**The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra**

**Chapter 23: The Former Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva**

With Commentary by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

**At that time the Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower spoke to the Buddha saying, “World Honored One, how is it that the Bodhisattva Medicine King roams throughout the Saha world? World Honored One, Medicine King Bodhisattva has undertaken so many hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of nayutas of bitter practices, so difficult to practice.”   
  
“It would be excellent, World Honored One, if you would please explain a bit. All the gods, dragons, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, non-humans, and so forth, and the Bodhisattvas who have come from other lands, as well as the assembly of Hearers, on hearing it, will rejoice.”**  
Outline:  
  
C1. Chapter on “Medicine King”—Master of Propagating Dharma.  
D1. The question.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
This chapter talks about the very bitter and difficult ascetic practices of Medicine King Bodhisattva. These are ascetic practices most people could not perform. He has already been certified to the fruit and become a Bodhisattva. Before, he was not called Medicine King Bodhisattva. He was called the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing. When beings saw him they felt happy in their eyes, happy in their ears, happy in their noses, happy in their mouths, happy in their bodies, and, of course, even happier in their minds. Why? It was because this Bodhisattva developed affinities with all living beings and so they all liked to see him. No matter whether they believed in the Buddha or not, they liked to see him. And so he was called the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing. When they saw him, their hearts felt happy. Even children loved to see him. Perhaps he always gave them candy. In any case, he never gave the kids hot peppers, so they liked him. Not only did people like him, but all the animals liked him too.   
  
This Bodhisattva used his body as an offering to the Buddha. How did he do this? He did not cut off all his flesh and offer it to the Buddha for a meal, or lie in front of the Buddha on the altar as an offering. He drank a lot of fragrant oil, wrapped his body in oil-soaked cotton, set it on fire, and sat there like a human candle as an offering to the Buddha.   
  
"Did it hurt?" you ask.   
  
I believe it hurt, yes, but he could bear it. He could offer up his body to the Buddha. I also believe it did not hurt. Why not? Because he has already forgotten all about his own body. The light of the wisdom of his self-nature had come forth. He knew that the body is just a false combination of the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water, and so it did not hurt. In general, hurting or not hurting, he could give up his body as an offering to the Buddha. This is a genuine offering to the Buddha with nothing false in it at all. And so the text says, "This is true vigor." To say nothing of burning up our whole bodies, we could not even burn off an arm. Sometimes people burn off one, two, three, four, five or six fingers for the Buddha. But no one has ever burned off an arm.   
  
"Okay, I will try it out," you say.   
  
Do not try it out. First cultivate patience. When you have true samadhi power, you can do something like this. If you do not have true samadhi power, it is going to hurt, and it will be useless because you would not be able to practice true renunciation. Medicine King Bodhisattva practiced such difficult ascetic deeds.  
  
Medicine King Bodhisattva made a vow to cure all living beings of their illnesses. No matter what sickness you have, he wants to help you, because he is very compassionate. His former deeds refer to the actions he cultivated in the past, the ascetic practices he undertook.   
  
**At that time the Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower spoke to the Buddha saying, "World Honored One,** I heard about Medicine King Bodhisattva in the Shurangama Sutra Assembly, but there are a few things I have not completely understood. **How is it that the Bodhisattva Medicine King roams throughout the Saha World?** How is it that he has such affinities with the living beings in the Saha World? **World Honored One, Medicine King Bodhisattva has undertaken so many hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of nayutas of bitter practices, so difficult to practice.** He cures living beings’ illnesses. In past lives he must surely have cultivated many ascetic practices, making vows to save living beings from the pain of sickness. These bitter practices were beyond the capabilities of ordinary people.   
  
**It would be excellent, World Honored One, if you would please explain** this **a bit.** You do not have to tell the whole thing; that would take too long. Just give us a general idea. **On hearing this, all the gods, dragons, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, non-humans, and so forth, and the Bodhisattvas who have come from other lands, as well as the assembly of Hearers, will rejoice.** They all want to hear about the bitter practices of Medicine King Bodhisattva."   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **The Buddha then told the Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower “Once, as many eons ago as there are grains of sand in limitless Ganges Rivers, there was a Buddha by the name of Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Right and Universal Knowledge, One Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, Well Gone One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Humans and Gods, Buddha, World Honored One. That Buddha had eighty kotis of great Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, and a great assembly of Hearers, equal in number to the sand grains in seventy-two Ganges Rivers. His life span as a Buddha was forty-two thousand eons. The life spans of the Bodhisattvas were the same.**

**In his country there were no women, hell-beings, hungry ghosts, animals, or asuras, and so forth, and also no difficulties. The ground was as level as the palm of one’s hand, made of vaidurya, adorned with jeweled trees, covered with jeweled nets, and hung with beautiful banners. It was surrounded everywhere with precious vases and censers. There were terraces made of the seven gems, one terrace for each tree, the trees being separated from the terraces by a distance of an arrow’s flight. Beneath each tree sat Bodhisattvas and Hearers. Upon each of the terraces were hundreds of kotis of gods playing heavenly music and singing praises to the Buddha as an offering.”**  
Outline:  
  
D2. The answer.  
E1. Answering only about the ascetic practices.  
F1. The origins.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
Hearing the Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower's question, **the Buddha then told the Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower, "Once, as many eons ago as there are grains of sand in limitless Ganges Rivers, there was a Buddha by the name of Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Right and Universal Knowledge, One Perfect in Clarity and Conduct, Well Gone One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Humans and Gods, Buddha, World Honored One.**

**That Buddha had eighty kotis of great Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas** whom he had taught and transformed. **And a great assembly of Hearers, equal in number to the sand grains in seventy-two Ganges Rivers. His life span as a Buddha was forty-two thousand eons. The life spans of the Bodhisattvas were the same. In his country there were no women,** because all the living beings were born purely from lotus flowers, with pure bodies. Nor were there any **hell-beings, hungry ghosts, animals, or asuras,** who love to fight, **and so forth,** referring to the others of the eightfold division.

**And also** there were **no difficulties**--none of the eight difficulties. **The ground was as level as the palm of one's hand.** Why was the ground level? Because the people's hearts were level. When people's hearts are not level, there are mountains, valleys, ravines, and seas, and rivers. It is people's minds that create these things. If people's minds are level, then the earth is perfectly flat. It was **made of vaidurya,** and **adorned with jeweled trees, covered with jeweled nets, and hung with beautiful banners. It was surrounded everywhere with precious vases and censers. There were** magnificent **terraces made of the seven gems, one terrace for each tree, the trees being separated from the terraces by a distance of an arrow's flight. Beneath each tree sat Bodhisattvas and Hearers. Upon each of the terraces were hundreds of kotis of gods playing heavenly music and singing praises to the Buddha as an offering,** just as we sing the “Incense Praise” and other songs to the Buddha.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **At that time, that Buddha, for the sake of the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, as well as for the host of Bodhisattvas and the host of Hearers, spoke the Dharma Flower Sutra.**  
Outline:  
  
F2. Past affairs.  
G1. The Buddha speaks the Dharma.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**At that time, that Buddha,** Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, **for the sake of the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, as well as for the host of Bodhisattvas and the host of** great **Hearers, spoke the Dharma Flower Sutra.**   
  
**Sutra:  
  
The Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing enjoyed practicing ascetic practices. Within the Dharma of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, he applied himself with vigor, single-mindedly seeking Buddhahood for a full twelve thousand years. He then obtained the samadhi of the manifestation of all physical forms.**  
Outline:  
  
G2. Cultivating offerings.  
H1. Offerings in the present life.  
I1. Cultivating and obtaining the Dharma.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**The Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing enjoyed practicing ascetic practices. Within the Dharma of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, he applied himself with vigor.** He was very vigorous and cultivated hard, **single-mindedly seeking Buddhahood for a full twelve thousand years.** So you have cultivated for two and a half years. How does that compare? From this passage we can see that one does not succeed in one's cultivation of the Bodhisattva path in a mere one or two years. **He then obtained the samadhi of the manifestation of all physical forms.** This means he could turn himself into all kinds of living beings in order to teach those kinds of being. To save a person, he could turn himself into a person. Seeing a dog, he could turn himself into a dog. He could manifest in the body of any kind of living being. That was the kind of concentration power he obtained.   
  
To save evil people, he would turn into an evil person. To save a good person, he would turn into a good person. He could turn into any kind of living being in order to teach it. If you want to do evil, he will turn into an evildoer to save you. After the evil deeds are done, he will say, "This is not so great. Let us change from the evil and go towards the good." He will save you in that way. If he were entirely different, he would not be able to save that being. So if Chinese people want to save Americans, they should get reborn as Americans! A lot of you have done just, but you do not know about it.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **Having obtained this samadhi, his heart rejoiced greatly and he immediately thought, “I have obtained the samadhi of the manifestation of all physical forms. This is through the power of having heard the Dharma Flower Sutra. I should now make an offering to the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, and to the Dharma Flower Sutra.”  
  
He then entered that Samadhi, and as an offering to the Buddha, he rained down mandarava flowers and mahamandarava flowers from space. Finely ground, hard, black chandana also filled the sky and descended like clouds. And there rained the incense of ‘this shore’ chandana, six karshas of which are worth the entire Saha world, as an offering to the Buddha.**  
Outline:  
  
I2. Thinking to repay the Buddha’s kindness.  
J1. The power of Samadhi and the offering.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**Having obtained this samadhi, his heart rejoiced greatly, and he immediately thought, "I have obtained the samadhi of the manifestation of all physical forms.** I can appear in any form at all! **This is through the power of having heard the Dharma Flower Sutra.** It is all because the Buddha spoke the Dharma Flower Sutra that I have such spiritual powers. **I should now make an offering to the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, and to the Dharma Flower Sutra.**   
  
**He then entered that samadhi and as an offering to the Buddha, he rained down mandarava flowers and mahamandarava flowers**—little white flowers and big white flowers—**from space. Finely ground, hard, black chandana also filled the sky and descended like clouds. And there rained** down **the incense of 'this shore' chandana,** that is, chandana from Jambudvipa, **sixkarshas of which are worth the entire Saha world.** “Karsha” is a Sanskrit term of measurement. Six small pieces, in another word, are worth the entire Saha world. All of these were by way of making **an offering to the Buddha** Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **Having made this offering, he arose from samadhi. He thought to himself, “Although by means of spiritual powers I have made this offering to the Buddha, it is not as good as offering my body.” He then swallowed incense of many kinds, chandana, kunduruka, turushka, prikka, aloeswood, and resin incense. He also drank the oil of champaka and other flowers, for a full twelve hundred years. He smeared himself with fragrant oil, and in the presence of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, he wrapped himself in heavenly jeweled robes and poured fragrant oil over himself. Then by means of spiritual penetration power and vows, he burned his own body. The light shone everywhere throughout worlds in number to the grains of sand in eighty kotis of Ganges Rivers.**  
Outline:  
  
J2. Burning his body as an offering.  
K1. Burning his body.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**Having made this offering he,** the Bodhisattva All beings Delight in Seeing, **arose from samadhi.** Basically one does not enter or leave samadhi. So why does the text say "arose"? It is because this samadhi was a state the Bodhisattva had attained. In this state there was no entering or leaving, but because he made an offering, **he thought to himself, "Although, by means of spiritual powers I have made this offering to the Buddha,** using the inconceivably wonderful power of spiritual penetrations, **it is not as good as offering my body,** my physical body. That would be even more true-hearted of me." **He then swallowed incense of many kinds--chandana, kunduruka, turushka** [olibanum], which means “white couch grass incense”, **prikka,** "clove incense"; very fragrant **aloeswood, and resin incense** which resembles glue and is also called “pine incense”.

**He also drank the oil of champaka,** of yellow flowers **and other flowers for a full twelve hundred years. He** then **smeared himself with fragrant oil, and in the presence of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, he wrapped himself in heavenly jeweled robes,** made of the finest and most delicate material. He **poured fragrant oil over himself. Then by means of spiritual penetration power and vows, he** used the true fire of his samadhi to light himself on fire and **burned his own body. The light shone everywhere throughout worlds in number to the grains of sand in eighty kotis Ganges Rivers.** All the Buddhas witnessed his offering.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **Within them all, the Buddhas simultaneously praised him, saying, “Good indeed! Good indeed! Good man, this is true vigor. This is called a true Dharma offering to the Thus Come One. Offerings of flowers, incense, beads, burning incense, ground incense, paste incense, heavenly cloth, banners, canopies, ‘this shore’ chandana incense, and all such offerings of various kinds, cannot come up to it. If one gave away one’s countries, cities, wives and children, that also could not match it. Good man, this is called foremost giving. Among all gifts, it is the most honored and most supreme, because it is an offering of Dharma to the Thus Come Ones.” Having uttered these words, they became silent.**  
Outline:  
  
K2. The Buddhas’ praise.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**Within them all, the Buddhas simultaneously praised him.** All the Buddhas in worlds equal in number to the grains of sand in eighty kotis of Ganges Rivers praised him**, saying, "Good indeed! Good indeed!** Really good. **Good man, this is true vigor.** You are truly vigorous--vigorous in body and in mind. **This is called a true Dharma offering to the Thus Come One."**  
  
When Great Master Zhi Zhe, third Patriarch of the Tiantai School, reached this sentence of text in his recitation, he entered samadhi. He obtained the dharani of a single revolution, which enabled him to understand all of the Sutras in a very short space of time. At that time he saw that the Magic Mountain Dharma Assembly was still in progress. Shakyamuni Buddha was still present on Vulture Peak speaking the Dharma Flower Sutra.   
  
The Buddhas said that to offer one's body to the Buddhas is a true Dharma offering. Someone might say, "How can you say that to offer one's body is true vigor and a true Dharma offering? Even though he ate a lot of incense and fragrant oils, and smeared himself with scented oil, still this physical, flesh body, no matter how much it is submerged in fragrant oil, when set on fire, is going to stink. How could all the Buddhas like a stench like that and even praise him for it?"   
  
The Buddhas did not like the stench. They were pleased with his true mind. In order to make an offering like that, you have got to have a perfectly true heart and be able to truly put it all down. One must have seen through the body as being empty and obtained non-obstruction. Having seen it as empty, one must then see through that very emptiness as empty. This is the attainment of great liberation. Having obtained great liberation is an ultimate kind of offering. This is a true Dharma offering, true vigor. You should not make the mistake of thinking the Buddha likes burned bodies as offerings. That is not it at all. The Buddhas praise him because he could see through it, and put down his body, that thing that cannot be put down. This is a true Dharma offering to the Thus Come One.   
  
**Offerings of flowers, incense, beads, burning incense, ground incense, paste incense, heavenly cloth, banners, canopies, 'this shore' chandana incense, and all** other **such offerings of various kinds cannot come up to it.** Such offerings in no way compare with the merit and virtue gained from offering one's body. **If one gave away one's countries, cities,** outer wealth, **wives and children, that also could not match it.** In no way could it match the offering of your own body. This is truly great merit. **Good man, this is called foremost giving**--the very best kind. **Among all gifts, it is the most honored and most supreme because it is an offering of Dharma to the Thus Come Ones.** It is a causal condition for the accomplishment of your Dharma body.   
  
**Having uttered these words, they become silent.** Nobody said a word.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **His body burned for twelve hundred years, after which time it was consumed.**  
Outline:  
  
K3. The length of time his body burned.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
When the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, after eating incense and fragrant oils, consumed himself with the true fire of samadhi, which came about from the wonderful functioning of spiritual power, **his body burned for twelve hundred years, after which time it was consumed.**   
  
**Sutra:  
  
When the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing had made this Dharma offering and his life had come to an end, he was born again. In the country of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, in the household of the King Pure Virtue, he was born suddenly by transformation, seated in full lotus.**  
Outline:  
  
H2. Offerings in his next life.  
I1. Born in the king’s household.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**When the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing had made this Dharma offering and his life had come to an end,** naturally he died. Then **he was born again in the country of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, in the household of the King Pure Virtue. He was born suddenly by transformation, seated in full lotus.** Suddenly he was there, a little child.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **He immediately spoke this verse to his father:**

**“Your majesty, you should now know: I, cultivating in that place, All at once attained The samadhi of the manifestation of all forms.**

**Diligently practicing great vigor, I renounced the body I cherished, As an offering to the World Honored One, In order to seek supreme wisdom.”**

**Having spoken this verse, he said to his father, “The Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon is still present from of old. Formerly, after making an offering to that Buddha, I gained the dharani of understanding the speech of all living beings. I further heard the Dharma Flower Sutra with its eight hundred thousand myriads of kotis of nayutas of kankaras, vivaras, akshobhyas and so forth of verses. Great King, I should now return and make offerings to this Buddha.”**  
Outline:  
  
I2. Telling of his past deeds.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**He immediately spoke this verse to his father.** If he was born by transformation, why did he have a father? He was born into the King's house, and so he took him as his father. Actually, those born by transformation have neither father nor mother.   
  
**Your majesty, you should now know: I, cultivating in that place,** in the presence of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, **all at once attained** by cultivating the doctrines of the Dharma Flower Sutra, **the samadhi of the manifestation of all forms.** In this Samadhi I could manifest in any kind of body. **Diligently practicing great vigor, I renounced the body I cherished**--I burned it. I did this **as an offering to the World Honored One, in order to seek supreme wisdom.** I was seeking the Buddha's wisdom.   
  
**Having spoken this verse, he said to his father, "The Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon is still present from of old. Formerly, after making an offering to that Buddha, I gained the dharani of understanding the speech of all living beings.** I could understand all the languages of living beings without even studying them. **I further heard the Dharma Flower Sutra with its eight hundred thousand myriads of kotis of nayutas of kankaras, vivaras, akshobhyas and forth, of verses.** The Sanskrit words here refer to large units of measurement, of which there are fifty-two in Sanskrit. Kankara is the sixteenth large number. Vivara is the eighteenth number. Akshobhya is the twentieth number. "And so forth" refers to the rest of the units of measurement. **Great King, I should now return and make offerings to this Buddha.** It is time for me to go back and make offerings to the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon."   
 **Sutra:**  
 **Just then he sat on a platform made of the seven treasures, rose up into space to the height of seven tala trees, went into the Buddha’s presence, bowed with his head at the Buddha’s feet, placed his ten fingers together, and spoke this verse in praise of the Buddha:**

**“How amazing and rare the countenance, With its light shining in ten directions! I formerly made offerings To you to whom I now behold once again.”**

**When the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing had spoken this verse, he then spoke to the Buddha saying, “World Honored One! World Honored one! You are still in the world!”**  
Outline:  
  
I3. Going to the Buddha’s place.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
When he had finished speaking with his father, **just then he sat on a platform made of the seven treasures,** and **rose up into space to the height of seven tala trees.** One tala tree is about seven feet tall, so that was about forty-nine or fifty feet in the air. He **went into the Buddha's presence, bowed with his head at the Buddha's feet, placed his ten fingers together, and spoke this verse in praise of the Buddha:   
  
How amazing and rare the countenance, with its light shining in the ten directions! I formerly made offerings to you whom I now behold once again.**  
  
"O Buddha! With your thirty-two marks and eighty subsidiary characteristics, your appearance is extremely fine. Before, when I was the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, I made offerings to you." After he burned his body as an offering, he was reborn and met the Buddha again.   
  
**When the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing had spoken this verse, he then spoke to the Buddha saying, “World Honored One! World Honored one! You are still in the world!”** The Bodhisattva was extremely happy that he could see the Buddha in a second lifetime. He felt as happy as someone who sees his parents again after being apart from them for a long time. That was why he called out the Buddha’s title twice.

**Sutra:**  
 **The Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon told the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, “Good man, the time of my Parinirvana has arrived. The time for my passing into stillness has arrived. You can arrange my couch, for tonight I shall enter Parinirvana.”  
  
He further commanded the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, “Good man, I entrust you, all the Bodhisattvas and great disciples, with the Buddhadharma, and also with the Dharma of anuttarasamyaksambodhi. I also entrust to you the worlds of the seven treasures throughout the three thousand great thousand world systems, with their jeweled trees, jeweled terraces, and gods-in-waiting. After my passing into stillness, I also entrust you with all my sharira. You should distribute them and vastly make offerings to them. You should build several thousand stupas.”  
  
In this way, the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, having commanded the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, in the last watch of the night entered Nirvana.**  
Outline:  
  
I4. The Thus Come One’s entrustment.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**The Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon told the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, "Good man, the time of my Parinirvana has arrived.** You showed up just in time today. **The time for my passing into stillness had arrived.** I have taught all those beings I was supposed to teach and transform, and it is now time for me to leave. **You can arrange my couch.** Get my bed all ready, **for tonight I shall enter Parinirvana.**  
  
The Buddha was born in the daytime, which represents the sun shining throughout the world. The Buddha entered Nirvana at midnight, which is yin. And so we have yin and yang. When the Buddha entered Nirvana, the world was plunged into darkness. We do not mean that the world was dark immediately after the Buddha entered Nirvana, but that after the Buddhadharma becomes extinct, the world will be in darkness. After the Buddha enters Nirvana, the Buddhadharma is still in the world, and so the world is still bright. If there were no Buddhadharma, the world would be as dark as night. **He further commanded the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, saying, "Good Man, I entrust you, all the Bodhisattvas, and great disciples, with the Buddhadharma, and also with the Dharma of anuttarasamyaksambodhi.** Here's a little work for you."   
  
**I also entrust to you the worlds of the seven treasures throughout the three thousand great thousand world systems, with their jeweled trees, jeweled terraces and gods-in-waiting.** The jeweled trees represent the kings of vows; the jeweled terraces represent the emptiness of all dharmas. The gods-in-waiting served the Buddha, did house-cleaning for him, poured tea for him and things like that.   
  
**After my passing into stillness, I also entrust you with all my sharira. You should distribute them and vastly make offerings to them. You should build several thousand stupas,** as many as eighty-four thousand of them."   
  
**In this way the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon, having commanded the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing, in the last watch of the night,** after midnight, **entered Nirvana.**  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **Seeing the Buddha pass into stillness, the Bodhisattva was sorely grieved and longed for the Buddha. He then built a pyre of ‘this shore’ chandana incense as an offering to that Buddha’s body, and set it on fire. When the fire had consumed itself, he collected the sharira, made eighty-four thousand jeweled urns; and built eighty-four thousand stupas, three worlds in height, adorned with poles from which hung banners, canopies, and many jeweled bells.**  
Outline:  
  
I5. Following orders.  
J1. Building stupas.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**Seeing the Buddha pass into stillness, the Bodhisattva** All Beings Delight in Seeing **was sorely grieved,** cried, **and longed for the Buddha.** He could not stand to see the Buddha enter Nirvana. He was like Ananda--all he did was cry, "Why didn't I ask the Buddha to remain in the world? If I had asked him to, he might not have entered Nirvana!" He was struck with grief and thought himself incompetent. He longed for the Buddha and could not let him go.   
  
**He then built a pyre of 'this shore' chandana incense as an offering to that Buddha's body and set it on fire.** This is that very expensive incense, six little pieces of which are worth the entire Saha world. In Suzhou, at Lingyan Mountain, when the Venerable Yinguang completed the stillness, he was cremated with regular sandalwood incense. There were crowds of people there, covering the entire mountain for a couple of miles. After the cremation, they found many shariras in the ashes. When they had gathered up all the sharira, one of his disciples showed up, looking for one, but they were all gone. He looked and looked and could not find one. He stayed there for two days, crying. After two days, a sharira showed up, the biggest one yet! He took it home to make offerings to it. So the Buddhadharma is an inconceivable thing. Whoever is truly sincere and true will obtain a response. Whoever is not sincere or true will not obtain a response. That disciple was especially reverent and faithful to the old Master, always wishing to see him. But after the Master went to Nirvana, he could no longer see him, so he cried and cried until he found sharira.   
  
**When the fire had consumed itself** and had died down, **he collected the sharira, made eighty-four thousand jeweled urns,** putting many sharira in each urn, **and built eighty-four thousand stupas,** the same number as were built for Shakyamuni Buddha by King Ashoka. They **were three worlds in height, adorned with poles from which hung banners, canopies, and many jeweled bells** made of gold and silver.  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **The Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing then further thought to himself, “Although I have made this offering, my heart is not yet satisfied. I should now make further offerings to the sharira.” He then spoke to the Bodhisattvas and great disciples, to the gods, the dragons, the yakshas, and so forth in the great assembly, saying, “All of you pay attention, and bring your thoughts to one, for I am now going to make offerings to the sharira of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon.” Having said that, in front of the eighty-four thousand stupas, as an offering he burned his arms, with their adornments of a hundred blessings, for seventy-two thousand years…**  
Outline:  
  
J2. Burning his arms.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**The Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing then further thought to himself, "Although I have made this offering, my heart is not yet satisfied.** Although I burned my body in my last life, I do not feel that I have done all I could. I do not feel I have exhausted my sincerity in making offerings to the Buddha."  
  
We give away a little money and feel that we have created great merit and virtue. This Bodhisattva offered his entire body and still did not say, "That is enough. I have done my bit. I am number one." The Buddhas of the ten directions had already praised him as foremost, saying, "This is true vigor. This is a true Dharma offering," but he still felt it was not enough. This is really a case of "Present as if not there, real as if unreal." He had true merit and virtue, but acted as if he did not. Basically, he had already acquired a tremendous amount of merit and virtue, but he still felt it was not very much. The Bodhisattva's resolve is not like that of common people. If we burn off a finger to the Buddha, we remember it our whole lives, thinking no one can compare to us. Bodhisattvas do not think like that.   
  
And so the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing decided, **"I should now make further offerings to the sharira." He then spoke to the Bodhisattvas and the great disciples, to the gods, the dragons, the yakshas and so forth**--the eight-fold division--**in the great assembly, saying, "All of you should pay attention and bring your thoughts to one, for I am now going to make offerings to the sharira of the Buddha Virtue Pure and Bright Like the Sun and Moon.** Help me by reciting this Buddha's name." **Having said that, in front of the eighty-four thousand stupas**he had built for that Buddha, **as an offering he burned his arms, with their adornments of a hundred blessing.** Living beings did not even have to see his face. Just seeing his arms and hands made all living beings rejoice. Why? He had exquisitely beautiful arms from having made offerings to the Buddha. He burned his arms **for seventy-two thousand years.** They burned for that long. Before, when he burned his body, it burned for twelve hundred years. Why did his arms take so long to burn? This time, his arms belonged to his transformation body, and so he could burn them for any length of time. Seventy-two thousand years is not that long.  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **…thereby causing countless multitudes of hosts seeking to be Hearers, and limitless asamkheyas of people to bring forth the resolve for anuttarasamyaksambodhi, and enabling them to dwell in the samadhi of the manifestation of all physical forms.**  
Outline:  
  
J3. Benefits.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
Why did he burn his arms, and why for so long? It is just to influence other living beings. Seeing his true mind in making offerings to the Buddha, those living beings who were not true would become true and those who were not sincere would become sincere. In his former life, he burned his entire body; this life he burns his arms. This is no piece of cake, either. It is not easy to do, but he did it anyway, **thereby causing countless multitudes of hosts seeking to be Hearers, and limitless asamkhyeyas of people to bring forth the resolve for anuttarasamyaksambodhi.** In this way he was teaching and transforming living beings **and enabling them to dwell in the samadhi of the manisfestation of all physical forms,** the same samadhi that the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing had attained.   
  
Old Master Yinguang had a lot of learning. He lived at Buddha-Peak Mountain on Mount Putuo for eighteen years, during which time he read the Tripitaka over and over. He was extremely reverent when he read the Tripitaka, and he sat up very straight. If he had to go to the bathroom, he would change all of his clothes—everything, even his shoes and socks. Because of his great reverence, he became enlightened. After he got enlightened, he exclusively recited the Buddha's name and established the Lingyan (“Magical Cave”) Mountain, a Way-place exclusively for the practice of Buddha recitation, in Suzhou. In that Way-place, they recited the Buddha's name every day. They also had the best food; no other monastery had food like that. So all the monks moved there. They came to recite the Buddha's name and also to "recite" food! Since they ate well, they also recited well. They did not indulge in idle thinking. If one does not eat well, one might have idle thinking. A little good food never hurts.   
  
When this Dharma Master lectured in Nanjing, a funny thing happened. Even though he lectured very well, no one came to listen. There were very few people in that area who understood the Buddhadharma, but he lectured anyway. One night, someone showed up. Master Yinguang thought that an audience of one was pretty good. After the lecture he asked the person, "Did you like my lecture? Pretty good, huh?" The man said, "I have no idea what you said."   
  
"Then why are you listening?"  
  
"I am just waiting to put the chairs away," the man said.   
  
And here he thought he had found someone who “knew his sound”! All of you are ones who know my sound. You listen when I lecture, and so I am really fond of all of you.  
  
Anyway, after that experience, Master Yinguang swore he would never lecture the Sutras in Nanjing again.   
  
One time he was lecturing at the Lay Society in Shanghai, and a female student had a dream. In the dream someone told her, "Hurry up and go to the Lay Society in Shanghai and listen to the Amitabha Sutra. Great Strength Bodhisattva is lecturing it there!" This student had no idea who Great Strength Bodhisattva was or what the Amitabha Sutra was, but having had this dream, she went there. She spoke to the Old Master, "Actually, I am not a Buddhist. I had a dream in which someone told me Great Strength Bodhisattva was lecturing the Amitabha Sutra at the Lay Society here, so I came. The day after the dream, I saw an ad in the paper, saying that you were lecturing the Amitabha Sutra here."   
  
Old Master Yinguang told her, "Do not tell this to anyone. Keep it to yourself."   
  
She had wanted to tell people, but she followed his orders. She also took refuge with him. In less than three years the Old Master entered Nirvana. After he had entered stillness, she told everyone her dream. Everyone then knew that Old Master Yinguang was a transformation of Great Strength Bodhisattva. No one knew at the time. Afterwards, everyone knew. That is how people are. When something is right in front of them, they do not recognize it. When it is gone, they say, "Oh! So that is who it was!" But by then it is too late.  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **At that time all the Bodhisattvas, gods, humans, asuras and so forth, seeing him without arms, were smitten with grief and said, “The Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing is our teacher. He has taught and transformed us, and now his arms are burnt off and his body deformed.”  
  
Then the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing made this vow amidst the great assembly, saying, “Having renounced both of my arms, I should certainly attain the Buddha’s golden-colored body. If this is true and not false, both of my arms should now be restored to as they were before.”  
  
After he had made this vow, his arms were spontaneously restored. This came about through the purity and depth of this Bodhisattva’s blessings, virtue, and wisdom.  
  
The three thousand great thousand world system then quaked in six ways. The heavens rained down jeweled flowers, and all the humans and gods gained what they had never had before.**  
Outline:  
  
J4. The manifestation of the reward.  
  
**Commentary:**  
**At that time all the Bodhisattvas, gods, humans, asuras and so forth,** that is, the rest of the eightfold division, **seeing him without arms, were smitten with grief.** The Bodhisattvas got afflicted! They cried **and said, "The Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing is our teacher. He has taught and transformed us** so that we could understand the Buddhadharma. **But now his arms are burnt off and his body deformed."** Without arms a person looks like a log or something, not very attractive. It was quite a scene, with all the gods, yakshas, dragons, kinnaras, garudas, gandharvas, and so on stirring up a big fuss.

**Then the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing made this vow amidst the great assembly, saying, "Having renounced both of my arms I should certainly attain the Buddha's golden-colored body. If this is true and not false, both of my arms should now be restored to as they were before.** I should get my two arms back." **After he had made this vow, his arms were spontaneously restored. This came about through the purity and depth of this Bodhisattva's blessings, virtue, and wisdom.** This happened because he had great blessings, wisdom, and virtue. He was also very honest and reliable. He never lied, killed, stole, took intoxicants, or committed sexual misconduct.   
  
**The three thousand great thousand world system then quaked in six ways:** banging, roaring, cracking, shaking, surging, and rising.   
  
**The heavens rained down jeweled flowers, and all the humans and gods gained what they had never had before.** They had certainly never seen anything like that before.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **The Buddha told the Bodhisattva Constellation King-Flower, “What do you think? Was the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing anyone else? He was just the present Medicine King Bodhisattva. Gifts of his body, such as this one, number in the limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of nayutas.”**  
Outline:  
  
G3. Conclusion—past and present.  
H1. Conclusion.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**The Buddha,** Shakyamuni, **told the Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower, "What do you think? Was the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing anyone else? He was just the present Medicine King Bodhisattva. Gifts of his body, such as this one, number in the limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of nayutas.** I have just told you of his burning body and his arms to give you a general idea of how he practiced giving his life for living beings. Actually, his gifts like this one were innumerable.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“Constellation King Flower! If a person who brings forth the resolve desiring to obtain anuttarasamyaksambodhi can burn off a finger or a toe as an offering to a Buddha stupa, his offering will surpass that of one who uses as offerings countries, cities, wives and children or even the three thousand great thousand worlds with their mountains, forests, rivers, ponds and precious objects.”**  
Outline:  
  
H2. Exhortation to cultivate.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**Constellation King Flower! If a person who brings forth the resolve desiring to obtain anuttarasamyaksambodhi can burn off a finger or a toe as an offering to a Buddha stupa, his offering will surpass that of one who uses as offerings countries, cities, wives, and children, or even the three thousand great thousand worlds with their mountains, forests, rivers, ponds, and precious objects.**   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“If, further, a person filled the three thousand great thousand world system with the seven treasures and offered it to the Buddha, to the great Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Arhats, the merit and virtue that person would obtain would not be equal to that of one who receives and upholds even a single four-line verse of the Dharma Flower Sutra, for the latter’s blessings are greater by far.”**  
Outline:  
  
E2. Praising the Sutra.  
F1. Praising the one who upholds it.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**If, further, a person filled the three thousand great thousand world system with the seven treasures and offered it to the Buddha, to the great Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Arhats, the merit and virtue that person would obtain** from making offerings to the Four Kinds of Sages, **would not be equal to that of one who receives and upholds even a single four-line verse of the Dharma Flower Sutra, for the latter's blessings are greater by far.** The merit and virtue of one who receives and upholds the Dharma Flower Sutra greatly exceed that of one who makes offerings of such precious things.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“Constellation King Flower! Just as, for example, among all the streams, rivers, and bodies of water, the ocean is foremost, so too, among all the Sutras spoken by the Thus Come One, the Dharma Flower Sutra is the deepest and greatest.”   
  
“Further, just as among Earth Mountain, Black Mountain, the Lesser Iron Ring Mountain, the Greater Iron Ring Mountain, the Ten Jeweled Mountains, and the entire multitude of mountains, Mount Sumeru is foremost, so too, among all the Sutras, the Dharma Flower Sutra is the most supreme.”   
  
“Further, just as among the stars, the Moon God is foremost, so, too, among the thousands of myriads of kotis of kinds of Sutra Dharmas, the Dharma Flower Sutra shines the brightest.”   
  
“Further, just as the Sun God can disperse all darkness, so, too, this Sutra can disperse all the darkness of unwholesomeness.”   
  
“Further, just as among the minor kings, the Wheel-Turning Sage King is foremost, so, too, among the Sutras, this Sutra is the most honored.”   
  
“Further, just as in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, Lord Shakra is king, so, too, among the Sutras, this Sutra is king.”   
  
“Further, just as the great Brahma God is the father of all living beings, so, too, is this Sutra the father of all the worthy sages, those studying, those beyond study, as well as those who have brought forth the Bodhisattva mind.”   
  
“Further, just as among the common people, the Shrotaapanna, Sakridagamin, Anagamin, Arhat and Pratyekabuddha are foremost, so, too, among all Sutra Dharmas whether spoken by the Thus Come Ones, by the Bodhisattvas, or by Hearers, this Sutra is foremost.”   
  
“One who can receive and uphold this Sutra, in the same way, is foremost among all living beings.”   
  
“Just as among all the Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas, the Bodhisattva is foremost, so, too, among all the Sutra Dharmas, this Sutra is foremost.”   
  
“Just as the Buddha is the king of all Dharmas, so, too, is this Sutra the king of all Sutras.”**  
Outline:  
  
F2. Praising the Dharma that is upheld.  
G1. Praising the substance of the Dharma.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
Here we have ten analogies. Shakyamuni Buddha calls out again, **Constellation King Flower! Just as, for example, among all the streams, rivers, and bodies of water the ocean is foremost, so, too, among all the Sutras spoken by the Thus Come One,** the Buddha, **the Dharma Flower Sutra is the deepest and greatest.** It is the most wonderful and the most profound.   
  
**Further, just as among Earth Mountain, Black Mountain, the Lesser Iron Ring Mountain, the Greater Iron Ring Mountain, the Ten Jeweled Mountains, and the entire multitude of mountains, Mount Sumeru**--Wonderfully High Mountain--**is foremost, so, too, among all the Sutras, the Dharma Flower Sutra is the most supreme.** The Ten Jeweled Mountains are mentioned in the Avatamsaka Sutra.   
  
**Further, just as among the stars, the Moon God is foremost, so, too, among the thousands of myriads of kotis of kinds of Sutra Dharmas, the Dharma Flower Sutra shines the brightest.** The other Sutras are like stars, and the Dharma Flower Sutra is like the moon, very bright.   
  
**Further, just as the Sun God can disperse all darkness, so, too, this Sutra can disperse all the darkness of unwholesomeness.** Goodness is light; evil is darkness. The Dharma Flower Sutra can break up the darkness of evil.   
  
**Further, just as among the minor kings,** who are as many as scattered grain, **the Wheel-Turning Sage King** who rules over four continents, **is foremost, so, too, among the Sutras, this Sutra is the most honored.**  
  
**Further, just as in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, Lord Shakra**--Lord God--**is king, so, too, among the Sutras, this Sutra is king.**  
  
**Further, just as the great Brahma God is the father of all living beings,** or so he says, **so, too, is this Sutra the father of all the worthy sages, those studying, those beyond study, as well as those who have brought forth the Bodhisattva mind.**Most people say they believe in God, meaning the Lord of the Heaven of the Thirty-three. How can the God Brahma claim to be the father of all living beings? At the end of the eon, after the world has gone through the processes of becoming, dwelling, and decay and when it is about to be destroyed and become empty, at that time, some living beings who believe in the Buddha or who cultivate will spontaneously be born in the Second Dhyana Heavens, in the heaven called the Light-Sound Heaven, also known as the Sound Heaven.

Then after the period of emptiness has passed and the life span of beings in the Light-Sound Heaven comes to an end and the world is about to be created again, one of the Light-Sound Gods will fall and go to the Great Brahma Heaven. Being just one, single God, friendless and alone, he will wait for some more Light-Sound Gods to fall into the Great Brahma Heaven, some to be the ministers and multitudes of Brahma. Once there is a crowd, the first person who got there and who now calls himself the Great Brahma God, will say, "Hi! You are all here. Guess what? I am the father of all of you!" Actually, this “father” business is purely imaginary. He is not really their father. Now the text refers to the Great Brahma God as the father of all living beings, but the text is just going along with him here. However, the Dharma Flower Sutra is indeed the father of all the Hearers, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas.   
  
**Further, just as among the common people, the Srotaapanna, Sakridagamin, Anagamin, Arhat, and Pratyekabuddha are foremost, so, too, among all Sutra Dharmas whether spoken by the Thus Come One, by the Bodhisattvas, or by the Hearers, this Sutra is foremost.**  
  
**One who can receive and uphold,** read and recite, write out, and bow to **this Sutra,** or explain it to others, **in the same way is foremost among all living beings.**  
  
**Just as, among all the Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas, the Bodhisattva is foremost, so, too, among all the Sutra Dharmas, this Sutra is foremost.**  
  
**Just as the Buddha is king of all Dharmas, so, too, is this Sutra the king of all Sutras.**

All you Dharma-protecting laymen and laywomen who are associated with the Buddhist Lecture Hall, the Sino-American Buddhist Association, or Vajra Bodhi Sea: when you come to the lecture hall, you should concentrate single-mindedly on whatever you came to do, whether it is studying Chinese or English, sitting in meditation, reciting the Buddha’s name, or listening to the Sutra lecture. Do not come here and gather in small groups of three, five, or ten people to chat about things that happened eighty thousand eons ago or to make plans for the next eighty thousand eons. People who come to the Buddhist Lecture Hall have to cultivate and not talk so much. The residents should not talk so much with visitors, and visitors should not talk so much with the residents.

Your talking obstructs the cultivation of others. If someone is trying to meditate, your talking will cause him to have false thinking; and if you cause a cultivator to have false thinking; you are creating offenses. Unless you have business to take care of, do not engage in casual conversations. If you have legitimate business, you should be able to deal with it in a few brief sentences. You should not have to hold meetings constantly. It is okay to hold a meeting if you have a legitimate reason, but three or five people should not get together just to shoot the breeze. You should know that talking is not as good as reciting the Buddha’s name.

“Speak one sentence less, and recite the Buddha’s name one more time.” Recite until your false thoughts die, and then your Dharma body will come to life. Only then can you apply effort successfully. As diligent cultivators, we should not mindlessly chatter. I am telling you this because some people have told me they do not like to come to the lecture hall because they cannot apply effort due to the constant chatter. All of you should pay attention to this and abide by the rules.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“Constellation King Flower! This Sutra can save all living beings. This Sutra can lead all living beings to separate from suffering and distress. This Sutra can greatly benefit all living beings, fulfilling their vows. Just as a clear, refreshing pool can quench the thirst of all; as a cold person finds fire; as a naked person finds clothing; as a merchant finds customers; as a child finds its mother; as a passenger finds a boat; as a sick person finds a doctor; as one in a dark place finds a lamp; as a poor person finds a jewel; as the people find a king; as a trader finds the sea; as a torch dispels darkness--the Dharma Flower Sutra, in the same way, can cause living beings to leave all suffering and all sickness and pain; it can untie all the bonds of birth and death.”**  
Outline:  
  
G2. Praising the function of the Dharma.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
Here we have twelve more analogies. Shakyamuni Buddha calls out again, **“Constellation King Flower! This Sutra can save all living beings.”** The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra has a great function. It can take living beings from great trials and tribulations to happier circumstances. **This Sutra can lead all living beings to separate from suffering and distress. This Sutra can greatly benefit all living beings, fulfilling their vows.** The great benefits this Sutra brings to living beings cannot be expressed in words. Whatever wish or vow living beings have, they can fulfill it. It is **just as a clear, refreshing pool can quench the thirst of all.**  
  
It is **as a cold person finds** a **fire.** Not understanding the Buddhadharma is like being cold. Understanding the Buddhadharma is like being warmed by a fire.   
  
It is **as a naked person finds clothing.** Before you read the Dharma Flower Sutra, you were as if naked. Now, studying the Dharma Flower Sutra and understanding it is like getting some clothes.   
  
It is **as a merchant finds customers,** so that he can do business.   
  
It is **as a child finds its mother.** Reading and reciting the Dharma Flower Sutra, you have found your Dharma-body mother.   
  
It is **as a passenger finds a boat.** To get across the sea, you need a boat. The Dharma Flower Sutra is a great boat.   
  
It is **as a sick person finds a doctor.** Otherwise he cannot get well. If a sick person finds a good doctor, he can get well. We are like sick people and the Dharma Flower Sutra is a great doctor who can cure us.   
  
It is **as one in a dark place finds a lamp.** In a dark room, you cannot see anything. If you light a lamp, then you can see everything. The Dharma Flower Sutra is just a bright light in a dark room.   
  
It is **as a poor person finds a jewel.** It is also like a poor man who finds a treasure, the seven treasures of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, mother of pearl, red pearls, and carnelian.   
  
It is **as the people find a king.** If the citizens do not have a king, there is chaos. Now they have a king.   
  
It is **as a trader finds the sea.** A trader is a person who wanders around selling his wares. Traders gain their treasures travelling on the sea.   
  
It is **as a torch dispels darkness.** The Dharma Flower Sutra,**in the same way** as the twelve analogies just mentioned, **can cause living beings to leave all suffering and all sickness and pain. It can untie all the bonds of birth and death.** Birth and death is like a rope that ties us up. Now, reading and reciting the Dharma Flower Sutra, we can untie those knots and obtain freedom and liberation.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“If a person hears the Dharma Flower Sutra, writes it out himself or employs others to write it out, the limits of the merit and virtue he shall obtain cannot be calculated even by means of the Buddha’s wisdom.”   
  
“If a person writes out this Sutra and makes offerings to it of flowers; incense; beads; burning incense; powdered incense; paste incense; banners and canopies; clothing; and lamps of various kinds such as butter lamps, oil lamps and fragrant oil lamps, lamps of champaka oil, lamps of sumana oil, lamps of patala oil, lamps of varshika oil, and lamps of navamalika oil, the merit and virtue obtained is also limitless.”**  
Outline:  
  
F3. Showing the depth of blessings of one who upholds the Sutra.  
G1. The blessings of one who upholds the entire Sutra.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**If a person hears the Dharma Flower Sutra**--if he has good roots and good causal conditions enabling him to hear the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra--and if he **writes it out himself or employs others to write it out, the limits of the merit and virtue he shall obtain cannot be calculated even by means of the Buddha's wisdom.** Using the Buddha's omniscient wisdom to try to figure out how much merit and virtue he has, one still could not find its limits.   
  
**If a person writes out this Sutra and makes offerings to it of flowers; incense; beads; burning incense; powdered incense; paste incense; banners and canopies; clothing; and lamps of various kinds such as butter lamps, oil lamps and fragrant oil lamps, lamps of champaka oil, lamps of sumana oil, lamps of patala oil, lamps of varshika oil, and lamps of navamalika oil, the merit and virtue obtained is also limitless.** “Patala” is the name of a “flower that blooms repeatedly.” “Varshika” are “flowers that bloom in the summer.” "Navamalika" means “variegated flowers”; they have patches of all different colors.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“Constellation King Flower, if a person hears this chapter, “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva”, he will also obtain limitless, boundless merit and virtue. If a woman hears this chapter, “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva” and is able to receive and uphold it, after quitting this woman’s body, she will not undergo one again.**

**If, after the passing of the Thus Come One, in the last five hundred years, there is a woman who, hearing this Sutra, can cultivate according to its teachings, at the end of her present life, she will go straight to the blissful world of the Buddha Amitayus where she is surrounded by great Bodhisattvas.**

**Born from a lotus flower, seated on a jeweled seat, this person will never again be tormented by desire, tormented by hate and stupidity, or tormented by the filth of arrogance and jealousy.**

**He will obtain the Bodhisattva’s spiritual penetrations and the patience with the non-production of Dharmas. Having obtained this patience, his eye will be pure. By means of this pure eye, he will see Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, equal in number to the grains of sand in seven million two thousands kotis of nayutas of Ganges Rivers.”   
  
“At that time all the Buddhas will praise this person from afar saying, ‘Good indeed, good indeed, good man, that within the Dharma of Shakyamuni Buddha you can receive, uphold, read, recite, and ponder this Sutra, and speak it for others. The merit and virtue you obtain is limitless and boundless. Fire cannot burn it. Water cannot flood it. Your merit and virtue is such that if a thousand Buddhas spoke of it together, they could not exhaust it.’”   
  
“‘You have already been able to destroy the thieves of Mara, to ruin the troops of birth and death, and to demolish all remaining enemies.’”   
  
“‘Good man, a hundred thousand Buddhas, with their power of spiritual penetrations, all protect you. In all the world with its gods and humans, there is none like you, with the exception of the Thus Come One. The Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas, and even the Bodhisattvas, cannot equal you in wisdom and Dhyana concentration.’”   
  
“Constellation King Flower, such is the power of the merit and virtue and wisdom accomplished by this Bodhisattva.”   
  
“If a person hears this chapter, “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva”, and rejoices in accord, praising its goodness, that person’s mouth in his present life will always emit the fragrance of a blue lotus. The pores of his body will always emit the perfume of ox-head chandana. The merit and virtue he obtains will be as described above.”**  
Outline:  
  
G2. The blessings of one who upholds this chapter.  
H1. The description.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**Constellation King Flower, if a person hears this chapter, “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva”**--not even the entire Dharma Flower Sutra, but just this chapter alone--**he will also obtain limitless, boundless merit and virtue.**  
  
**If a woman hears this chapter, “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva” and is able to receive and uphold it,** read and recite it, **after quitting this woman's body, she will not undergo one again.** Thinking it a lot of trouble and affliction, she does not want to be a woman. Then after her life as a woman naturally comes to an end--this does not mean that she commits suicide because she does not want to be a woman, but rather that her life naturally comes to an end--having undergone her retribution, she will not undergo a woman’s body again. If she receives and upholds this chapter, then after her life as a woman comes to a natural end, she would not have to be a woman again. If you want to be a woman, even thought it is trouble, and you do not want to be a man, then you can do as you please. No one is going to force you to give it up. It is up to you. So women hearing this should not be afraid and think they are not going to be women, run off and not listen to the Sutra.   
  
**If, after the passing of the Thus Come One, in the last five hundred years, there is a woman who, hearing this Sutra,** or this chapter, **can cultivate according to its teachings**—cultivating patience, compassion, and the emptiness of Dharmas, these three Dharma doors—**at the end of her present life she will go straight to the blissful world of the Buddha Amitayus, where she is surrounded by great Bodhisattvas.** The Pure Ocean-wide Assembly of Bodhisattvas surround the Buddha as he speaks the Dharma. They are mindful of the Buddha, mindful of the Dharma, and mindful of the Sangha.

**Born from a lotus flower, seated on a jeweled seat**--seated on a golden terrace, with a lotus flower for a father and mother—**this person will never again be tormented by desire.** So you see, the Buddha really understands the thoughts of living beings. He knows that women have a difficult time seeing through greed and desire. These two words can totally confuse even the most intelligent women. Desire is extremely fierce. One may crave for food and always think, "What tasty thing can I have to eat?" With thoughts like this, eventually one goes to steal food--off to the refrigerator to see what is good and to steal some. One can also be greedy for nice clothing. "I think I need a new outfit." One can also be greedy for a fancy house to live in. Everyone has greedy thoughts like these about food, clothing, and a place to live.   
  
There is another kind of desire that is even fiercer than the desire for food, clothing, and a place to live. This is a desire that comes with you at birth. Right when you are born, you come with these impure thoughts. The desire for food, clothing, or a place to live is a small problem compared with this one. This biggest problem of all is sexual desire. These thoughts are difficult indeed to stop. But if you can stop them, then you are on your way to becoming a sage, an Arhat, or a Bodhisattva. If you are not a sage, an Arhat, or a Bodhisattva, you would not be able to stop thoughts of sexual lust. You would not have control over yourself. You will be tormented by such thoughts. Then, confused by lust, without rhyme or reason, you will get angry.   
  
Moreover, this person who upholds the Dharma Flower Sutra will not be **tormented by hate and stupidity.** Because you are hateful, you become stupid, totally lacking wisdom. One is afflicted by hatred and stupidity, but the root of the problem is sexual desire. Hatred and stupidity follow in its wake. Further, one would not be **tormented by the filth of arrogance and jealousy.**

If you understand the Dharma Flower Sutra you would not be arrogant and think yourself higher than Mount Sumeru. You would not look down on everyone. Jealousy means you are afraid someone else is going to be better than you. You should know that arrogance and jealousy are filth; they are unclean, extremely dirty. Why haven't you become enlightened? Why do you lack wisdom? It is just because you are arrogant and jealous. Here, we are talking about women, but men are subject to these faults too. If you have such faults, you should change them. Hearing this chapter about Medicine King, you should put down your body. You should think, "Medicine King Bodhisattva burned his body and his arms as an offering to the Buddha. What have I got to be arrogant about?" Get rid of your arrogance. When it is gone, you will obtain purity and give rise to genuine wisdom. Giving rise to genuine wisdom, you would not be tormented by greed and desire, by hatred, stupidity, and jealousy and all those impure thoughts.   
  
**He will obtain the Bodhisattva's spiritual penetrations and the patience with the non-production of Dharmas. Having obtained this patience, his eye will be pure.** One who reads and recites this chapter, “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva” will not be defiled, and will obtain the Bodhisattva's spiritual penetrations. The patience with the non-production of Dharmas means that one does not see the slightest dharma produced or the slightest dharma destroyed. One experiences such a state and endures it mentally. Having obtained this patience, your eye will be pure and will obtain the merit and virtues enumerated above.   
  
**By means of this pure eye, he will see** the Buddhas of the ten directions. Why can't we see them? Because our eyes are not pure. If your eyes obtain purity, then you can see **Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, equal in number to the grains of sand in seven million, two thousand kotis of nayutas of Ganges Rivers.**  
  
**At that time all the Buddhas will praise this person from afar, saying, "Good indeed, good indeed, good man, that within the Dharma of Shakyamuni Buddha, you can receive, uphold, read, recite, and ponder this Sutra, and speak it for others. The merit and virtue you obtain is limitless and boundless.** You understand the Sutra's doctrines yourself, and you can communicate those doctrines to others. In general, **fire cannot burn it.** And if you enter a fire yourself, you would not burn. But you cannot try this out to see if it works. If you try it out, you are going to burn. It has to be an accident. Let's say you are in the mountains: The mountain may catch on fire, but you would not get burned. If your house catches on fire accidentally, the fire would not burn you. If you set the fire yourself trying to run an experiment, the Buddhas are not going to pay any attention to you. **Water cannot flood it.** You would not drown in any body of water--seas, rivers, lakes, or ponds. **Your merit and virtue is such that if a thousand Buddhas spoke of it together, they could not exhaust it.** If a thousand Buddhas all together tried to speak about your merit and virtue, they would never finish.   
  
**You have already been able to destroy the thieves of Mara**—the demons of afflictions, the demons of the mind, all the demons—and **to ruin the troops of birth and death.** There is no more birth and death for you. **And to demolish all remaining enemies,** having totally vanquished them.   
  
**Good man, a hundred thousand Buddhas, with their power of spiritual penetrations, all protect you.** The Buddhas are mindful and protective of you. **In all the world with its gods and humans, there is none like you.** No one has as much merit and virtue, **with the exception of the Thus Come One.** Of course the Buddha's merit is greater than yours. **The Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas, and even the Bodhisattvas, cannot equal you in wisdom and Dhyana concentration.** Even their accomplishments do not come up to yours.   
  
**Constellation King Flower, such is the power of the merit and virtue and wisdom accomplished by this Bodhisattva** who receives and upholds, reads and recites, explains and writes out the Dharma Flower Sutra.   
  
**If a person hears this chapter, “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva”**--he does not need to hear the whole Sutra, just this chapter—**and** if he **rejoices in accord, praising its goodness, that person’s mouth in his present life will always emit the fragrance of a blue lotus. From the pores of his body he will always emit the perfume of ox-head chandana**--a very sweet incense. **The merit and virtue he obtains will be as described above.**   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“Therefore, Constellation King Flower, I entrust to you this chapter, “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva”. After my passing, in the last five hundred years, propagate it extensively in Jambudvipa. Do no let it become extinct, thereby allowing evil demons, demonic denizens, all the heavenly dragons, yakshas, kumbhandas and so forth to get their way.”   
  
“Constellation King Flower, you should use the power of spiritual penetrations to protect this Sutra. Why? Because this Sutra is good medicine for the sicknesses of those in Jambudvipa. If a sick person gets to hear this Sutra, his sickness will be cured immediately. He will not grow old or die.”   
  
“Constellation King Flower, if you see a person who receives and upholds this Sutra, you should scatter blue lotuses filled with powdered incense over him as an offering. Having done that, you should reflect: ‘Before long, this person will certainly lay out a grass mat, sit in the Way-place, vanquish the troops of Mara, blow the Dharma conch, strike the great Dharma drum, and save all living beings from the sea of old age, sickness, and death. Therefore, when those who seek the Buddha Way see one who receives and upholds this Sutra, they should bring forth a reverent heart in this way.”**  
Outline:  
  
H2. The entrustment.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**Therefore, Constellation King Flower, I entrust to you this chapter, “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva.”** I am putting you in charge of distributing this very important chapter, so bring forth your resolve to do so. **After my passing, in the last five hundred years** of the Dharma-ending age, **propagate it extensively in Jambudvipa,** distribute and circulate it. **Do not let it become extinct,** be cut off, **thereby allowing evil demons, demonic denizens, all the heavenly dragons, yakshas, kumbhandas and so forth, to get their way,** to run around and do whatever they wish. Kumbhanda means "wintermelon ghosts" and also "nightmare ghosts." Aside from kumbhandas, there are other kinds of ghosts like the putana, the kalaputana, and all the rest. Most people think ghosts just come in one variety, but they come in myriads of varieties. All living beings come in many varieties. Take ants, for example. There are many, many different kinds: yellow, white, black, big, small, long, short, and so forth. Who knows how many different kinds of ants there are? Some are very, very tiny. There are also black, yellow, red, green mosquitoes--all kinds of them. Such little things! Butterflies also come in infinite varieties.   
  
There are just as many varieties of spirits and ghosts. This applies to all the various species of living beings. You could never classify them all. They vary from country to country. In cold climates the ants are different from the ones in hot climates. Western ants are not the same as Eastern ants.   
  
**Constellation King Flower, you should use the power of spiritual penetrations to protect this Sutra. Why? Because this Sutra is good medicine for the sicknesses of people in Jambudvipa.** The chapter “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva” is good medicine for sick people here. **If a sick person gets to hear this Sutra,** if he recites this chapter of the Sutra, **his sickness will be cured immediately. He will not grow old or die.** Isn't this wonderful?   
  
"But I have never seen anyone in the world who did not get old just because they recited this chapter," you say.   
  
How many people do you know? Just because you have not met any people who do not grow old or die, you cannot say they do not exist.   
  
**Constellation King Flower, if you see a person who receives and upholds this Sutra,** and this chapter, **you should scatter blue lotuses filled with powdered incense over him as an offering.** Take a blue lotus, fill it with powdered incense, and then sprinkle it over the one who recites this chapter of the Dharma Flower Sutra. **Having done that, you should reflect: 'Before long, this person will certainly lay out a grass mat**--a seat made of auspicious grass--**sit in the Way-place** beneath the Bodhi tree, and accomplish Buddhahood. He will **vanquish the troops of Mara, blow the Dharma conch,** and **strike the great Dharma drum.** When you blow the Dharma conch, all the demons are afraid. **And** he will **save all living beings from the sea of old age, sickness, and death. Therefore, when those who seek the Buddha Way see one who receives and upholds this Sutra, they should bring forth a reverent heart in this way.** They should be very reverent and respectful.  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **When this chapter “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva” was spoken, eighty-four thousand Bodhisattvas obtained the Dharani of understanding the speech of all living beings.**  
Outline:  
  
D3. The benefits.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**When this chapter “The Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva” was spoken** by Shakyamuni Buddha, **eighty-four thousand Bodhisattvas obtained the Dharani of understanding the speech of all living beings.** This is the language samadhi. They knew the languages of all living beings.  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **From within the jeweled stupa, the Thus Come One Many Jewels praised Constellation King Flower Bodhisattva saying, “Good indeed, good indeed, Constellation King Flower! You have accomplished such inconceivable merit and virtue that you are able to question Shakyamuni Buddha about matters such as these and to benefit limitless living beings.”**Outline:  
  
D4. Praise from Many Jewels Thus Come One.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**From within the jeweled stupa, the Thus Come One Many Jewels praised Constellation King Flower Bodhisattva saying, “Good indeed, good indeed, Constellation King Flower! You have accomplished such inconceivable merit and virtue** this time. It cannot be conceived of by the mind or expressed in words. It is excellent **that you are able to question Shakyamuni Buddha about matters such as these and benefit limitless living beings.** This is of infinite benefit to all living beings, entirely inexpressible and inconceivable in its magnitude.”