinary. Your study of the Buddhadharma now means that you have great good roots and virtuous practice.

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

I have good news. Now, every night many people gather in this small Buddhahall and there is not enough room. It is standing room only. Every seat is filled and there are no empty seats. So we need to find a bigger place. Every evening all of you Bhikhus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas have been reciting the Great Compassion Mantra hoping to enlarge the lecture hall! You have been reciting for so many days, and I believe the hall will get bigger. How big? Large enough to hold four or five hundred people. I think it will happen this week! Is that wonderful or not? You would not think this little lecture hall could grow so large; wait until it happens and you will see it is really inconceivable. You can recite at home, too, to help the Buddhist Lecture Hall and the Sino-American Buddhist Association expand quickly. The bigger they get, the better. The more people the better. Then even when many people come, they will all have a place to sit.

At Putuo Mountain, the Great Hall in Puji Temple appears to be one size, not too big, but it expands to accommodate a thousand people, ten thousand people, or even a hundred thousand people, with more space remaining. This is an inconceivable jeweled hall. We want such a hall here, that will expand to fit exactly the number of people who come. If you do not believe we will have that here, just wait three years and see what happens. That is my true, real good news for the evening.

Some people think, “I will never believe it.” Wait until you see it happen. When it happens, you will believe in what you do not believe. If you have not seen it, if you do not believe it, there is nothing I can do to make you believe it. Once you see it for yourself, I would not have to convince you. It is not a question of believing or not believing it; it is a matter of waiting until you see it. Then you will know.

On January 1, 1968, the year of the first Summer Session, I said to someone—I do not know if he was a Buddhist disciple or a demon king’s disciple—I said, “A great lotus flower is about to bloom in American Buddhism.” “Really?” he asked. “Wait and see,” I said.

The Summer Session got underway, but he could not wait to see the lotus flower blossom. He ran off and never saw it.
 **Sutra:**
 **At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke verses, saying:**

**“If one wishes to speak this SutraHe should rid himself of envy, anger, and arrogance,Flattery and deceitful thoughts.His practice should be honest and straightforward;He should not ridicule othersOr speak lightly of the Dharma,Or cause others to have doubtsBy telling them they shall not obtain Buddhahood.”**

Outline:

H2. Verses
I1. The explanation in verses
J1. Verses about the conduct of “stopping”
 **Commentary:**

**At that time, the World Honored One,** Shakyamuni Buddha, **wishing to restate his meaning, spoke verses, saying: If one wishes to speak this Sutra,** if a great Bodhisattva who cultivates the Bodhisattva Path wishes to speak the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, **he should rid himself of envy, anger, and arrogance;** he should get rid of jealousy, anger and pride, **flattery and deceitful thoughts.** He should not flatter the rich or tell lies. He should not harbor such improper thoughts. **His practice should be honest and straightforward** in speech and action, not deceptive or crooked. The straight mind is the Bodhimandala.
 **He should not ridicule others,** make fun of them, look down on them, **or speak lightly of the Dharma, or** should he **cause others to have doubts** about the Buddha Way, **by telling them they shall not obtain Buddhahood,** by saying, “You would not become a Buddha. You are too lazy and sloppy.” You must not torment them in this way.

**Sutra:**

**When this son of the Buddha speaks the Dharma,He is ever gentle, agreeable and patient,Compassionate towards allAnd never slack in his efforts.The great Bodhisattvas of the ten directionsTake pity on the multitudes and so practice the Way.He should bring forth a heart of reverence,Thinking, “These are my great teachers.”With regard to all the Buddhas, World Honored Ones,He should think of them as his supreme fathers.He should break through all thoughts of arroganceAnd then speak the Dharma without obstacle.**

Outline:

J2. Verses about the conduct of “contemplating”

**Commentary:**

**When this son of the Buddha,** the Bodhisattva, **speaks the Dharma, he is ever gentle, agreeable and patient,** donning the Tathagata’s robe, **compassionate towards all** living beings, entering the Tathagata’s Room **and never slack in his efforts.

The great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions take pity on the multitudes and so practice the** Bodhisattva **Way. He should bring forth a heart of reverence** towards the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas of the ten directions, **thinking, “These are my great teachers.”** What kind of contemplation does he make? He thinks of these Bodhisattvas as the very best teachers he can have. What about the Buddhas? **With regard to all the Buddhas, World Honored Ones, he should think of them as his supreme fathers,** his greatly compassionate fathers. **He should break through all thoughts of arrogance** and pride. **And then speak the Dharma without obstacle.** When he speaks any kind of Dharma, he should be free of obstructions.
 **Sutra:**

**Such is the third dharmaWhich the wise ones should always guard.With the single-minded happily-dwelling conduct,One is revered by limitless multitudes.**

Outline:

I2. Verses about how the conduct is accomplished
 **Commentary:**

**Such is the third dharma**—the happily-dwelling conduct of the mind. It is a Dharma **which the wise ones should always guard.** Those with wisdom rely on these methods in their practice and protect the happily-dwelling conduct**. With the single-minded** cultivation of the **happily-dwelling conduct, one is revered by limitless multitudes.** Limitless living beings will revere and respect this Bodhisattva who cultivates the Bodhisattva Way.

End of Happily-dwelling Conduct of the Mind.

**Sutra:**
 **“Further, Manjushri, in the future Ending Age, when the Dharma is about to become extinct, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva who upholds the Dharma Flower Sutra, should give rise to thoughts of great kindness for those at home and those who have left home. He should give rise to thoughts of great compassion for those who are not Bodhisattvas.”**
Outline:

G4. Happily-dwelling conduct of vows
H1. Prose
I1. The method used to achieve this conduct
J1. The statement
J2. The explanation
K1. Clarifying the realms that the vow affects
 **Commentary:**

Shakyamuni Buddha continues speaking to Wonderfully Auspicious Bodhisattva: **Further, Manjushri, in the future Ending Age when the Dharma is about to become extinct, The Bodhisattva Mahasattva who upholds the Dharma Flower Sutra should give rise to thoughts of great kindness for those at home, and those who have left home.** Wonderfully Auspicious, if there is a great Bodhisattva who cultivates the Bodhisattva conduct and who receives, upholds, reads, and recites the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra in the Dharma-ending Age of the future, he should have thoughts of great kindness and compassion for Upasakas, Upasika, Bhikshus and Bhikshunis. Kindness makes living beings happy. **He should give rise to thoughts of great compassion for those who are not Bodhisattvas.** Towards those who are not Buddhist and even those who slander Buddhism, he feels great compassion. Compassion pulls beings out of suffering which they are undergoing because of the offenses they have committed.

**Sutra:**
 **“He should think, ‘People like this are missing a great deal. Although the Tathagata speaks the Dharma expediently and appropriately, they do not hear, know, or awaken to it. They do not inquire into it, believe it, or understand it.’ ”**
Outline:

K2. Clarifying the reason for bringing forth the vow

**Commentary:**

**He should** contemplate and **think** in this way: “**People like this are missing a great deal.** The benefits they are missing are tremendous. They are taking the greatest loss. **The Tathagata speaks the Dharma expediently and appropriately.** According to the wishes and intent of the people he meets, the Buddha speaks the Dharma. If he meets a Great Vehicle person, he speaks the Dharma of the Great Vehicle. If he meets a Small Vehicle person, he speaks the Dharma of the Small Vehicle. As it is said,

The Buddha speaks the Dharma with one sound;
Living beings understand it according to their kind.

Living beings are different, yet, they all in their own way understand what a Buddha speaks. Although the Buddha speaks in that way, there are people with offenses who do not wish to study the Buddhadharma. **They do not hear, know, or awaken to it.** Why don’t they hear the Buddhadharma or know about it? Why don’t they study the Dharma or awawken to it?it is because **they do not inquire into it, believe, or understand it.** They do not understand and they do not ask questions from those who do understand. They do not believe and they have no intention of understanding the Buddhadharma. People like that suffer the greatest loss.

**Sutra:**
 **“Although these people do not inquire into, believe, or understand this Sutra, still, when I attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi, wherever they happen to be, I will use the power of spiritual penetrations and the power of wisdom to lead them to abide within this Dharma.”**
Outline:

K3. Stating the vow itself

**Commentary:**

“**Although these people do not inquire into** and ask about the wonderful principles of the Dharma Flower Sutra, or **believe** the wonderful principles of the Dharma Flower Sutra, or **understand this Sutra, still, when I attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi,”** vows the great Bodhisattva who is cultivating the Bodhisattva Way, “when I attain the Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment, **wherever they happen to be, I will use the power of spiritual penetrations and the power of wisdom to lead them to abide within this Dharma.”** I will welcome and lead those who do not ask, do not believe, and do not understand and enable them through the use of my spiritual powers and the strength of my wisdom to dwell in this wonderful Dharma.

**Sutra:**
 **“Manjushri, after the Nirvana of the Tathagata, the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva who accomplishes this, the fourth dharma, shall be free from error when he speaks this Dharma.”**
Outline:

J3. Conclusion about how to accomplish the conduct
K1. Clarifying how one is free from error

**Commentary:**

**Manjushri, after the Nirvana of the Tathagata, the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva who accomplishes this, the fourth dharma,** happily-dwelling conduct of making vows, **shall be free from error when he speaks this Dharma.** When he has accomplished all four of the happily-dwelling conducts just explained, he will make no mistakes when he explains the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra.

**Sutra:**
 **“He will always receive offerings from and be revered, honored, and praised by Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasika, kings princes, great ministers, common people, Brahmans, lay-people and so on. The gods in empty space will always follow and serve him in order to hear the Dharma. If, in villages and cities, in the wilds or forests, someone wishing to pose difficult questions approaches him, all the gods, for the sake of the Dharma, will protect him day and night, and he will cause the listeners to be joyful.”**
Outline:

K2. Clarifying the benefits
L2. The clarification

**Commentary:**

**He will always receive offerings from and be revered, honored, and praised by** all the **Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasika, kings, princes, great ministers, common people, Brahmans, lay-people and so on.** Not only will those in the human realm revere make offerings to, and praise this great Bodhisattva who is cultivating the Bodhisattva conduct, but also **the gods in empty space will always follow and serve him in order to hear the Dharma** from this Bodhisattva.

**If, in villages or cities, in the wilds or forests,** and in the mountains—in the places where he is cultivating—**someone wishing to pose difficult questions** to give him a test, **approaches him, all the gods,** dragons, and others of the eightfold division, the Dharma-protecting good spirits, **for the sake of** guarding **the Dharma, will protect him day and night. He shall cause the listeners to be joyful.** When someone asks him difficult questions, he answers with the wonderful meaning of the Great Vehicle, so that those who hear the dharma will be made happy.

**Sutra:**
 **“Why is this? This Sutra is protected by the spiritual powers of all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future.”**Outline:

L2. Concluding explanation

**Commentary:**

**Why is this? This Sutra is protected by the spiritual powers of all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future.** The Buddhas of the three periods of time guard the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. Therefore, whenever problems or difficulties arise, they are taken care of so that they disappear.

**Sutra:**
 **“Manjushri, throughout limitless kalpas, it is not possible even to hear the name of the Dharma Flower Sutra, much less to see, receive, uphold, read, or recite it.”**
Outline:

I2. Praise of this Sutra
J1. General praise

**Commentary:**

Shakyamuni Buddha continues speaking. **“Manjushri, throughout limitless kalpas, it is not possible even to hear the name of the Dharma Flower Sutra, much less to see, receive, uphold, read, or recite it.”** It is definitely not easy to get a chance to even hear the name of the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra. Now there is a certain sect that exclusively recites the phrase “Namo Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra,” showing that they have been able to hear the name. Some people never even get to hear the name, so, those of that sect, having heard it, constantly recite it. It is not easy to lay eyes on this Sutra, much less to receive, uphold, read, and recite it.

**Sutra:**
 **“Manjushri, it is like a powerful wheel-turning sage king who wishes to subdue other countries by force. But all the lesser kings do not follow his commands. The wheel-turning king then mobilizes his various troops and goes to punish them. Seeing his troops successful in warfare, he is greatly delighted and rewards them according to their merits, giving them fields, houses, villages, cities, countries; or else clothing, personal ornaments, or various precious treasures of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, carnelian, coral, or agate; or elephants, horses, carriages, servants, or subjects.”**
Outline:

J2. Expanded praise through analogy
K1. The analogy of not giving away the pearl
L1. Setting up the analogy
M1. Using force to subdue other countries
M2. The lesser kings’ lack of compliance
M3. Sending out troops to punish them
M4. Happily rewarding the successful

**Commentary:**

**Manjushri, it is like a powerful wheel-turning sage king who wishes to subdue other countries by force.** He wants to use his awesome virtue and might to conquer other lands. **But all the lesser kings do not follow his commands.** All the kings of the smaller countries do not listen to the wheel-turning sage king’s orders. **The wheel-turning king then mobilizes his various troops and goes to punish them.** The king then sends out all kinds of military forces to impose discipline on those countries.

**Seeing his troops successful in warfare,** the wheel-turning sage king **is greatly delighted and rewards them according to** the size of **their merits, giving them fields,** which represent samadhi; **houses,** which represent wisdom; **villages,** which represent the first and second fruitions of Arhatship; **cities,** which represent the third fruition, or **countries,** which represent the fourth fruition. Or he gives them **clothing,** which represents patience with insult, **personal ornaments** to adorn the body, **or various precious treasures of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, carnelian, coral, or agate.** The seven gems represent the good Dharma of the Seven Limbs of Enlightenment, also called the Seven Bodhi Shares. **Or** he gives them **elephants, horses,** and **carriages,** which represent the Two Vehicles; **servants,** which represent the functioning of spiritual penetrations; **or subjects,** which represent wholesome Dharmas.

ULLAMBANA

Before I finish explaining this passage of the Sutra, I have some news for everyone. This Sunday, we are going to celebrate Ullambana. “Ullambana” is Sanskrit. It means “releasing those who are upside-down.” It is very painful to be hanging upside down, and so now we are going to release those who are. Release whom? We are going to release parents and ancestors from our previous lives. We do not know if our past parents and ancestors created merit or if they created offenses. If they created merit, they may have been reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, or in the heavens, or among people as presidents or emperors. It is not fixed. If they created offenses, they may have fallen into the hells, into the realm of hungry ghosts, or into the animal realm. The fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month is the anniversary of the day when Bhikshu Mahamaudgalyayana saved his mother from the hells. One this day, Ullambana, all living beings can create merit and virtue for our parents and ancestors from the past seven lives and cross them over.

If you feel you have a big temper and too much “fire of ignorance,” it is because your parents and ancestors from the past have not left suffering and attained bliss. Every day they help you to get angry, and encourage you to commit offenses so that you can hurry up and join them. If you feel that this may be the case, you should take advantage of this opportunity to do merit and virtue to cross over your parents and ancestors from the past seven lives. This kind of ceremony has rarely been done in the West. You should not miss this chance. Every one of you should be a filial descendant and do some merit and virtue on your ancestors' behalf.

**Sutra:**
 **“Only the bright pearl on his cowl, that alone, he does not give away. Why not? Only the king can wear this pearl on his crown. If he gave it away, the king's retinue would surely be greatly astonished.”**
Outline:

M5. Not giving away the pearl

**Commentary:**

**Only the bright pearl on his cowl, that alone, he does not give away.** The wheel-turning sage king wears a bright pearl on his crown and it is the only thing he will not give to his troops, generals, or anyone else. **Why not? Only the** wheel-turning sage king **can wear this** bright **pearl on his crown.** Therefore, he cannot give it away. **If he gave it away** to those meritorious soldiers, all **the** wheel-turning sage **king's retinue would surely be greatly astonished.** They would be incredibly surprised. They would not believe such a thing could happen. They would not believe they themselves could attain such a valuable gift.

**Sutra:**
 **“Manjushri, the Tathagata is also like this. Through the use of the powers of Dhyana samadhi and wisdom, he has gained the country of the Dharma and is king of the three realms. Still, the demon kings refuse to submit. The Tathagata’s generals, the worthy ones and sages, do battle with them. With those who are successful, he is delighted. For the four assemblies, he speaks the Sutras, causing their hearts to rejoice. He confers upon them the Dhyana concentrations, the liberations, the lack of outflow, the roots and powers, and all the wealth of the Dharma. He further bestows upon them the city of Nirvana, telling them that they shall attain cessation. He guides their thoughts, causing them all to rejoice.”**
Outline:

L2. Relating the analogy to the Dharma
M1. Relating to subduing the country with force
M2. Relating to the lesser king’s lack of compliance
M3. Relating to sending out troops to punish them
M4. Relating to rewarding the successful

**Commentary:**

**Manjushri, the Tathagata is also like this.** I, Shakyamuni Buddha, am like the wheel-turning sage king. **Through the use of the** inconceivable **powers of Dhyana samadhi and wisdom, he has gained the country of the** unsurpassed, wonderful **Dharma and is king of the three realms.** Within the desire realm, form realm, and formless realm, he is the Dharma King. The Buddha is the Dharma King, and is at ease within the Dharma. He is endowed with great wisdom, great knowledge, and the true Dharma.

**Still,** although the Buddha has attained the unsurpassed, wonderful Dharma and is the Dharma King, the King of the three realms, **the demon kings refuse to submit.** They would not surrender. They do not want to meekly comply.

**The Tathagata’s generals, the worthy ones and sages, do battle with them.** The Tathagata leads all the generals, those of the Great Vehicle, the Two Vehicles and the Three Vehicles, to engage in battle with the demon kings. This is what our monthly journal “ Vajra Bodhi Sea” does. By publishing the journal, we are also doing battle with the demon kings. We wish to protect the genuine Buddhadharma, and so those with phony credentials are being exposed.

**With those who are successful, he is delighted.** There are those who earn merit by defeating the demon kings. That makes the Buddha happy. **For the four assemblies,** the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas, **he speaks the Sutras.** He may speak the Agamas, the Vaipulya, or the Prajna Teachings. He may speak the Storehouse Teaching, the Connected Teaching, or the Special Teaching. He may speak the Sudden, or the Gradual, the Secret, or the Unfixed Teachings. He expounds the doctrines in the Sutras for all living beings, **causing their hearts to rejoice. He confers upon them** the merits of **Dhyana concentrations, the** virtue of the **liberations,** the wisdom of the **lack of outflows, the** five **roots and** five **powers and all the wealth of Dharma.** The five roots are the root of faith, the root of vigor, the root of mindfulness, the root of concentration, and the root of wisdom. Once the five roots come forth, they generate five kinds of powers with the same names. The Buddha bestows all these wealth of Dharma upon all living beings.

**He further bestows upon them the city of Nirvana.** Why is Nirvana likened to a city? It is because it can ward off the attacks of enemies, that is, the demon kings. Demons have no way to destroy your nirvana. He tells **them that they have** already **attained cessation. He guides their thoughts, causing them all to rejoice.** He guides the minds of living beings, filling them with delight.

**Sutra:**

**“But he does not speak the Dharma Flower Sutra.”**
Outline:

M5. Relating to not giving away the pearl

**Commentary:**

He holds back and does not speak the wonderful Dharma. **He does not speak the** Wonderful ***Dharma*** Lotus ***Flower Sutra*.** Just as the wheel-turning king's precious crown jewel cannot be given away casually, so too, the Dharma Flower Sutra cannot be explained casually.

**Sutra:**
 **“Manjushri, eventually the wheel-turning king, seeing among his troops those who have been greatly successful, is overjoyed, and at last gives them the incredible pearl, which he has long worn in his top-knot, and which he would never casually give away.”**
Outline:

K2. The analogy of giving away the pearl
L1. Setting up the analogy

**Commentary:**

Shakyamuni Buddha continues, “**Manjushri,** Wonderfully Auspicious, **eventually the wheel-turning king,** who represents the Buddha in the analogy, **seeing among his troops those who have been greatly successful, is overjoyed, and at last gives them the incredible pearl, which he has long worn in his top-knot, and which he would never casually give away.** But now he does give it away because they are entirely deserving of such a reward.

**Sutra:**
 **“So, too, is it with the Tathagata. As the great king of the Dharma within the three realms, he uses Dharma to teach and transform all living beings. Seeing the army of worthy ones and sages doing battle with the demons of the five skandhas, the demons of afflictions, and the demons of death, and being greatly successful extinguishing the three poisons, escaping the three realms, and rending the nets of the demons, the Tathagata is greatly pleased. He then speaks to them the Dharma Flower Sutra, which can lead living beings to All-Wisdom, which meets with resentment and disbelief in all the world, and which he has never spoken of before.”**
Outline:

L2. Relating the analogy to the Dharma

**Commentary:**

**So, too, is it with the Tathagata.** I, Shakyamuni Buddha, am like the wheel-turning king. **As the great king of the Dharma within the three realms,** the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm, **he uses** the unsurpassed wonderful **Dharma to teach and transform all living beings.**

When **seeing the army of worthy ones and sages**—that is, sages of the first, second, third, and fourth fruitions, and Those Enlightened by Conditions, as well as the Bodhisattvas—**doing battle with the demons of the five skandhas,** the Buddha is pleased. The five skandhas are the five heaps we all possess: form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness. He sees them battle with **the demons of afflictions, and the demons of death.** Everyone has to die; and death, too, is a kind of demon.

Now we want to be free of death. We want to cultivate to become Buddhas and put an end to birth and death, so we go to battle with the demon of death. **And** the Buddha sees them as **being greatly successful** in their battle with these demons of the five skandhas, of afflictions and of death, conquering all of them, thus **extinguishing the three poisons** of greed, hatred, and stupidity, and **escaping the three realms** of desire, form, and formlessness, **and rending the nets of the demons. The Tathagata is greatly pleased.** If in cultivation we defeat the demons of death, afflictions, and the five skandhas, then at that point the nets of the demons will be broken up as well. Now the Buddha sees that those cultivating the Two Vehicles and the Great Vehicle have had some success and he is delighted.

**He then speaks to them the**Wonderful ***Dharma*** Lotus ***Flower Sutra* which can lead living beings to** the stage of **All-Wisdom, which meets with resentment and disbelief in all the world, and which he has never spoken of before.** All the people in the world complain that the doctrines of the Dharma Flower Sutra are difficult to believe. For more than forty years of the Buddha's teaching, he did not speak this Sutra, but now he does. He will now explain the wonderful aspects of the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra for everyone.

**Sutra:**
 **“Manjushri, the Dharma Flower Sutra is the foremost among the Tathagata's teachings. Among all the teachings it is the most profound, and it is only bestowed at the very end, just like that bright pearl which the powerful king long kept and then gave away. Manjushri, the Dharma Flower Sutra is the secret treasury of all the Buddhas, Tathagatas. Among all the Sutras it is the highest. In the long night of time it has been guarded and never recklessly expounded. Today, for the first time, I am speaking it for you.”**
**Commentary:**

Shakyamuni Buddha continues, “**Manjushri, the**Wonderful ***Dharma*** Lotus ***Flower Sutra* is the foremost among the Tathagata's teachings.** It is the foremost teaching of all Buddhas of the past, present, and future. **Among all the teachings,** all the Sutras spoken by the Buddhas, **it is the most profound, and it is only bestowed at the very end.** The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra is by far the most supreme and profound; there is nothing more lofty, nothing more deep. It is only spoken for living beings at the very end. It is **just like that bright pearl which the powerful king long kept and then gave away.** The mighty wheel-turning sage king of awesome virtue wore that pearl on his crown for a long, long time before he finally gave it away. In time, his troops were so successful that they deserved to have it.”

**Manjushri,** Wonderfully Auspicious Bodhisattva, **the**Wonderful ***Dharma*** Lotus ***Flower Sutra* is the secret treasury of all the Buddhas, Tathagatas** of the ten directions and the three periods of time. It is a secret, a Dharma that ordinarily is not transmitted. **Among all the Sutras** spoken by the Buddhas, **it is the highest.** This Sutra is above all the other Sutras. **In the long night of time,** for such a long time, **it has been guarded and never recklessly expounded.** It cannot be casually explained for people. **Today, for the first time, I am speaking it for you.** I am explaining the Sutra in detail for all the people in this great Dharma Assembly. Do not think this is an ordinary Dharma you are hearing.

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

**“Always practicing patience,And being merciful to all,One will then be able to proclaimThis Sutra praised by the Buddhas.”**

Outline:

H2. Verses

I1. Verses about the method to achieve this practice
J1. Opening verses about how to accomplish this conduct

**Commentary:**
Shakyamuni Buddha, having spoken the above passages out of great compassion, **at that time** spoke verses to elaborate these principles for those in the Dharma Assembly. **The World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses saying, “Always practicing patience** is what the great Bodhisattva cultivating the Bodhisattva Way does. He must bear what other people cannot bear. Always practicing patience and **being merciful to all,** having sympathy for all living beings, **one will then be able to proclaim this Sutra praised by the Buddhas.** The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra is praised in unison by all the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time.

**Sutra:**

**In the future Ending Age,One who upholds this Sutra,Should bring forth kindness and compassion For those at home, those who have left home,And those who are not Bodhisattvas,Thinking, “Those who do not hear Or believe this Sutra Suffer a great loss.**

**When I have gained the Buddha WayI shall use expedientsTo speak this Dharma for themSo they may abide within it.**

Outline:

J2. Subsequent verses about how to achieve this conduct
K1. Verses about the realms that the vow affects
K2. Verses about the reason for bringing forth the vow
K3. Verses stating the vow itself

**Commentary:**

**In the future Ending Age** when the Dharma is about to become extinct, **one who** receives, **upholds,** reads, and recites **this**Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower ***Sutrashould bring forth kindness and compassion, for those at home, those who have left home, and those who are not Bodhisattvas.*** “Those who are not Bodhisattvas” refers to those who are neither lay people nor left-home people, and who do not understand the Buddhadharma. One should be kind and compassionate to them, in order to make them happy and alleviate their suffering.

He should take pity on such beings **thinking, “Those who do not hear or believe this**Dharma Flower ***Sutra* suffer a great loss.”** This is the greatest loss of all, because if you do not believe in the Dharma Flower Sutra you cannot become a Buddha. If you want to become a Buddha, you have to believe in the Dharma Flower Sutra.

He should think, “**When I have gained the Buddha Way, I shall use expedients,** the power of my Dhyana samadhi, the power of my wisdom, the power of my spiritual penetrations, and various other skill-in-means, **to speak this Dharma for them.** I will speak the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra for these living beings **so they may abide within it.”** He wants to speak so that beings may obtain the wonderful advantages of the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra and dwell in that wonderful state.

Those who study the Buddhadharma should day by day become more vigorous, more sincere, more compliant with the rules, and more intelligent. Today you should be smarter than yesterday, and tomorrow you should be smarter than today. Bit by bit you will gain genuine wisdom. If you want to gain genuine wisdom, you have to follow the rules and apply true effort. From now on, you should keep watching over yourselves. If you can look after yourself, then one day you are sure to have success.

**Sutra:**

**It is like a powerfulWheel-turning kingWho bestows rewardsUpon soldiers successful in battle:Elephants, horses, carriages,Personal ornaments,As well as fields, houses,Villages, cities, and countries.**

**Or he may give clothingOr various rare treasures,Servants or other valuables,Giving them joyfully.**

**Should there be a heroWho can do difficult deeds,The king will take from his top-knotHis bright pearl, and give it to him.**

Outline:

I2. Verses praising this Sutra
J1. General verses about the two analogies

**Commentary:**

**It is like a powerful wheel-turning king** who rewards his troops. A wheel-turning sage king has great power and awesome majesty. In this world there are four kinds of wheel-turning sage kings: Gold Wheel-turning sage kings, Silver Wheel-turning sage kings, Copper Wheel-turning sage kings, and Iron Wheel-turning sage kings.

Gold Wheel-turning sage kings rule over all four continents: Eastern Purvavideha, Southern Jambudvipa, Western Aparagodaniya, and Northern Uttarakuru.

Silver Wheel-turning sage kings rule over three continents: Eastern Purvavideha, Southern Jambudvipa, and Western Aparagodaniya.

Copper Wheel-turning sage kings rule over two continents: Eastern Purvavideha and Southern Jambudvipa. Iron Wheel-turning sage kings only rule over Southern Jambudvipa. Here, the Buddha is referring to a Gold Wheel-turning sage king who possesses seven treasures which are rare in the world.

It is he **who bestows rewards upon soldiers successful in battle.** The soldiers fought and triumphed over the rival countries, so he gives them all kinds of wealth and valuables, such as: **elephants, horses,** and **carriages.** These represent the Two Vehicles. **Personal ornaments** are Dharma-doors to be cultivated. He bestows these **as well as fields** and **houses,** which represent the powers of Samadhi and wisdom, respectively; **villages** which represent the first and second fruitions of sagehood; **cities** which represent the third fruition; **and countries,** which represent the fourth fruition.

**Or he may give clothing,** speaking for you the Dharma doors of being gentle and patient. He also gives **various rare treasures,** not one kind, but many, many kinds. If you list them, they include gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, red pearls, mother-of-pearl, and carnelian. However, every kind of gem is represented. He bestows **servants** upon them, which represent the function of spiritual penetrations. Therefore, you should not think that spiritual penetrations are highly unusual. From a Buddhist point of view, they are merely servants which you are free to use at will. If you have the penetration of the heavenly ear and you decide you want to listen in on others' conversations, you can know what they are saying from a long way off. The penetration acts as your servant. With the penetration of the heavenly eye you can take advantage of your power to see what people are doing even though you may be far away from them. With one look, you will know whether they are sleeping, eating, or what they are doing. The power is also like a servant. Your spiritual penetrations will do for you whatever it is in their power to do. He bestows these and **other valuables, giving them joyfully.** It makes him very happy to offer them to you.

**Should there be a hero,** a most courageous, invincible general who cannot be beaten in battle and who never fails to capture what he sets out to get, he will win no matter whom he goes to battle with. It does not matter what city he attacks, he will certainly conquer it. He is one **who can do difficult deeds.** He can do what others cannot do. Because he is so courageous and can defeat his adversaries, **the king will take from his top-knot his bright pearl.** When the Wheel-turning sage king regards this general, he realizes that no other gift would be adequate to equal the value of this man's contributions to his country, and so he takes the pearl from his cowl **and gives it to him.** He removes the bright pearl from his top-knot and bestows it upon this most heroic general. And now, the Dharma Flower Sutra is likened to that precious pearl. The Buddha speaks the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra for living beings. He refrained from speaking it in the past, but now the time has come, so he is speaking the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra.
 **Sutra:**

**The Tathagata is also thus.As king of all the Dharmas,With patience, great powerAnd the precious store of wisdom,With great kindness and compassion,He transforms the world according to the Dharma.**

**He sees all peopleSuffering pain and agony,Seeking liberation,And battling with the demons.**

**For these living beingsHe speaks various Dharmas.Using great expedients,He teaches them the Sutras.**

**Once he knows that living beingsHave become strong,Then at the very endHe speaks the Dharma Flower for them.**

**This is like the king who unties his top-knotAnd gives away his bright pearl.Highest among the host of Sutras,This Sutra is venerable.**

**I always guard and protect it,And never speak it recklessly.But now the time is exactly rightTo speak it for all of you.**

Outline:

J2. General verses relating the analogies to the Dharma

**Commentary:**

**The Tathagata is also thus.** I, Shakyamuni Buddha, am like the Wheel-turning sage king who at last offers his crown jewel. The Buddha is the **king of all the Dharmas** and is at ease within the Dharmas, having obtained the wonderful function of unobstructed self-mastery.

He has **patience, great power, and** great awesome virtue. He has **the precious store of wisdom.** His wisdom is like a great treasure trove. **With great kindness and compassion** he bestows happiness and relieves beings of their suffering. **He transforms the world according to Dharma.** He teaches and transforms all living beings according to the Dharma.

If beings can be saved by someone in the body of a Buddha, he appears in the body of a Buddha and speaks Dharma for them. If beings can be saved by someone in the body of a Bodhisattva, he appears in the body of a Bodhisattva and speaks Dharma for them. The same applies to appearing in the body of a Pratyekabuddha, the body of One Enlightened by Conditions, the body of a Hearer, and so on. He manifests all kinds of bodies to teach living beings. This is how he “transforms the world according the Dharma.”

He observes the potentials and bestows the teaching,
Speaking the Dharma according to the person.

For example, if a particular living being is fond of eating, he will speak the Food Sutra to him. He will say, “Have some of this, it is good for you. If you are too fat, it will make you thin. If you are too skinny, it will make you fatter!”

“That is great!” says one person. “I am tired of being so fat and flabby. I will eat some of this food that will make me thinner.” So he eats up the Food Sutra that is spoken for him.

Another person says, “I am tired of being so skinny, I will eat some of this and put on a few pounds.”

This is the food of Dharma spoken by the Tathagata. You should not think that the expression “Dharma food” means real food! We say one takes Dhyana bliss as food and is filled with Dharma happiness, but that is just a figure of speech. Why is it that many of you can now eat only one meal a day? That is because you take Dhyana bliss as food and are filled with Dharma happiness. You eat a “Dharma meal” every evening. If you do not get enough today, tomorrow evening there will be another Dharma meal for you to eat. That is how the Buddha taught.

Other living beings may not care so much about food, but they like to sleep. Everyday they have to take a nap after lunch. The Buddha then speaks the Sleep Sutra for them. He says, “When you sleep, put your head to the south, your feet to the north, and lie on your right side. Place your right hand under your right cheek and your left hand on your left side. That is the “auspicious sleeping posture. You will have auspicious sleep and dreams and even auspicious waking hours.”

The person thinks, “Great! I will sleep that way,” and he enters the “sleeping samadhi.” Once he gains this samadhi, he wakes up and thinks, “I should not sleep so much It is not really very interesting.” He understands the Sleep Sutra and wakes up. But this is just an analogy. What is meant by “sleeping”? Entering samadhi is what is meant by sleeping. But actually, when you sleep, your head hangs down; whereas when you enter samadhi your head remains erect and your back straight. One is “in a state of unmoving suchness, clear and forever bright.” That is genuine sleep! Your kind of sleep is a false sleep; the sleep of the dead, not of the living. When you truly enter samadhi, you are lucid and clear.

If you can enter samadhi, you can shrink ten thousand years into the space of an instant, or you can stretch out an instant into ten thousand years. One thought is ten thousand years and ten thousand years are one thought. Would you say that was a long sleep or not?

“I do not get it,” you say.

Of course you do not get it. If you did you would be something else entirely!

The Buddha “transforms the world according to the Dharma,” speaking the Food Sutra to those who like to eat and the Sleep Sutra to those who like to sleep. For those who are greedy for money, he speaks the Wealth Sutra. The Buddha speaks the Wealth Sutra, the Form Sutra, the Fame Sutra, the Food Sutra, and the Sleep Sutra, depending on the listener's inclinations. That is known as transforming the world according to the Dharma.

**He sees all people suffering pain and agony.** He sees living beings attached to wealth, form, fame, food, and sleep, and undergoing all kinds of suffering because of their attachments. Those who are greedy for wealth are anxious and eager to get rich. They worry about it until they finally go out and steal or rob it. Then what? They are worried again! They have to guard it all the time. They are afraid that since they stole it from someone, someone will steal it from them. They cannot sleep day or night because they are watching their money. Wouldn't you call that an affliction?

Form, fame, food, and sleep are the same way. Before you get some, you worry about getting it. Once you have got some, you worry about losing it! Would you say that was a lot of trouble or not? They suffer from these kinds of pain and agony and start **seeking liberation.** After undergoing such suffering for a long time, they want to get free and not be attached anymore. They want to fly in the skies and travel through the earth, **and** so they start **battling with the demons.** They fight with the demons of affliction, the demons of death, the demons of karmic obstacles, the demons of greed, the demons of hatred, the demons of stupidity, the demons of pride, and the demons of doubt. They fight with the five poisons. The three poisons of greed, hatred, and stupidity expand into the five poisons of greed, hatred, stupidity, pride, and doubt. He defeats all of these demon kings.

**For these living beings, he speaks various Dharmas.** For those living beings who have gotten involved with demons, the Buddha speaks various Dharmas so that they can attain liberation. He does this by **using great expedients.** Expedients dharmas are used with no thought of self. For the sake of taking living beings across, one is even willing to descend into the hells. One wants to take on the sufferings of living beings oneself. Consider what Earth Store Bodhisattva does: he accompanies living beings who are in the hells, teaching and transforming them there. He is using great expedients.

**He teaches them the Sutras.** Shakyamuni Buddha sets forth the Three Storehouse teachings, the Vaipulya Sutras, and the Prajna Sutras. **Once he knows that living beings have become strong** and have benefitted from the Vaipulya teachings and the Prajna teachings, **then at the very end, he speaks the Dharma Flower for them.** The Buddha's final aim is to speak the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra.

**This is like the** wheel-turning sage king **who unties his top-knot and gives away his bright pearl.** He bestows the crown jewel upon his most meritorious general.

**Highest among the host of Sutras, this**Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower ***Sutra* is** most **venerable**. It is unsurpassed, the most lofty of all the Sutras. **I,** Shakyamuni Buddha, **always guard and protect it and never speak it recklessly.** I never just casually speak it for people; I hold back from speaking the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra for a long, long time.

**But now the time is exactly right.** It is neither too soon nor too late. It is the perfect moment **to speak it for all of you.** So now we are lecturing the Dharma Flower Sutra here at the Buddhist Lecture Hall, because it is just the time to lecture it.

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

In this country, the first major lecture series I gave was on the Shurangama Sutra. The Shurangama Sutra is false. Why? People become dazed when they read it. They get confused, so they mistakenly think it is false. It is not really false. Even if it is true, if you think it is false, then it becomes false. If it is false, but you think it is true, then it becomes true. Why? Everything is made from the mind alone. True and false are merely discriminations made by your mind. It is people who make discriminations. What does it mean for the Sutra to be true or false? If it helps you, it is true. If it does not help you, it is false. If you benefit from it, then it is true. If you do not benefit from it, then it is false. True and falsity depends on you, not on the Sutra. We are lecturing the Dharma Flower Sutra, and it is true. If you do not understand it, even if it is true, it is of no use to you. If you understand it, then even if it were false, it would be of some use.

The second Sutra I am lecturing on is the Dharma Flower Sutra. The third Sutra I will lecture on will lecture on will be the Great Means Expansive Buddha Flower Adornment Sutra. “What about Earth Store Sutra and the Vajra Sutra that you have lectured?” you ask. Those are smaller Sutras. I am talking about the major Sutras.

Tomorrow is Great Strength Bodhisattva's birthday. Great Strength Bodhisattva is Amitabha Buddha's disciple in the Land of Ultimate Bliss in the West. Guanshiyin Bodhisattva stands on Amitabha's left, and Great Strength Bodhisattva stands on the right. When Amitabha Buddha retires, Guanyin Bodhisattva will take over as the teaching host of the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Then, when Guanyin Bodhisattva retires, Great Strength Bodhisattva will become the teaching host. The three of them are known as the three sages of the Western Paradise. Tomorrow and the day after we will recite Amitabha Buddha's name and in this way we will celebrate Great Strength Bodhisattva's birthday and also celebrate the Ullambana Dharma Assembly in order to rescue all living beings. We will recite the Ullambana Sutra and perhaps lecture on it as well.

**Sutra:**

***After my extinction,
Those who seek the Buddha Way,
Who wish to gain peace and ease,
And to proclaim this Sutra
Should draw near
Such Dharmas as these four.***

Outline:

F3. General explanation of the appearances associated with accomplishing this conduct

G1. Concluding exhortation regarding the four kinds of conduct

**Commentary:**

Shakyamuni Buddha continues, saying, **“After my extinction,** my entry into Nirvana, **those who seek the Buddha Way,** such great Bodhisattvas, **who wishes to gain peace and ease, and proclaim** and explain **this** *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower* ***Sutra*, should draw near such Dharmas as these four.”** The four Dharmas described in the prose above are:

1. Happily-dwelling conduct of the body
2. Happily-dwelling conduct of the mouth
3. Happily-dwelling conduct of the mind
4. Happily-dwelling conduct of vows

They should draw near to and truly practice these four Dharmas.

**Sutra:**

***Those who read this Sutra
Will have no worries or afflictions;
They will be free from the pain of sickness,
With a countenance will be fresh and clear.***

Outline:

G2. Bringing up the three retributions as a means of exhortation (purification of the three obstacles)

H1. The obstacles of retribution turning into rewards in this present life

**Commentary:**

**Those who read this Sutra**—who always reads the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*—**will have no worries or afflictions.** They will have no cares or vexations. **They will be free from the pain of sickness, with a countenance fresh and clear.** Their faces will be bright and radiant, with a fresh, rosy light around them. If you look at people's faces and they glow with a fresh, rosy light without any dark shadows, those people have wisdom. If someone's face looks dark (of course people whose pigment is black are not included in this), that is, if it has a black cast to it, it means he is going to encounter inauspicious events. On the other hand, if a person’s face is always bright and rosy, auspicious things will happen to him. Here, “fresh and clear” means their faces have an attractive rosy glow.
 **Sutra:**

***They would not be born poor,
Lowly, or ugly.***

Outline:

H2. The obstacle of karma turning into rewards at rebirth

**Commentary:**

**They would not be born poor,** into a household plagued with poverty. They would not be born **lowly** and have to work as someone's servant doing menial tasks and not making very much money. They would not be born **ugly,** with an unattractive countenance.

**Sutra:**

***Living beings will be happy to see them,
As if they were longed-for sages.
All the children of the gods
Will act as their messengers.***

Outline:

H3. The obstacle of affliction turning into rewards in future lives

I1. Specific clarification of the turning of the three kinds of affliction-obstacles

**Commentary:**

**Living beings will be happy to see them.** If you cultivate the Bodhisattva Path, has no sickness or worries, and are not poor, lowly, or ugly, then living beings will be glad to see you. **As if they were longed-for sages,** Bodhisattvas. **All the children of the gods, will act as their messengers.** They will work for you.

**Sutra:**

***Knives and staves will not hurt them,
Poison will not harm them,
And should someone revile them,
His mouth will be stopped.
They shall roam fearlessly
Like the lion king.***

Outline:

J2. Turning the obstacle of hatred
 **Commentary:**

If there is violence, **knives and staves will not hurt them.** Not only will knives and staves be unable to harm you, even if someone tries to poison you, **poison will not harm them. And should someone revile them, his mouth will be stopped.** Someone may try to scold you, but he would not be able to open his mouth. **They shall roam fearlessly, like the lion king.** Wherever you go, you will be unafraid. You will be like the lion, the king of the beasts, feared by all.

**Sutra:**

***The light of their wisdom
Will shine like the sun.***

Outline:

J3. Turning the obstacle of stupidity
 **Commentary:**

***The light of their wisdom will shine like the sun,*** illumining the great earth. There will be no place not illuminated by it.

**Sutra:**

***In dreams they will see
Only wonderful things.
They may see the Tathagatas
Seated on their lion thrones,
Surrounded by a host of Bhikshus
As they speak the Dharma.***

***They will also see the dragons, spirits,
Asuras, and so forth,
In number like the Ganges' sands
Reverent, with palms joined.
They will see themselves appearing
To speak the Dharma for them.***

Outline:

I2. General clarification of the turning of all kinds of affliction-obstacles

J1. In a dream entering the Ten Faiths, positions that resemble the Bodhisattva Stages

**Commentary:**

***In dreams they will see only wonderful things.*** Their dreams will be lucky, not inauspicious. They will see auspicious events in their dreams. **They may see the Tathagatas,** the Buddhas, **seated on their lion thrones surrounded by a host of Bhikshus,** Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas, the four-fold assembly, **as they speak the Dharma.** They gather around the Buddhas, to praise them and listen to the Dharma they speak. **They will also see the dragons, spirits, *asuras* and so forth in number like the Ganges' sands.** The gods and dragons and the rest of the eight-fold division will be **reverent, with palms joined,** as they make offerings and bow in homage. **They will see themselves appearing to speak the Dharma for them**—for the gods, dragons, and others of the eightfold division.

**Sutra:**

***Further, they will see all the Buddhas,
Their bodies of golden hue
Emitting limitless light,
Illumining all,
And proclaiming all the Dharmas
With the Brahma sound.***

***The Buddhas, for the four-fold host,
Will speak the supreme Dharma.
They shall see themselves there, too,
With palms joined, praising the Buddhas.
Hearing the Dharma, they will rejoice
And make offerings.
They will gain the Dharanis,
And certify to non-retreating wisdom.***

***The Buddhas, knowing their minds
Have deeply entered the Buddha Way,
Will then bestow upon them a prediction
For the realization of the most proper enlightenment,
Saying, “You, Good Men,
Shall in the future age,
Attain limitless wisdom,
And the Great Way of the Buddha.***

***Your lands shall be adorned and pure,
Vast and incomparable,
And the four assemblies there
Will listen to the Dharma with palms joined.***

Outline:

J2. In a dream entering the First Dwelling, the Position of Seeing the Way

**Commentary:**

**Further,** in dreams, **they will see all the Buddhas, their bodies of golden hue**—the Buddhas’ bodies are the color of burnished gold—emitting **limitless lights illumining all.** The Buddhas' lights will be shining upon all living beings, and the Buddhas will be **proclaiming all the Dharmas with the Brahma sound**—a clear, pure sound. The sound of one's voice is very important. When you lecture on the Sutras, your voice should sound clear and resonant. You should not speak in a way that people cannot understand. People whose voices are full and resonant cultivated good roots in previous lives, and now they have this reward. People without this reward may sound as if they are crying when they talk—whining and sniveling. Their listeners may not have been sad to begin with, but after they hear such a whiny voice, they feel like crying.

**The Buddhas, for the four-fold host will speak the supreme,** wonderful, **Dharma. They will see themselves there, too,** in the Bodhimanda **with palms joined, praising the Buddhas.** There are some very sincere laypeople who have dreams like this because they have good roots. Some Bhikshus also have such dreams. **Hearing the Dharma, they will rejoice and make offerings** to the Buddhas. **They will gain the *Dharanis*,** “uniting all Dharmas, and upholding limitless meanings,” **and certify to non-retreating wisdom.** They will gain wisdom and never be stupid and muddled again.

**The Buddhas, knowing their minds have deeply entered the Buddha Way, will then bestow upon them a prediction for the realization of the most** supreme, **proper,** equal and right **enlightenment, saying, “You, Good Men, shall in the future age, attain limitless wisdom, and the Great Way of the Buddha. Your lands shall be adorned and pure, vast and incomparable, and the four assemblies,** the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas, **there will listen to the Dharma with palms joined.”**

**Sutra:**

***They will also see themselves
Dwelling in the mountain forests,
Practicing wholesome dharmas,
Certifying to the Real Mark,
Deeply entering Dhyana concentration,
And seeing the Buddhas of the ten directions.***

Outline:

J3. In dreams entering the Dwellings, the Practices, the Transferences, and the Grounds—the Positions of Cultivating the Way

**Commentary:**

**They will also see themselves dwelling in** the purity of the **mountain forests, practicing wholesome Dharmas** of *Dhyana* Samadhi, **certifying to the Real Mark**—the inconceivable state of reality and wonderful existence—**deeply entering *Dhyana* concentration,** which means the state of practicing the profound Prajna-paramita, **and seeing the Buddhas of the ten directions.** In *Dhyana* Samadhi, they will meet the Buddhas of the ten directions and hear the Sutras and the Dharma.

**Sutra:**

***The Buddhas, with golden bodies,
Will be adorned with the marks of a hundred blessings.
Hearing their Dharma, they will speak it to others.
And always have good dreams like these.***

***They will also dream of being a king
Who, forsakes his palace and retinue,
As well as fine objects of the five desires,
To enter a Bodhimanda.***

***There, beneath the Bodhi tree,
They sit upon the lion throne,
Seeking the Way for seven days,
And gaining the Buddha's wisdom.***

***After realizing the supreme Way,
They rise and turn the Dharma wheel,
And speak the Dharma for the four-fold host.
Throughout thousands of myriads of millions of eons,
They speak the non-outflow wondrous Dharma,
And save limitless living beings.
Later they enter Nirvana,
As a lamp goes out when its fuel is gone.***

Outline:

J4. In dreams entering the ultimate position of Wonderful Enlightenment

**Commentary:**

They can see the Buddhas in their dreams **The Buddhas, with golden bodies,** emit purple-golden light. In dreams they see Buddhas **adorned with the marks of a hundred blessings;** possessing the thirty-two marks and eighty subtle characteristics, the supreme, pure Dharma-body. **Hearing their Dharma, they will speak it to others.** Hearing the Dharma from the Buddhas, they will then explain it to others. **And** they will **always have good dreams like these.** These are the kinds of wonderful and inconceivable dreams they will have all the time!

**They will also dream of being a king who** forsakes **his palace and retinue.**

They give up the Three Palaces and the Six Courts, the queen and concubines, **as well as fine objects of the five desires.** The five desires refer to wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep, and also to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch. They renounce all of these. They **enter a Bodhimanda. There, beneath the Bodhi tree, they sit upon the lion throne, seeking the Way for seven days, and gaining the Buddha's wisdom.** In a dream, they become Buddhas! **After realizing the supreme** Buddha **Way, they rise and turn the Dharma wheel. They** manifest the Eight Marks of Accomplishing the Way, **and speak the Dharma for the four-fold host**–the Bhikshus, the Bhikshunis, the Upasakas, and the Upasikas. **Throughout thousands of myriads of millions of *eons*,** all this time passes in the space of their dream, **they speak the non-outflow wondrous Dharma.** In a dream, they **save limitless living beings. Later they enter Nirvana, as a lamp goes out when its fuel is gone.**

**Sutra:**

***If, in the future evil age,
They can speak this foremost Dharma,
They shall gain great benefit,
Merit, and virtue as told above.***

Outline:

G3. General conclusion
 **Commentary:**

**If, in the future evil age,** the Dharma-ending Age, **they can speak this foremost Dharma,***the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*, **they shall gain great benefit, merit, and virtue as told above.** One will gain the greatest advantage! In the Dharma-ending Age if you can lecture on the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, you will gain all these advantages and have all these good dreams.